

From the President

by JOANNE RAPPAPORT | Georgetown University | rappaport.lasa@gmail.com

As we return from the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Latin American Studies Association, I'd like to remind LASA members of some of the significant developments in our field in the 1960s and 1970s, at the time of the birth of our organization. In his address at the opening ceremony, Gil Joseph identified the founders of LASA as male and mostly from the global North. In one of my quiet periods in New York, I decided to take a look at the first year of the *Latin American Research Review* to see what our forebears were up to. What I found was unexpected. For almost a decade, the journal did not publish research articles but instead featured topical reviews on an array of issues ranging from social stratification, land reform, and urbanization to the role of the military, inflation, and instability. Not all of these far-ranging reviews of the state of Latin American studies were written by social scientists; there were also contributions on theater and on philosophy and thought, as well as reviews of museum exhibits. What was impressive to me, accessing *LARR* via my iPad in our era of academic specialization and disciplinary jargon, was how general and accessible the articles were, how they made a clear appeal to a multidisciplinary audience. Their contributions were also international in scope; in addition to articles written by North American and European scholars—which were the majority—there were contributions by Latin American authors, as well as reports on the state of Latin American studies in France, Germany, and what was then the Soviet Union. The first volume included a supplement, published in Portuguese, cataloguing the projects of social scientists throughout Latin America.

Those who attended Rodolfo Stavenhagen's Kalman Silvert lecture at the New York City Congress might recall that he reminded us that CLACSO (Consejo

Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales) was founded the same year as LASA. FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales) had been in operation for a decade when LASA held its first Congress in New York. LASA's peers in Latin America were exploring their own avenues for rejuvenating academic research, parallel and in response to North American and European intellectual production. This is the period when testimonial literature achieved generic status, included as a category in the awards competition sponsored by the Casa de las Américas. Gustavo Gutiérrez had just published his *Teología de la liberación*. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, and other Mexican anthropologists and sociologists were exploring avenues for decolonizing the social sciences, both through theoretical introspection and participation as scholars in building social movements. Together with Stefano Varese, Darcy Ribeiro, Nelly Arvelo Jiménez, and others, Bonfil Batalla appeared as a signatory of the 1971 Declaración de Barbados, which voiced academic support of indigenous struggles in the Americas. Contemporaneous with the founding of LASA, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire published *Pedagogia do oprimido*, mapping out a participatory methodology for raising the consciousness of peasants and working-class people through adult education, one which was later expanded by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda in what came to be known as Participatory Action Research (PAR).

These interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Latin American reality connected the academy to grassroots communities and organizations in innovative ways and inspired critical thought and dialogue among both academics and nonacademics, including peasants and indigenous people, many decades before LASA's Otros Saberes



initiative was even imagined. An array of results emerged from these methodologies, including not only academic books and articles but also comic books, documentaries, picture-maps, and creative writing in indigenous vernaculars and in Spanish. Frequently, this work takes the form of a dialogue—a *diálogo de saberes*. It came as a surprise to me when I visited the CLACSO website to discover that CLACSO and the New School had organized an international colloquium to take place immediately before LASA2016 titled “Diálogo de Saberes,” because that is also the theme that Juliet Hooker and Mauricio Archila, the 2017 program chairs, and I had just chosen for LASA2017, which will take place at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, in Lima. In the upcoming Congress we hope to foreground the demographic transformation of LASA, a little under half of whose members live and work in Latin America, as well to expand on the long-term interdisciplinary and international dialogues that have been with us since LASA's beginnings, as well as more recent innovations, like the Otros Saberes initiative. As you will read in the Congress theme and in the *LASA Forum* column written by the two program chairs, we conceptualize this diálogo de saberes as a far-ranging conversation: between the academies of the global South and the global North, with grassroots researchers (including indigenous and Afro-descendant, but not confined to those sectors), and with other producers of knowledge (journalists, graphic novelists, workers in NGOs).

We also are thinking of a host of other projects, on which I will expand in future

From the Outgoing President

by Gil Joseph | Yale University | gilbert.joseph@yale.edu

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,