



RUNNING AFTER PARADISE

HOPE, SURVIVAL, AND ACTIVISM IN BRAZIL'S
ATLANTIC FOREST

COLLEEN M. SCANLAN LYONS

Documenting the lives of the people living in one of the most important and threatened tropical forests on the planet

Brazil's Atlantic Forest is a paradise to many. In Southern Bahia, surfers, billionaires, travelers, and hippies mingle with environmentalists, family farmers, *quilombolas* (descendants of former fugitive slaves), and *nativos*, or "locals." Each of these groups has connections to the unique environment, culture, and character of this region as their home, their source of a livelihood, or perhaps their vacation escape. And while some-times these connections converge—other times they clash.

The pressures on this tropical forest are palpable. So are people's responses to these pressures. What was once the state's economic mainstay, cacao production, is only now beginning to make a comeback after a disease decimated the crops of large and small farmers alike. Tourism, another economic hope, is susceptible to economic crises and pandemics. And the threat of a massive state-led infrastructure project involving min-ing, a railroad, and an international port has loomed over the region for well over a decade.

Southern Bahia is at a crossroads: develop a sustainable, forest-based economy or run the risk of losing the identity and soul of this place forevermore. Through the lives of environmentalists, farmers, *quilombolas*, and *nativos*—people who are in and of this place—this book brings alive the people who are grappling with this dilemma.

Anthropologist Colleen M. Scanlan Lyons brings the eye of a storyteller to present this complex struggle, weaving in her own challenges of balancing family and field-work alongside the stories of the people who live in this dynamic region. Intertwined tales, friendships, and hope emerge as people both struggle to sustain their lives in a biodiversity hotspot and strive to create their paradise.

COLLEEN M. SCANLAN LYONS is an associate research professor in the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Colorado Boulder, and the director of the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force.

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**Critical Green Engagements:
Investigating the Green Economy
and Its Alternatives**

"This book brings together the history of the people and communities of Bahia with a touch of lightness but the same strength as the struggles and ideals of Chico Mendes—our father and grandfather. Set in the Atlantic Forest, one of the most threatened biomes in Brazil, it highlights the resistance of the people as they work through associations and cooperatives and the importance of social organization for conquering and maintaining rights. It also shows that it is possible to combine development while keeping forests standing, and that local actions can strengthen the resilience of communities, improve people's lives through socio-bioeconomy, and contribute to the mitigation and adaptation to local and global impacts of climate change."

—Angela and Angelica Mendes, social activists and daughter and grand-daughter of Brazilian social-environmental activist Chico Mendes

"Scanlan Lyons vividly draws into sharp focus the local ecologies, livelihoods, and meanings that drive life in Southern Bahia, Brazil. With humor, tenacity, and unrivaled honesty, Running After Paradise charts seemingly disparate agrarian reform and environmental social movements in the region to show how their networked power lies in their diversity rather than homogeneity. This is a must-read for anyone interested in new approaches to sustainability and environmentalisms in Latin America."

—Laura Zanotti, author of *Ontological Entanglements, Agency and Ethics in International Relations and Radical Territories in the Brazilian Amazon*

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