

## From the Outgoing President

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columns: an insertion of LASA once again into human rights work through collaboration with the Scholar Rescue Fund, as well as a series of projects aimed at giving students more of a voice in the association and promoting various mentoring activities. We are currently selecting a five-member commission to study the impeachment process in Brazil. Otros Saberes is once again seeking funding for a third cycle of sponsored research. We have two new sections—Nineteenth Century and Otros Saberes—and, hopefully, in the near future, a student section. I look forward to working with all of you over the coming year on all of these exciting projects. ■

LASA's landmark 50th Anniversary Congress in New York City is now history. Big and boisterous—with close to 6,500 participants, over 1,400 panels, more than twice as many presidential sessions as its predecessors, a first-ever Gala fund-raising dinner, not to mention Willy Colón headlining the Gran Baile—“LASA at 50” was not only our largest, most international congress but also the most labor intensive. At times, the process of planning and fund-raising for the event, as well as the actual staging of it, posed challenges that the program chairs, the executive director, and I were hard-pressed to meet. We added an extra day; we rented more rooms; and we responded to emergencies (like Brazil's burgeoning impeachment crisis and the new, horrifying revelations from Ayotzinapa, Mexico) that demanded new plenary sessions. Some of the images I took away from the 50th Congress will long be with me: hundreds of young Brazilians and international supporters in black *camisetas* at the Welcoming Ceremony, protesting the crisis of democracy in their country—a state of affairs that resonated with LASA's Executive Council, which voted unanimously to put a resolution before LASA's membership and send a delegation to report on the impeachment trial of suspended president Dima Rousseff before the Brazilian Senate. Or, the hundreds of LASA members who observed a moment of silence for the 43 disappeared *normalistas* and their families in Ayotzinapa. Or our historic session on the normalization—five decades in the making—of relations between Cuba and the United States, which featured the nations' new ambassadors dialoguing in earnest about political life in both nations, the disposition of Guantanamo Bay, and other pressing matters. Or the animated exchange that *New York Times* National Correspondent Julia Preston and the audience had with Ali Mayorkas, President Obama's deputy

secretary of Homeland Security, who has been both the chief architect of the administration's DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) policy and one of those most directly responsible for border security and the deportation of Central American refugees. Or the nearly seven hundred (mostly young) people who listened raptly as octogenarian linguist and historian Noam Chomsky recalled the worst moments of the Nicaraguan Contra War, and then engaged with Greg Grandin in a far-reaching discussion of popular politics and activism that took on the energy of a Bernie Sanders rally. Nor will any of those who were present soon forget Willy Colón's salsa display at the Gran Baile or journalist Alma Guillermoprieto's poignant evocation of Latin America's (and LASA's) tumultuous first 50 years, suspended so often between tragedy and hope.

Of course, these images only scratch the surface of the 50th Congress. As Program Chairs Ariel Armony and Amy Chazkel recount in their detailed report on the Congress, the Congress's 1,432 sessions provided a real opportunity to critically engage with the conference's central theme: the past, present, and future of Latin American (and area) studies at a particularly consequential moment of transnational interdisciplinarity—itsself showcased by LASA's return after 50 years to the radically transformed global metropolis that is New York.

As a lifelong Metro New Yorker and a historian, it was a rare privilege to plan this Congress with Ariel and Amy, their track chairs, LASA's Sections and Secretariat, and then to participate in it with so many of you. In my view the plenaries, panels, and protests at the Congress raised some central questions that many of us will ponder over the course of the next year,



and likely reengage next April and May at LASA2017, in Lima. To state but a few: How do we adequately account for the crisis of democracy and regimes of inequality, corruption, violence, narcopolitics, and impunity throughout so much of Latin America in the current political economic moment? What is the staying power of U.S. hegemony—has it diminished significantly in the face of rapidly evolving South-South relations? What have been the consequences of state-led economic and social policies, not just over the last decade but over the past 50 years? What has been the multivalent impact of immigration and coerced movements of people in Latin America's recent and long-term pasts? And how do we explain the fragile and contingent nature of democratic institutions in recent decades? The 50th also underscored the need for more central discussions about climate change and the environment, and about the roles that new forms of electronic communication and social media, as well as more enduring forms of establishment media, play in alliances that both maintain and contest concentrations of power.

The 50th anniversary year brought many new and exciting developments for LASA. The Otros Saberes initiative was institutionalized in a LASA Section and the theme of the 2017 Lima conference will be "Diálogo de Saberes." The Executive Council, working primarily with the graduate students who now make up close to 25 percent of LASA's membership, created a new student section, spearheaded by Latin American students, and began a process to represent students in the

Executive Council. (Not surprisingly, students ably served as track chairs for "LASA at 50.") The EC, led by Vice President Joanne Rappaport, also took positions on several infringements of academic freedom and human rights in the Andean nations and inaugurated a process to develop a more efficient mechanism for action alerts in the future. As mentioned above, in the weeks ahead LASA will send a diverse observer delegation to report on impeachment in Brazil.

In order to more adequately and transparently provide for its growing membership—especially in Latin America, where close to half of its members now reside—LASA has just inaugurated a new Five-Year Strategic Plan. This effort has ramifications for all of the association's activities, as well as for enhancing communication and initiatives *between* the large congresses that members most identify with. The new plan will also advance the development of LARC, the Latin American Research Commons, an initiative led by LARR Editor in Chief Phil Oxhorn, that will drive open-access, electronic dissemination of Latin America-based research throughout the hemisphere. The past year also witnessed the selection of a new editorial regime for the *Latin American Research Review*, headed by University of Pittsburgh political scientist Aníbal Pérez-Liñán.

Finally, the 50th anniversary year has witnessed impressive strides in fund-raising. Milagros Pereyra and I organized a celebratory Gala Dinner and other fund-raising initiatives to raise money for LASA's Endowment, which prioritizes the travel fund to bring Latin American scholars to our congresses. This year LASA was able to offer 403 travel grants to Latin America-based scholars, students, nontenured professors, and researchers

from around the world. We hope to do even better in future years, drawing upon by the \$850,000 that we have added to LASA's Endowment this year. (We still have July, August, and September to meet our ambitious but now realizable goal of \$1 million during our 50th year, and Milagros and I encourage you to go to LASA's website and contribute to our 50 × 50 campaign!)

All things considered, it has been a very good year for LASA, and I have been extremely proud to serve as your president and work so closely with Ariel and Amy, Milagros, and with Congress Coordinator Pilar Rodríguez and other members of the Secretariat's extraordinary staff. My best wishes and sincere thanks go out to all of you, and I know you will provide the same encouragement and support to our new president, Joanne Rappaport, that you extended to me. I look forward to seeing many of you in Lima at LASA2017! ■