

From the President

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I write this message at the midpoint of my presidential term, in the wake of a stimulating New Year's Day *tertulia* hosted by Susan Meiselas and Julia Preston, two longtime observers of Latin American politics and cultures. A hundred of us celebrated in SoHo, a bohemian quarter of the great multicultural metropolis where, in a few months' time, LASA will convene its historic 50th anniversary Congress. LASA will be returning to New York for the first time since it held its inaugural meeting in 1966, when its membership numbered only a few hundred, mostly North American scholars. Now LASA is an organization of 12 thousand members, nearly half of whom reside in Latin America. Not only does "LASA at 50" promise to be the largest Congress the association has ever sponsored, in terms of the number of panels and participants; it will also be the most international in character, with a bit more than 60 percent of the accepted papers from participants residing outside the United States. With well over a thousand panels, workshops, roundtables, and receptions, we had to add an extra day to the conference, and even so, limitations of space meant we could accommodate only about 75 percent of those who submitted proposals. (For the rigorous procedure that was undertaken for selection, please see Program Chairs Ariel Armony and Amy Chazkel's report, elsewhere in this issue.)

LASA's return to New York is particularly fortuitous for reasons far more profound than historical symmetry. Over the course of LASA's first half century, New York has become an important part of "the field" itself, a critical crossroads for the study of Latin America in its rich transnational and multilayered contexts. It is therefore fitting that two of "LASA at 50's" 39 program tracks privilege Latino/a studies, and many of our panels promise a continuing

discussion of how specialists in that field might better communicate with those who work on what is traditionally regarded to be Latin America. A variety of panels engage Latino New York, and one highlighted session organized by transnational historian and documentary filmmaker Seth Fein links Cold War-era New York City and Latin America. Fein will also premiere an interdisciplinary, multimedia installation that interrogates conventional notions of North-South encounters, imperial core and periphery, and spatial concepts of "interborough" and "outerborough." One of the Congress's presidential panels will feature a timely interview, six months before the U.S. presidential election, with a major figure in President Obama's administration. The interview, to be conducted by *New York Times* national immigration correspondent Julia Preston, will focus on the dilemmas posed by international migration and border security, and the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform. Another presidential panel will feature a high-profile dialogue among leading Cuban and U.S. diplomats and policy makers behind the normalization of relations between the two nations. In addition to the diplomatic challenges the two nations will continue to confront, the dialogue will also engage the flow of people, goods, and ideas between the two nations as normalization proceeds. Yet another presidential panel, "Latin American Transformations," will bring some of the most distinguished interdisciplinary thinkers in our field, including John Coatsworth, Alejandro Portes, Maria Herminia Tavares de Almeida, Florencia Mallon, and Steve J. Stern, to assess changes over the past 50 years. The panelists will focus on U.S. power and hegemony, migration and demographic trends, democracy and dictatorship, economic paradigms and policies, and new grassroots



constituencies—and speculate on what the decades ahead will bring. A companion presidential roundtable, on 50 years of journalistic coverage of Latin America, will include some of the hemisphere's most renowned reporters and photojournalists, all of whom seek to promote a deeper exchange with academic scholars.

In these and a myriad of other ways, "LASA at 50" will afford us the opportunity to take stock of Latin American studies and chart new directions for our dynamic interdisciplinary enterprise. In keeping with our goal of promoting a more diverse, engaged, and relevant association, the 50th Congress will provide a meeting place for continuing efforts to enhance the participation and better represent the interests of LASA's student members, who make up roughly one-fifth of the association. In the same spirit, "LASA at 50" will foster the relaunch of *Otros Saberes*, thereby paving the way for continuity with the Lima 2017 Congress theme "Diálogo de Saberes." *Otros Saberes* has recently organized a LASA section and a new website, and the 50th Congress will feature a presidential session dedicated to the role of hip-hop artists and activists in diverse political, social, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, and linguistic movements of the global South (which also includes the immigrant imaginaries in the global North). The vitality of *Otros Saberes* among LASA's membership—and the opportunity it affords to consolidate collaborations between academic scholars and intellectuals and knowledge producers at the grass roots—constitutes one of our organization's

most promising renovating strategies as we begin our next half century.

