

## Report of the LASA Business Meeting

XXVI International Congress | San Juan, Puerto Rico | March 17, 2006

The meeting began at 8:00PM with a warm welcome by President Sonia Alvarez in Spanish, English and Portuguese. She indicated that the Awards Ceremony would constitute the first part of the meeting, followed by the Business Meeting and reports of various LASA officers. This would be followed by a discussion of the denials of visas to Cuban scholars and strategies for dealing with the problem.

### Presentation of LASA Awards

Alvarez began with recognition of the **2006 Kalman Silvert Award** recipient, Dr. Miguel León Portilla, who unfortunately was not able to attend the meeting. His lecture had been read by Silvert Committee Chair Marysa Navarro, and would be published in the *LASA Forum*. (Members of the committee included Thomas Holloway, Arturo Arias, Peter Ward and prior Silvert recipient June Nash.) Accepting the award for Dr. León Portilla was his colleague, Dr. Marcela Terrazas Basante.

Alvarez then recognized this year's recipient of the **LASA/Oxfam-America Martin Diskin Memorial Lectureship**, William M. LeoGrande. The award would be presented officially at the Diskin Lecture on Saturday at 2:00 PM. (The Diskin Committee consisted of James Green, chair, with Suzanne Oboler, Norma Chinchilla, Florence Babb, Manuel Pastor, and Ray Offenheiser.)

Rita Schmidt, the chair of the **Bryce Wood Book Committee**, was then called upon to present the 2006 award. (The Bryce Wood Award is presented to the outstanding book in the social sciences and the humanities published in English.) Schmidt thanked Alvarez for asking her to chair the committee. She thanked committee members María Luisa Tarres, Edmé Domínguez, Aldo Panfichi, and Ed

McCaughan, for the time they devoted to reviewing and discussing 51 books. The committee selected *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* by Sibylle Fisher. Schmidt indicated that the book "stood out in terms of original treatment of the subject matter, quality of research, empirical analysis, consistency between proposal, framework and methodology, and was beautifully written." She praised the work for "its strong contribution to Latin American Studies in the sense that it brings these studies into productive dialogue with scholars of the African diaspora by foregrounding sound reflections on the limits of race, democracy, emancipation and nationhood."

The Committee also awarded a **Bryce Wood Honorable Mention** to *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998*, by Steve J. Stern. The book "stood out for bringing new insights into a localized historical phenomenon from the point of view of an original conception of what memory is and how it works against the backdrop of a complex landscape of ideological and political struggles."

The **Premio Iberoamericano** is presented to the outstanding book in the social sciences and the humanities published in Spanish or Portuguese. Chair Alberto Olvera thanked Alvarez for naming him chair and acknowledged the members of the committee: Marcela Ríos Tobar, Guillermo de la Peña, Celia del Palacio Montiel, and Alai García Diniz. Olvera indicated that the committee had examined 17 books, and lauded the 2006 awardee, *El otro occidente: una historia crítica de la occidentalización de la América Latina* by Marcello Carmagnani with the words "este libro nos viene a acordar que la América Latina se insertó en el mundo hace siglos y que esa sensación no fue nunca un proceso

lateral...ofreciendo sin embargo una visión extraordinariamente compleja y profunda de un período histórico de la formación de nuestra región".

Three awardees were selected for a **Premio Iberoamericano Honorable Mention**. They are: *Reinvenções da África na Bahia* by Patricia de Santana Pinho; *Crimen pasional: Hacia una antropología de las emociones* by Myriam Jimeno; and *Entre prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de reconciliación en el Perú* by Kimberly Theidon.

The **Media Award** recognizes long-term journalistic contributions to analysis and public debate about Latin America in the United States and in Latin America, as well as breakthrough journalism. Committee chair Guillermo Delgado thanked committee members Jorge Ruffinelli, Lidia Chávez, Eugenio Bermejillo, Rosalba Oxandabarat, Edgardo Vásquez, and Gonzalo Aguilar and presented the award to María Esther Gilio, for her persistent publication of articles, even at great personal risk, and for confronting authoritarian governments, especially in Uruguay in the 60s during the *golpe de estado*. In her efforts as newspaper writer, author and chronicler of events, she has always pursued the right to free expression.

