

# Carandiru Lockdown: Inside the World's Most Dangerous Prison

By Drauzio Varella



**Carandiru Lockdown: Inside the World's Most Dangerous Prison** By Drauzio Varella

## One doctor's account of 10 years spent treating inmates in the Casa de Detenção, Brazil's largest and harshest prison

The Carandiru House of Detention, in the teeming city of São Paulo, was the largest and most crowded prison in Latin America. Known as the "Old House," it was also highly unusual in the way it was governed. Closed to the outside world, and even largely to the wardens, it was run almost entirely by the inmates themselves, who created a unique society complete with politics, hierarchies, and a system of justice. In 1989, at the height of the AIDS epidemic in Brazil, with only a handful of physicians attempting to treat an inmate population of more than 7,000, the medical situation at Carandiru was dire. A city doctor, Drauzio Varella, volunteered his time at Carandiru over the course of 13 years, in an effort to combat the rampant disease. As he gained the inmates' trust he was given access to their society, where he was overwhelmed by the profound humanity and freedom of spirit shown by these men, despite their terrible crimes and the inhuman conditions in which they lived. Carandiru Lockdown is Varella's powerful depiction of life on the inside, wherein he recounts the prisoners' colorful and surprising stories. The book ends with the massacre by the police of the prisoners that ultimately brought down the "Old House."



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About the Author

**Dr Drauzio Varella** was born in São Paulo and is a noted medical professional, award-winning author, and public commentator on issues such as prison conditions and social welfare. He is a pioneer of HIV treatment in Brazil, and from 1989 to 2001 he volunteered to work as an unpaid physician in one of the largest jails of Brazil, the Casa de Detenção Carandiru, in order to combat the AIDS epidemic raging among the incarcerated population. He is chairman of the cancer research institute at Universidade Paulista in São Paulo and teaches and lectures around the world.

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