

From the President

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So much has happened in Latin America during the past three months, that if I were to dedicate this column to these events I would not know where to begin. I will mention only a few of the most recent developments. The Brazilian Senate opened the impeachment trial of President Dilma Rousseff, which will have concluded by the time this column goes to press. As many of you are aware, LASA sent a fact-finding delegation to Brazil in July and we are awaiting its report, which will be published in the *LASA Forum*, posted on our website, and disseminated widely beyond our organization; a link to the results of voting on the Brazil resolution are posted on LASA's main web page. The Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas have concluded their peace negotiations and a cease-fire has begun. The process will now move from the negotiating table in Havana to a national plebiscite in Colombia, a hopeful sign after more than five decades of war, with several hundred thousand dead, over a thousand massacres, and millions displaced. We are currently working on a dossier for the next issue of *LASA Forum* that will include articles on the Colombian peace process. Finally, Donald Trump has put forward (then rescinded, then put forward—I'm losing count) yet another immigration plan. I urge those of you who didn't read the last issue of the *Forum* to go back to the excellent articles prepared by Mexican scholars in response to Trump's call for a wall at the border.

Notwithstanding these and other developments in Latin America, I will dedicate this quarter's column to another subject: why we chose Lima as the site of the 2017 LASA Congress. LASA members and the Executive Council have become increasingly aware of the need to choose Latin American locations for the Congress, especially given the fact that such a large proportion of our membership is based in

Latin American institutions. In this column I will focus on the intellectual reasons why Lima is such a good choice by very briefly summarizing some of the research going on in various institutions in the city, in order to emphasize that Lima is not just a good city to visit but a city with a long and rich scholarly tradition.

Our host institution will be the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. It was the institutional home of Alberto Flores Galindo, the author of *Buscando un inca*, recently translated into English, a wide-ranging reflection on Andean utopias, beginning in the colonial period and moving into the author's present (he died in 1990, only recently having turned 50). Among the Católica's faculty are a highly regarded set of scholars in linguistics, musicology, political science, literature, and history, many of whom are involved in the planning of LASA2017. Given space limitations, I want to point out three of the Católica faculty's most impressive contributions to recent scholarship. One of these is Gonzalo Portocarrero, the highly prolific founder of the university's master's program in cultural studies and last year's awardee of the Premio Nacional de Cultura. A public intellectual whose influence ranges far beyond the Católica campus, Portocarrero has written books and essays on the educational system, racism, Andean art and literature, and the place of intellectuals in Peru, among many other topics that demonstrate his bold transcendence of traditional disciplinary boundaries. I must also point to Scarlett O'Phelan Godoy's highly influential research into the late colonial period and the independence era, as an example of the major contributions made by historians of the Católica to our understanding of the emergence of nation-states in Latin America. Finally, the preeminence of archaeology at the Católica



led me to incorporate the field into one of the Congress tracks. Excavations at Pachacamac, a massive ceremonial center in the Lima region that was in operation for a millennium, are currently being coordinated by Católica archaeologist Krzysztof Makowski.

The other major university in Lima is the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Founded in 1551, it is the oldest university in the Americas. San Marcos has a long genealogy of illustrious alumni—among them, authors José María Arguedas and Mario Vargas Llosa, and ethnohistorian María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco—as well as a roster over the decades of well-known faculty members, such as sociologist Aníbal Quijano and anthropologist Julio Cotler, as well as historians Pablo Macera and Manuel Burga. Many current members of the San Marcos academic community are contributing to the success of LASA2017 as track chairs and members of prize committees. A center for Andean and Amazonian studies, San Marcos has produced outstanding studies of the Quechua language, indigenous literatures, intercultural education, and the relationship between ecology and cultural diversity. In the past few decades, San Marcos has also been a significant academic space for research into political violence and inequality.

Finally, the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP) is one of the major contributors to *limeño* intellectual life. A private institution dedicated to research, teaching, and publication, the IEP was founded in

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1964 as an interdisciplinary center for studies in the social sciences. Many of its most notable researchers have also taught concurrently at the Universidad Nacional de San Marcos. For example, the late Carlos Iván Degregori, who taught anthropology at the Universidad Nacional de San Marcos while participating on the IEP's research team, was a member and lead author of the report issued by the Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación, the Peruvian truth commission. IEP researchers concentrate on three key thematic areas: democracy, governability, and decentralization; poverty and inequality; culture and diversity. To give an idea of what IEP members are working on, I will point to just three topics: a study of ethnohistorical sources to comprehend the development of a syncretic culture in the colonial Andes (a return to the original pioneering research by IEP scholar María Rostworowski); research into state-sponsored extractive industries in Peruvian Amazonia; and an evaluation of communal decision making and negotiation with the private sector in localities in Peru.

There is also a rich tradition in Lima of nonacademic research, most notably in the areas of human rights and collaborative filmmaking, and we are hoping to plan activities with some of these organizations at LASA2017. I will take these up in my next column. ■

The disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, in September 2014 grabbed worldwide attention. During its 2016 Congress in New York at the end of May, LASA held a presidential session featuring three members of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, or GIEI), appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to investigate the Ayotzinapa case. Chaired by Elizabeth Oglesby (a professor of Latin American studies at the University of Arizona), the panel included opening remarks by Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst at the National Security Archive, and discussion with GIEI members Carlos Martín Beristain, Francisco Cox, and Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey. The fate of the 43 students remains unknown, but the GIEI's work, which concluded in April, lays bare the nature of impunity in Mexico and provides a road map for what can be done. The Ayotzinapa investigation is an important precedent for human rights struggles across Latin America.

For background on the GIEI and to download the results of its investigation: <http://prensagieiyotzi.wix.com/giei-ayotzinapa>. For a full transcript of the LASA session in English or Spanish, write to eoglesby@email.arizona.edu.

Kate Doyle: Impunity has many dimensions in Mexico; it is multifaceted, like a crystal held up to the light. It can be abrupt and brutal: the murder of a journalist who gets too close to the truth. It can be furtive, a quiet campaign designed to undermine the public's faith. It can be calculating, like the electric shocks applied to the soles of a detainee's feet in order to produce what will later be called a confession. It can be true incompetence—police leaving footprints in the victim's blood, evidence

lost, files misplaced. Or it can be pretend incompetence—police leaving footprints in the victim's blood, evidence lost, files misplaced. Impunity can be silence before the families of a disappeared. It can be a stonewalling, a cover-up. It can simply be “No,” a very firm no, an official no.

The experience of the experts in this case has implications that are both encouraging and troubling. On the one hand it signifies that “yes, we can”—we can create a mechanism of international cooperation that investigates even the most sensitive human rights cases to produce powerful results. But, on the other hand, the reaction of Mexico was deeply disturbing. It became clear that the Mexican government would only go so far in the Ayotzinapa case. There was a limit to Mexico's willingness to support a true investigation. When the Group approached that limit, it was terminated.

It can be said that the Mexican authorities have a genius for impunity; they hold PhDs in the art of obstruction. The government learned its lesson long ago that it could mount a simulation of justice, human rights, transparency, and international cooperation, and most of the time that would satisfy its critics. To paraphrase Nietzsche: The Group stared into the face of impunity. And impunity stared back.

Carlos Martín Beristain: The GIEI's work had three components: the criminal investigation; the search for the disappeared; and attention to the victims. These three things have to go together so that the investigation is not seen separately from working with the victims or continuing the search. In the end, the families are most interested in the search.

In our first report in September 2015, we tried to clarify the facts. The attack