

## Other Americas/Otros Saberes II Report

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### The Political Economy Challenges of Development Based in Mining,” organized by Rosemary Thorp, Oxford University

Analyzing the complex interplay of institutions, politics and natural resources, this project aims to illuminate the factors that have impeded governments from effectively managing mineral wealth. Drawing on economic theory as well as detailed historical research by Latin Americanists and Africanists, the project will unpack micro-macro interactions, at both the economic and political levels, that have shaped outcomes in developing country settings where mining has played a central role in economic growth. Building on field research currently underway, the project envisions a March 2010 conference, a panel at the Toronto meeting, and a subsequent collaborative publication. ■

The second phase of *Otros Saberes* was launched in February 2009. This initiative provides grants to support research on *justice and citizenship-rights issues* undertaken by members of civil society organizations working collaboratively with university-based scholars. The call for proposals was sent out prior to the Rio Congress and elicited an impressive response, with nearly one hundred applications received. Dissemination of the call for research proposals was crucial: in addition to established LASA networks, there was a concerted effort to distribute the call through existing networks of civil society-based organizations associated with justice and citizenship rights.

The applications point to an enormous dynamism in research on rights and justice-related issues across the Americas, and to cutting-edge, interdisciplinary work that draws on the methodologies of a variety of fields such as sociology, anthropology and political science. Proposals were received from fourteen countries in the Americas. Over a quarter came from Colombia, more than double the number of applications submitted from any other country. Significant numbers of applications also came from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. Topics addressed included indigenous rights, environmental and land rights, access to justice, violence against women, and reparations for gross human rights violations.

A long list of twenty-two proposals was drawn up by the selection committee and reviewed in detail over two days at a meeting in Mexico City in July. The committee agreed that many of the research proposals received were excellent and had important policy implications, but gave priority to those that met the *Otros Saberes* criteria for innovative collaborative research methodologies. In the end, grants of

approximately US\$20,000 were awarded to each of four teams. The funds will support basic research expenses over the period of one year. A summary of the selected projects follows:

### *Legal Mobilization and Political Impact of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Movement in Colombia.*

Mauricio Albarraçín, Colombia Diversa  
COLOMBIA

Colombia Diversa is an NGO that engages in political, legal and social campaigning for LGBT rights in Colombia. The organization has carried out strategic litigation in association with the Group of Public Interest Law at the University of the Andes and with the Centro Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad (Dejusticia). The research project will systematize, analyze and evaluate the legal and social mobilization strategies Colombia Diversa has pursued in order to secure rights for same-sex couples from the Colombian Constitutional Court. It aims to contribute to academic debates about processes of legal mobilization in favor of the rights of marginalized groups, and also to help develop more effective campaign strategies to guarantee the rights of the LGBT community in Colombia.

### *Human Rights Trials and Access to Justice in Peru.*

Jo-Marie Burt, Coordinadora Nacional de DDHH.  
PERU

Although the recent conviction of former president Alberto Fujimori suggests important progress in efforts to prosecute those responsible for grave human rights violations during Peru's internal armed conflict, hundreds of cases remain backlogged in Peru's legal system. This

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research project aims to obtain data about the estimated thousand cases in varying phases of litigation in Peru. Researchers at George Mason University and the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos will work together to gather these data through surveys and interviews with survivors and relatives of victims, human rights organizations, public prosecutors, and judges in order to identify the universe of human rights trials, and to systematize and analyze the data so as to discern the key issues and problems associated with the judicial process. The project aims to assist civil society organizations in advocating on behalf of citizens seeking justice for human rights violations in domestic and international forums.

*The Experience of Training in Indigenous Law ("Derecho Propio") in Cauca.*

María Socorro Grande, Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (ACIN)/ Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca, CRIC  
COLOMBIA

In December 2002 ACIN (which is part of the CRIC) created the Espacio de Formación en Derecho Propio, Cristóbal Secue. This initiative forms part of ACIN/CRIC's strategy to recover and revitalize ancestral justice systems, thereby strengthening autonomous government, and to achieve better coordination between indigenous and national state law, strengthening the Special Indigenous Jurisdiction established in the 1991 Constitution. Since 2004 more than eighty representatives of fifteen *resguardos* of different ethnic groups have systematically engaged in the collective construction of knowledge and intercultural exchange with other forms of justice. This research project aims to systematize, analyze and highlight the conceptual and practical advances generated through this process of

reflection and training in *derecho propio*. It aims to provide important data for traditional authorities to legitimate their own role vis-à-vis state justice officials, and also to reflect on, debate, and further develop and strengthen their own forms of law.

*Women Leaders, Indigenous Rights and the Environment: the Legal Struggle for Cucupá Fishing in the Gulf of California*

Alejandra Navarro, Cooperativa de Pescadoras Cucupá, Baja California.  
MEXICO

This research project examines the conflicts between environmental conservation legislation and legal norms recognizing the collective rights of indigenous peoples in Mexico. It focuses on the strategies of women Cucupá leaders in a fishing cooperative fighting for recognition of their rights as indigenous peoples to their traditional forms of livelihood, rights that have been denied by conservation legislation, which deems such activity illegal. The Cucupá have been engaged in a legal struggle against the Mexican state for sixteen years, and in 2008 took their case to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. This project aims to document and systematize the legal restrictions to the exercise of indigenous fishing rights in the Gulf of California, and the ways in which different legislative changes have affected Cucupá organization and identity. It will hopefully contribute to the Cucupás' struggle for their collective rights.

As with the first phase of *Otros Saberes*, *Otros Saberes II* will involve two methodology consultants, *Dr. María Teresa Sierra* (Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, CIESAS, Mexico City) and *Dr. Angelina Snodgrass Godoy*, (Law, Societies and Justice Program,

University of Washington, Seattle). Together, these methodologists will act as a liaison and point of contact for the research teams, visiting them in situ throughout the course of the year, documenting their collaborative research methods, and contributing to the workshop that will be held with representatives from the four teams immediately prior to the LASA Congress in Toronto in October 2010. The four teams will also present their research results at a special panel at the LASA Congress and we look forward with great enthusiasm to hearing about the results of their important work. ■