

From the LASA2019 Program Chair

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*Quando pensam que morri
Renasço nas mãos de uma mulher
...
Reverberar o som com suas sementes*
— Elizandra Souza, *Águas da Cabaça*

In her 2012 collection of poetry *Águas da Cabaça*, feminist activist Elizandra Souza takes the calabash as a symbol of black women's suffering and resilience. Plucked from the vine, the fruit does not simply die but is reborn as a sacred receptacle and a musical instrument in candomblé ceremonies. Souza's poetry sounds like an act of defiance in the face of increasingly audacious acts of violence against women, especially black women in Brazilian political life and against black spaces of worship. Souza's writing, slam poetry performances, and leadership in cultural programming in the periphery of São Paulo are about being seen and being heard. Her activism inserts the voices of black women from Brazil's favelas into a dialogue with leading black female voices across the diaspora.

LASA2019 in Boston will open up such spaces for dialogue in the context of the erosion of civil discourse and democratic norms across the Americas and beyond. Let us make Boston a place to reflect on how to learn from the knowledges and experiences of those othered by racism and bigotry. Let us interrogate what social, political, and cultural interventions and engagements are necessary and possible in our work to commit our own acts of defiance against abuses of power and social inequalities. Universal values and political rights are under siege in government discourse and policy across the hemisphere. However, these aspirational notions have always been a mirage for communities of color and first peoples in the Americas whose social realities demonstrate that there can be no one-size-fits-all

notion of citizenship for people whose founding contract with the state was and is based on genocidal violence.

Our Boston 2019 presidential sessions will consider some of the challenges facing the hemisphere from the perspective of activists, cultural producers, and intellectuals. Two of our sessions in particular emphasize listening and dialogue. "Vozes/Voces Negras: Black Women's Poetics, Performance, and Politics" will feature Elizandra Souza performing her work alongside writer and anthropologist Ana-Maurine Lara, who was born in the Dominican Republic and grew up partly in New York. Souza and Lara will discuss how their work engages with questions of art and social justice, and imagines freedom in the face of the daily restrictions placed on black, indigenous, and queer subjects. "Indigenous Matters: A Critical Hemispheric Dialogue" will bring together four indigenous scholars from South, Central, and North America to discuss urgent common concerns across the hemisphere, such as resource extraction, cultural heritage, and the environment. The panel will highlight alternative knowledges and uniquely indigenous perspectives on resistance.

Three sessions will focus explicitly on issues of democracy and justice. "Media, News, and Democracy" will feature leading Mexican journalist and defender of press freedom Carmen Aristegui in conversation with journalist Julia Preston from the nonprofit news organization the Marshall Project. They will explore the role of the mainstream and alternative media in sustaining democracy, violence against the press, "fake news," and new possibilities for press coverage in Mexico with the Lopez Obrador presidency. In the session "Employment, Social Inclusion and Justice," Rebeca Grynspan and José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs will discuss how wages, employment conditions, and worker organization and representation reproduce cycles

of inequality and exploitation. Grynspan, a former vice president of Costa Rica and Secretary-General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), and Salazar-Xirinachs, Director of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, will consider how labor markets can be improved in the service of social mobility, inclusion, and equality. "Immigrant Families and Youth: Justice and Democracy" will put two notable scholars of immigration and social injustice in conversation. Roberto G. Gonzales is Professor of Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education and has undertaken one of the most comprehensive and impactful studies of undocumented immigrants in the United States. Patricia Zavella, Professor Emerita of the Latin American and Latina/o Studies Department at University of California Santa Cruz has made an outstanding contribution to scholarship on reproductive justice, family, poverty, sexuality, and transnational migration in Mexican and Chicana-Latinx communities.

"Thinking Territory in Latin America" brings together Arturo Escobar, Kenan Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Raquel Rolnik, Professor of Architecture at the Universidade de São Paulo and UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (2008–2014). They will consider the correlation between territorial and social exclusion, especially in the context of the crisis of democratic processes across the Americas. These two world-renowned scholars of territory in Latin America will contemplate alternatives to hegemonic models of development and urbanism that are not producing adequate standards of living for the urban and rural poor.

The session "From Populism to Fascism? The Americas in the Era of Trump" will also take stock of the undermining of democratic discourse and process since the inauguration of Donald Trump. Panelists will discuss the threats posed to human rights, civil liberties, efforts toward social justice, and practices of inclusion and tolerance, both in the United States and abroad. Two other sessions will focus closely on current events and the present social and political climate. "Taking Action Against Harassment" will continue to break the silence

around harassment within LASA and our profession and discuss strategies for inclusivity in our organization, our policies, and our ways of working. The session "Puerto Rico's Challenges, Before and After Hurricane Maria" will propose approaches to reconstruction and revitalization in housing, health, education, and the economy. Speakers will discuss the social and political fallout of the hurricane, as well as how to secure a safer and more prosperous future for the island.

Finally, "The Cuban Revolution 60 Years Later" addresses the present moment, as well as the past and future of the revolution. Its goals and promises continue to inspire and mobilize peoples in Cuba and beyond, but the challenges and setbacks it has faced are also part of its legacy. A stellar group of scholars—Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Lillian Guerra, Zuleica Romay, Carlos Alzugaray, and Alejandro de la Fuente—will contemplate the impact of the revolution on society and politics in Cuba and the Americas over the years.

The Program Committee has focused on the theme and the imperative of inclusion in proposing and organizing presidential sessions. We also hope that our theme will be reflected in the diversity of presenters at this upcoming congress. We look forward to lively discussion and debate on the diaspora, the Atlantic, and the borderlands at LASA2019. //