

What's New at NACLA?

WITH THIS ISSUE WE COME TO THE END OF THE year-long celebration of our 45th anniversary. This issue, volume 45, number 4, marks not only the completion of our 45th year, but also the beginning of our first year in our new home at New York University's Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS). Our new collaboration with CLACS promises to be a fruitful one, enabling us to tap the vast resources of the center's faculty and the enthusiasm and commitment of its students. We are confident that the benefits will be mutual.

Volume 45 has marked our transition from a 52-page (on average) bimonthly publication to a quarterly whose normal length is planned to be 92 pages. Our hope is that with more comprehensive issues and Reports, we will be able to cover Latin American events—and U.S.-Latin American relations—in much greater depth, breadth, and diversity of analysis.

The rise of electronic journalism allows our print edition to appear less frequently. Until the advent of digital publishing, our readers relied on our printed publications for up-to-date reporting on ongoing events and breaking news from around the Americas. Such coverage can now be found on our website, nacla.org, which is still expanding in its coverage and which will soon be redesigned to make for easier navigation.

We were born some 45 years ago in a series of meetings in conference rooms, kitchens, and living rooms mostly around university campuses in the Midwest and East Coast. In the wake of the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic—a country that most U.S. citizens could not have found on a map—NACLA's founders wanted to form a group that would be a reliable source of information and analysis on Latin America and U.S.-Latin American relations. It was hoped that the publications of such a group would be of use to the critical and skeptical among those citizens, and even

more so to engaged political activists.

If you turn to page 91 of this issue, you will see a short essay in our recently inaugurated From the Archives section that, written in 1967, muses on the kind of organization the NACLA of the future might come to be. The author, a NACLA founder named Brady Tyson, argues for the need to pull discussions of U.S.-hemispheric relations from the fringes of U.S. consciousness to the center of U.S. political debates. He also describes the new group's first ecumenical steps in the creation of an organization that would sponsor and encourage open, useful, and constructive debate among scholars and activists occupying a broad swath of progressive opinion. That future has come to pass—and is still evolving and developing—as we come to the end of our year-long anniversary celebration.

And now the pitch: There is a bind-in donation/subscription card just inside the back cover of this magazine. If you find the Report useful and are not yet a subscriber, you can detach the card and mail it in to initiate your subscription. If you are already a subscriber but not yet a donor, you can fill out the other side of the card and send it in with whatever size donation you care—and your pocketbook allows you—to make.

NACLA has always operated on a very small budget. Sales of the magazine and the donations of our supporters have always provided the bulk of the revenue we use to carry out our mission. We stretch every one of your donated dollars to the maximum we can, and now, with the administrative support CLACS is providing, we will be able to use more of the funds you donate for our publications and programs. Consider any donation you may be able to make as an investment in NACLA's future—and a small step toward honest, critical publishing and greater liberty and justice throughout the Americas. **■**



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At the very least, we can hope that Obama, in his second term, will show greater tolerance for the debate on drug-policy alternatives that has blossomed across Latin America.

Taking Pleasure in the Republican Scramble

GREG GRANDIN

SCHADENFREUDE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE MOST overused word in the weeks that followed President Obama's reelection; understandably so since anyone who lived in fear of the party of rape, racism, rapacity, Rand (Ayn and Paul), and Rove could take great pleasure in the right-wing post-mortem of Mitt Romney's losing campaign. Personally, I've enjoyed reading what Republicans think they should do with Latinos.

Majority conservative opinion accepts that the strategy in place at least since 2000—race-targeted voter suppression, ethnic cleansing (the Arizona gambit), and repression combined with targeted co-optation (the Texas model)—no longer cuts it. Some still think tokenism might be workable, urging Republicans to make way for telegenic Cubans, such as Florida's Marco Rubio and Texas's Ted Cruz. Or Jeb Bush, who has managed to convince a good number of political commentators that he holds some special appeal—the *hacendado* paunch, maybe—for Latinos.

And there has been a stunning turnaround on immigration reform, with everyone from William Kristol to Sean Hannity calling on Republicans to back some version of the Dream Act or legislation that would grant a path to citizenship to undocumented migrants. Some find some solace in Ronald Reagan's oft-repeated 1984 remark that Latinos, being good patriarchs and hard workers, "are Republicans; they just don't know it yet." But the crushing numbers—Latinos went by over 70% for Obama, who even won a majority of Florida's Cuban vote—have forced a rethinking.