Several **LASA Merit Awards in Film** were presented by Claudia Ferman, Film Festival Director. For LASA2006, twenty-eight films were selected. Several of the directors were present to receive their awards. They included Grace Barnes for "After the Black Book"; Cecilia Cornejo for "I wonder what you will remember of September"; Oscar Torres for "Voces Inocentes"; Regina Harrison for "Mined to Death"; Alexandra Halkin for "Mirando hacia adentro"; Héctor Cruz Sandoval for "KordaVision"; Erik Rocha for "Rocha Que Voa"; Víctor

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Ramos for “Frankie Desde la Calle”; Nancy Siboca for “Dirt”; and Oscar Torres and Margarita Estolaza for “Por Voces Inocentes”, representing the co-producer Eva Luz.

Alvarez then recognized **LASA2006 Program Co-chairs** Amalia Pallares and Frances Aparicio, for their “phenomenal and unprecedented job”. Margarita Ostolaza, Chair of the **Local Arrangements Committee**, was thanked for leading the “most fantastic local arrangements committee in LASA history”. Arturo Arias, **Associate Editor of the LASA Forum**, was acknowledged for his efforts to make the *Forum* a true forum for debate.

## LASA Business Meeting

### President's Report

President Alvarez began her report by thanking Executive Director Milagros Pereyra and the LASA Secretariat, President-elect Charlie Hale, Past President Marysa Navarro, and Treasurer Merilee Grindle. She acknowledged the members of the Executive Council (EC) who would be stepping down, i.e., Merilee Grindle, Joanne Rappaport and George Yúdice. The Puerto Rico Advisory Committee was lauded for contributing immensely to the success of the Congress. Alvarez noted that everyone who had served LASA during the past 18 months would be recognized officially and celebrated at the Special Recognition Reception to be held on Saturday.

Alvarez announced the results of the recent elections: Eric Hershberg was selected as Vice president; Kevin Middlebrook as LASA Treasurer, and Guillermo Delgado, Alcida Rita Ramos and José Rabasa as members of the Executive Council.

Alvarez commented on her goals during her administration, specifically “Latinoization”, “Latin Americanization”, and “internationalization”. LASA will establish a database of members who are willing to serve in specific volunteer areas. With the program chairs, Alvarez had worked to make the program and program tracks reflect recent trends in Latin American studies. The *Otros Saberes* initiative is a new and important effort to foreground the voices of indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and also to help shape research agendas and build networks. All this should contribute to the formation of debates at future Congresses.

Lastly, Alvarez added that hosting the Congress in San Juan had greatly contributed to the LASA2006 theme “Decentering Latin American Studies”.

### Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Milagros Pereyra indicated that her report would address the LASA2007 Congress and general advances made by the Association during the past 18 months. The San Juan Congress had surpassed all prior records in terms of attendance and number of proposals. The Secretariat had received more than 1,500 individual paper proposals and approximately 650 panel proposals. The Program Committee managed to form 930 sessions from these submissions. Eight-hundred twenty-seven requests for funding had been received, and 212 grantees had been selected. Pereyra thanked the Local Arrangements Committee, headed by Margarita Ostolaza, for its work, as well as the Teacher's Association, for installing 25 computers for Congress attendees' use. She acknowledged the Program Co-chairs, Sonia Alvarez, and her colleagues in the Secretariat for their work on behalf of LASA2006, as well as Marysa Navarro for

her assistance in evaluating possible venues for LASA2009.

Pereyra then referred to advances at the Secretariat, including the introduction of a new LASA website, the revision of the *LASA Forum*, and efforts to select a site for LASA2009. After much investigation and visits to the three cities that were finalists, Rio de Janeiro was the first choice, with São Paulo as the second option.

