

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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crhale@mail.utexas.edu

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Eric Hershberg, Simon Fraser University  
eric\_hershberg@sfu.ca

### **Past President**

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# President's Report

by CHARLES R. HALE | University of Texas, Austin | crhale@mail.utexas.edu

The LASA Executive Council (EC) recently braved Montréal's sub-zero temperatures to attend our midterm meeting, an intense day and a half long session dedicated to vital Association issues. Reflecting on the past nine months that culminated with this midterm meeting, I am happy to report that the majority of my time and energy as President has been spent on issues of great intellectual-political substance and challenges crucial to Latin Americanist scholars. When, on occasion, I do not highlight these substantive dimensions myself, I have learned to rely upon the present EC—a critical, demanding, energetic and highly talented group—to bring them to the fore. Here is a glimpse of our deliberations, followed by a comment on pluralism and the concerns about “politicization” within our Association.

One topic to which this EC has assigned great importance is our commitment to the “Latin Americanization” of LASA. While our members surely have a range of positions on the meaning of this term, and on the substance of this commitment, my sense is that most would endorse two broad principles (and these two certainly formed part of what I understood as my presidential mandate). We seek to increase the percentage of Latin America-based LASA members as well as an evolutionary change toward an Association that more fully encompasses the study of Latin America *from Latin America*, thereby moving away from an organizational culture and intellectual frame dominated by scholars from the North. To be sure, this stark contrast between Southern and Northern perspectives does not always hold, given the great heterogeneity that both geographic locations encompass. Still, the dual principle is a reasonable point of departure, and indeed, it goes to the heart of why many of us find LASA to be so valuable and vital.

The data show how far we have come from LASA's U.S.-centric beginnings, but also, how far we have to go. Currently, roughly 30 percent of our members live outside the United States, of whom about 20 percent are Latin America-based. We have never had a Latin America-based president. It is one thing to reaffirm the principle, but quite another to achieve full clarity about the end goals and the appropriate means to reach them. What geographic distribution of our membership do we seek? What changes in organizational culture are most important in this gradual transformation toward becoming a truly Americas-wide association with a U.S. home? What kinds of relations with our Latin American sister organizations will best achieve complementarities and mutual support? Our practice of providing travel funds for significant numbers of Latin America-based Congress participants is crucial to the overall objective of Latin Americanization, but how sustainable are our current fund raising strategies as both general Congress attendance, and the Latin American-based proportion of attendees continue to grow? We do not yet have firm answers to these questions, but I can report that the EC has assigned them high priority, and has begun to take action. For example, a subcommittee of the EC will design a brief survey to better understand the current sources of travel funds available to Latin American participants and in May LASA officials will hold meetings with our counterparts in Brazilian social science organizations to discuss these issues in the context of both Montréal 2007 and Rio de Janeiro 2009.

Closely related to the need to increase the funds available for travel grants is the thorny question of corporate sponsorship. Given that attendance at the Montréal 2007 Congress is projected to be greater than that of Puerto Rico, the fund raising challenge will be exacerbated as well. In order to



reach our benchmark of supporting roughly 30 percent of total applications, we will need to raise about \$492,000 (25 percent more than our Puerto Rico goal)—while the amount we currently have in hand is about \$257,000. The EC had a long and spirited discussion about socially responsible investment, in relation to management of LASA reserves and endowment funds, as well as the possibility of pursuing corporate donations. Without any attempt to convey the many complexities, I can report that the EC approved exploratory actions on both fronts: a more assertive move toward socially responsible investment of the Association's assets and a primary attempt to attract donations from socially responsible corporations. Fully aware that this latter step is highly controversial, and fully expecting it to generate intense and constructive debate, I am very excited about the initiative. It is an opportunity for LASA to engage critically with the uneven and contradictory economic conditions in which we are all immersed, while also potentially fashioning creative new ways to meet our Association's pressing financial needs. I am also deeply grateful to life member Michael Conroy, who has volunteered to work with the Fund Raising Committee and the EC to help us navigate this rocky terrain. More details on this initiative will soon be available.

Finally, I would like to report briefly on the EC's deliberations regarding our revitalized commission on academic freedom, as well as the related issue of a petition for LASA to convene a fact-finding mission to investigate the impact of social conflict and government actions on Oaxacan intellectuals, academics,

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued...

and cultural workers. The EC agreed that LASA should establish a protocol for action when our members' (or would-be members') physical integrity or basic intellectual freedoms are seriously and systematically curtailed. Yet closer scrutiny of this seemingly clear-cut principle revealed a welter of difficult questions and grey areas. What investigative capacities can and should such a Committee have? Will the protocol hold up over time in the face of what could be a long and steadily growing roster of cases brought forth? How broadly should the principles "physical integrity" and "intellectual freedom" be interpreted? Who is included in the term "intellectuals"? What measures should be taken to assure that partisan affinities do not influence the application of procedures that should apply across the board? We are still one step away from the provisional resolution of these (and other similar) questions, which in turn will allow the CAF to be inaugurated. I have been very impressed by how hard the EC has worked on this task under vice president Eric Hershberg's leadership and I am confident that the results will meet with the approval of the great majority of LASA members. After the CAF discussion, the EC turned to the Oaxaca delegation petition, and voted unanimously (one abstention) for approval. Efforts are now underway to form a delegation and plan its activities.

In one way or another all three of these issues resonate with larger questions raised by the four excellent comments in the "on the profession" section of this issue. I am grateful to these four political scientists for having taken the time to write their thoughts and especially appreciate the frank criticisms they put forth. I invited these four in hopes of hearing from scholars who are highly respected in the mainstream of their discipline, but without any illusion that they are representative of some larger body. Many other LASA political scientists

(including LASA officers, former officers, and previous contributors to the *Forum*) may not agree with the views espoused, and we have yet to hear from Latin America-based political scientists on the various issues raised. It is also important to note that there is considerable diversity of opinion among these four. In any case, these comments help to begin thinking through a series of concerns regarding LASA that have circulated in less accessible channels for some time.

As a further contribution to this dialogue, I want to reflect briefly on the question of LASA's alleged "politicization." While I agree with Susan Stokes that this term can often be a red herring, it is also clear that it has become a catch-phrase for one significant (albeit a minority) current of discontent within LASA. I also feel a special responsibility to address this issue because in some members' perceptions I may be implicated in the problem. And while there may be some misapprehension involved in these perceptions, they are based at least partly on positions I have defended without ambivalence. Take, for example, the *Otros Saberes* Initiative. In part this initiative is simply about making space for indigenous and Afro-descendant intellectuals who are woefully underrepresented in LASA—hardly a controversial goal. Yet, the initiative attempts to support a different conception of Latin Americanist scholarship: where research agendas are conceived and carried out in a horizontal, collaborative dialogue between academic and civil society-based intellectuals, where the latter are apt to be motivated primarily by socio-political rather than academic-professional objectives. To some, the *Otros Saberes* Initiative may well confirm the alleged politicization of LASA; to others, it is both a healthy move in its own right, and a welcome counterweight to the often unacknowledged politics of research agendas that are defined exclusively

by academics on grounds that are portrayed as strictly objective or professional (and therefore apolitical). This divergence of opinions creates an arena in which a series of important debates regarding intersubjectivity in the humanist and social science research, the sociology of knowledge, and the political economy of research can be staged.

I contend that LASA is enriched by these healthy debates, as long as one key condition can be met. This condition is big tent pluralism, supplemented by a clear distinction between initiatives taken under LASA's name, on the one hand, and attempts to define *the* official LASA position, on the other. The *Otros Saberes* Initiative, for example, employs the rigorous requirement that research agendas be conceived through collaborative means, but without the slightest pretense that such a criterion should somehow become a prescribed norm for LASA members. The same goes, presumably, for initiatives around "nontraditional" knowledge producers or for efforts to connect LASA with various policy, activist, or grassroots communities. This distinction helps us focus the healthy debate on alleged politicization away from the question, "do I like, endorse, or practice this kind of intellectual work?" toward the question "does this kind of intellectual work have a legitimate place under LASA's big tent?" There will be many cases that still call for a "no" in response to the latter question, and much occasion for disagreement on where that line should be drawn, but my strong sense is that refocusing the dialogue in this way will encourage mutual tolerance of difference and draw attention to the high stakes associated with drawing a line that essentially says: "no, your approach to research does not belong." This argument, in turn, has three dimensions that merit further attention.

First, it is hard for the membership not to perceive a given initiative as *the* official LASA policy, when it is taken up by the president, or even by the EC. Yet this is the way our Association works. Officials are elected with the dual mandate to exercise good governance and to devote special energy to one or two projects to which we are deeply committed. As newly elected officials circulate on the EC, a new set of special projects emerge. By taking a long term view, and by trusting our democratic procedures, these presidential initiatives can be seen as further affirmations of organizational pluralism, rather than as successive attempts to redefine *the* character of LASA.

The second issue involves the composition of our membership over time. LASA has changed enormously over the past two decades (the rise of cultural-literary studies and the increasing proportion of Latin America-based members are two notable trends), and with these changes come new distributions of perspectives on basic questions like the alleged “politicization.” As a result it may well be that the position put forth by Ariel Armony once reflected a majority sentiment within the Association, but now represents the views of a minority (the numbers that Raúl Madrid musters and the vote to relocate to Montréal are two data points that support this conjecture). If this is the case, then it becomes imperative that elected officials vigorously defend this minority perspective, making sure its proponents have their rightful space and legitimacy within the Association; at the same time, they must be encouraged to adapt to new conditions of organizational pluralism, without the pretension that a given conception of legitimate professional practice should automatically trump other beliefs.

Finally, these two previous points beg the question of the representative character of LASA’s elected leadership. Having just completed the present cycle of nominations, resulting in a slate to be announced in this *Forum*, I can affirm full confidence in our current procedures. Under the able leadership of Carmen Diana Deere, the nomination committee chose a stellar slate of candidates, with diversity on a range of criteria that closely reflects the composition of our membership. A quick glance at past slates reinforces this assertion: the election of officers every 18 months is a plebiscite of sorts on a range of issues about which LASA members feel most strongly. What remains (and what has *not* always happened to the extent it should) is for our membership to organize, to vote and to register its views through all means available. As long as our internal democratic practices remain sound, and our pluralist principles are rigorously defended, we can look to these debates on issues such as alleged politicization, and to the ongoing dialogue about where to draw the boundaries of the big tent, as vital signs of a healthy, vibrant Association that constructively engages our own diversity. ■

# Associate Editor's Report

by ARTURO ARIAS | University of Redlands | Arturo\_Arias@redlands.edu

In this edition of the *Forum* we feature two issues of major importance for LASA. The articles in the *Debates* section explore the role of Latin Americans in the United States. They problematize how transnational and transregional foci characterize research and curricular interests in Latin America at present. The *On the Profession* section explores the present-day role of political science within the framework of interdisciplinarity and the transformation of knowledge that has taken place in academia in the last ten or so years.

Both debates coincide with the vision of the future of the profession as expressed by centers such as the Reinvention Center, a national entity focusing on education at research universities. The juxtaposition of contrary discourses in this issue might imply both a questioning, and a defense, of the boundaries of traditional disciplines, their premises and methods, their knowledge system, and their values. We assume that all disciplines have to rethink their roles in the context of the fluid transformations of the early 21<sup>ST</sup> century, reposition themselves regarding the many complex issues they are facing, and become more flexible and far-reaching at a moment when dramatic changes in the world reposition flows of knowledge.

The first essay in the *Debates* section is "Don't Panic, We Are Hispanic!": Migración y resistencia social," by José Manuel Valenzuela Arce. In this article, Professor Valenzuela Arce argues that the enormous number of Latinos already living in the United States and transforming themselves into a virtual majority by mid-century, calls for an accentuation of transnational processes: "Los desplazamientos al norte junto con la ofensiva antimigratoria, están definiendo inéditas expresiones protagonizadas por los migrantes, cuya manifestación más contundente la

observamos durante la primera mitad del año pasado." In his understanding, these factors require a general rethinking of social movements in the United States, analyzed from the perspective and characteristics of Latin American social movements. He sees transnational migrant struggles as the new defining aspect of globalization. Professor Valenzuela Arce, a social anthropologist, is Senior Researcher at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Tijuana, Mexico.

The second article, "Crossing-back Methodologies: Transnational Feminist Research on Incest in Mexico," by Gloria González-López, is the personal reflection of a Mexican citizen who migrated to the United States and became an academic there. She returned to Mexico to do research on incest among Mexican families. She notes: "In the fall 2005, I left for Mexico with a romanticized image of transnational feminist research; a series of disappointments, dilemmas, and unexpected positive experiences gradually emerged as soon as I immersed myself in the field." Professor González-López goes on to chronicle how her professional and cultural legitimacy were tested by both professionals and potential interviewees as she had to cope with identity issues, leading her to explore and promote creative forms of intellectual and activist solidarity with community-based agencies. Professor González-López is in the Department of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin.

"Why the Immigrant Rights Struggle Compels Us to Reconceptualize both Latin American and Latino/a Studies," by William I. Robinson, closes this section. Professor Robinson argues that if Latin America is to have any relevance in this new century, it must refer to all those peoples who have become inextricably bound up over the past 515 years within that matrix. This includes the 40 million people of Latin American

descent in the United States. In his eyes, the historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural forces shaping the reality of Latinos/as in the United States are the same ones shaping the lives of the 500 million people living south of the border. Thus, to consider inquiry into the reality of U.S.-based Latino/a populations as "Latino/a Studies" and inquiry into that reality south of the Rio Bravo as "Latin American Studies" seems patently absurd to him. He concludes by stating that as the peoples of Latin America on both sides of the border transnationalize their collective struggles, we need a parallel intellectual and epistemological transnationalization within the academy. Professor Robinson is in the Department of Sociology of the University of California-Santa Barbara.

The *On the Profession* section begins with Evelyne Huber's "What LASA Can Do for Political Scientists." Professor Huber maintains that LASA Congresses are more exciting than those of APSA because one can find out "what has happened lately in politics and the economy in Latin American countries, and what social scientists familiar with these countries think about the latest developments." She then proceeds to list what LASA can do to enhance these functions of the Congresses. She makes a variety of recommendations, such as more roundtables, the introduction of cross-regional perspectives, additional resources to provide seed funds for collaborative research projects in the region, and a greater effort to facilitate networking among scholars. She also warns us of pitfalls such as confusing area studies with cultural studies. Professor Huber is Morehead Alumni Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The contribution of Professor Raúl Madrid to the *On the Profession* section is entitled "A Survey of Political Scientists' Views on

LASA.” Madrid argues that “there is a significant amount of disenchantment among political scientists with LASA, particularly regarding what is viewed as efforts by the leadership of LASA to politicize the association and marginalize social scientists.” While “it is not possible to know to what extent the survey accurately reflects the distribution of views among the association’s political scientists,” Professor Madrid finds significant meaning in the reactions of the respondents. For example, “half of the respondents...complained that literature and cultural studies scholars dominated the association.” Nevertheless, most respondents enjoy the Congresses, and were impressed with the interdisciplinary nature of LASA’s programs, the heterogeneous composition of the membership, and the higher number of participants from Latin America in recent years. Professor Madrid is Associate Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin.

Ariel C. Armony’s “El incierto rumbo de LASA” argues that since the approval of the Strategic Plan, LASA has become more politicized and has drifted “away from its founding principles and historical roots as a *professional* association to one moving increasingly toward partisanship and methodological narrowness,” because it has generated “a recent tendency to steer the association closer to a pressure group that advances partisan causes beyond those that deal directly with scholarship, academic freedom, and the right of inquiry.” Professor Armony recognizes that this frustration comes primarily from political scientists, but he fears that some of them might withdraw from LASA after belonging for many years. Professor Ariel C. Armony is Katz Distinguished Associate Professor of Government and Director of Latin American Studies at Colby College.

In the final article of this section, “What Might LASA Do to Best Meet the Needs and Serve the Interests of Those in the Political Sciences?,” Susan Stokes argues that, whereas the tensions between political scientists and LASA are real, they are also “(potentially) productive rather than organizationally divisive.” Professor Stokes touches on three sources of tension: “the ‘politicization’ of the association, tensions between the academic cultures in which we participate, and differences over modes of political participation of individual scholars.” Regarding the first, she believes that the real problem is an insufficient participation within LASA structures by a subset of members. Professor Stokes believes that LASA should strive to make this subset more engaged with the Association. As to a second source of tension, Stokes argues that the tensions between academic cultures “reflect academic-cultural and linguistic divisions.” She also points out the difference between mainstream political scientists’ understanding of reality and that of language-centered scholars, for whom “truth” is subjective and relative. Finally, Professor Stokes states that LASA’s membership covers the entire spectrum, from the intensely political to the apolitical, and that many political scientists prefer to maintain a critical distance from their subjects of study. However, this does not mean a non-willingness to participate. She cites William LeoGrande’s example as a mode of political participation for political scientists. Professor Susan Stokes is John S. Saden Professor of Political Science and director of the Yale Program on Democracy at Yale University.

