

George Vickers

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It is with great sadness that I report the death of George Vickers on December 2, 2018. A LASA Life Member and member of LASA's Kalman Silvert Society, George was deeply committed to advancing human rights and social justice in Latin America and will be sorely missed.

George did his undergraduate studies at Northwestern University and earned his master's and PhD degrees in sociology at Washington University in St. Louis. At the time of his graduate studies, he was interested in the impact of the Vietnam War on politics in the United States. His first book was entitled *The Formation of the New Left: The Early Years*, published by Lexington Books in 1973.

From 1975 until 1997, George was a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. In the late 1970s and 1980s, he became increasingly outraged by US policy in Central America and began a lifelong concern for peace and democracy in the region.

In the 1990s, George was one of the most active and engaged analysts of politics in El Salvador and Nicaragua. He was a member of the US presidential delegation that monitored El Salvador's 1994 elections. With colleagues at Hemisphere Initiatives, he coauthored numerous incisive, hard-hitting analyses of the turbulent peace process in El Salvador and of key elections in both El Salvador and Nicaragua. These pieces had an impact in both the scholarly and policy communities.

Giving up tenure, George became an outstanding institution builder. First, from 1993 until 2001, he was Executive Director of the Washington Office on Latin America. Then, he was Regional Director for Latin America of the Open Society Foundations and, finally, the Director of International Operations for Open Society. He served on the boards of various NGOs, including Hemispheric Initiatives and, later, the East-West Management Institute.

In addition, George worked to strengthen LASA. Not only was he a Life Member and member of the Kalman Silvert Society, but he also served on the Development Committee for many years. During 2002–2003, he chaired the Committee on Academic Freedom and Human Rights.

At the same time, George continued to write. After elections took hold in Central America, he sought to explain how peace and democracy could be consolidated. He developed recommendations for civilian control over the military and for police forces that worked for the people. He presented many of his insights in the chapter "Renegotiating Internal Security: The Lessons of Central America," in the volume *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, edited by Cynthia Arnson (Stanford University Press, 1999). And he did not hesitate to call out democratic failures; for *Foreign Policy* in November 2009, he wrote "The Sham Elections in Honduras."

My own happiest memories of George are of his wonderful participation in a LASA election-monitoring delegation in Peru in 1995 (which I had the pleasure to chair). Bringing to bear his experiences from Central America, George was exceptionally insightful. He was also enthusiastic and fun. It was my special pleasure that, on the

trip, he met his future partner, Irene Silverblatt, Professor of History at Duke University, who specializes in Peru.

George was a great friend to LASA; he provided critical support for the hemispheric scholarly networks at LASA's core. And he was a great friend to Latin America, helping to invigorate the civil society groups that resolve conflict and reduce injustice. We are deeply grateful to George and will miss his intelligence, commitment, and friendship.

George Vickers, presentel //