"It is not immigration policy that creates the strong bond between Hispanics and the Democratic party," wrote Heather MacDonald at the *National Review*, "but the core Democratic principles of a more generous safety net, strong government intervention in the economy, and progressive taxation." Over at the American Enterprise Institute, Charles Murray also throws cold water on the idea that "Latinos would be natural converts to a more welcoming Republican Party." They aren't more religious than other groups, Murray points out, nor are they more

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Greg Grandin is NACLA's Executive Editor.

homophobic, and they are only marginally more opposed to abortion than the population at large (though Murray does say that the Latino laborers who work on his house seem to be "hard-working and competent," which he takes to be synonymous with conservative).

If anything, the fact that Wal-Mart is unionized in many Latin American countries should put to rest once and for all Reagan's old saw. Latinos in the United States are of course diverse, but wherever they hail from, they tend to define democracy as social democracy. Latinos have slowed the right-wing lurch of the Catholic Church, complicated Evangelical (as well as Mormon) politics, and reinvigorated the labor movement. They push back against not just economic but intellectual austerity, which defines things like education and health care as "gifts," as Romney put it following his loss.

Nothing is written in stone. Many Italians were anarchists, the Irish radical nationalists, and Jews Communists. But as they passed through the New Deal welfare state, their politics transformed. That could, theoretically, happen with Latinos. The Republican Party could manage to suppress its nativist wing and ideologically capture Latinos, the way first the New Deal Democrats and then Reagan Republicans did the white working class.

But there are two reasons why this isn't likely to happen: First, there is no robust welfare state for Latinos to pass through, thanks to the institutionalization of neoliberalism in this country. Second, the dynamics of race today are different than they were in the first half of the last century, when both political and social citizenship was defined in opposition to African Americans, who were largely left out of the New Deal. When the New Deal unraveled, Republicans leveraged that exclusion to great political gain, with Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy.

Look at the numbers: Latinos make up over 20% of the population in Colorado, Florida, and Nevada, nearly 30%, 40% in California and Texas, and almost 50% in New Mexico. Even in bastions of rock-ribbed Republicanism, like Nebraska and Georgia, they hover at around 10%.

The Democrats will betray and Obama will trim, but the dead hand of the Confederacy is finally being pried off the throat of U.S. politics. ■

Puerto Rico, Now!

On the Road to Self-Determination

MICHAEL GONZÁLEZ-CRUZ

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF NOVEMBER 6 IN Puerto Rico presented a great challenge to the national liberation movement. Through the work of the political action committee *¡Boricua ahora Es!* (Puerto Rico, Now!), we succeeded in uniting nearly all the political tendencies of the country with the goal of ending our colonial-territorial status with the United States. By bringing together defenders of annexation, sovereignty and independence to end our colonial status, Puerto Rico, Now! is continuing the work of the League of Patriots of Eugenio María de Hostos, who proposed the holding of a plebiscite in 1898 to rid the country of the military government that had been imposed on it.

The French historian Ernest Renan once proposed that a nation is created in a daily plebiscite. This is to say that in-so-far as the members of a society voluntarily speak their own language and maintain their own customs and traditions, they are voting in favor of a nation every day with their actions. But in the case of nations that are colonized by other nations, this daily plebiscite takes on greater importance because colonized people don't have the sovereignty required to produce the goods and services needed by their communities. This is the case of Puerto Rico, a nation without a state since the U.S. invasion of 1898.

Because we are a nation without a state, we face severe problems of economic and social insecurity that are linked to our territorial-colonial relationship with the United States. In 2011, there were 1,026 homicides, making our island one of the most violent territories the world. Almost 15% of the workforce is unemployed and only four of 10 Puerto Ricans participate in

the formal labor market. During the decade 2000-10, about 500,000 Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States, where, according to the 2010 U.S. census, 4.3 million now live. For the first time in our history, more Puerto Ricans live in the metropolis than in our own national territory.

The economic crisis that affects us with its high levels of unemployment, the indiscriminate violence of drug trafficking, and poor educational and health services has its origins in the lack of sovereign power. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, which, between 1952 and 1982 succeeded in taking care of some of its social and economic problems, has been left without resources to develop beyond its colonial reality. We

Because we are a nation without a state, we face severe problems of economic and social insecurity.

need to reclaim our sovereignty in order to produce the goods and services that we need to continue our everyday voting for our own nation.

In his introduction to Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre tells us about the force of the colonized human being: "This contained fury, if it doesn't explode, turns in upon itself and damages the oppressed themselves. To liberate themselves from that fury, they end up killing one another." Is this why we Puerto Ricans see ourselves surrounded by violence everywhere we turn—shopping malls, schools, streets, neighborhoods, public housing? This colonized fury, instead of confronting the status quo, spreads out indiscriminately. The policies of an "iron fist against crime" and "certain punishment" simply criminalize the poor and disperse poverty.

