

Associate Editor's Report

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First and foremost, I want to call attention to our new cover design. Beginning with this year—and with this issue—the new design not only represents the culmination of the changes generated by LASA's 2003 *Strategic Plan*, but it becomes a visual reminder of the many changes that have taken place since the Plan was approved shortly after the XXIV International Congress in Dallas. The winner of the graphic design contest is Jason Dancisin. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to him. Indeed, LASA's Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas is so happy with his work that she hired him to also design the Puerto Rico Congress program and the accompanying CD. The change of format is part of our effort to transform the *LASA Forum* into an intellectually and politically relevant publication that aims to stimulate debate among our membership.

In line with the thinking of the editorial team, the “new” *LASA Forum* will air some of the major issues that a significant sector of the LASA membership has been debating during the recent past. Look for these issues in the *Debates* and the *On the Profession* columns in this first 2006 *Forum*—and in those to follow. Of critical importance, most of the conversations that appear in this issue prefigure upcoming Congress thematic plenaries and featured sessions. This enables us not only to give continuity to prioritizing new spaces of knowledge that are presently transforming Latin American Studies, but also to spark further interest in LASA2006. We are hopeful that these debates will continue during the Congress itself and beyond.

While the present *On the Profession* section was guest-edited by professor Juan Poblete of the University of California, Santa Cruz, LASA President Sonia Alvarez defined the theme and commissioned the papers for the *Debates* section. Sonia explains this process in her *President's Report*. It suffices here to say that she requested all authors of this section to focus on the political and cultural significance of the a wide range of social mobilizations presently taking place in the Latin America—and which have brought to the presidency of Bolivia the first indigenous person to occupy such a position in over 150 years in the entire continent: Evo Morales. Sonia's, and our, interest, is in the meaning of these mass-based mobilizations and what they portend, given their protagonism in the last ten or so years. We were particularly interested in discerning how contemporary forms of activism are changing the nature of Latin American politics, and whether these changes are of a qualitative nature, genuinely promising a better future for their peoples. In this process, the scholars invited to participate begin to theorize about new social and political perspectives that might better explain the innovative dynamics of these social struggles we are witnessing.

The *Debates* section includes six articles. The first one, “Evo Morales en el contexto de los más recientes movimientos sociales,” is by professor Guillermo Delgado-P. of the Latin American/Latino Studies program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. While recognizing the euphoria of “el Evo”'s election, Guillermo Delgado traces this outcome from its origin in the late

1980s, and describes it as “múltiples movimientos sociales asincrónicos, aunque *transcomunales*,” as ways in which “eticidades, feminismos, sexualidades, y clases subalternas, rearticulan, en sus propios ambientes *glocales*, las respuestas posibles ante el bulldozer de la homogeneización globalista.” Delgado concludes that these movements, however heterogeneous, aim to truly reinvent nation-states, and to create a more egalitarian form of citizenship that truly enfranchises the great majority of their people. In this context, Evo Morales merely seems to be the individual capable of channeling those collective desires for the Bolivian people at the present moment.

As a counterpoint to Delgado's treatment of the Bolivian movement, we have Amalia Pallares's appraisal of the Ecuadorian movement in “Mass Mobilization and Presidential Removal in Ecuador: *entre la ira y la esperanza*.” Pallares explains this country's new strategy of popular removal of elected presidents. Defining them as *pueblazos*, a concept employed by Eduardo Galeano, she describes the most recent *pueblazos* in Ecuador to problematize their nature, social composition, and consequences for its indigenous movement. From this analysis, she draws three important reflections on the limits of this kind of mobilization. She argues that *pueblazos* are similar in style, but different in substance. She also states that, while *pueblazos* have been incapable of bridging the great divide between civil society and the central state, other political developments taking place at the same time might facilitate the creation of

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bridging mechanisms. Finally, she concludes that this division between the power of those who disrupt, and the power of those who govern, is a "political straightjacket" for activists who are members of the social and political movement at the same time. Amalia Pallares teaches at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Problematizing social movements in Brazil, we have Jeffrey W. Rubin's "In the Streets or in the Institutions?" Tracing their growth from 20 or so years ago, Jeffrey Rubin argues that by choosing a more institutional path, many activists opted for reform instead of revolution. This implied that the reform needed to be significant to justify this gamble. Retrospectively, Lula's election in 2002 was the culmination of this historical effort. By now it is evident that Lula did not champion significant reform, and that the PT became involved in political corruption. As a result, nearly all activists who supported Lula and the PT feel betrayed. However, many present social movements "act at the edge" of this overall political process, and Rubin finds this "the most innovative and desirable path for pursuing social justice" in the country. Jeffrey W. Rubin is in the Department of History, Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs of Boston University.

Margaret E. Keck and Rebecca Neaera Abers argue in "Civil Society and State-Building in Latin America" that social movement scholars have not paid enough attention to state-building in the region. During the transition to democratization, scholars emphasized the importance of

civil society and its movements, seeing the state as its adversary, given the legacy of dictatorial regimes. But very little work has been done "on the state side of these participatory processes." However, Keck and Abers believe that state-society interactions "might be the seeds of building alternative forms of public political organization, or an alternative proposal for stateness." Given present-day movements, civil society has a high stake in the type of state-building that takes place. Because of this, they believe that scholars should pay more attention to this process, so that Latin American nations can actually build future states that actually address the real needs of civil society. Margaret E. Keck is in the Department of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University. Rebecca Neaera Abers is associate researcher at the Center for Public Policy Research at the University of Brasília.

Virginia Vargas addresses "Las nuevas dinámicas feministas en el nuevo milenio". Vargas argues that feminist movements are living through significant modifications that not only transform agendas, but also those spaces where they operate, thus broadening the horizons of feminism. She emphasizes the role that the Foro Social Mundial has played in this last aspect, and how the Diálogos Feministas have operated within it, enabling feminists from all over the world to come together in both Mumbai and Porto Alegre. This has enabled feminist movements to become better articulated with other movements operating simultaneously within civil society, to better understand how their own membership can be active in various

spaces and groupings, and to come to terms with their need for diversity and "interseccionalidad" as a collective challenge. Virginia Vargas is a founding member of Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán in Lima and is active in the Articulación Feminista Marcosur.

Finally, Xóchitl Leyva-Solano addresses "las redes del movimiento zapatista como una respuesta a la globalización." This article rethinks the relationship between local movements and an alternative globalization by focusing on the alliances and convergences that the Zapatistas have established during the last 10 years, primarily in Europe. Leyva-Solano places these alliances within the concept of social movement networks, to define a space of transnational political convergence that opens up the global possibilities of membership in the Zapatista movement. She then proceeds to analyze how these work, and concludes by arguing that after understanding these g/local convergences, we can no longer conceive of movements such as zapatismo as local organizations. We have to understand them within transnational frameworks, and come to terms with how multi-faceted, fluid, global anti-neoliberal movements operate. Xóchitl Leyva-Solano works with the CIESAS SURESTE in Chiapas, Mexico. ■