The contribution to the *Political Commentary* section is Salomón Nahmad’s “Situación social y política de México y de Oaxaca al final del gobierno de Vicente Fox y principios del gobierno de Felipe Calderón.” Professor Nahmad believes that

Mexico is on the eve of a new social confrontation of serious proportions that could gravely impact the international community. He draws parallels between what happened in 1907 and what has happened in 2006-7. He sees the Oaxaca conflict with the Asamblea Popular de Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO) as just the tip of the iceberg, a problem that reflects both the conservative forces within the PAN beginning to hegemonize that party and attempting to crush the PRD, at the same time as surviving PRI forces fight among themselves in a vicious struggle to reposition themselves as viable alternatives to the PAN, in the wake of the destruction of the PRD. Professor Nahmad is Investigador Titular of the CIESAS Pacifico Sur in Oaxaca. ■

## What LASA Can Do For Political Scientists

by EVELYNE S. HUBER | University of North Carolina | ehuber@unc.edu

When comparing LASA Congresses with other professional meetings of social scientists, particularly of the APSA, I have been saying for a long time that LASA Congresses are both more exciting and more inviting. They are more exciting, because one can find out not only what new topics people are working on—which is also true for APSA meetings—but also what has happened lately in politics and the economy in Latin American countries, and what social scientists familiar with these countries think about the latest developments. It is simply not possible for most of us to stay up with political dynamics in a whole number of Latin American countries on a continuing basis. Newspapers and newsletters only convey so much information, even if we make the assumption that professors have the time to read five newspapers daily. Annual visits to several countries to talk to people put a severe strain on time and financial resources. LASA Congresses offer the opportunity to partially compensate for the lack of first-hand information, by allowing scholars to listen to presentations and to talk with colleagues from South, Central, and North America.

The LASA Congresses are generally also inviting, both from the point of view of the intellectual interchange and from the point of view of socializing. In marked contrast to some other professional meetings, political scientists generally do not come to LASA to score points, i.e. to prove to others and themselves how brilliant they are, but to exchange ideas about topics and real problems they are concerned about. They come to learn and to offer their insights and invite feedback, and the debates center around important problems in politics more so than around problems in political science. The Congresses provide a forum for give and take about real world problems and intellectual approaches to deal with them. From the social and professional point of

view, they offer opportunities to see old friends and acquaintances, and to make new ones. For young scholars, they make it possible to build networks of peers and meet the more established people in their field. For all of us, they enhance our international scholarly networks.

What can LASA do to protect and enhance these functions of the Congresses? Given the centrality of the information function, the roundtable format might be used more frequently. Scholars could be invited to comment on major events, their causes and implications (e.g. elections, large-scale protests) or significant new approaches to old problems (e.g. second round of reform of pension systems, judicial reforms, reopening of human rights cases). These roundtables would not require full-blown papers, so it should not be difficult to get scholars to participate. This might require relaxing the rules concerning limits on participation; i.e. participation in such roundtables should not count towards the limit.

I would like to emphasize that I am suggesting that LASA build on successful examples of such roundtables—I am not suggesting something new, just more of the best from the point of view of political scientists. This might require reallocating some time slots from traditional panels to such roundtables. In a similar vein, I would like to suggest that LASA continue with sessions where major new reports are presented and debated, such as the UNDP Report on *La Democracia en América Latina*, or the IDB Report on *The Politics of Policy*.

Another suggestion for the Congresses would be to broaden the horizon and introduce a cross-regional perspective. There has been much fruitful work done by social scientists comparing development patterns in Latin America with those of East Asia, or

processes of democratization in Latin America with those in Eastern Europe and East Asia. There has also been a vigorous debate about the merits and limitations of such comparisons. Roundtables with leading scholars from different regions addressing common topics would bring new perspectives to the discussion. Organizing such roundtables would require initiatives from the program committee or council to reach out and invite appropriate participants.

In order to further enhance LASA's information and networking functions additional resources would be required. I am fully aware of the longstanding efforts to build up an endowment and to increase the travel fund, and I admire and thank all those involved in this effort. Enabling Latin American colleagues to attend the Congresses is central to the fulfillment of the information and networking functions, and supporting graduate students from North and South to do the same is vital for the future of the Association. Should the stock market hit new heights and the LASA Development Committee strike gold, it would be wonderful to add research support to the core functions of LASA. I am thinking of programs to provide seed funds for collaborative research projects and to support doctoral dissertation research in the region. Both of these programs should work on a competitive basis, which in turn would require the constitution of a selection committee. Such a committee could easily be appointed by the LASA Executive Council, with overlapping terms paralleling those of EC members.

LASA of course does much more than hold the Congresses. It publishes *LARR*, a high quality interdisciplinary journal devoted to research, and the *LASA Forum*. From the point of view of a political scientist, the *LASA Forum* could be made more central to

the information function of the Association. For instance, a part of the *LASA Forum* could be devoted to commentaries or debates on the kinds of topics mentioned above—problems faced by Latin American actors. These commentaries should by no means be confined to political scientists, but, rather, could be interdisciplinary, in the best LASA tradition. Anthropologists and sociologists would have lots to say about large-scale social protests and the reopening of human rights cases, and sociologists and economists could weigh in on the latest round of pension reforms just as well as political scientists. The idea is to have short analytic pieces on the major social, economic, and political developments that affect various Latin American countries in similar or different ways.

LASA has also served as an important advocacy group. The Association has been at its best as an advocate where it has remained inclusive and concentrated on scholarly or professional concerns, and on human rights. LASA has been an important voice on the North American academic scene for the value of area studies, that is, the in-depth study of different countries with their language, history, and culture, in a larger regional and comparative context. From the point of view of political scientists, two pitfalls have to be avoided if LASA is to continue to be taken seriously on this issue. First, area studies should not be contrasted with systematic, theoretically informed, comparative research, but, rather, their symbiotic relationship should be stressed. Case knowledge acquired under the umbrella of area studies is a prerequisite for the advancement of comparative research and social science theory, and only theoretically informed comparative knowledge gives us the tools to understand individual cases in their whole complexity.

The second pitfall that has to be avoided is to equate area studies with cultural studies. There are different approaches to knowledge about countries, their language, history, and culture, and to declare one approach—cultural studies—as superior to all others is to be exclusionary and to disparage the considerable accumulated knowledge of social scientists who use other approaches, such as structural and institutional approaches. To label structural and institutional approaches as alien to or useless for studying Latin American realities at best, and as imperialist perspectives at worst, is to ignore the long and venerable tradition of Latin American social science rooted in historical materialism and finding one of its prominent expressions in the *dependencia* perspective.

Let me end on a brief note that has nothing to do with a political science perspective in particular but will benefit political scientists along with everybody else. Given the importance of the networking and social function of the LASA Congresses, it is crucial to organize these in places where there are opportunities to sit with small groups and talk outside of panels. This always works better when the outside is an option (Puerto Rico was great!) and not as well when the participants are confined to one or two giant hotels in business districts in cool climates, without the outside, coffee shops, or small restaurants to retreat to. I fully realize that there are many variables that have to be taken into account in the choice of a convention site, but I think it helps to reflect on what participants really want to get out of the meetings, and to inspect the sites with an eye on their suitability for these purposes. ■

## A Survey of Political Scientists' Views on LASA

by RAÚL MADRID | University of Texas at Austin | rmadrid@mail.utexas.edu

In recent years, I have heard a growing number of complaints about LASA from fellow political scientists. When I was asked to write a short article for the *LASA Forum* asking me among other things “to reflect proactively on what LASA might do to best meet the needs and serve the interests of those in [my] discipline,” I decided to survey the members of the Latin American Political Institutions Section (LAPIS) to evaluate how satisfied they were with LASA: what they liked and did not like<sup>1</sup>. I chose to survey a broad group of political scientists rather than simply present my own views, in large part because it matters much more what the discipline as a whole thinks of LASA than what I think on a personal level.

As we shall see, this survey found that among political scientists there is considerable disenchantment with LASA, particularly regarding what is viewed as efforts by the leadership of LASA to politicize the association and marginalize social scientists. Nevertheless, most of the survey’s respondents expressed satisfaction with the association in spite of any criticisms they might have. I would like to make clear that I did not try to influence the results of this survey in any way, and I have selected certain quotes for inclusion below, because they are expressive of particular points of view held by political scientists in the Association, not because I necessarily agree with them. Indeed, while I agree with some of the praise and criticism of LASA expressed here, I disagree with a significant amount of it as well.

The survey, which I sent to LAPIS members via its listserv, contained the following questions:

1) In general, are you very satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied, or very unsatisfied with the way that LASA is run?

2) Please list the three things about LASA that you like the most:

3) Please list your three main complaints about LASA:

4) What do you think LASA can do to better serve political scientists?

5) What, if anything, should LASA do to promote inter-disciplinary dialogue and scholarship?

I received 31 responses to the survey in all, although some of the respondents did not answer all of the questions. The survey’s respondents represent only a small percentage of the total number of political scientists who are members of LASA. Moreover, the survey was not designed to achieve a representative sample. It is not clear whether the members of LAPIS in general, or those who responded to the survey in particular, are broadly representative of all political scientists who belong to LASA<sup>2</sup>. Thus, it is not possible to know to what extent the survey accurately reflects the distribution of views among the Association’s political scientists. Nevertheless, the survey should at least provide some insights into how a select group of political scientists feel about the association.

As Table 1 indicates, 52 percent of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with LASA, and another seven percent of the respondents pronounced that they were very satisfied with the association<sup>3</sup>. A sizable percentage of the respondents, however, stated that they were unsatisfied (28 percent) or very unsatisfied (seven percent) with LASA. And another seven percent indicated that they were somewhere between satisfied and unsatisfied.

Half of the respondents cited the politicization of LASA as one of their main complaints about the association. This complaint was particularly widespread among people who expressed dissatisfaction with the association. One unsatisfied political scientist referred to “the ridiculous lengths to which the organization goes to make a political point that emphasizes the organization’s irrelevance and extremism.” Another argued that “a certain group is politicizing LASA. In the name of political correctness, standard scholarly criteria are being cast aside.” A third complained about “obvious ideological tendencies that the organizers think all people should share if only they were right-thinking.” Even some scholars who stated that they were satisfied with LASA complained about the politicization of the association. One satisfied political scientist, for example, wrote that the organization placed “too much emphasis on political resolutions (and yet, LASA has yet to issue a strong resolution condemning Cuba’s lack of human rights).” Another complained about the “politicization of some decisions within LASA, especially by an agenda that seems somewhat outdated and heavily focused on Cuba.” Some of the respondents also mentioned the decision to move the next LASA meeting to Montreal as an example of the politicization of the Association.

Half the respondents also complained that literature and cultural studies scholars dominated the Association, and many of these respondents maintained that this group had deliberately marginalized political scientists (and economists) from the organization. One respondent referred to the “progressive exclusion of political scientists and economists (e.g. [fewer] panels for [the] conference).” Another mentioned “the patently obvious and politicized efforts to eliminate political science and especially empirical research from the LASA program

(we are following economists toward the exit door).” This complaint was also made by some people who were generally satisfied with LASA. One satisfied scholar, for example, stated that “I sense that social science is less and less central to the organization. Economists seem to be nearly extinct there, and political scientists seem to be a rare breed these days. I LIKE that we mix it up with the humanities, especially history, but the marginalization of the social sciences (probably self-imposed) is disheartening.” Another wrote:

*My main complaint, by far, is that LASA is being increasingly dominated by a subjectivist group whose methodological/philosophical positions tend to run counter to the more positivist leanings of most political scientists. Pluralism in methods is always advantageous, but I have heard from several members of the executive committee that the LASA leadership increasingly views methodological differences as a zero-sum ‘us versus them’ struggle, and that there exists a conscious policy of trying to diminish the presence of positivist social science. I am finding this growing hegemony a little stifling and find it is siphoning the resources (‘Otros Saberes’ project and the panel schedule which is according political science a diminishing role).*

The respondents also had complaints about the LASA Congresses, although these were fewer in number. Approximately 34 percent of the respondents mentioned some complaint about the Congresses, but most of these criticisms came from scholars who were satisfied with LASA and the criticisms were juxtaposed with praise for certain aspects of the meetings. Some respondents complained about the absenteeism of paper givers and the limited access to the papers that are presented. One scholar, for

example, wrote that “the official deadline for turning in papers is always too early; consequently, many papers are not turned in at all. Why can’t papers be uploaded online a few days before the conference?” A few scholars complained that political scientists were not awarded enough panels and/or that the conference organizers often added additional paper givers to their panels. In addition, a variety of respondents complained about hotel prices, and the sites and dates of the meetings. A few people complained that LASA did not have enough of a presence outside of the Congresses. One scholar wrote that “Other than the Congress and LARR [and the LASA] Forum, LASA really provides little benefit to members.” Others complained about “the lack of clarity about what sections may do” and the need “to strengthen and invigorate the sections.”

The vast majority of respondents also had positive things to say about LASA, however. Most of the respondents seemed to enjoy the Congresses. Indeed, 90 percent of the respondents identified the meetings as one of their three favorite things about LASA. A number of scholars stated that they liked the interdisciplinary program, the membership, and the opportunity to network with scholars from different universities and countries. One satisfied scholar wrote that s/he liked the “high level of participation by scholars based in Latin America. [The] large number of humanities scholars is [an] interesting contrast with other (political science conferences) I attend.” Another satisfied political scientist wrote “without question the LASA Convention is at the top of the list [of the things s/he likes most about LASA], because of the incredible mix of people, intellectual content, richness and variety of the panels, usefulness in facilitating regional networking and connections, and substantive and moral concerns engaged, all with the ability also to

have fun.” Even dissatisfied scholars, by and large, had good things to say about the meeting, characterizing it as fun and praising it for “the mixture of people from different fields at the conference” or because it gave them “the opportunity to interact...with scholars from Latin America and Europe working on similar topics.”

A number of political scientists also had praise for LASA publications, particularly the *Latin American Research Review (LARR)*<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, 34 percent of the respondents mentioned these publications as one of the three things about LASA they like the most. One political scientist, for example, stated that “LARR has served as an excellent site for publishing research (and reading top level interdisciplinary research and book reviews) and obviously I hope the current transition will not affect that.”

## The Way Forward

The survey respondents offered a variety of recommendations, most of which aimed at addressing their main complaints. Those concerned about the politicization of the organization urged LASA in the words of one scholar to “stop the political posing.” Many of these scholars recommended that LASA focus more on academic and scholarly matters and avoid expending resources on politically charged endeavors. Those who argued that the social sciences were being marginalized recommended that LASA increase the number of panels and tracks allocated to the social sciences and take other steps to encourage social scientists to participate in the Congresses. Some scholars also recommended that LASA overhaul the procedures for selecting the nominees for key LASA posts. One scholar argued that LASA should “have competitive elections. Give us a choice between a politicized slate and a more professional slate and let us choose.”

MADRID continued...

Another advocated that “corporatist representation [be] built into the governing structure such that governing council representatives came from each discipline to make sure that the interests of all groups are represented and heard.” A third scholar argued that “political scientists need their own sub-organization within LASA that proportionally controls and allocates resources.”

Those who complained about certain aspects of the annual meetings had a host of recommendations to improve them, ranging from finding cheaper and more accessible locations for the Congresses to making conference papers accessible on line and limiting the number of presenters on each panel. The respondents were quite divided about what, if anything, LASA should do to promote interdisciplinary dialogue and scholarship, however. Some scholars argued that LASA is doing quite enough already. Others suggested that LASA might encourage interdisciplinary panels or research projects or solicit more interdisciplinary articles in *LARR* or the *LASA Forum*.

In considering these recommendations, LASA should also take into account the preferences of members from the many other disciplines that make up the Association. I would therefore recommend that LASA carry out a survey of its entire membership in order to gauge the overall level of satisfaction with the Association and its policies in recent years. However, even if such a survey finds that only a minority of its members are critical of the Association and its direction, I would nevertheless recommend that LASA seek to address the sources of the disenchantment of this minority, lest they begin to leave the organization *en masse*.

Several steps might be taken to address some of the complaints of some political scientists. First, I would recommend that LASA develop a new procedure for selecting the candidates for the Executive Council (EC) and the presidency/vice presidency. This is crucial in order to allow dissident groups to choose their own candidates and to challenge the incumbent power holders more easily. The current procedure vests too much control of the process in the incumbent president by allowing him or her to select the chair of the nomination committee who, in turn, chooses the members of the nomination committee. This committee then names the candidates who stand in the elections. I would favor a system in which the LASA membership had more input into the selection of candidates, perhaps by allowing members who gather sufficient signatures to run for the EC or the presidency/vice presidency, or by having the Sections play some role in the nomination

process. It might also make sense to change the electoral system itself, by, for example, allowing more candidates to run for the LASA presidency/vice presidency in the first round and then holding a runoff between the top two finishers. Such measures might go far to restore confidence in the openness and fairness of the system.

