

# Associate Editor's Report

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With this issue we begin the presidency of Charlie Hale. I appreciate Charlie's trust in retaining me as Associate Editor of the *Forum*. Needless to say, the *Forum* process is a team effort that includes the Editor itself, personalized by the LASA president, and the Managing Editor, in this case personalized by LASA's Executive Director Milagros Pereyra Rojas. Together, the Editorial Committee is responsible for both the substantive contents, as well as the production and circulation of the *Forum*. It is through the interplay of all members of the Editorial Committee that we come up with those topics and/or issues that nurture LASA members with policy debates, areas of study and peoples of the region (e.g., defense of equality and democracy, promotion of sustainable development, and broadening of social justice within and between nations).

The summer 2006 *On the Profession* section features William M. Leogrande's LASA-Oxfam America Martin Diskin Memorial Lecture, presented at the 2006 Congress in San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 16, 2006. Leogrande begins by tracing President Reagan's appalling policy towards Central America. This enables him to problematize the ways in which scholars can make an effective use of scholarship to influence the policy process. Leogrande believes that scholars help frame issues so that the terms of political debate can be grounded in reality, not fantasy. Scholars can help inform public opinion through the mass media. Scholars also can help fashion workable alternative policies. They can give voice to people in Latin America whose lives are affected by U.S. policy decisions. They can use their knowledge to influence the policy process by analyzing the process itself to identify points of political leverage. But Leogrande also implies that scholars can be decisive in creating countervailing political movements.

To do so, scholars can develop the skills necessary to translate their expertise in such a way that it becomes accessible for popular consumption. This kind of public participation, the opposite of the jargon-speaking professor hiding away in ivory towers and incapable of speaking in short sound bites, is what, ultimately, and in an implied ethical attitude, Leogrande feels that scholars owe to their students. By becoming public intellectuals, academics can better prepare their students to be good citizens, as long as this is done in an ideologically neutral way.

The *Debates* section focuses this time around on sexualities. The idea is to explore the conversions and/or differences between research on sexualities, as presently understood by LGBT members of LASA's Sexualities Section, who chose to change the name of their Section from Lesbian and Gay Studies Section to sexualities as their field, issues, and problematic continued to diversify in many unexpected ways. For this purpose, we requested that the present Co-Chairs of the LASA Sexualities Section, Jossyana Arroyo (UT-Austin) and Raúl Rubio (Wellesley) put together a dossier that explored these issues in a broad, transversal way, with emphasis on research done in Latin America, or within Latin American or Latino/a communities. Five short articles have emerged from this process.

In "To queer or not to Queer": Coloniality, Feminism and New Research Agendas," Jossyana Arroyo talks about how the body was always a key element for understanding the fictional "consensus" of the region's nation-building processes. Arroyo then proceeds to narrate her own evolution in the problematization of the body, from what she called "travestismo cultural," focusing on anthropological views of black and mulatto populations in

Cuba and Brazil, to "cultural drag," a term borrowed from Marcus Kuinland, which focuses more on the use of the body in public agendas to understand better power relations. This implies exploring relations between race, gender, sexuality and class "from below." There are, nonetheless, difficulties in the usage of "queer" in a Latin American and Caribbean perspective that Arroyo recognizes. These go from perceiving it as an academic intervention of the U.S. academia on the Latin American space, to the fact that "queer" cultures appear in Latin America in close association with "the strongholds of capital and Western/European (white) urban (gentrified) centers all over Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States." At the same time, there are Latin American activist groups arguing for alternative sexualities, and/or for intellectual tools to contest the state censorship of their citizens' lives, when it comes to issues of gender and/or sexuality. Arroyo concludes by citing an example of a dialogue that took place in Puerto Rico between U.S.- and Latin American-based academics on issues and agendas emerging both in the United States and in Latin America.

Susan Paulson's "Connecting Queer Studies of Men Who Desire Men With Feminist Analysis of Unmarried Women in Bolivia" emerges from an anthropological questioning of "the paradigmatic status that marriage has held in scholarship, law and policy." Paulson then compares two different developmental initiatives that, in her understanding, conveyed discriminatory marriage and family models: on the one hand, an agrarian reform and peasant union system that institutionalized a male-head-of-household model in rural Bolivia in the 1950s, and an HIV/AIDS prevention campaign that promoted a gay individual model in Bolivian cities in the 1990s. Paulson discovers that state policies and

international development initiatives impose certain family norms in Bolivian lives that are most often much more diverse than the narrowly-focused norms, but “the practices and meanings of a significant portion of Bolivians do not correspond with official models.” Both models studied exclude significant segments of the population from their objectives and programs by virtue of the way they define the subjects that are supposed to benefit by their given campaigns. Paulson is the head of the Latin American Studies Program at Miami University of Ohio.

Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco’s “Pájaras y maricones” ‘llegó la hora’: Un relato de mi experiencia en el movimiento LGBTIR dominicano” is an autobiographical account of the author’s transition from being a closeted lesbian teaching in the Department of Puerto Rican and Latin American Studies of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice as the only full-time Dominican on campus, to prioritizing her own process of coming out as a lesbian, returning to the Dominican Republic and becoming an LGBT organizer rather than going for tenure at John Jay. In the process she was transformed into a public intellectual who appeared in papers and on television. In her account, Jiménez Polanco includes details such as her father breaking with her as a result of her sexual orientation and traces her trajectory to a position where she felt she could give a more solid contribution to her community and her people.

Israel Reyes’s “Transnational Bodies, Queer Borders: The Challenge of Latin American and Latino/a Sexual Identities” emphasizes the point of contact between debates on transnational identities and analyses in LGBTQQ Studies of global sexualities. He argues that issues of sexuality also challenge the intersections between Latin

American and Latino/a Studies “when transnational queer writing subjects re-imagine the homeland,” and that because issues of gender, sexuality and transnational identities” traverse many different fields of scholarship, interdisciplinary approaches to these questions often produce a more multifaceted analysis of the discourses, performances, and lived experiences of LGBTQQ Latinos/as and Latin Americans.” Ultimately, he sees the implications of this research in his students, and in the formation of queer/Latino/Latin American communities of students on campus. Reyes teaches at Dartmouth College.

Finally, Raúl Rubio’s “Comparative Ethnic Sexualities and Interdisciplinarity in Latin(o) American Research” argues that by continually bridging the analysis of literary and cultural production with issues of sexualities and gender, community formation, ethnic relations, civil engagement and activism, it is possible to observe, through the application of these categories, how writers, artists, practitioners of culture and/or performers, affect communities, culture, and political agendas.

This issue also includes a political analysis of the violent events that took place in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico, in early May. R. Aída Hernández Castillo’s “El estado mexicano y la violencia de género: denuncias y reflexiones en torno a Atenco” recounts the organizing history of the Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra, how women came to play a prominent role within it, and the political reasons behind the clash against the police in San Salvador Atenco that led to the arrest and rape of many of these women. Hernández Castillo is a researcher at CIESAS in Mexico City. ■