

From the Outgoing President

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Once the LASA secretariat signed the contract with the historic, 53-year-old salsa band El Gran Combo, we knew that this conference was a guaranteed success. Of course, far in advance of that agreement, members had already submitted their proposals for 2015, indicating their enthusiasm for LASA and for its return to Latin America.

This recent LASA Congress in San Juan, Puerto Rico, enjoyed the highest number of total proposals from our members since Rio de Janeiro, when we were still on an 18-month schedule; and we ended up with nearly five thousand registered participants. We faced some unexpected last-minute challenges: bad weather in parts of the United States, including the flooding of Houston's airport, which caused a wave of last-minute reroutings and cancellations, and challenges in Puerto Rico with new shipping companies and new customs requirements, which held up books for some of our exhibitors as well as delaying arrival of LASA's own conference materials.

Nonetheless, energy was high. Beginning with the electrifying presentations by Puerto Rican poet and novelist Mayra Santos Febres and Zapotec rapper Mare Advertencia Lirika at the inaugural session, association members knew that they were at a different kind of conference. This high level of energy was present everywhere during the four days of the conference, including in the overall high quality of panels, which created a domino effect of packed rooms and exceptional levels of participation at sessions. While I was unable to attend many of the sessions myself, I was aware of the extraordinary attendance and of the eager comments and questions continuing into hallways after panels formally came to a close. Many, many people at this conference preferred to engage in intellectual debates rather than

allowing themselves to be seduced by the nearby beaches or the attractions of Old San Juan (although the adjacent pools and beaches were gratefully enjoyed).

As was evident from the conference theme "Precariedades, exclusiones, emergencias," this conference focused on an effort to increase diversity in our association at all levels, including welcoming unprecedented numbers of indigenous and Afro-descendant scholars, featuring a significant representation of intellectuals coming from outside of traditional academic circuits and (as reported by the Cuba Section) an exceptionally high number of scholars from Cuba. Program co-chairs Luis Cárcamo-Huechante and Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo worked tirelessly with the track chairs on special sessions focused on the conference's central concepts, and with the support of Milagros Pereyra Rojas and Pilar Rodríguez, along with the rest of the Secretariat staff, created opportunities and incentives for proactive track chairs. I want to thank all the track chairs for their extra efforts this year, especially in making invited guests feel welcomed and for creating additional spaces for conversation within and outside of the panel presentations.

I also need to recognize the track chairs who have been particularly proactive in creating buzz and encouraging participation from colleagues in areas that were not well represented in recent LASA congresses, and who were able to make extraordinary strides at LASA2015 in gaining greater visibility for important disciplines, including linguistics and language study, public health, performance studies, Latino/a studies, urban studies and city planning, and the Otros Saberes project, among others. Regarding Otros Saberes, LASA2015 was able to close the cycle opened almost ten years ago in the



Puerto Rico LASA2006 with the launch at this conference of a website dedicated to Otros Saberes, as well as energizing scholar-activists to begin thinking toward phase three of the initiative, both through this year's conference sessions and the organization of a new LASA section.

Among other highlights for this LASA was the exhibition of 20 selected photographs, including the prize winner and honorable mentions in the contest for LASA program image, an exhibition made possible by Mexico's CIESAS, which reproduced the images for us. Our film festival curator, Claudia Ferman, reported record attendance at the films and special events, which included participation of filmmakers Vincent Carelli (Brazil), Iván Sanjinés (Bolivia), and Marta Rodríguez and Fernando Restrepo (Colombia), all of whom are well known for their work in marginalized communities, where they foster sharing of knowledge and filmmaking practice among indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. We also enjoyed the opportunity to exchange ideas with Manuel Antonio Garretón (Chile), Kalman Silvert Award winner, whose ongoing commitment to activist scholarship in support of social renovation and democratic process is an inspiration to us all.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Lynn Stephen were co-recipients of the Martin Diskin Lectureship award. While Rivera Cusicanqui was unable to be with us in Puerto Rico, Lynn Stephen shared a moving personal testimony on, precisely, the genre

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of *testimonio* in all its richness. *Testimonio* is central to her work and her activism, a trajectory she shares with Martin Diskin, to whose work she paid specific homage in her address.