Second, I would reinstate the Politics and Public Policy track. According to the LASA leadership, this track was eliminated in order to encourage more interdisciplinary panels. Some political scientists, however, viewed it as a move to reduce the number of political science panels at the Congress. Moreover, a number of political scientists have told me that their research does not fit easily into any of the current tracks, although there are tracks (such as the Democratization and Democratic Performance track) that deal with issues of central interest to the discipline. Reinstating the Politics and

**Table 1**  
**A Survey of Political Scientists' Views on LASA**

	NUMBER OF PEOPLE GIVING THIS RESPONSE	PERCENT OF ALL PEOPLE RESPONDING TO QUESTION*
<b>Degree of Satisfaction with LASA</b>		
Very satisfied	2	7%
Satisfied	15	52%
Between satisfied and unsatisfied	2	7%
Unsatisfied	8	28%
Very unsatisfied	2	7%
<b>Favorite things about LASA</b>		
Congresses	26	90%
Publications	10	34%
<b>Main Complaints about LASA</b>		
Politicization	15	50%
Marginalization of social scientists	15	50%
Organization of Congresses	10	34%

\* The total number of people responding varied slightly for each question.

## El incierto rumbo de LASA

by ARIEL C. ARMONY | Colby College | acarmony@colby.edu

Public Policy track would be a relatively costless way to address these concerns, and might serve as an effective goodwill gesture.

The most difficult issue to address may be the issue of politicization. Whereas some members clearly want LASA to take political stands, others believe that LASA should be strictly a professional organization. Nevertheless, even on this issue a compromise might be found by limiting the organization's stances to those issues that centrally involve academic freedom and/or participation in the association. In order to find such a compromise, however, we need to have dialogue and we need to have better information on the preferences of all of LASA's members.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I chose LAPIS both because I have been a member of the Section off and on for the last half dozen years, and because, to my knowledge, it has largest number of political scientists within LASA. LAPIS had 281 members included on its listserv at the time I carried out the survey.

<sup>2</sup> It may be that people who were dissatisfied with LASA were more likely to respond to the survey in order to voice their discontent, but it is also possible that people with critical views felt uncomfortable expressing their criticisms even though I promised that I would keep the identity of the respondents confidential.

<sup>3</sup> One of the respondents whom I have classified here as very satisfied actually said s/he was between satisfied and very satisfied.

<sup>4</sup> The author of this article (and administrator of the survey) was Associate Editor of *LARR* from mid-2004 until January 2007. It is not clear how many of the respondents knew this, but it conceivably could have affected their responses to the survey. ■

It is important to place this contribution in its proper context. Along with other political scientists, I received an invitation from LASA President Charles Hale to write a brief piece for the *Forum* on the role of interdisciplinary dialogue and scholarship in Latin American studies and the best ways by which LASA can contribute to maximize this dialogue and the quality of scholarship.

I interpret Hale's invitation as a healthy response to a growing concern among members of LASA about the gradual drift of the Association away from its founding principles and historical roots as a *professional* association to one moving increasingly toward partisanship and methodological narrowness.

Frustration with LASA seems to come primarily from political scientists. However, disenchantment is evident to me in other social science disciplines as well and in sectors of the humanities. While voices of discontent have been louder among a sizable group of members with a background of active involvement in the Association, my sense is that many members perceive some problematic trends in LASA.

Recent developments in LASA are significant because they can, potentially, alter its fundamental character. It is important to stress that these changes have not originated under the current leadership, but began at least four years ago. If the gap between the Association's leadership and part of the membership deepens, I am afraid that we will witness growing disaffection, particularly among members who have devoted significant time to LASA without seeking any personal rewards. Unfortunately, a possible outcome of this process could be a decision by some of the very members who have supported the Association for decades, and nurtured it through thick and thin to withdraw from the Association.

Therefore, I commend Hale for opening this space. These are important issues that should

be amply debated. In this spirit, let me focus on two of the most important concerns raised by some LASA members.

### Politicization of the Association

A number of members have expressed their disagreement with LASA's increasing *political* engagement. This concern was primarily triggered by LASA's 2003-06 Strategic Plan, which contained several sections calling for an increased political role of the Association. A point of particular concern was the Plan's proposal "to increase *political* relations with new or emerging social actors" [emphasis added].

Indeed, an important contingent of members, based on the conversations I have had, consider that LASA has been drifting in the direction of political partisanship, a trend that threatens LASA's status as an *academic, professional* association. No one questions the right of the Association to vote and publish resolutions on pressing matters. These formal declarations, which state specific views on public policy matters, are agreed to by a vote at the business meeting. This is the accepted procedure. What some members question is a recent tendency to steer the association closer to a pressure group that advances partisan causes beyond those that deal directly with scholarship, academic freedom, and the right of inquiry.

A group of members, most of them political scientists, articulated these concerns in a letter dated May 27, 2003 to the LASA president at the time. They wrote:

"Each member of LASA has countless opportunities to become engaged politically if he or she chooses. Members can join political parties, pressure groups, and voluntary associations of many kinds to push for the sorts of political changes that they may favor, and they can join other groups to oppose changes

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being advocated by others. LASA members can even join or form associations of other scholars who might wish to lobby for a political position. But, LASA itself is a pluralistic association of scholars and students; it is not a pressure group, nor is it a political party.”

If we take seriously the institutional roots of our association, it is clear that the purpose of LASA is not to function as a political actor, not even as a think tank (as the Strategic Plan envisioned as part of LASA’s transformation). The Constitution and By-Laws of LASA, adopted and approved in 1966, state that

“The purposes of the Association are to provide a professional organization that will foster the concerns of all scholars interested in Latin American studies and will encourage more effective training, teaching, and research in connection with such studies, and will provide both a forum and an instrument for dealing with matters of common interest to the scholarly professions and to individuals concerned with Latin American studies.”

The goal of LASA is to serve as a professional vehicle for scholars and non-scholars alike. The decision to improve mechanisms for the participation of social actors outside academia, especially those based in Latin America and representing historically marginalized populations, is very positive. However, such an effort of incorporation should be framed within the *professional* purposes of the association.

While it is vital to innovate, politicization—expressed as direct involvement in promoting partisan causes or particular groups—risks steering LASA away from its roots. In these difficult times, professional associations such as LASA must secure their role as a respected source of intellectual debate and research. Politicization not only weakens the public image of LASA, but it is also potentially self-destructive because it can undermine pluralism within the Association.

### Preference for Certain Intellectual and Methodological Positions

The Strategic Plan includes remarks concerning a presumed distance that separates some academic work from historically underrepresented groups. According to this document, the voices of underprivileged groups are not taken seriously by many LASA members, because they are seldom articulated in abstract theoretical language. This assertion has been received with substantial concern by many members. The basis for this concern is a sense that LASA might be questioning the work of political scientists, economists, and other scholars employing positivist methodological approaches, criticizing these approaches for being detached from the subaltern. It is disturbing that the perception exists, and that the number of people holding this view seems to have grown in the last few years.

Some of the recent debates sponsored by the *Forum* suggest a trend toward hegemonic thought. For instance, the emphasis given to some strains of scholarship, such as politically engaged or action-oriented research, seems to confirm a push to give these approaches preeminence over others. Indeed, one cannot help noticing that some of the “debates” in the *Forum* present mostly similar perspectives. While the transformation of the *Forum* into a vehicle for stimulating intellectual interaction between Congresses is to be applauded, these are signs that debate on critical topics, such as research methodology, is becoming one-dimensional. It may well be the case that this is no fault of the editors, and that they have tried to stimulate contributions from all quarters. Rather, it may be that many political scientists have chosen to invest their intellectual energies elsewhere because of their flagging interest in the nature and quality of these debates.

An agenda of “de-centering” Latin American studies should not be pursued at the expense of the exclusion of some methodological and

theoretical approaches. There is excellent scholarship, within and outside Latin American studies, that addresses the problem of de-centering social science research. A number of these studies employ a combination of “conventional” perspectives that bring new insights into our understanding of processes that structure social and political hierarchies. In fact, some of this research has been published by the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, a publication not known for its predilection for subaltern-oriented scholarship.

### LASA’s Present and Its Future

Our association is in a strong position to continue growing in size, scope, and influence. Now that the acrimonious debates about the relevance of area studies are over, the field of Latin American studies has reemerged with significant vitality. The auspicious development of research on topics such as subnational politics, citizenship rights, and transnational flows and movements creates great opportunities for our field. It is time to recover the intellectual leadership that Latin American studies enjoyed during the period of democratic transitions. As an association that promotes sound academic scholarship and broad-ranging debates, LASA can play a key role in helping to incubate new theoretical and empirical ideas, relevant for understanding Latin America and beyond.

One of the most significant changes of recent years has been the incorporation to LASA of numerous colleagues residing in Latin America. LASA should engage in a continuous search for innovative ways to make the dialogue between North and South more fluid and horizontal. The “Otros Saberes” initiative is a promising component of this agenda because, among other reasons, it values grassroots knowledge, incorporates “non-scientific” styles of communication, and challenges hierarchical

## What Might LASA Do to Best Meet the Needs and Serve the Interests of Those in the Political Sciences?

by SUSAN C. STOKES | Yale University | susan.stokes@yale.edu

ways of validating knowledge. Regrettably, this initiative has raised skepticism among many LASA members, who perceive it as a mechanism to implement a political rather than a scholarly agenda.

One may argue that, today, any critical appraisal that refers to the Strategic Plan is outdated because the plan was presented to the membership for feedback several years ago and a revised mission statement developed by the planning group was approved by the members themselves. This is a valid point. However, decisions ratified by elections cannot lead to the exclusion or marginalization of members, whether they represent a minority or not. In addition, as it happens with any policy, the process of implementation opens new areas for debate and contestation. This is part of the democratic process. The problems that I have outlined in this contribution remind us that participation is crucial.

It is vital to discuss how LASA can continue to serve its academic mission and develop a broad consensual agenda that supports values such as human rights and rational debate. Finding a proper convergence between innovation and preservation of the Association's roots is a significant challenge. It is thus essential that the leadership of LASA reassure its members that this is a professional association, committed to the principles recognized four decades ago. LASA should open more venues to address the disenchantment of many of its members. This dialogue is a welcomed step. One or more panels at the Montreal Congress could offer a venue to continue this dialogue. It is crucial that leaders and membership alike find mechanisms to bridge differences so as to chart a promising future for LASA without alienating or marginalizing anyone. ■

The tensions that have arisen between political scientists and LASA are real, interesting, and (potentially) productive rather than organizationally divisive. LASA should take actions that allow us to productively explore the important questions that the organization faces, and to avoid getting bogged down in unproductive debates. Political scientists in LASA should recognize that this is a multi-disciplinary organization which will, inevitably, have a different character from the disciplinary organizations in which we take part. In these comments I touch on three sources of tension between political scientists and LASA: the "politicization" of the Association; tensions among the academic cultures in which we participate; and differences over modes of political participation of individual scholars.

### "Politicization" of LASA

The "politicization" of LASA is a concern of some of my political-science colleagues. Yet, phrased in this way, I believe this is a red herring. Most of us would reject the idea that LASA should never involve itself in political issues. Since its founding in 1966, the Association has dealt with crucial questions of politics and U.S. policy which have had a direct impact on our members or about which many members felt deeply. Consider the situation—not so unreal—in which members of the Association were jailed or tortured because of their research. Surely LASA would have to speak out, as it has in the past. So the question for most is not *whether* the Association should adopt political stances, but which ones? And do our internal rules and procedures produce sufficiently democratic and participative responses to this question?

My sense is that the problem here is not one of insufficient internal democracy, but of

insufficient participation—a common problem in membership organizations. A subset of members that is highly motivated to shift the organization in some direction can do so; and even individual members have full freedom to get involved in organizational decision-making. The problem, instead, is that many of us care about LASA but don't have the time or incentives to make its governance or decisions a high priority. But it doesn't take much time or initiative to become offended by a decision which appears, to the relatively uninvolved (fairly or not), to have been taken by a small cabal. The point is not to scold most of us who are not deeply involved, but to challenge LASA to find easier ways for us to participate. The recent shift to email votes on resolutions is a big step in the right direction.

### Tensions among Academic Cultures

Some of the tensions between political scientists and LASA reflect academic-cultural and linguistic divisions. (These divisions are frequently referred to as "methodological," but are in fact broader than that term suggests.) Many (though obviously not all) political scientists who are members of LASA belong to academic communities in which it is assumed that there is a reality "out there" in which the objects of study reside; that good research means explaining things causally; and that there is—indeed should be—a certain separation of researcher from object of research. In a more narrowly methodological sense, many also believe that quantitative measures and formal models are useful tools in the process of explanation. These stances would also be held by the typical economist and by not a few sociologists. They are not undisputed in political science today. Indeed, there have been interesting and productive criticisms of them, whether in the form of the *perestroika*

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movement in the American Political Science Association or the reconsideration of the value of qualitative research.<sup>1</sup>

My impression from reading through the *LASA Forum* over the past few years is that those who control its editorial content are fairly oblivious to the academic culture of mainstream social science that I've just sketched. Arturo Escobar's account of the history of scholarly paradigms informing (and challenging) Latin American studies goes from liberalism and Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s to "hyphenations of these two paradigms" in the 1970s and 1980s. "In the 1980s and 1990s, a third paradigm—post-structuralism, as a language and meaning-based social theory" arose. "Today, combinations of these three paradigms are practiced by many scholars...with one paradigm usually predominating in a given discipline or in the work of particular authors."<sup>2</sup>

Mainstream political science is written out of this condensed history. Missing is another major force that challenged Latin American studies, and area studies more broadly, in the 1990s: the challenge of rational choice theory and of the new institutionalism. These scholarly developments pushed us to discover general causal relations that operated across all regional settings. To offer just one example: if presidentialism increased the probability of military intervention, the challenge went, one should therefore study presidentialism (and its alternatives), as well as coups everywhere in the world. Not all Latin Americanist political scientists accepted the precepts of this challenge; others might agree in theory but find the trade-offs, in a loss of understanding of processes and historical context, too costly. But the point is that these scholarly developments influenced many of us, buffeted all of us, and questioned the paradigm of Latin American

studies. We look in vain to recent LASA communications for a reflection of, and reflections on, this experience.

Language is a part of culture, and LASA members are separated by linguistic divides as well. Ironically for an association that is multi-lingual—note that there will be *four* official conference languages in Montreal—even those of us who share the same native languages use terms that others of us do not understand. The problem of technical and jargon-ridden prose in academic writing is well known and perhaps irresolvable; the problem that LASA needs to work hard to mitigate is that our jargon-laden prose sometimes infects our organizational communications. The Call for Papers for the 2007 Congress left many of us scratching our heads. The word "de-centering," which appears scattered throughout LASA documents in recent years, means little to most political scientists, especially those outside of political theory (this includes most of us who are also LASA members). "Re-visioning" is not in the dictionary—does it mean reviewing, re-envisioning, revising? I know what a border is, and I know what an order is, but what is a (b)order?<sup>3</sup> Perhaps even many colleagues for whom these terms are more familiar would disagree with one another about what was being said. The examples are in themselves harmless, but when many people read prose that appears eccentric and inscrutable, a feeling of alienation creeps in.

(Of course, political scientists also often write in ways that are inscrutable to members of other tribes; I hope to avoid the "everyone-has-an-accent-except-me" fallacy.)

It would be unfair to assume that LASA has been univocal in its methodological stances. William Leogrande, in his 2006 Martin Diskin Memorial Lecture, encourages us, perhaps in our scholarship but especially in

the roles of public intellectuals that some of us may wish to take on, to "speak truth to power." In so doing, he echoes the view, accepted by many mainstream political scientists, that there is a "there out there," and argues for the political importance of this stance:

No knowledge is absolute, of course, and knowledge of complex social phenomena is always partial and mediated by point of view. But neither is knowledge entirely relative, as some recently popular epistemologies in the social sciences would have us believe. Truth is not just a point of view.<sup>4</sup>

### Communicating Across Disciplines

LASA is by definition a multi-disciplinary association. The great benefit of LASA Congresses is that they allow people who are asking similar questions but from different disciplinary perspectives to learn from one another. Political scientists, for instance, are trying to understand why the left has risen to power in many Latin American countries and what the implications are of this rise. We will benefit greatly from the perspectives that anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and literary scholars bring to these questions.

For such cross-fertilization to occur, of course, we need to be able to understand each other; this goes back to the last complaint. We should all strive to make LASA Congresses jargon-free zones. Not only do we often not understand the work of our colleagues from other disciplines, our attitudes toward it tend to vary between condescension and disdain. These opinions are almost invariably the product of ignorance, seasoned with a bit of defensiveness. I have two degrees in anthropology, but, if pressed to produce an

opinion of current anthropological research, I might fall back on outdated and inaccurate stereotypes about anthropologists and their methods. Others' views of political science are similarly ill-informed. The ambitious among us might try to immerse ourselves in the methods and findings of non-proximate disciplines, but for the rest, some humility and tolerance would help a multi-disciplinary organization withstand the stresses of increased specialization.