The program of “LASA at 50” graphically underscores that LASA remains fully committed to its “big tent” philosophy. As Ariel Armony and Amy Chazkel point out in their report, the sessions that have been organized by our diverse tracks and sections equally represent the social sciences and the humanities and seek to honor classical fields of study as well as emerging fields and coverage of the pressing issues of the day. In this spirit we take particular pride in the presidential panel that will feature a dialogue on the achievement and prospects for democracy in the hemisphere between two of Latin America’s most enduring statesmen and thinkers, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Ricardo Lagos; a presidential roundtable on political and economic development that will showcase Costa Rican president Luis Guillermo Solís; and a blue-ribbon panel that will commemorate Guillermo O’Donnell’s classic work on democratic transitions.

Congresses in New York City as ambitious as this one incur gargantuan expenses; it is not for nothing that LASA has not met in the Big Apple since its modest inaugural event! In order to accommodate as many participants as possible, we have been obliged to rent space at New York prices for an extra day of sessions. At the same time, we only turn 50 once! The special circumstances of the 50th require an appropriate celebration and also afford a unique opportunity for LASA to raise funds to realize its abiding commitment to become a more diverse and inclusive institution for its expanding membership. The 50th challenges us to bolster LASA’s endowment, which above all underwrites travel and research opportunities for Latin America-based members.

As I began my presidential year I was charged by LASA’s Executive Council and Secretariat with coordinating a fund-raising effort around the 50th anniversary in collaboration with LASA’s executive director and Development Committee. I have taken this charge very seriously. For the past six months, Milagros Pereyra and I have been reaching out to foundations, LASA life members and past presidents, New York metro area universities, and Latin American studies centers across the country and internationally to organize a celebratory fund-raising dinner to raise as much money as possible for the association. LASA has never been in the business of galas and—full disclosure—I haven’t worn a tuxedo since my senior prom (happily for me, our fund-raising dinner will be short on pomp, and black tie will be optional!). The idea behind the dinner is not to target individuals who can afford to pay and thereby create an elite group of partygoers. The exception will be life members and past presidents, who will be subsidized at cost to honor them at the dinner, along with LASA’s supporting foundations, for standing with us these past 50 years. Rather than individuals, the appeal has been focused on foundations, universities, institutions, and centers, in an effort to raise as much money as we can on a one-time basis. We have been extremely heartened by those institutions and centers that have answered our challenge and also by those who continue to consider participation in our fund-raising drive either as individual centers or as part of creative inter-institutional collaborations. We realize this is a difficult moment for Latin American studies centers’ operating budgets, and that they have to make difficult requests of their university administrations. We realize, too, that every institution has its own valid set of priorities. Still, we have been gratified with the interim results of our drive and will

keep working in the months ahead to be able to deliver some encouraging news to the membership in a future issue of the *Forum*. Finally, let me emphasize that, outside of the context of the dinner, we would greatly welcome any contribution to the broader anniversary fund-raising effort, and we encourage all LASA members to contribute “50 for 50”—50 dollars for 50 years.

Meantime, rest assured that, in addition to the celebratory dinner, the 50th will have its full complement of regular events, including a welcoming ceremony and festive reception on opening night and our accustomed, pulsating Gran Baile on the night before the final day of sessions. This is in addition to a program whose intellectual agenda will be unprecedented in both size and scope.

These are exciting times for the Latin American Studies Association and for me as president. LASA has just appointed a new editor in chief of the *Latin American Research Review*, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, a renowned political scientist at the University of Pittsburgh, who will bring further technological innovations to the journal and has appointed an interdisciplinary editorial team that will include several distinguished scholars from Latin America. He is committed to disciplinary excellence, to synoptic articles that engage developments in Latin American and global studies across disciplines, and to greater balance in *LARR*’s articles between the social sciences and the humanities (which in recent years have been underrepresented). It is a distinct privilege to welcome aboard Aníbal Pérez and his team, who will formally commence their editorship at the beginning of 2017. At the same time, LASA also acknowledges a decade of dedicated and pioneering service by outgoing editor in chief Phil

La vocación de una generación: Discurso de recepción del Premio Kalman Silvert, LASA, Puerto Rico, 29 Mayo 2015

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Oxhorn of McGill University. During Phil's editorship, *LARR* is transitioning to publication in electronic form and will become the first completely open-access journal of its stature in the field. Phil also played a key role in LASA's decision to create an open-access press for publishing book-length monographs, thereby facilitating a single hemispheric market for the dissemination of academic books. He will continue working with the new Latin American Research Commons Press after his editorship of *LARR* ends this coming December.