The largest single event at the conference based on attendance (over six hundred people), was the presentation of Aníbal Quijano's new anthology, sponsored in collaboration with CLACSO. Quijano's work on the coloniality of power has been highly influential, and his presentation was a fitting intervention with respect to this year's theme. CLACSO is hosting the book *Cuestiones y horizontes: De la dependencia histórico-estructural a la colonialidad/descolonialidad del poder* (2014), which is being made available on the CLACSO website through open access and may be freely downloaded anywhere in the world.

I am honored to have served LASA as president in this past year and to have been able to work closely with so many of you in bringing together our ideas and energies in the process leading up to the conference, including the special focus clusters in the *LASA Forum*, as well as in discussion with the program co-chairs and track chairs. I have learned more about and gained an increased appreciation for the inner workings of our association through the serious and thoughtful discussions in Ways and Means, the Executive Council, the Development Committee, the Finance Committee, the section chairs meeting, and the meeting with graduate students. Like all of you, I'm looking forward to seeing what treats and surprises Gil Joseph and his team have in store for us during the 50th Anniversary celebrations at LASA2016 in New York City. ■

Ser testigo presencial—Acompañando, presenciando, actuando

Me siento muy honrada por presentarles la conferencia LASA/Oxfam America en memoria de Martin Diskin. Trabajé con Martin en MIT en 1984, 1986 y 1987, pero lo conocí por primera vez cuando me mudé a Boston en 1979. Martin fue un mentor importante para mí mientras estuve escribiendo mi disertación de doctorado y temprano en mi carrera, hasta su muerte en 1997 a la edad joven de 62 años. Me acuerdo cuando llegó a la defensa de mi disertación doctoral y me aseguró que haría preguntas difíciles a los miembros del comité para que discutieran entre ellos y no se enfocaran en mí. Mucho de lo que me formó como intelectual y alguien dedicada a la justicia social salió del tiempo que pasé con Martin. Me acuerdo en particular del trabajo que realicé con él en un proyecto acerca de las políticas de asilo para los refugiados centroamericanos en Estados Unidos. Mientras escribí mi disertación también trabajé como asistente legal y pude ayudar a cientos de familias para que pudiesen satisfacer los requisitos de IRCA, así como en docenas de casos de asilo político de El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua. Mi plática de hoy en memoria de Martin se titula "Ser testigo presencial". En lo que sigue me gustaría hablar acerca del testimonio en relación con cinco temas principales:

1. El testimonio y su papel en la literacidad indígena a través del tiempo.
2. La trayectoria del testimonio desde las narrativas individuales heroicas hasta las narrativas colaborativas/colectivas.
3. Género, testimonio y la resistencia a la lógica del sistema colonial/moderno de género.

4. Archivar y el poder del testimonio para influir las percepciones de la historia y los eventos.
5. Académicos y la movilización del testimonio: las políticas del testimonio experto para los refugiados y migrantes centroamericanos.

1. El testimonio y su papel en la literacidad indígena

Narrar. Testificar. Ser testigo. El testimonio oral se refiere al relato que una persona hace acerca de un evento o vivencia, contado por medio de su boca a través de un acto del habla. Es un recuento oral de la percepción que una persona tiene de un evento a través de la vista, el oído, el olor y otra información sensorial. Significa ser testigo de algo y proviene de la palabra del latín *testis*. El testimonio oral también tiene aspectos de *performance* y aspectos públicos. Los testimonios son eventos que juntan la memoria y la replicación del conocimiento. ¿Qué podemos aprender acerca de las diferentes formas en las que los testimonios funcionan hoy en día a través de las consideraciones históricas?

Antes de la conquista española, los pueblos indígenas en México tenían varios sistemas de escritura que se pueden encontrar en códices, mapas y glifos en la arquitectura. Investigaciones recientes sobre la literacidad indígena durante el período colonial sugieren que debemos descartar la noción que la literacidad indígena se perdió ante lo que se volvió una circulación totalmente oral de los idiomas indígenas, o que los pueblos indígenas están cambiando solo recientemente de una cultura oral a una escrita. Por ejemplo, la investigación reciente de Joanne Rappaport y Tom Cummins acerca de cómo los pueblos andinos recibieron y subvirtieron las