Cross-disciplinary ignorance becomes an organizational problem when those responsible for Congress programs, who may be well intentioned but not well versed on recent developments in other disciplines, reconfigure panels and tracks to the point that whole sets of members fail to recognize a niche for their work in the program. I doubt that my political-science colleagues want a mini-APSA conference lodged within the LASA Congress; to limit ourselves to such an event would be to miss some real opportunities for cross-fertilization. The answer, I believe, is to include on program committees people who will pull toward more traditional disciplinary categories along with others who will pull toward more novel configurations.

### **The Activist Researcher and the Public Intellectual**

A complaint voiced by some political scientists (and perhaps not exclusively by them) is that they feel that LASA is hectoring the membership to make politics part of our practice of doing research. This is another aspect of the "politicization" that many have complained about. Some political-science colleagues believe that the official LASA view is that their research is top-down and elitist, biased, and impervious to subaltern voices or perspectives. I don't believe that any method popular in today's humanities or

social sciences holds inherent political implications—is empowering or disempowering—in and of itself.

It seems obvious that our membership will fall across a broad range, from the apolitical to the intensely political. Many LASA members feel no tug toward politics. Among those of us who do, the tug often pulls us in opposite directions. Some are committed to introducing political considerations and efforts for social change into all aspects of research. But a third option, one that may be preferable to many political scientists, is to maintain a certain analytical distance from our subjects of study, without giving up entirely on political involvement. That is, to become public intellectuals on a parallel track to our roles as scholars. *Public intellectual* is perhaps too grandiose; again I recommend William LeoGrande's Diskin lecture, which lays out simple and helpful steps toward making a difference (developing relationships with organizations that lobby the U.S. government on relevant policy areas, writing letters to the editor, and the like).

Certainly LASA is an organization large enough for all types: the apolitical, the activist, the public intellectual. Charlie Hale's recent reiteration of a big-tent philosophy for LASA, for instance, and his respectfulness toward the minority that opposed moving the 2007 Congress to Montreal, are welcome signs.<sup>5</sup>

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *LASA Forum* 37(2), Spring 2006, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> The term (*b*)order appears twice in *LASA Forum* 37(2):1.

<sup>4</sup> *LASA Forum* 37(3):7.

<sup>5</sup> *LASA Forum* 37(3), Summer 2006, p.1. ■

## Immigration Matters

### Don't Panic, We are Hispanic! Migración y resistencia social

by JOSÉ MANUEL VALENZUELA ARCE  
El Colegio de la Frontera Norte  
jmvalen@colef.mx

#### Los desplazados de la tierra

Para mediados de este siglo, habrá más de cien millones de latinos y latinas en Estados Unidos, cifra similar a la actual población de México. Este escenario implica una acentuación de los procesos transnacionales y un importante fortalecimiento de las comunidades internacionales, además de significativas transformaciones en los ámbitos socioculturales latinoamericanos y estadounidenses. Los desplazamientos al norte junto con la ofensiva antimigratoria están definiendo inéditas expresiones protagonizadas por los migrantes, cuya manifestación más contundente la observamos durante la primera mitad del año pasado. Estos elementos requieren que ubiquemos de manera general los escenarios previsibles de estos movimientos en el contexto de las condiciones que definen las trayectorias de vida de los países pobres caracterizados por el incremento de la desigualdad social.

Los escenarios globales muestran de manera contundente las condiciones que conforman el soporte social del proceso migratorio y, en particular, de los desplazados por el miedo y la pobreza. Entre los pilares que definen estos soportes, tenemos que la mitad de la población mundial sobrevive con menos de dos dólares diarios, al mismo tiempo que una quinta parte lo hace con menos de un dólar al día. Este proceso ocurre al mismo tiempo que unos cuantos resultan favorecidos por un modelo económico que produce una inmoral concentración de la riqueza. Tan sólo en América Latina, cerca

de la mitad de sus habitantes (226 millones) viven en condiciones de pobreza y hay 95 millones de indigentes, al mismo tiempo que en México, 25 personas concentran ingresos superiores a 25 millones de mexicanos. En la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos crecen los niveles de pobreza, así como los niveles de vulnerabilidad social, mientras que, en el año 2000, la malnutrición afectaba a 55 millones de latinoamericanos y caribeños, siendo los países más afectados Haití, Nicaragua, República Dominicana, Guatemala, Bolivia y Venezuela.

A la información proporcionada, podemos añadir la existencia de bajas tasas de crecimiento económico, que siete de cada nueve empleos se generan en la informalidad, o que nuestras economías no están generando los empleos que requiere la población que ingresa al mercado de trabajo. Sólo incorporando este escenario podemos entender el papel central del desplazamiento como opción disponible para millones de latinoamericanos que han sido expropiados de la posibilidad de conformar trayectoria de vida digna en sus propios países. Por si fuera poco, los bajos salarios y la precarización laboral se añaden como factores que inciden en los desplazamientos latinoamericanos.

Junto a la pobreza y precarización de la población latinoamericana, la violencia y los imaginarios de miedo participan de manera importante en la decisión de muchas personas que optan por dejar sus lugares de origen, así, los desplazados del miedo se suman a los desplazados de la pobreza, conformando los rasgos definitorios de la migración latinoamericana, africana y, en general, de las regiones pobres. En los escenarios latinoamericanos de las últimas cuatro décadas, la violencia ha tenido un papel importante en la decisión de dejar el sitio de origen, abandonar el terruño y los entornos entrañables. Desde hace más de

tres décadas, los desplazamientos derivados de las violencias han sido conspicuos, especialmente durante los regímenes militares en Brasil, Chile, Uruguay y Argentina. De igual forma, durante los años setenta y ochenta, cientos de miles de centroamericanos se vieron obligadas a salir de sus países huyendo de la violencia y la muerte generada por los gobiernos dictatoriales de El Salvador, Guatemala y la Nicaragua Somosista.

En la actualidad, las formas de violencia política se combinan con otras expresiones de violencia social, como ocurre con el narcotráfico, propiciando el desplazamiento de cerca de 4 millones de colombianos, por señalar el caso más impactante, aunque en otras comunidades latinoamericanas también se generan múltiples migraciones vinculadas a la violencia del narcotráfico. Estos desplazamientos generan una de las formas extremas de vulnerabilidad social, donde la gente "se tiene que ir", muchas veces sin poder despedirse. En ocasiones, el desplazamiento forzado confronta peores escenarios como la desaparición o la muerte.

Los desplazados por motivos económicos constituyen una importante realidad de los escenarios latinoamericanos. Generalmente estos migrantes son sobre explotados en otros países latinoamericanos o en Estados Unidos y en Europa, pues se ven expuestos a mayores condiciones de vulnerabilidad, recibiendo pagos inferiores a los que perciben otros trabajadores y viviendo en condiciones de indefensión social y riesgo de deportación. Pagan impuestos sin recibir servicios sociales y están expuestos al racismo o la discriminación.

En muchos casos, el desplazamiento se interrumpe por la detención, lo cual acentúa las condiciones de vulnerabilidad de los migrantes frente a los organismos policíacos, la gendarmería o los agentes migratorios.

En otros, el viaje termina con la muerte, como ha ocurrido con cerca de 4,000 migrantes que han perdido la vida en la frontera México-Estados Unidos desde el inicio de la Operación Guardián en 1994 y el incremento del riesgo en el recorrido.

A pesar de las vicisitudes y avatares de la migración indocumentada, la población de origen latinoamericano crece en Estados Unidos, país que necesita de esta fuerza de trabajo pero mantiene un doble juego que incrementa las ganancias de los empleadores y participa como elemento de presión en el ajedrez político, (re)produciendo la vulnerabilidad social y la sobre explotación de los migrantes.

Según datos censales estadounidenses, la población latinoamericana en Estados Unidos representa 12.6 por ciento de la población total de 282.1 millones y, de acuerdo con estimaciones recientes de la Oficina del Censo, para mediados del presente siglo, cerca de la cuarta parte de la población total de Estados Unidos será de origen “hispano”, lo cual significa más de cien millones de personas, cifra similar a la población actual de la República Mexicana (se estima que 420 millones de personas vivirán en Estados Unidos, de los cuales 102.6 millones serán de origen hispano).

La vulnerabilidad de los trabajadores migrantes incluye tres escenarios que se complementan. Inicia con condiciones de pobreza y carencias que influyen en la decisión de emigrar (en otros casos son las condiciones de inseguridad o de riesgo las que obligan a irse), posteriormente se encuentran los problemas y riesgos del camino, las agresiones, las incomodidades, y, en ocasiones los ataques físicos o la muerte. Finalmente se encuentra un escenario de vulnerabilidad social definido por la condición indocumentada, la cual implica aceptar los peores empleos, abusos laborales,

pagos por debajo de lo establecido para trabajadores con documentos legales, invisibilización social, temor ante el riesgo de ser deportado, limitación o inexistencia de derechos ciudadanos, problemas para asegurar servicios educativos y de salud para los hijos. A todo esto, se añade la manipulación de la migración bajo el argumento de que ellos generan los problemas económicos, el desempleo, la inseguridad o, la división política y cultural de los Estados Unidos. Este es un viejo argumento conservador recuperado por Samuel Huntington, conocido profesor de Harvard. Desde una perspectiva asimilacionista decimonónica, Huntington ha vuelto a plantear la condición unívoca y monocultural que sentencia la desaparición de todas las culturas en una cultura dominante, destacando que sólo existe un sueño en la sociedad estadounidense, el “sueño americano”, creado por la población angloprotestante y que los mexicanoamericanos sólo compartirán ese sueño si sueñan en inglés.

De cara a los escenarios de pobreza latinoamericana, el incremento en la desigualdad en la distribución del ingreso, la no generación de los empleos que requiere la población que ingresa al mercado de trabajo, el fortalecimiento de los imaginarios de riesgo vinculados a la violencia, podemos considerar que la pobreza y vulnerabilidad latinoamericana seguirán presionando para que muchos latinoamericanos decidan dejar sus lugares de origen, fortaleciendo la condición de que los 3,100 Kilómetros de frontera común entre México y Estados Unidos, son también la frontera latinoamericana de la pobreza y la desigualdad.

### **Don't Panic, We Are Hispanic!**

Entre las muchas lecciones que se pueden extraer de las impresionantes movilizaciones contra la ley del congresista republicano F. James Sensenbrenner (propuesta HR4437) que convocaron a millones de personas en las calles estadounidenses, destacan las siguientes:

En primer lugar, la capacidad expresiva de los inmigrantes que hicieron retroceder de manera coyuntural, los rasgos más agresivos de la ley, especialmente lo referido a la criminalización de los migrantes indocumentados (cerca de 11 o 12 millones) y de quienes les ayuden de alguna manera, así como la intención de construir el tercer muro fronterizo. Destaca la capacidad de convocatoria demostrada en las manifestaciones, que fueron de enorme contundencia, movilizando a millones de personas: Más de medio millón en Los Ángeles, 50,000 en Denver, 3,000 en Charlotte, 4,000 en Sacramento, 200,000 en Chicago, 30,000 en Milwaukee, 80,000 en Atlanta, 20,000 en Phoenix, 30,000 en Washington, y muchos otros en San Francisco, Tucson, Kansas City y otras ciudades. (Véase David Brooks, “Megamarcha en Los Angeles”, *La Jornada*, Portada, Domingo 26 de Marzo de 2006.)

En segundo lugar se encuentra su integración plural que logró la participación de diversos sectores que se involucraron como organizadores y convocantes, tales como organizaciones de paisanos, iglesia católica (el cardenal Roger Mahoney de Los Ángeles, el Padre Luis Ángel Nieto, de la Iglesia de la Placita Olvera), sindicatos, frentes indígenas (Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (FIOB), MAYAVISION), decenas de miles de jóvenes, estudiantes, comunicadores radiales y espacios periodísticos en español, como La Opinión de Los Angeles. Las movilizaciones

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también tuvieron el apoyo de artistas y de algunos políticos como Antonio Villaraigosa, Alcalde de Los Ángeles, o Rob Blagojevich, Gobernador de Illinois. Junto a la pluralidad de organizaciones participantes, vale la pena considerar la transformación del propio perfil de los migrantes indocumentados, que, como ocurre con los mexicanos, que han incrementado el peso urbano, letrado, femenino y con mayor capacidad de vinculación social a través de los medios de transporte o de los recursos mediáticos y electrónicos.

Es notable la dimensión horizontal de las redes de organizaciones involucradas en las marchas, que no se corresponden con la dimensión vertical de las organizaciones que lideraron movimientos previos, conformados desde posiciones etnoclasistas. Estas movilizaciones ya son consideradas como las mayores de manifestación latina de la historia estadounidense. Resulta necesario destacar que, pese a los discursos que criminalizan a los migrantes, no se presentó ningún acto violento o delictivo, ni enfrentamientos, ni desmanes.

Esta condición fue explícitamente destacada por los manifestantes, quienes coreaban: “¡No somos criminales ni terroristas!”, “¡Don’t panic, we are hispanic!”, “¡El que no brinque es migra!”, “¡Aquí estamos y no nos vamos y si nos echan nos regresamos!”.

Desde hace varios años, la disputa migratoria se ha sido una pieza importante en el tablero político electoral como se ha podido observar de manera conspicua con la manipulación del fenómeno migratorio con fines de reelección por parte del ex Gobernador de California Pete Wilson, o la incorporación de los efectivos de la Guardia Nacional en el patrullaje fronterizo y en el levantamiento de un nuevo muro de 1125 kilómetros. Al mismo tiempo, las perspectivas supremacistas actualizan sus

discursos anti-migrantes y grupos como White Power, Metal Militia, Wake up Washington, Ku Klux Klan, Skin Heads, Light up The Border, American Border Patrol, Ranch Rescue, pierden visibilidad frente al nuevo protagonismo de Los Minuteman Project, con sus estrategias públicas de reclutamiento de prosélitos para capturar inmigrantes, y sus actividades de vigilancia armada. También en Arizona, el Sheriff de Maricopa, Joe Arpaio, junto con cerca de trescientos agentes y voluntarios civiles, patrullan la frontera cazando indocumentados, en una cruzada para *ajustar cuentas* con los migrantes que cruzan por lo que el define como su territorio. Justo en este condado ha entrado en vigor una ley llamada “anticoyotes”, que penaliza a los indocumentados que pagan para que les crucen a Estados Unidos. Producto de esta ley antimigrante, Juan Villa destaca el hecho inédito derivado de esta ley, donde en la cárcel de Maricopa han encarcelado a 350 migrantes, quienes enfrentaran juicios debido a que se auto culparon de haber pagado para que algún coyote les ayudara a cruzar la frontera.

#### ...y si nos echan, nos regresamos

De manera creciente, la lucha de los migrantes incorpora aspectos que rompen la condición referida al estado nacional, como ocurre con la ciudadanía transnacional, el respeto de los derechos humanos independientemente de la condición migratoria, la transformación de los marcos político-electorales, donde crece el esfuerzo por captar los votos de los paisanos en el exterior, las nuevas adscripciones en marcos socioculturales transnacionales, su peso económico en las comunidades de origen, el papel creciente de las remesas y la necesidad de romper su condición fetichizada, pues las remesas no son sólo dinero que cruza las fronteras, sino un soporte emocional y

socioafectivo conformado desde las redes de relaciones familiares y comunitarias. Finalmente, la lucha de los migrantes se inscribe como parte de la misma lucha contra la vulnerabilidad, la precarización y el empobrecimiento de la gran mayoría de los habitantes del planeta.

Uno de los aspectos centrales que subyace a las manifestaciones que realizaron los migrantes y sectores solidarios en 2006, corresponde a la condición límite que conlleva la pérdida del proyecto de vida. Los migrantes son desplazados por la pobreza o la violencia, desplazados de sus sitios de origen de donde deben salir buscando oportunidades de vida digna canceladas en sus lugares de origen. Son desplazados en el lugar de destino donde deben habitar en intersticios subrepticios donde se les niegan derechos ciudadanos. La propuesta de reforma migratoria HR4437, conllevaba un nuevo desplazamiento que los regresaría a la situación original de indefensión y pobreza. Por ello desencadenó reacciones decididas de quienes han dejado su trabajo y una parte importante de sus vidas en Estados Unidos. Al igual que los jóvenes franceses que reaccionaron contra la Ley del primer empleo, los migrantes indocumentados expresan la expresión de la vulnerabilidad extrema y la expropiación de la esperanza producida por el capitalismo global contemporáneo. ■

**Crossing-back Methodologies  
Transnational Feminist Research on  
Incest in Mexico**

by GLORIA GONZÁLEZ-LÓPEZ  
University of Texas at Austin  
gloria386@mail.la.utexas.edu

In Fall of 2006, I went back home to immerse myself in the field to collect my data as part of my second project as a sociologist who studies sexuality with populations of Mexican origin. In this transnational research journey, I went back to Mexico after migrating to the U.S. southwest with a *licenciatura en psicología* in hand. I eventually mastered my still accented English, completed a Ph.D. in sociology, and began to conduct research with Mexicans on the U.S. side of *la frontera*. Since I came in 1986, I have gone back to Mexico regularly for short visits to my family. However, this was the first time I went back to conduct sexuality research, inspired by feminist and community-based perspectives and ideologies.

