

Q & A

Interview with Marizelha Carlos Lopes ('Nega'), a fisherwoman and a leader of the Movement of Fisherworkers of Bahia, the National Organization of Fisherwomen of Brazil (ANP) and the National Movement of Fishermen and Fisherwomen of Brazil (MPP) (nega.ilha@bol.com.br)

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Where are you from and when did you start fishing?

I am from Bananeiras, a *quilombola* community, which is located on the Ilha de Maré, Salvador, Bahia. I am now 42 years-old. I was seven when I started fishing along with my mother, to increase our income.

When and why did you start to fight in defence of fishing?

My reference is always my father, who was a great leader in the community. When I was 17, I took part in the activities held by the local Catholic church, and I also led a youth group at the first assembly of the founding of the rural workers' union. When I was 19, we founded the first association of residents and friends from Bananeiras. I started fighting in defence of fishing after undergoing some training with the Pastoral Council of the Fishermen (CPP).

In the beginning, what was your experience of working in organizations where most of the fishers were men?

We suffered a lot of prejudice, discrimination and sexist comments, disparaging our potential and competence.

How is it now?

We were many women in this effort and one of us even became president of the fishers' union of our region. We made significant changes there, a real revolution. For instance, we changed the union's statute and put in place a system of collective decisionmaking. In the periodical election of the Directive of the Union, women were elected in the third term.

How do you feel being one of the main leaders of the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen from Brazil?

I feel I am one of a group of warriors, who, with great effort, dedication and responsibility, broke down the barriers and prejudices that weighed down this movement. Together, we have a sense of strength and freedom. ✊