Finally, in recent months LASA has been engaging in a strategic-planning initiative to brainstorm ways to make the association more efficient, more transparent, and more alive to the needs of its greatly expanded and more diverse membership, at a dynamic historical moment for Latin America and those who study it. I will have more to say on the strategic-planning initiative in the Spring issue of the *Forum*. In the meantime, let me encourage you to finalize your reservations for "LASA at 50" in New York City in late May. Not only will it be a historic meeting, but we also need your ideas and energy as we begin to debate and plan the next half century of Latin American studies! ■

Autoridades de LASA, miembros del Jurado, queridas amigas y amigos,

Agradezco muy emocionadamente en primer lugar a LASA, su Comité Ejecutivo y su Jurado del premio Kalman Silvert, su equipo administrativo. Parte importante de mi trabajo ha estado presente en LASA, he asistido a 18 Congresos y he sido miembro del Comité Ejecutivo. Recuerdo en este momento a otros Premios Kalman Silvert, a quien conocí cuando se jugaba por la ayuda a los académicos y centros que habían sido víctimas de las intervenciones militares en las universidades en Chile, otorgados a amigos y colegas como Richard Fagen, Alain Touraine, Julio Cotler, Guillermo O'Donnell, Osvaldo Sunkel, Edelberto Torres Rivas, Jean Franco, Peter Smith, por nombrar los más cercanos, y al recordarlo me produce un enorme honor el agregarle a esa lista. Agradezco a Merilee Grindle y a mis amigos Sofía Donoso, Juan Pablo Luna y Ken Roberts por sus magníficas intervenciones en este panel. Gracias a todos Uds. por su presencia aquí y por su afecto. Para mí es conmovedor y será imborrable en mi memoria. Un abrazo estrecho para todos.

Siempre he pensado que los premios a la trayectoria de vida en algún ámbito, junto a con celebrar a alguna persona individualmente son también un reconocimiento a su entorno, en este caso, intelectual y generacional. Así recibo este Premio, como parte de una generación.

Esta generación nació a la vida pública y académica en los sesenta de la mano de las ciencias sociales, especialmente de la sociología que de alguna manera incluía a la ciencia política en América Latina. Desde nuestros inicios fuimos descubriendo que junto a una profesión y una disciplina había un objeto de estudio, la sociedad histórica, en mi caso la sociedad chilena, y

para todos, la sociedad latinoamericana. Esta sociedad se definía por una problemática histórica que era elaborada por las ciencias sociales y era a la vez un tipo ideal en el sentido weberiano y una utopía que se buscaba alcanzar. En aquella época dicha problemática era la cuestión del desarrollo que las ciencias sociales tematizaban como modernización, lo que tan bien formularan, entre otros, José Medina Echavarría y Gino Germani, desde ángulos distintos. Pero, más allá de las voces del desarrollo o la modernización, aparecían voces alternativas y críticas que se harán predominantes a partir de mediados de los sesenta, reflejando en el campo intelectual el impacto de la revolución cubana. Si en la realidad histórica, la cuestión de la revolución reemplazaba a la del desarrollo, en términos intelectuales, lo que se llamó la teoría de la dependencia y la hegemonía del pensamiento marxista en las ciencias sociales reemplazaban los enfoques de la modernización. A veces eso se hizo con críticas injustas de las visiones precedentes como las de la CEPAL.

En todo caso, lo que trato de mostrar es que nuestro nacimiento a la vida académica e intelectual está marcado por un doble significado: debíamos a la vez descubrir una profesión y una disciplina y un objeto de estudio, la sociedad latinoamericana y, como parte de ella, la sociedad chilena. Ello no habría sido posible sin una tradición de pensamiento en esta materia, pero sobre todo sin algunos que siendo un poco mayores en ciertos momentos nos confundíamos en una misma generación¹.

Concebíamos nuestras vidas y carreras académicas y profesionales en una triple dimensión, como lo intuyera Medina Echavarría: científica, intelectual crítica y profesional. Y eso lo vivimos como una tensión a veces insoportable y que nos