In this ongoing research project, I study the sociology of incest in Mexican society, while paying special attention to the sexual and romantic histories of 60 adult women and men who have experienced sex within the context of the family during their childhood or adolescence. I collected these histories through individual tape-recorded interviews conducted during the 2005-06 academic year and Fall 2006. I also interviewed professionals who work with these populations, such as activists, attorneys, psychotherapists, and priests. Conducting my fieldwork in highly industrialized locations in Mexico (i.e., Ciudad Juárez, Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey), I have worked mainly with activists and community organizers, some of whom have been my friends for a long time, and who also work with these particular populations.

Why incest in Mexican society? The incestuous relationships of the Mexican immigrant women and men I interviewed for my previous project touched me deeply. I originally intended to work with Mexican immigrants for this project, but the invisibility of sociological research on this topic in Mexico became clearly evident as I advanced my research, while also listening to a group of activist friends working on related issues and concerns in Ciudad Juárez. In our informal conversations, they highlighted the urgent need to do this kind of research in Mexico. They kept motivating me to pursue it for a long time. More than two years have passed since then. Today I reflect about the different lessons and challenges this project has offered me as a feminist and a sociologist.

In the fall 2005, I left for Mexico with a romanticized image of transnational feminist research; a series of disappointments, dilemmas, and unexpected positive experiences gradually emerged as soon as I immersed myself in the field. Going back to work with community-based agencies helped me reconnect with different regions that have changed since I have been gone—changes that were not easily perceived during my previous short visits. And while those changes took place, I also evolved. I went back to these different locations (including my hometown of Monterrey) while having to explain myself repeatedly, “I am from here but I migrated to the United States 20 years ago.” Some people kept reminding me of something that had been in my mind all along: “How much do you know about these issues locally and nationally? Things have changed, for how long you have been gone? 20 years?! You are definitely a *gringa*.” My professional and cultural legitimacy was tested by some professionals and potential interviewees who kept asking me questions designed to measure my cultural literacy and

professional expertise. I truly understood and appreciated their interest in making sure that I was qualified to do research on such a sensitive topic in Mexico. While the legitimacy was tested and finally received the approval, I became “*la investigadora de Texas*, who used to be from here.”

Many times I also felt like the representative of some kind of intellectual *maquiladora*, some kind of intellectual invader who was in Mexico in order to practice some form of exploitation: interview people, get and organize the data, and then disappear to go back North. I received complaints from activists (who eventually became close friends) about researchers from Mexico and from the United States who have been in Mexico to conduct research. Reportedly, these investigators got their projects going, received local support, but they never heard back from them after they finished them. Before I was asked about what I could give in return for their priceless help, I openly talked to them about what would help them feel reciprocated for all the support they were offering me. I told them I identified myself as an intellectual activist, and talked about my commitment to challenge any form of exploitation.

These experiences have invited me to explore and promote creative forms of intellectual and activist solidarity with these community-based agencies. In the places where I have conducted my work, I have also offered seminars and workshops on feminist-informed research dealing with gender and society, and feminist psychotherapies, which I learned more than ten years ago as part of my training as a couple and family therapist. These presentations took place at the community-based agencies where I identified and interviewed my informants. In these meetings, I also had informal conversations about other research topics, including informal dialogues on my preliminary

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findings. In these conversations, I became self-critical and open to others' criticism when my preconceived ideas or training were perhaps too Western and non-representative of their own social realities. After all, in this project I am also incorporating issues identified as crucial by my informants, as well as by the clinicians and activists working with these populations and involved communities.

While I dealt with these issues in some locations, in others, I experienced the opposite. In some places, I became *la doctora de Austin*, "the expert" who was qualified to give voice to women's local problems. At times, I experienced deep discomfort after realizing that I had been invited to participate at special events addressing the issues affecting women locally, while local feminists—who were far more qualified than me on these topics—had been excluded from these conversations. Through these experiences, I soon learned about the many conflicts and internal divisions historically experienced by activists and other intellectuals within their local, regional, and national groups. While keeping myself on the margins of sensitive or unresolved tensions, I also kept myself as humble and respectful as possible, and very receptive to all community contacts.

This project also invited me to explore some of the issues and concerns with regard to my own internalized intellectual colonization. "What does a Mexican feminist do in the United States, and in Texas, *la tierra de Bush*?!" I was confronted in this manner by some professionals who eventually became good friends. In these conversations, as well as in my presentations and workshops, I became aware of how hyper-vigilant I have become as I monitor myself regarding ideologies, theories, and concepts used to articulate ideas I wanted to share with these professionals and activists. These reflections

never did stop. If I was so progressive, what was I doing living in "the land of the enemy"? How have I resolved this contradiction? I kept thinking about the ways I have been able to learn to explain *myself* not only to myself, but also to others in the United States and to some professionals back in Mexico.

As I went through this experience, these feminist methodologies of crossing-back unfolded intellectually stimulating opportunities for professional and personal development. In the process, I kept exploring ways to organize and grow from these challenges and lessons. In my mind, I kept going back to the archives of Anzaldúan concepts and theorizing on the multiple dimensions of the borderlands. My *mestiza* consciousness, now on the Mexican side, organized my migration-back experience. My professional self discovered the multiple layers of permanent transition lacking clear boundaries. The quintessential state of consciousness identified as *nepantla*, that long ago had explained my life as an immigrant, was now experiencing a more mature and much less distressing yet parallel dimension of the very same process. No matter on what side of the border I find myself, Anzaldúa's quintessential *nepantla* had become that state of consciousness that identified and "normalized" a feeling of permanent displacement and a sense of being always-in-transition, lacking rigid boundaries and frontiers. The meaningful conversations I had with some of my beloved *chicana* friends as a graduate student and at some point as a professor, kept coming back to me throughout the entire process. Being in the borderless intellectual borderlands meant professional expansion in an act of "spiritual activism" or interconnectedness with informants and professionals, including the honest and committed activists who have taught me so much as I conducted my data collection for a year and a half.

The day before I returned from Mexico City to Austin, nostalgia embraced the process of professional awareness and transformation I had experienced. I paid a visit to Coyolxauhqui, a soothing reflection of the image of myself in this process and the iconic reminder of my gratitude to Anzaldúa. As I approached the entrance to the Templo Mayor, I heard someone say, "Is that you, Gloria? What are you doing in Mexico?" A *chicana* friend, a professor who had gone South during the summer, greeted me at the entrance to the museum. We were both surprised by the coincidence, but the encounter was a good way to wrap up the experience in a meaningful way; "*la coincidencia fue para cerrar con broche de oro*," as my mother would say. She also reminded me of the ways in which my emotional and cultural uprootedness, anguish, and distress, experienced after migrating 20 years ago, became well-healed scars, symbolic reminders of the yet uncovered lessons and challenges as a feminist and a sociologist going back and forth to do research. Many are the countless *retos y lecciones* of doing research while crossing-back, I keep reminding myself, as I make plans to go back to the field to continue nurturing the modest research I conduct in the Americas without borders, in the always-changing borderlands. ■

### **Why the Immigrant Rights Struggle Compels Us to Reconceptualize Both Latin American and Latino/a Studies**

by WILLIAM I. ROBINSON  
University of California-Santa Barbara  
wirobins@soc.ucsb.edu

What is Latin America? Who is a Latin American? To what do “Latin American Studies” and “Latino/a Studies” refer? To what ought they refer? These are not new questions. But they are in my view all the more pressing in light of the transnational processes sweeping the Western Hemisphere and the world as globalization proceeds. These processes compel us to reconceptualize Latin American as well as Latino/a Studies. Among the most salient of these processes are a worldwide upsurge in transnational migration as global capitalism reorganizes economies, labor markets, and social hierarchies in every locale in accordance with its logic of integrated transnational accumulation.

We know that Latin America—both the name itself and the reality which is purported to denote—is itself an invention. If that invention is going to have any relevance in this new century beyond a “colonial matrix of power,” to use Walter Mignolo’s phrase,<sup>1</sup> it must refer to all those peoples who have become inextricably bound up over the past 515 years within that matrix. This includes the 40 million people of Latin American descent in the United States, some 20 million of them immigrants. Immigrant communities in this country, as elsewhere around the world, are increasingly transnational communities. The patterns of assimilation into a particular nation that corresponded to an earlier era in the global system have given way to ongoing bi- and multi-directional flows of people and culture, and to the rise of truly transnational social structures.

“Latin American Studies,” let us recall, emerged in U.S. universities as an object of Cold War “area studies.” The knowledge that was supposed to be generated by these “area studies” would help guide U.S. foreign policy and resolve problems of stability, development and integration of these areas into the post-World War II capitalist world order. What use did the powers that be, and their organic intellectuals, have for integrated, world-historic knowledge of Latino/a population in the United States? “Latino/a Studies” emerged from a very distinct dynamic, that of struggles to establish in the North American academy ethnic, racial, diaspora, anti-colonial and multicultural studies in the wake of the civil rights movement and other popular, national, and radical movements in the United States and around the world. But much of Latino/a studies became swept up in a nation-state framework of inquiry and more parochial and disabling U.S. race/ethnic relations paradigms.

Today, more than ever, the historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural forces and dynamics shaping the reality of Latinos/as in the United States are the same ones that shape the lives of the 500 million people living south of the Rio Bravo. To consider inquiry into the reality of U.S.-based Latino/a populations as “Latino/a Studies” and inquiry into that reality south of the Rio Bravo as “Latin American Studies” is patently absurd. But it is more than that: it is epistemologically bankrupt and politically disempowering. It renders invisible to “Latin American Studies” the 40 million Latinos/as in the United States and cuts them off from the larger reality in which their lives are grounded at a time when our struggles and fates are more than ever shaped by our engagement with global-level processes and structures.

These Latino/a and other immigrant communities took the political stage by storm with unprecedented mass demonstrations

across the United States that involved millions of immigrants and their allies in Spring 2006.<sup>2</sup> The immediate trigger was the introduction in the U.S. Congress of anti-immigrant legislation, but, more broadly, the protests represented the unleashing of pent-up anger and repudiation of what has been deepening exploitation and an escalation of anti-immigrant repression and racism. Dominant groups and the state were terrified by the mass mobilizations and they responded with a wave of repression, including stepping up raids, deportations, and anti-immigrant hysteria. What is the larger backdrop to these developments?

The latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century began a period of massive new migrations worldwide, generated by the forces of capitalist globalization. A low-end estimate by the United Nations placed the number of immigrant workers in 2005 at some 200 million by the new century, double the amount of 25 years earlier. During the 1980s eight million Latin American emigrants arrived in the United States, nearly equal to the total figure of European immigrants who arrived on U.S. shores during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, making of Latin America the principal origin of migration into the United States. This wave of outmigration from socially and economically devastated communities in the Hemisphere accelerated in the 1990s, and in the first decade of the new century, as globalization and neo-liberalism ravaged the region, displacing millions and generating a social disaster of unprecedented magnitude.<sup>3</sup>

The same capitalist globalization that triggers this mass migration also generates an escalating demand for immigrant labor. The division of the global labor force into citizens and non-citizens, immigrant and native workers, is a major new axis of inequality. The maintenance and strengthening of state controls over transnational labor creates the

ROBINSON continued...

conditions for “immigrant labor” as a distinct category of labor in relation to capital, replacing earlier direct colonial and racial caste controls over labor worldwide. Most transnational immigrant workers become inserted into segmented labor markets as low-paid, low-status laborers under unstable and precarious work conditions without the political or labor rights accorded to citizens. They are racialized to the extent that cultural and physical markers can be used—or constructed—to demarcate these workers. Class, race, national borders and transnational processes all come together to generate explosive relations of exploitation and oppression, as well as new forms of resistance.

Repression and xenophobia against immigrants from Third World countries, of course, is ingrained in both U.S. and Western history. As indirect mechanisms have replaced colonialism in the mobilization of racialized labor pools, states assume a gatekeeper function<sup>4</sup> to regulate the flow of labor for the capitalist economy. U.S. immigration enforcement agencies undertake revolving door practices—opening and shutting the flow of immigration in accordance with the needs of capital accumulation during distinct periods. Immigrants are sucked up when their labor is needed, and then spit out when they become superfluous or potentially destabilizing to the system.

But these gatekeeper functions become more complex—and contradictory—as transnational capital comes to be increasingly dependent on immigrant labor. Latino/a immigrant labor became structurally embedded in the North American economy by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although immigrant labor sustains U.S. and Canadian agriculture, by the 1990s the majority of Latino/a immigrants were absorbed by industry, construction, and services as part of

a general “Latinization” of the economy. Latino/a immigrants have massively swelled the lower rungs of the U.S. workforce, often displacing African American and white ethnic laborers. They provide much of the labor for hotels, restaurants, construction, janitorial and house cleaning, child care, domestic service, gardening and landscaping, hairdressing, delivery, meat and poultry packing, food processing, light manufacturing, retail, and so on.

Now more than ever, employers and the state must sustain a vast exploitable labor pool that exists under precarious conditions, that does not enjoy the civil, political, and labor rights of citizens, that face language barriers and a hostile cultural and ideological environment, and that is flexible and disposable through deportation. It is the *condition of deportable* they wish to create or preserve, since that condition assures the state the ability to super-exploit with impunity, and to dispose of without consequences, should this labor pool become unruly or unnecessary. Hence, a reserve army of immigrant labor must remain just that—*immigrant* labor, and, therefore, undocumented. Sustaining this reserve army of immigrant labor means creating—and reproducing—the division of workers into immigrants and citizens.

This requires contradictory practices on the part of the state. From the vantage points of dominant group interests the dilemma is how to deal with the new “barbarians” at Rome’s door. This contradictory situation helps explain the frightening escalation of hostilities and repression against Latino/a immigrants. The system needs Latino immigrant labor, yet the presence of that labor scares dominant groups and privileged, generally white, strata. Political and economic elites fear a rising tide of Latino immigrants will lead to a loss of cultural and political control, becoming a source of

counter-hegemony and of instability, as immigrant labor in Paris showed to be in the late 2005, uprising in that European capital against racism and marginality.

The preferred solution for capital and its political representatives are “guest worker” programs that would convert immigrants into a quasi-indentured labor force, alongside campaigns to criminalize Latino/a immigrants and to militarize their control. The state must lift national borders for capital, but must reinforce these same national boundaries in its immigrant policies. In its ideological activities, it must generate a nationalist hysteria by propagating such images as “out of control borders” and “invasions of illegal immigrants,” given the special oppression and dehumanization involved in extracting their labor power.

The migrant labor phenomenon will continue to expand along with global capitalism. Just as capitalism has no control over its implacable expansion as a system, it cannot do away in its new globalist stage with transnational labor. Immigrant labor pools that can be super exploited economically, marginalized and disenfranchised politically, driven into the shadows, and deported when necessary, are the very epitome of capital’s naked domination in the age of global capitalism. Therefore, bound up with the immigrant debate in the United States is the entire political economy of global capitalism in the Western Hemisphere, the same political economy that is now being sharply contested throughout Latin America with the surge in mass popular struggles and the turn to the Left. The struggle for immigrant rights in the United States is, thus, part and parcel of this resistance to neo-liberalism, intimately connected to the larger Latin American—and worldwide—struggle for social justice.

No wonder protests and boycotts took place throughout Latin America on May Day 2006

in solidarity with Latino immigrants in the United States. The immigrant rights group that I am involved with, the Los Angeles-based *March 25 Coalition*, which played a key role in organizing the Spring 2006 mobilizations, sent several delegations to Mexico in 2006 to show solidarity with those protesting electoral fraud, and with the struggle in Oaxaca. It is also lobbying Latin American governments and social movements to brandish as their own the banner of the immigrant rights struggle in the United States.

As the peoples of Latin America on both sides of the Rio Bravo transnationalize their collective struggles we need a parallel intellectual and epistemological

transnationalization in the academy. This would start with acknowledgment that “Latin American Studies” must include the reality of Latino/s in the United States and other transnational processes that go beyond the geographic map of Latin America, and that “Latino/a Studies” is but a component of a more expansive historical and contemporary domain beyond U.S. race/ethnic and cultural studies. This, of course, is just the beginning. We need to develop a global perspective across all fields and disciplines in the social sciences and humanities as we rethink what it means to study/engage particular regions, peoples, cultures, and histories in the global system.