### Report of the Vice President

Vice president Charles Hale thanked President Alvarez, Milagros Pereyra, and her colleagues at the Secretariat for their assistance thus far. He acknowledged that the major challenge facing him and the Association was to assure that colleagues would be able to secure visas to participate in the Congress, and further, to guarantee a Congress with “pluralism”, in which different viewpoints could be presented, and marginalized peoples would be represented. He explained that similar discussions had given rise to the Other Americas/*Otros Saberes* Initiative, which would concentrate on the creation of research partnerships between teams comprised of both indigenous and/or Afro-descendent intellectuals and university-based scholars. The Initiative had been funded and the program was now underway. By June, 2006, the steering committee would be named, and teams would begin their work.

Hale then introduced the theme for the next Congress, LASA2007, “After the Washington Consensus: Collaborative Scholarship for a New America”. He referred to a continuation of “decentering study of the region” and making a “special call for methodological innovation and scrutiny” that incorporates “the horizontal, the collaborative and egalitarian principles that might be counterposed to the

Washington Consensus.” Neil Harvey of the University of New Mexico/Las Cruces and Maria Socorro Tabuenca, of the Colegio de la Frontera Norte have been named LASA2007 Program Co-chairs.

#### Report of the Treasurer

Treasurer Merilee Grindle indicated that the Association’s finances were in very good order and were well-managed by Executive Director Milagros Pereyra-Rojas.

#### Discussion of the Denial of Cuban Visas

Prior to the discussion, a video was shown in which Cuban participants who were denied visas described their own particular situations.

Hale provided a brief background of the history of Cuban visa denials for LASA Congresses. He indicated that at its meeting three days earlier the EC had voted to “explore every possibility for moving the Boston Congress outside the United States. Sites in Canada and Mexico would be explored. Alternatives will be presented to the EC within a month and a decision made. LASA will also work with other organizations to raise the profile of these visa denials. He referred to the declaration that had been prepared for publication in the *New York Times*, and asked if there were other suggestions for actions.

The meeting participants were reminded that scholars from other Latin American countries had also been denied visas. Still others could have participated but had refused on principle to do so. It was suggested that LASA should refuse to host Congresses in the United States until the policy with regard to Cuba changes. LASA could use the *LASA Forum* to lobby for change. Others spoke of the denial of academic freedom, and increased limitations on student and faculty travel to

Cuba. Wayne Smith, Co-chair of the Emergency Coalition to Defend Academic Travel (ECDAT) indicated that ECDAT will bring suit against the federal government for direct violations of academic freedom. He proposed additional wording to strengthen the resolution that had already been declared by the EC. Hale agreed to present the suggested changes to the EC for its consideration. Alvarez suggested that an *amicus* brief be filed by LASA in conjunction with the suit by ECDAT. Sheryl Lutjens, Co-chair of the Cuba Section, presented recommendations from the Section regarding the letter to President Bush and for dealing with the difficulties inherent in moving the 2007 Congress to a venue outside the United States.

Hale closed the meeting with a summary of the discussion: 1) there was strong support among those present for moving the venue of the 2007 Congress; 2) constructive suggestions had been made regarding how best to accomplish the move; 3) there was a need for continued discussion among interested parties regarding how to move forward; and 4) research by the Secretariat was needed to determine the full implications of the move before a final decision could be made by the Executive Council. ■

## On the Scene at LASA2006



Charlie Hale, Arturo Arias and friends



Amalia Pallares, Milagros Pereyra, Margarita Ostolaza, and Frances Aparicio



Rita Schmidt presenting the Bryce Wood Book Award to Sybille Fischer



Claudia Ferman presenting a LASA Award of Merit in Film to Regina Harrison



Frances Apario, Sonia Alvarez, and Amalia Pallares



Norma Chinchilla presenting the Martin Diskin Award to William Leogrande.

Photo provided by Patrick Breslin.