#### Endnotes

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## Situación social y política de México y de Oaxaca al final del gobierno de Vicente Fox y principios del gobierno de Felipe Calderón.

by SALOMÓN NAHMAD | CIESAS Pacífico Sur | snahmad@prodigy.net.mx

Después de 45 años de haber concluido mis estudios de antropólogo, he podido constatar que, desde el punto de vista histórico, la vida social de México no ha sido una evolución pacífica o continua. Por el contrario, siempre han existido fuerzas internas y externas que provocan confrontaciones debido a las contradicciones inherentes al dilema de construir un México incluyente y justo. A pesar de la revolución que estalló el 20 de noviembre de 1910, las desigualdades, la marginación y la extrema pobreza no han logrado superarse. A sólo tres años de celebrarse los 100 años de este gran evento revolucionario tengo la impresión, y casi la sensación, de que nuevamente se dará una confrontación grave y de gran impacto en la sociedad mexicana, con graves consecuencias internacionales. No se trata de realizar profecías. Sin embargo, no cabe duda de que los hechos más relevantes del año 2006 se asemejan a la situación de 1907. En aquel año, el Gobierno de Porfirio Díaz reprimió violentamente a los trabajadores de la industria textil en Orizaba y Río Blanco, Veracruz. Con la misma saña reprimió en la frontera norte a los trabajadores mineros de Cananea, Sonora. Por similares fechas el mismo gobierno reprimió a los mayas del estado de Quintana Roo, que se mantuvieron por más de 50 años en guerra con el gobierno federal y con el del estado de Yucatán. También los eventos de hoy nos recuerdan la gran ofensiva contra la tribu yaqui de Sonora y su expulsión hacia Valle Nacional, Oaxaca, localizado a más de 3 mil kilómetros de distancia de su territorio.

El escenario actual puede parecerse enormemente al de la época de Porfirio Díaz debido a que el supuesto nuevo gobierno “democrático” del presidente Fox postulado por el Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), quien ofreció un cambio de fondo en la vida política y social, sólo logró acrecentar las

confrontaciones y rivalidades sociales. Dicho gobierno panista representó a las fuerzas más conservadoras y evoca las luchas del siglo XIX en las cuales similares fuerzas se apoderaron de México y se apoyaron en la jerarquía de la iglesia católica para que, con alianzas internacionales, intentaran instaurar un gobierno imperial dependiente de Austria. Benito Juárez, el primer presidente indígena de América Latina, derrotó a dichos conservadores en ese entonces. A pesar de las grandes conquistas logradas por la Revolución de 1910 en la cual los obreros y campesinos mexicanos, y sobre todo los pueblos mesoamericanos originarios de este enorme territorio, lograron avances significativos para reivindicar sus derechos sobre la tierra, sus derechos laborales y el mantenimiento de la soberanía nacional sobre los recursos naturales tales como el petróleo, el rápido avance de la economía neoliberal globalizadora erosionó las mismas a partir de los ochentas.

Es por ello que en el año 2006 se volvieron a vivir episodios de una época supuestamente superada (que para los que en los años 40 y 50 del siglo pasado éramos jóvenes, estaban en la conciencia histórica y no en la vida cotidiana). Hoy se vive la represión de los mineros en Michoacán, de los trabajadores de la educación en Oaxaca, de los pueblos indígenas en Chiapas, en Oaxaca y en otros estados, y de los campesinos de Atenco en el estado de México. El fraude electoral que se cometió en 1910 contra Francisco I. Madero se volvió a repetir, primero contra Cuahutemoc Cárdenas, y después contra Manuel López Obrador. La entrega de poderes del gobierno de Fox al gobierno de Calderón se tuvo que dar en un contexto de alta violencia y de conflicto nunca antes visto en la historia moderna de México. La represión contra el movimiento popular de Oaxaca, evidencia un terrorismo de estado

que refleja no sólo la orientación ultraconservadora del nuevo gobierno sino incluso una tendencia de corte fascista dentro del mismo PAN.<sup>7</sup>

En el nacimiento de dicho partido, nos comenta Jorge Alonso en un artículo próximo a aparecer, “*hubo muchos admiradores de esas formas políticas de fascismo, y en no pocos panistas ha prevalecido esa tendencia hasta nuestros días. Arendt advirtió que las soluciones totalitarias surgían donde parecía imposible aliviar la miseria económica, política y social de un modo digno del ser humano*”<sup>1</sup>. En mi vida profesional nunca habíamos vivido una experiencia como la que se está viviendo en este momento. El caso de Oaxaca de 2006 con el movimiento de la Asamblea Popular de Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO)<sup>3</sup> es, desde mi punto de vista, sólo la punta del iceberg de una profunda grieta en la sociedad mexicana que está llevando a una gran polarización. La misma no sólo es extremadamente peligrosa de por sí, sino que podría estallar en poco tiempo en un gran conflicto nacional.

El papel de las fuerzas más retrógradas y conservadoras del México del siglo XIX se está activando con la movilización de la iglesia y de los grandes capitalistas (banqueros, industriales, inversionistas extranjeros con el apoyo de los Estados Unidos), quienes están confrontando en el siglo XXI a las fuerzas que ya hicieron cambiar a México en gran parte del siglo XX. Hoy pretenden el retorno a un sistema de gobierno católico-civil-militar y la entrega de los recursos estratégicos a las fuerzas ultraconservadoras que se están desquitando por los cambios que provocó la revolución mexicana en el siglo XX. Estas tendencias se expresan en los hijos de los cristeros y de los neofascistas como Carlos Abascal (hijo del fundador del Sinarquismo mexicano) que

hoy gobiernan desde el PAN y desde el mismo gobierno federal.

El caso de Oaxaca es la expresión de este resurgimiento de las fuerzas conservadoras en contra de las fuerzas progresistas de México. Las demandas de los 16 pueblos indígenas<sup>4</sup> de Oaxaca y del magisterio oaxaqueño expresan una lucha por un desarrollo equilibrado y justo que permita un nivel de vida más igualitario entre los habitantes del país. Su meta es hacer desaparecer la pobreza en que viven cerca de 15 millones de indígenas en más de 15 estados, quienes se sostienen con un ingreso diario de uno ó dos dólares por familia, apoyados por programas gubernamentales diseñados por las fuerzas de la caridad pública como el programa OPORTUNIDADES, que no es más que un barniz para soslayar el conflicto social. Las evidentes desigualdades han provocado y generado movimientos alzados de la población, como el que se está viviendo en Oaxaca. El gobierno federal y el estatal sólo lo atienden con medidas paliativas y con sistemas de control social y de represión.

El conflicto en Oaxaca también tiene su origen en la rivalidad entre los grupos de poder al interior del PRI, como sucedió en los años ochenta, cuando el grupo neoconservador encabezado por Miguel de la Madrid y Carlos Salinas de Gortari impuso agresivamente el modelo neoliberal por encima de otras tendencias. En Oaxaca los priístas se han enfrentado entre sí a la vez que se han negado a cederle una cuota de poder a las fuerzas progresistas encabezadas por el magisterio, la fuerza laboral más importante del estado que se mantiene con el nivel de industrialización más bajo de México. Estas fuerzas priístas están encabezadas por Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, Heladio Ramírez López, Diódoro Carrasco Altamirano, José Murat Casab y Ulises Ruiz

Ortiz. Ellos han enfrentado entre sí a diversos grupos, y dicha confrontación está permitiendo que, a nivel nacional, las fuerzas ultraconservadoras intenten eliminar al candidato opositor Gabino Cué Monteagudo, quien fue apoyado originalmente por el Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Convergencia y el Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), y quien perdió supuestamente, como en el caso de López Obrador, por un pequeño margen de votos. A estos personajes no les interesa resolver el conflicto. Por lo menos tres ex-gobernadores son ahora integrantes del Congreso de la Unión, como diputados federales o senadores, y hasta el momento ninguno ha intervenido para buscar una solución. El ex-candidato Gabino Cué ganó en las elecciones del 2 de julio del 2006 la senaduría de la república junto con la mayoría de las diputaciones federales al PRI. Hoy, dicho senador se perfila como el candidato a suceder a Ulises Ruiz, sea por la vía electoral o bien por el revocamiento de este gobernador.

En los 90 días del actual gobierno federal no se vislumbran nuevos cambios de políticas públicas, fuera del fortalecimiento de las fuerzas policíacas y militares para reprimir a la población inconforme con las condiciones de vida que está viviendo, y que se manifiestan en movimientos sociales amplios. De la misma manera, las fuerzas más conservadoras del PRI, en alianza con el PAN, mantienen por la fuerza, y en contra de la opinión pública y de la ciudadanía oaxaqueña, a un gobernador que ha sido considerado un represor. El mismo ha violado los derechos humanos de los habitantes de Oaxaca, provocando la muerte de cerca de 20 opositores y cientos de encarcelados. Hasta finales de febrero, permanecen en la cárcel 64 miembros de la APO.

Desde mi punto de vista, esta es la grave confrontación que hoy se vive en Oaxaca y en gran parte de México. Es una ilusión de democracia partidista totalmente manipulada por las fuerzas ultraconservadoras.<sup>6</sup>

El país entero atraviesa por una situación inédita desde años atrás. La situación que vivimos en Oaxaca a mi entender es grave, y ha fracturado profundamente a la sociedad oaxaqueña,<sup>5</sup> de por sí ya quebrantada por el colonialismo interno, y que hoy se traduce en una disputa por el poder entre las mismas clases dominantes. Éstas han movilizad, sin embargo, a la población más pobre, para luchar unos contra otros. Esto puede generar una incipiente guerra civil, como la que vivimos el segundo semestre del año pasado, y como la que puede suceder el 2 de agosto del 2007 con las elecciones para la cámara de diputados local, y para las presidencias municipales que se rigen por partidos políticos. El ambiente que se respira en Oaxaca es mucho más violento que el de Chiapas en los años noventa con el levantamiento Zapatista.

No existe una congruencia ideológica entre los participantes en la contienda electoral y entre quienes han gobernado Oaxaca en los últimos sexenios, porque cada grupo busca resolver sus aspiraciones políticas por su cuenta y son capaces de cambiar de partido, como lo hizo Diódoro Carrasco, quien fuera gobernador priísta y ahora es diputado del PAN a nivel federal y quien apoyó al gobierno de Felipe Calderón.

Lo que distingue este conflicto es que se mantiene un acuerdo tácito entre el gobierno del estado y el gobierno federal tanto para dividir y fracturar al magisterio de la sección 22, al crear una nueva sección 59 del Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), como para mediatizar a

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la APPO,<sup>9</sup> al llevarlos a la búsqueda del poder en la próxima elección del 2 de agosto del presente año<sup>2</sup>. De esta manera tenemos a la población dividida y confrontada en dos corrientes políticas que al final van a demoler la posición histórica de Oaxaca como una sociedad liberal y progresista identificada con Benito Juárez, para encausarla en pocos años hacia el PAN, en un proceso de conquista de los gobiernos estatales y municipales. Varias organizaciones eclesiales de base han expresado que se proponen tomar el poder desde las micro-comunidades hasta los municipios y el estado. Esta estrategia ha surtido gran efecto en los estados del norte de México, y hoy avanza apresuradamente a la conquista de los estados más indígenas como Yucatán, Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, Oaxaca y Guerrero. Si bien se esperaba un cambio democrático que permitiera a los partidos políticos asumir el poder, hoy la orientación se perfila más bien hacia el empoderamiento a largo plazo de estas fuerzas ultraconservadoras que gobiernan México.

Marzo de 2007

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## Report from the Program Chairs

by NEIL HARVEY | New Mexico State University, Las Cruces | nharvey@nmsu.edu

and MARÍA SOCORRO TABUENCA | El Colegio de la Frontera Norte | tabuenca@dns.colef.mx

Entre el 22 y el 25 de enero nos reunimos con el staff de LASA en Pittsburgh para armar el programa del Congreso. Fue una experiencia muy interesante pues combinamos la metodología que utilizaron las codirectoras del programa anterior, las sugerencias de María Cecilia Dancin y de Milagros Pereyra, con un método propio que decidimos sería el que nos ayudaría a avanzar con mayor efectividad. Durante esos días estuvimos también en contacto con Charlie Hale, Presidente de LASA, para asegurarnos que el programa tuviera la coherencia que buscábamos. Finalmente, el 25 en la noche tuvimos listo el borrador final.

El 26 por la mañana nos trasladamos a Montréal a la reunión del Comité Ejecutivo. En esa reunión presentamos el programa armado y algunas cifras importantes como el número de solicitantes al Congreso, el porcentaje de paneles en los diferentes circuitos (*tracks*), y el índice de rechazo. Recibimos algunas sugerencias del Comité Ejecutivo con respecto a este último punto y volvimos a nuestras ciudades de origen con la encomienda de hacer algunas de las revisiones solicitadas. Una vez hechas las revisiones respectivas, nos comunicamos con el Secretariado de LASA a fin de que la membresía pudiera recibir los avisos de aceptación o de rechazo correspondientes.

Finalmente concluimos acordando que ha sido una experiencia de lo más interesante y que agradecemos el apoyo que hasta hoy se nos ha brindado. ■

### Target Dates for LASA2007

May 11, 2007	Deadline to submit changes/corrections for Program Book
May 30, 2007	Notification of travel grant requests
June 15, 2007	Pre-registration deadline
June 15, 2007	Deadline for canceling pre-registration without penalty
August 1, 2007	Deadline to submit electronic paper for conference proceedings



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# Elections 2007

## Nominating Committee Slate

The LASA Nominating Committee presents the following slate of candidates for vice president and members of the Executive Council (EC). The winning candidate for vice president will serve in that capacity from November 1, 2007 to April 30, 2009 and as president from May 1, 2009 until October 31, 2010. The three winning candidates for EC membership will serve a three-year term beginning November 1, 2007.

### Nominees for Vice President:

Edna Acosta-Belén  
*University at Albany, SUNY*

John Coatsworth  
*Columbia University*

### Nominees for Executive Council:

Florence Babb  
*University of Florida*

Jonathan Hartlyn  
*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel  
*University of Pennsylvania*

Silvio Torres-Saillant  
*Syracuse University*

Teresa Valdes  
*Center for the Study and Development of Women (CEDEM)*

Deborah Yashar  
*Princeton University*

### The Candidates

**Edna Acosta-Belén** is Distinguished Professor of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies, and Women's Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY. She is also Director of the Center for Latino, Latin American, and Caribbean Studies (CELAC); a former Chair of the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies; and editor and co-founder of the *Latino(a) Research Review*, a journal that focuses on the transnational connections between the U.S. Latino(a) populations and their Latin American and Caribbean countries of origin. Dr. Acosta-Belén is a former President of the Puerto Rican Studies Association (PRSA, 2001-2003) and also served as Vice President (1999-2000) of this organization. She was Chair of the LASA XVIII Congress Program Committee in Atlanta (1994) and has co-chaired LASA's Task Force on Women (1988-1991), Latino Studies Section (1997-1998), and Gender and Feminist Studies Section (2000-2001). She also served on LASA's Development Committee (1995-97), LASA's Executive Director Search Committee, and the Puerto Rico Congress Advisory Committee (2005-2006). She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University. Her specialty areas are Hispanic Caribbean and U.S. Latino cultural studies and literature; and feminist and postcolonial studies. She has been a postdoctoral fellow at Princeton and Yale Universities, and a Visiting Professor at Cornell University. She has received numerous grants and fellowships from the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Information Agency, and the Southern Fellowship Fund, among others. She is serving or has served on the Editorial Boards of the journals *Signs*, *Meridians*, *The Americas Review*, *Centro Journal*, and *Ethnic Explorations*. Among Dr. Acosta-Belén's book publications are:

*Puerto Ricans in the United States: A Contemporary Portrait* (with C.E. Santiago); "Adiós, Borinquen querida"; *The Puerto Rican Diaspora, Its History, and Contributions* (with M. Benítez et al.); *The Puerto Rican Woman: Perspectives on Culture, History, and Society*, *La mujer en la sociedad puertorriqueña*; *The Hispanic Experience in the United States* (with B.R. Sjoström); *Researching Women in Latin America and the Caribbean* (with C.E. Bose); *Women in the Latin American Development Process* (with C.E. Bose); and *The Way It Was and Other Writings by Jesús Colón* (with V. Sánchez Korrol). In addition, she has over 50 articles published in a variety of refereed journals and edited volumes. A promoter of gender studies, she has been an organizer and participant in several feminist *encuentros* in Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, and at the University at Albany that have involved scholars and activists from several other Latin American and Caribbean countries, the United States, as well as other regions of the world. She developed and co-directed three major projects funded by the Ford Foundation to internationalize women's studies with a focus on Latin American and the Caribbean, Africa, and Eastern Europe, and to incorporate the study of women into the area and ethnic studies curriculum. She also has written extensively about the intersections between area, ethnic, and women's studies and has been a promoter of a transnational hemispheric approach to the study of the Latin American and Caribbean regions and their (im)migrant Latino(a) populations in the United States. For over a decade, she was part of a team of scholars who collaborated with the University of Houston's *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage*. Dr. Acosta-Belén was born and raised in Puerto Rico, but has lived in the United States for almost four decades.

### **Acosta-Belén Statement**

For many years LASA has been fortunate to choose the kind of leadership that strives to be responsive to the multiplicity of interests and disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches of its diverse membership. Most recently, this has included engaging the organization in a stimulating and promising process of “decentering” the field in order to make it more attuned to the different or alternative forms of knowledge and experiences that are being produced in Latin America and the Caribbean, not only by those privileged to be part of the academy, but also by those learning from a variety of lived experiences and practices. At a time when contemporary globalization processes continue to impinge on and change the lives of many peoples and nations around the globe—often in unforeseen or unimaginable ways—it becomes increasingly difficult (and perhaps even shortsighted) for producers of knowledge to remain solely within the confines of their own disciplinary or geographic area studies training in order to address the myriad of challenging interrelated issues faced by a more interdependent human community. As a product of interdisciplinary Latin American Studies training, and after many years of my own involvement in what were once fledging (and for a long time considered) “marginal” interdisciplinary fields (e.g., women’s studies, Puerto Rican/Latino Studies), it is now the case that these, as well as other non-traditional areas, have been contributing to some of the most stimulating and innovative knowledge about the populations of our hemisphere. Thus, I continue to envision networks of scholars and activists pooling their perspectives and resources across the confines of their disciplinary boundaries and sites of knowledge coming together to share their professional expertise and practical experiences in addressing some of the new problems and challenges posed by the professed era of globalization. While

globalization is only a new term to refer to processes that have been shaping the lives of peoples and nations for many centuries, its impact is consistently felt in more immediate, discernible, and profound ways, and there is an unavoidable convergence of pressing conditions and issues that fall beyond the competence or capacity of any single discipline or field to address, in seeking and articulating alternative solutions and policies. Critical environmental and human rights issues, unrestrained manipulations of labor and capital that often exacerbate socioeconomic and gender inequalities, unfettered worldwide migration flows and population displacements from developing countries to metropolitan centers, and new modes of social organizing and collective action are only a few of the themes that are opening up new opportunities for area studies scholars to join together and focus their expertise around specific issues that transcend the populations of our particular geographic areas of interest and connect us to a wider global community. What better place than LASA for this sort of collaboration, comparative work, and networking opportunities to continue being cultivated and promoted! In more local organizational terms, I see a need for LASA to intensify its efforts in forging a more welcoming environment for students by spearheading initiatives that further encourage and facilitate their Congress participation. Mentoring younger generations of engaged scholars and activists, and contributing to their continuous presence, successful career development, and integration into the professions, are goals that we should continue to pursue more proactively. Of course, for those of us who have witnessed the evolution of LASA over three decades and have been privileged to learn a great deal from leaders and colleagues who preceded us, it is of paramount importance to encourage a new crop of students to give continuity to the

meaningful work that scholars and activists have been carrying out since the creation of this esteemed organization. A great deal of this work has made a difference for the academy and for the communities of the Americas, but in the process we also need a more embedded awareness of the mutual interdependence as knowledge producers and learners that should continue to be nurtured among U.S.-based scholars and activists, and those based in Latin America, the Caribbean or other countries.

**John H. Coatsworth** recently left Harvard University for Columbia, where he is professor of history and international public affairs, and director of Columbia’s Institute for Latin American Studies. He is the author or editor of seven books and many scholarly articles on Latin American economic and international history. He is a former president of the American Historical Association. At Harvard, he served as the founding Director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies from its creation in 1994 until 2006. He chaired the ACLS/SSRC Joint Committee on Latin American Studies from 1985 to 1990. He served twice on the LASA Executive Council and as LASA Treasurer. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Board of Directors of the Tinker Foundation, and numerous professional associations. Coatsworth received his BA degree in History from Wesleyan University (1963) and his MA (1967) and Ph.D. (1972) degrees in Economic History from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He taught at the University of Chicago from 1969 until he joined the Harvard faculty in 1992. His other academic posts have included visiting professorships at El Colegio de México, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the National University of Buenos Aires, the Instituto Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires, and the Instituto Ortega y Gasset in Madrid. He

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has served on the editorial boards of numerous scholarly journals including the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of Economic History*, and the *Hispanic American Historical Review* and as well as social science and history journals published in Britain, Germany, Mexico, Peru, and Spain. Professor Coatsworth's most recent book is *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America* (2 vols., Cambridge University Press, 2006), edited with Victor Bulmer-Thomas and Roberto Cortes Conde. His research and publications have focused on comparative economic, social, and international history of Latin America, especially Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Other recent books include *The United States and Central America: The Clients and the Colossus* (New York: Twayne, 1994); *Latin America and the World Economy Since 1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), edited with Alan M. Taylor; *Culturas Encontradas: Cuba y los Estados Unidos* edited with Rafael Hernández and published jointly by the David Rockefeller Center and Cuba's Juan Marinello Center in 2001. Professor Coatsworth was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1986, served as Senior Fulbright Lecturer three times (for appointments in Argentina and Mexico), and has received research and institutional grants from public agencies and private foundations in the United States and elsewhere. He has also acted as consultant for program design or review to numerous U.S. universities and private foundations. In 2005, he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**Coatsworth Statement**

*LASA plays a vital role in encouraging research, teaching, professional development, and civic engagement. Its Congresses bring us together, enrich our understanding of this vast region in all its diversity, and help to focus attention on the intellectual and*

*practical challenges we face as scholars and citizens. The Congresses, together with the LASA sections, committees, publications, and special projects, also create opportunities for scholarly collaboration within and across disciplines and between scholars based in the United States and those who work in Latin America and elsewhere. These vital activities contribute significantly to advances in many fields of knowledge and to the professional development of thousands of teachers and scholars. As president, I would work to expand the LASA endowment devoted to supporting Latin American participation in LASA Congresses and other activities. The decision to move LASA 2007 to Montreal to make it possible for Cuban colleagues to attend, exchange ideas, and participate fully also demonstrates LASA's commitment to the principles of academic freedom and open debate. LASA should continue to work to lift the intellectual embargo on U.S. scholars that limit and distort relations with our Cuban colleagues. LASA's commitment to academic freedom and civil liberties is especially significant now, when a hyper-inflated "war on terror" has begun to erode civil liberties in the United States and is making it more difficult, at times even impossible, for foreign students and scholars to enter the United States. LASA's principles have also and quite appropriately led it to express solidarity with colleagues experiencing persecution wherever they may be. As president, I would use my experience developing academic exchange and study abroad programs with Cuba to help LASA's longstanding campaign to end restrictions on travel to Cuba and on the travel of Cuban scholars to the United States. LASA's vitality strengthens area, regional and international studies in all their forms. LASA members debate the meanings of these terms and the utility of the diverse perspectives they imply. But we all understand that the ubiquity of English and the Internet has not yet*

*suspended the laws of physics. It is still impossible to do empirical research (or heal patients or negotiate a treaty) in more than one place, with its unique language and culture, at a time. Even in fields where abstract modeling has acquired a well-deserved prestige, testing models (and even much of the inspiration that inspires their design) depends crucially on advances in the kind of knowledge that LASA members produce. As president, I would renew efforts to entice more of our colleagues in the model building and quantitative human sciences to participate in LASA Congresses. Given the significance of the Internet, I would work to expand LASA's electronic publishing capabilities, focused initially on papers related to each Congress's overall theme. LASA has been a uniquely consistent voice of reason on issues of inter-American relations. Repeated disasters and failures attributable to U.S. policies have imposed heavy human and material costs on many Latin American societies. Since LASA is a U.S.-based organization, it seems reasonable to me that the organization has made it a point to express its concern whenever U.S. policy turned especially ugly or stupid, even when the authors of such policies prove to be predictably unresponsive. The consolidation of democracy over the past two decades has led governments with priorities better aligned to voter preferences and pledged to confront the region's notorious inequality and poverty while restoring economic growth. It would be a tragedy if the United States reverted to Cold War policies that treated such governments as potential enemies. As president, I would look for ways that LASA's members can be more consistently informed and mobilized to improve the quality of U.S. policymaking toward Latin America.*

**Florence E. Babb** is the Vada Allen Yeomans Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Florida, where she is also Affiliate Professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies. She serves on the Advisory Council and is Coordinator for the Gender Specialization in the Center for Latin American Studies. She studied at Tufts University (BA Anthropology and French) and the State University of New York at Buffalo (MA, PhD Anthropology) and has taught at Colgate University (1979-1982) and the University of Iowa (1982-2004), where she held joint appointments in Anthropology and Women's Studies. At Iowa, she served terms as chair of the two departments as well as of programs in international studies, including Latin American Studies. Babb is the author of *Between Field and Cooking Pot: The Political Economy of Marketwomen in Peru* (1989, second edition 1998) and *After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua* (2001), both with University of Texas Press. Her articles have appeared in many journals, including *American Anthropologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *American Ethnologist*, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *Ethnology*, *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, *Latin American Research Review*, and *GLQ*. She has co-edited special issues of *Latin American Perspectives* on *Gender and Same-Sex Desire* (with James Green, 2002) and on *Youth, Culture and Politics* (with Jon Wolseth, in preparation) and *Critique of Anthropology on Autonomy in an Age of Globalization: The Vision of June Nash* (with Lynn Stephen, 2005). Babb's current book project, *Touring Revolution, Fashioning Nations*, focuses on the cultural impact of tourism in post-revolutionary and post-conflict areas, including Nicaragua, Cuba, Peru, and Mexico. She has served on the editorial boards of *Latin American Perspectives* (1992-present) and the *Journal*

*of Latin American Anthropology* (1999-2004), and is a past Chair (2000-2001) and Program Editor of the LASA Section on Lesbian and Gay Issues. She won the Elsa Chaney Prize for her paper presented at the 2001 LASA Congress. She served as a member of the 2006 Martin Diskin Memorial Lecture selection committee. She was a member of the Area Advisory Committee for Latin America: Andean Countries / Central America, Council for International Exchange of Scholars (Fulbright Program) (1992-1994) and of the Latin America Advisory Panel for CIES, Fulbright Senior Scholar Program (1999-2001). She has received research awards from the Fulbright Foundation (1990-1991), the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (1991-1992), and the Ford Foundation (2001), and she was a Resident Scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy (2003). Babb has served as a member of the Committee on Minority Issues in Anthropology (2002-2005) and currently she is President of the Association for Feminist Anthropology (2005-2007).

#### **Babb Statement**

*At a time when Latin America is experiencing a political sea change, LASA's broad membership across the Americas is poised to play an increasingly important role in engaged scholarly work. I would be honored to serve on the Executive Council with others who are committed to building on LASA's long tradition of research and activism. Among the areas that I would like to address through service on the EC are enhancing relations with counterpart associations at the international level and Latin Americanist sections of disciplinary organizations in the Americas. I would like to see LASA embrace the Americas as a whole, with greater attention to Latinas/as in the United States and transnational, diasporic populations more broadly. I*

*would wish to see continued emphasis on issues of race, gender, and indigenous identity, even as we become more cognizant of urbanization and cosmopolitanism. While we must remain critical of the forces of neoliberalism and globalization, we should take heart in the social movements and currents of change that are under way. As a cultural anthropologist who has played an active part in Latin American Studies programs at several universities, I would like to emphasize accountability to the peoples who are the subjects of our research and teaching. LASA can be supportive of progressive currents through the association's selection of Congress locations and its efforts to build a strong membership base throughout Latin America. We can consider ways to draw younger members and those from less-represented areas, and to support the work of public intellectuals whose reach extends well beyond the academy. LASA has an outstanding record of accomplishment as an association and I would welcome the challenge of building on this strong record.*

**Jonathan Hartlyn** is Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). He has served as Director of UNC's Institute of Latin American Studies and of the Carolina-Duke Consortium in Latin American Studies, which has been a joint NRC Title VI Center since 1991. He has also served as Chair of UNC's Department of Political Science. Born in Peru and reared in Latin America (including pre-revolutionary Cuba and Mexico), he received his Ph.D. at Yale University (1981) and taught at Vanderbilt University from 1981 to 1988. He is the author of *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia* (Cambridge University Press, 1988); *La política del régimen de coalición: La experiencia del Frente Nacional en Colombia*, 1993) and of *The Struggle for Democratic Politics in the Dominican*

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*Republic* (UNC Press, 1998; Spanish translation forthcoming 2007). He is the co-author (with Manuel Antonio Garretón, Marcelo Cavarozzi, Peter Cleaves and Gary Gereffi) of *Latin America in the Twenty First Century: Toward a New Socio-Political Matrix* (North-South Center and Lynne Rienner Press, 2003; *América Latina en el siglo XXI: Hacia una nueva matriz sociopolítica*, 2004 and Portuguese translation forthcoming 2007). He has co-edited three books: *Latin American Political Economy* (with Samuel Morley), 1986; *The United States and Latin America in the 1990s: Beyond the Cold War* (with Lars Schoultz and Augusto Varas), 1992; and *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America, 2nd edition* (with Larry Diamond and Juan Linz), 1999. He has authored or co-authored articles in journals, including in *Asian Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Current History*, *Estudios Jurídicos*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Revista Opinión Pública*, and *Studies in Comparative International Development*. And, he has contributed chapters to numerous edited books, including *Cambridge History of Latin America*; *Democracia y Reestructuración Económica en América Latina*; *Cambio Político en el Caribe*; *Democratic Governance and Social Inequality*; *Miradas Desencadenantes: Los Estudios de Género en la República Dominicana al Inicio del Tercer Milenio*; and *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. He serves on the editorial boards of *América Latina Hoy*, *Anuario Social y Político de América Latina y el Caribe*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, and *Latin American Politics and Society*. He is on the Academic Advisory Committee of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the Executive Committee of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política (ALACIP), and is Chair of the

Comparative Democratization section of the American Political Science Association (2005-2007). He has served as a program reviewer for the Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (IEPRI), Universidad Nacional de Colombia; the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (Dominican Republic); the Departamento de Ciencia Política, Universidad de Los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia); and the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies, Vanderbilt University, among others. He has been on the Advisory Council of LASA's Colombia Section, as well as a member of the selection committee for LASA's Premio Iberoamericano (for the best book published in Spanish or Portuguese). In 2000, he received UNC's Johnston Award for Teaching Excellence. His current research includes four collaborative projects: analyzing the nature of the gap between intentions and outcomes in contemporary constitutional reforms in Latin America; critically examining the quality of electoral processes in Latin America; examining the evolution of citizen evaluation of government institutions, government performance and women in politics in the Dominican Republic through the use of surveys and other data; and completing an edited volume in Spanish applying the concept of the *matriz sociopolítica* to five country case studies in the region.

#### **Hartlyn Statement**

*I am honored to be nominated to serve on the Executive Council of LASA. I have been a regular participant at LASA Congresses since 1979. For me, the value of the Congresses lies in the extraordinary mix of people, intellectual content, richness and variety of the panels, centrality in facilitating regional networking and connections, and substantive and moral concerns engaged, all, crucially, with the ability also to have fun. I would bring to LASA a decades-long*

*commitment to Latin American and Caribbean studies. I would particularly like to apply myself to finding more ways for LASA to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative research regionally and inter-regionally as well as within and across disciplinary lines. As a Center Director and board member, I have helped structure programs and working groups to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue, and recognize its benefits and challenges. In my research, I discovered early on the joys of collaborative scholarship, and I have co-edited three books, authored another with four colleagues (!), and co-authored numerous articles. I would seek to bring this collaborative spirit to the LASA Council, as it continues to reach out to under-represented disciplines while encouraging an appropriate balance across disciplinary concerns. LASA could do more to encourage inter-regional work with Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe; as a first step it could join with other regional associations to seek foundation support for collaborative inter-regional projects. I would also like to work with others in further strengthening LASA as an organization which can better meet the needs of all of its current members while reaching out to new members and advocating for core academic and human rights values. The establishment of the LASA Sections has been an important innovation. It may be appropriate now to take a step back and examine ways in which LASA as an association can find ways to facilitate their daily management, invigorate their on-going activities, and encourage cross-fertilization across Sections to ensure they don't ultimately serve more to fragment the association than to strengthen it. To remain a vigorous association, LASA must constantly examine its success in incorporating the Latin American studies community in its broadest sense, including not just college and university-based scholars. Given continuing financial*

*limitations that face many colleagues in Latin America and the Caribbean, LASA must continue to find ways to facilitate their continuing participation in LASA and foster their professional development.*

**Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel**, Associate Professor of Romance Languages. (B.A. University of Puerto Rico, 1989; M.A. Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley 1991, 1996). Martínez-San Miguel was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico. Her areas of research and teaching include: Colonial Latin American discourses and contemporary Caribbean and Latino narratives; colonial and postcolonial theory, migration and cultural studies. She has been a faculty member at the University of Puerto Rico (1996-1997); Princeton University (1997-2000); Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (2000-2003); and the University of Pennsylvania (2003-present). Professor Martínez-San Miguel is author of two books. *Saberes americanos: subalternidad y epistemología en los escritos de Sor Juana* (Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 1999) is the first book-length analysis of the constitution of an epistemological subjectivity in the works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. This critical reading explores three specific dimensions in the constitution of a cognitive subject: her feminine condition, the colonial context in which knowledge was produced, and the emergence of a “Creole” perspective during the second half of the seventeenth century. *Caribe Two Ways: cultura de la migración en el Caribe insular hispánico* (Ediciones Callejón, 2003) focuses on the representation of displacement and the reconfiguration of a contemporary Caribbean identity in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Caribbean enclaves in New York City. This study is an attempt to assess what impact this displacement of the “national” has had on the reformulation of those subjectivities that

are not “migrating subjects” themselves, but are experiencing both massive emigration and immigration to and from their places of origin. Another objective of this project is to identify some of the most significant cultural manifestations—such as literature, cinema, graffiti, music, and graphic arts—that incorporate migration into their definition of national and Caribbean identities, to explore the limits of some of the theoretical categories produced within Regional, Migration and Cultural Studies in the United States. Professor Martínez-San Miguel has also edited with Mabel Moraña the compilation of essays “*Nictimene sacrilega: homenaje a Georgina Sabat de Rivers*” (México: Iberoamericana and Claustro de Sor Juana 2003). She has published articles in *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, *Revista Iberoamericana*, *Posdata*, *Nómada*, *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, *Centro Journal*, *Colonial Latin American Review*, and *Debate Feminista*. Martínez-San Miguel just finished her third book project entitled “From Lack to Excess: ‘Minor’ Readings of Latin American Colonial Discourse.” This book analyzes the narrative and rhetorical structures of Latin American colonial texts by establishing a dialogue with studies on minority discourse, minor literatures, and colonial and postcolonial theory. The manuscript includes analysis of texts by Hernán Cortés, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. She is working on a fourth book manuscript entitled “Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Ethnic Minorities in a Comparative Context.” This project proposes a comparative study of Martinique and Puerto Rico to explore two cases of internal migration between former/actual metropolis and colonies. Using Aníbal Quijano’s notion of the “coloniality of power,” Martínez-San Miguel proposes

“coloniality of diasporas” as a theoretical framework to study literary works by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Luis Muñoz Marín and Piri Thomas. Honors and Awards include the Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral (1990-1995), Dissertation (1995-1996) and Post-doctoral Fellowships (1999-2000), and a Research Grant for the Bellagio Study and Conference Center entitled *Collaborative Writing on Translocal Flows in the Americas* (co-authored with Marcial Godoy-Anatívia) and sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Program on Latin America and the Caribbean, Social Science Research Council (October 20-27, 2004).

**Martínez-San Miguel Statement**  
*Since I became a member of LASA in 1991, I have valued the interdisciplinary dialogues promoted by the association in its publications and in its Congresses. The conceptualization of Latin American culture has traditionally been a common area of research in the humanities and the social sciences. In the last twenty years, however, the intersections between these two disciplines have produced a new generation of scholars who combine the empirical data of the social sciences with the discursive analysis of literary studies, in order to conceptualize cultural productions as part of a social, cultural, artistic, and political continuum. Latin American Studies, Migration Studies, Comparative Literature, Spanish, English, History, Anthropology, Sociology, Latino and Cultural Studies have all been home departments or programs in which “culture” is analyzed and reconceptualized from this interdisciplinary perspective. LASA has been crucial in the configuration of an academic community that includes scholars based in the United States and Latin America. Humanistic studies and research within the United States have been traditionally conceived as an extension of Lucien Goldman’s classical model known as the “sociology of*

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*literature," while in Latin American and Caribbean Studies this interdisciplinary dialogue between the social sciences and the humanities has been a vital characteristic of the most prominent scholarship in the field (Fernando Ortiz, Gilberto Freyre, Frantz Fanon, Darcy Ribeiro, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Néstor García Canclini, Stuart Hall, Nelly Richard, Beatriz Sarlo, Walter Dignolo, among others). This critical difference informs not only how research fields are conceived, but also how scholars are formed. I am interested in broadening and fostering the intersections between the social sciences and the humanities in the study of cultural representation in Latin America and the Caribbean. We should address how these disciplines are epistemologically constructed in Latin America and the United States. How do Latin American and U.S. Latino critics read each other? How do their questions and methodologies overlap or diverge? These disciplinary distinctions are central to how we approach a field, and how we use its methodology in transnational intellectual contexts. I would like LASA to provide a space to analyze the implications of how Latin American Cultural Studies is articulated or imagined in the United States vis-à-vis different institutions in Latin America or the Caribbean. If elected to LASA's Executive Council, I would also like to foster debates that promote paradigm shifts among disciplines in the conceptualization of Latin American cultures.*

**Silvio Torres-Saillant**, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Latino-Latin American Studies Program at Syracuse University, was the founding Director of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute at City College of the City University of New York, where he served in the Hostos Community College faculty until 2000. He spent academic year 2005-2006 at Harvard

University as the Wilbur Marvin Visiting Scholar affiliated with the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. He has sat on the boards of the New York Council for the Humanities, the Inter-University Program for Latino Research, the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, the Dominican-American National Roundtable, the New York State Council on the Arts, Ollantay Center for the Arts, the Latin American Writers Institute, the Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean Committee of the Fulbright Scholars Program, the MLA Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada, the MLA Delegate Assembly, and the American Social History Project, among others. He has served on the editorial boards of *Callaloo*, the *Latino (a) Research Review*, *Brújula/Compass*, among other serial publications. He is Associate Editor of *Latino Studies* and was one of the Senior Editors of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*. He is the Guest Editor of the spring 2007 issue of *Review: Literature and Arts in the Americas*. The author of numerous journal essays, book chapters, and magazine articles, Torres-Saillant has published widely on Caribbean, Dominican, Latino, and Latin American topics, with a focus on cultural history, race and ethnicity, diasporic identity, and intellectual history. He has lectured widely in the United States and abroad, and in 2005 he was decorated with the Order of Merit of Duarte, Sanchez y Mella conferred by the government of the Dominican Republic. He has co-edited the collections *Desde la Orilla: hacia una nacionalidad sin desalojos* (Santo Domingo 2004), *The Challenge of Public Higher Education in the Hispanic Caribbean* (Princeton 2004), and *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage*, Vol. 4. (Houston 2002). With sociologist Ramona Hernández, he co-authored *The Dominican Americans* (Greenwood 1998). His book-length, single-

author publications include *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (Palgrave 2006), *El retorno de las yolas: Ensayos sobre diáspora, democracia y dominicanidad* (Ediciones Librería La Trinitaria/Editora Manatí 1999), and *Caribbean Poetics: Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). A native of the Dominican Republic, Torres-Saillant came to the United States in 1973, subsequently settling in the Dominican enclave of Washington Heights, in northern Manhattan, where he participated actively in community activism for over fifteen years.

#### **Torres-Saillant Statement**

*A certain view of blackness may affect the study of Hispaniola. I once frequented a college where the Afro-American faculty asserted their primacy over Haiti, and their Latin American counterparts claimed the Dominican Republic. Monolingual training, legacies of fragmentation, and enduring biases that devalue heritages partition the hemisphere, discouraging our having a tolerably well-informed idea of the whole. Brazil may appear off limits to Latin Americanists unsensitized to the multiplicity of tongues spoken in the region. Indigenous voices will seldom reach beyond their immediate communities if not dignified with translation into Spanish or Portuguese. The educated in the hemisphere thus deprive ourselves of the wisdom of entire civilizations, cultural prejudice and linguistic limitations robbing us of it. Equally troubling, a student may graduate from the University of the West Indies without knowing about José Martí, as George Lamming once noted with sadness. We recognize connection and interdependence between populations in Latin America and in U.S. Hispanic settlements while sensing their apartness: their seamlessness interrupted by migration to an alien land, emergence of minoritized identities, and cultural changes stemming from diminished*

*contact with lands of origin. Pan-hemispheric paradigms typically gain ascendancy in the profession due to scholarly desire and our viewing borderlessness as an inevitable result of the fierce force of globalizing, capitalist dynamics. But we have yet to develop clearly explicable notions of the precise continuities existing between the Latino and Latin American experiences. We lack a coherent discourse to speak efficiently about the socio-cultural and intellectual link of Caribbean societies with their respective diasporas in the United States. If granted the honor of serving on the LASA Executive Council, I would hope to contribute to ongoing efforts to articulate viable ways of tackling the challenge of seeing the Americas as a difficult totality with inter- and intra-regional complexities and a perplexing rapport of diasporas and native lands. I expect my experience as a Comparatist, a Caribbeanist, a timid Latin Americanist, an advocate of Latino Studies, and a student of diasporic formations to serve me in such an endeavor. I envision a time when the numerous culture areas within our region will become equally visible to scholars. I envision scholars trained to recognize the reality of the phenomena that have split the hemisphere into distinct geographies of knowledge with contours tenuous enough to interlace with adjacent geographies and steady enough to render the interlacing toilsome.*

**Teresa Valdes** is currently a senior researcher of the Center for the Study and Development of Women (CEDEM) in Santiago, Chile. For 25 years, she was a researcher and professor at the Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Chile, where she also has been Deputy Director (1996-2001) as well as the founder and coordinator of the Gender Studies Area (1993-2006). She is also a visiting professor at the Stanford University's Program in Chile (since 1995), teaches at the Alberto Hurtado Jesuit

University (Santiago) and has been a Tinker Larocque Visiting Professor at Columbia University (New York, 1986). She studied Sociology at the Catholic University (Chile) and is a Social Sciences Ph.D. candidate at the Buenos Aires University, Argentina. A human rights activist, imprisoned by the dictatorship, she became a leader of the Women's Movement and contributed to the development of its political agenda—later institutionalized by the first democratic government. Member of the Sociology Group of the National Council for Science and Technology (Chile) and the Editorial Committee of the Latin American Research Review (México), she received in 2003 the “Elena Caffarena” Award given by the government of Chile in the category “Woman Researcher in Science and Education”. She coordinated the regional project “Latin American Women in Numbers” in 19 countries (1990-1995) that led to the publication of 17 national studies and a comparative volume (translated to English). For the first time in Latin America, an integral vision of the situation of women compared to that of men was achieved and many countries used their volume to prepare national reports to regional forums. She later led the regional project “The Index of Fulfilled Commitments” that published a “Social Watch Instrument for Women” in 18 countries (1997-2004) and developed gender indicators for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action (ICPD). She is currently part of the international project “Introducing Gender and Sexualities in the Academic Curricula” (Colegio de México) and the Latin American Center for Sexuality and Human Rights (Brasil). She is currently preparing two books of the Index of Fulfilled Commitments project and coordinating a Social Observatory of President Bachelet's Commitments with Gender and Social Equity. A consultant for international organizations (UNDP,

UNIFEM, UNFPA, IADB, World Bank, JICA) and Chilean ministries (Women's Affairs, Health, Education, Housing), she also has been member of two national governmental commissions: the Citizen Council for the Strengthening of Civil Society (Rapporteur, 2000) and the Commission for the Analysis and Proposals on Sexual Education (2004). Author of *Venid, Benditas de mi Padre. Las Pobladoras, sus Rutinas y sus Sueños* (FLACSO, 1988); *De lo social a lo político. La acción de las mujeres latinoamericanas* (FLACSO-LOM, 2000); co-author of *Mujeres que sueñan: Las organizaciones de pobladoras en Chile 1973-1989* with M. Weinstein (FLACSO, 1993); *El poder en la pareja, la sexualidad y la reproducción. Mujeres de Santiago* with J. Gysling and C. Benavente (FLACSO, 1999); *El Índice de Compromiso Cumplido-ICC. Un instrumento para el control ciudadano de la equidad de género* with a group of researchers (two volumes for Chile and other countries and a comparative volume, FLACSO, 2001 and 2005); *Puertas adentro. Mujeres, vulnerabilidades y riesgo frente al VIH/SIDA* with C. Dides, A. Márquez and K. Barrales (FLACSO-MINSAL (Chilean Health Ministry), 2006). Editor of *Masculinidad/es. Poder y crisis* with J. Olavaria (Ediciones de las Mujeres N° 24, ISIS Internacional, 1997); *Masculinidades y equidad de género en América Latina y el Caribe* with J. Olavaria (FLACSO-UNFPA, 1998); *Familia y vida privada: ¿transformaciones, tensiones, resistencias o nuevos sentidos?* with X. Valdés (FLACSO-CEDEM-UNFPA, 2005).

#### **Valdes Statement**

*I feel committed to pursue the strategy adopted by the actual directive of LASA toward the strengthening of dialogue and collaboration among academic researchers in the Americas regarding Latin America and the study of its profile, especially in the*

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SLATE continued...

*prevalent moment of great transformations and political and social opportunities in our region. The presence and leadership capacity of new actors on the political scene who emerged from the social processes of the last decades, as well as the redefinition of the national and regional development agendas, summon social scientists to a rapprochement and a comprehension that go beyond simple visions and stereotypes—a concern that calls for a renewal in the discussions around leftisms, indigenism, feminism, popular movements and populisms as a necessary agenda. I believe in the richness of LASA as an academic and political forum able to nurture the role and commitment of the social sciences with the possibility to build societies that guarantee the full validity of human rights and social and gender justice, in the framework of a globalization that tightens human bonds as well as economic and politic dependencies. At the same time, I am deeply interested by the contribution of LASA to the unfolding and elaboration of history and memory processes that may further these new understandings, together with fortifying a wide array of social actors. Finally, I would like to bring closer and invigorate the bonds between Latin American academicians besides the institutional spaces that are more traditionally linked to LASA, in order to pay attention to the great transformations undergone by universities as well as to the emergence of new academic spaces and networks that seek to attend local needs. It is also very important that all the components of this praxis be gathered in the best possible manner by the Latin American Research Review.*

**Deborah J. Yashar** is Associate Professor of Politics and International Affairs and Director of the Program in Latin American Studies at Princeton University. She is the author of various articles and chapters on democracy, citizenship, indigenous movements, collective action, and globalization. She has also written two books: *Demanding Democracy: Reform and Reaction in Costa Rica and Guatemala* (Stanford University Press, 1997); and *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). The latter received the 2006 best book award from the New England Council on Latin American Studies (NECLAS) and the 2006 Mattei Dogan Honorable Mention, awarded by the Society for Comparative Research. She is currently writing a book, tentatively entitled *Violence, Citizenship, and Security in Post-Authoritarian Latin America*, which sets out to explain both the contemporary rise in violent crime and the uneven record of Latin America's third wave democracies to secure the rule of law. She is on the editorial boards of *Latin American Research Review*, *World Politics*, and *Studies in Comparative and International Development*, as well as the international advisory board for *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*. As a whole, Yashar's work addresses broad social science debates about Latin America while drawing heavily on work from political science, sociology, economics, history, and anthropology. If elected, she would bring this commitment to interdisciplinary conversations to the table.

**Yashar Statement**

*Professor Yashar has been a member of LASA since 1992, during which time she has joined the editorial board of LARR (2006), served on the nominations committee (2003-2004), and participated as a member of the Ford-LASA Special Projects Fund Committee (2001). She was also an elected council member (1998-2001) of the New England Council of Latin American Studies. If elected to the LASA council, Yashar would advocate to further expand opportunities for travel and participation by Latin American scholars at LASA; would vote for Congress venues that are politically accessible and financially affordable to our international membership; and would continue to support the creation of political task forces to address pressing political issues. Yashar would also support the formation of research task forces to tackle more long-term issues of academic and political interest to the region; themes would be proposed by the LASA community but examples for consideration might include international task forces on enduring inequalities; violence; citizenship, mobilization, and representation; the new Latin American left(?); revisiting empire; migration and diaspora; etc. These research task forces would be designed to promote academic collaboration and to sustain agenda-setting scholarly exchange in the 18 months between LASA Congresses. ■*

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## LASA Voluntary Support

by SANDY KLINZING

Our biggest news is that LASA has five new **Life Members!** Our warmest thanks to Florence Babb, Rosario Espinal, Kevin Middlebrook, Manuel Pastor and Marianne Schmink. Their Life Memberships not only signal their commitment to the mission of the Association, but also contribute to the preparation of future scholars through support of the LASA Endowment. Over the years all five have served in several leadership positions in LASA, generously contributing their time to serve as Section officers and/or members of the Executive Council. *Thank you for your continuing support and dedication to the Association!*

LASA is working diligently to secure funding for the 2007 Congress. Thanks to your support of the Endowment, the Association is able to fund a substantial number of travel grants. The remainder of what is required, however, comes from member and friend contributions to the Travel Fund, the Student Fund, and the new Indigenous and Afro-descendent Fund. A thank-you to all who continue to generously support these critical funds. (For information on how you too can make a contribution, please refer to the end of this report.)

We gratefully recognize these donors since our last report in the summer, 2006 issue of the *Forum*.

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<b>Total memberships</b>	5613	(22 percent increase over 2005)
New members	1428	
Renewed from 2005	3116	(68 percent renewal rate)
Renewed lapsed members	1069	
<i>Member type:</i>		
Traditional members	2205	
Student members	970	
Life Members	67	
Joint Members	241	
<i>Member residency:</i>		
U.S. residents	3891	(69 percent of the membership)
Latin American residents	825	(15 percent of the membership)
Other Non-U.S. residents	896	(16 percent of the membership)
<b>Three-year memberships initiated in 2006</b>	165	
<b>Major disciplines represented:</b>		
Literature	891	
Political Science	839	
History	779	
Anthropology	538	
Sociology	427	
Latin American Studies	282	
Economics	176	
Cultural Studies	127	
International Relations	111	
Education	105	

### Institutional Memberships

<b>Total memberships</b>	99	(3 percent increase over 2005)
New members	8	
Renewed from 2005	69	
Renewed lapsed members	22	
<i>Institution location</i>		
United States	82	
Latin America	6	
Other Non-U.S.	11	



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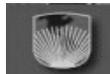
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