In the midst of this crisis, Puerto Rico, Now! has

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emerged as a social movement at the margins of the traditional parties to orient, mobilize, and vote for a status that is not territorial and colonial, but one that permits us to confront the United States with a demand for freedom for all Puerto Ricans. The national result on November 6 was an emphatic no for colonial status with 943,094 votes (54%) and 803,407 votes (46%) for maintaining our colonial relation with the United States.

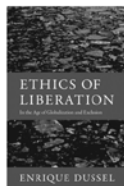
The Puerto Rico, Now! plebiscite succeeded in defending liberty by voting no against remaining a colonial territory. This convincing victory of the movement for national liberation allows us to elaborate with our own people the most appropriate method of decoloniza-

tion. In this process, we can begin to look for solutions to the economic and social problems of Puerto Rico.

The sociologist Max Weber understood that all societies, at some moment of their history, become nations and establish a state with which to govern themselves. Colonized societies can have a government but not a national state. Colonies with more or less autonomy lack sovereign power to meet the needs of their citizens. For this reason, colonial relations produce conflicts characterized by violence experienced by their citizens, combined with an economic stagnation that impoverishes the working and middle classes.

The Puerto Rican liberation

movement cannot remain solely an opposition force but must aspire for power to serve the people. Every nation constructs itself daily and diversely. We remember the people of Algeria who in a plebiscite confirmed their colonial relation with France but later won their independence in 1956. Today there are many nations without states that have begun the process of self-determination: Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Quebec, to name just a few. Puerto Rico should join forces with all these movements for decolonization. It would seem that the world faces at least another decade of struggles for decolonization and the self-determination of peoples. □



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‘Like a War’: The New Central American Refugee Crisis

NOELLE K. BRIGDEN

ON AUGUST 25, 2010, THE CORPSES OF 72 CENTRAL and South American migrants were discovered in the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas. The news reverberated across the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) with an impact similar to 9/11’s in the United States.¹ The massacre of the 72, as they came to be known, was a political and social milestone for the region, setting in bold relief the risk of violence that migrants face. Detailed reports of violence saturated Central American media, and Los Zetas, a notorious Mexican drug gang implicated in the Tamaulipas massacre and kidnappings, became a household word synonymous with the class of cruel, professionalized criminal that awaits migrants during their journeys.

Since Central American refugees began moving to the United States during the civil war period of the 1980s, the migratory route through Mexico has been dangerous. In those early days, opportunist criminals, immigration officials, and corrupt Mexican police stalked Central Americans, committing a variety of human rights abuses against them.² In the 1990s and early 2000s, Central American street gangs controlled the southern train routes through Chiapas, frequently assaulting and terrorizing migrants with machetes and small arms.³ The Sonora desert and the northern border towns have long been infamous for their lawlessness.

Now, however, the violence threatening migrants extends throughout Mexico, not just at the borders.⁴ Criminal gangs have made a business of targeting migrants, kidnapping them, and demanding that they and their smugglers pay tribute for crossing their territory. In a six-month period from April to September 2010, over 11,000 migrants were kidnapped in Mexico, according to the National Human Rights Commission

of Mexico (CNDH).⁵ During these kidnappings, criminals extort anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars from the migrants’ U.S.-based relatives, threatening torture, forced labor, and murder. Women risk rape and being sold into sexual slavery. Children captured in transit suffer alongside adults. Families often pay ransoms by accumulating debt, but migrants sometimes disappear without a trace.

As a migrant Guatemalan youth living along the train tracks in Ciudad Ixtepec put it: “The route is like a war.”⁶

The safest way to navigate the journey is to pay a reputable guide who knows the appropriate gangs and corrupt authorities to bribe for passage rights through Mexican territory. For upwards of \$6,000, migrants can pay for door-to-door smuggling service from Central America to destinations within the United States. Family members in the United States generally sponsor migrants with a combination of hard-earned savings and high-interest loans, paying half the smuggling fee at the outset of the journey and the other half upon arrival. Despite their great expense, even these travel arrangements can end in tragedy: No migrants are immune from kidnappings, rapes, suffocation in hidden compartments, and other calamities during clandestine travel. In fact, migrants with “payment on delivery” agreements have become valuable merchandise, subject to theft by competing smugglers and other criminal groups, because of their potential to pay a large ransom. Some unscrupulous smugglers sell their human cargo to their competitors or kidnappers, cutting their losses and minimizing their own risks of criminal victimization or legal prosecution when trouble arises along the route.

Those who cannot afford an expensive smuggler, despite the precarious conditions, nonetheless press on—clinging to boxcars on cargo trains, begging and borrowing to stay alive, and exposing themselves to predation. Every northbound train from the southern

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Mexican town of Arriaga, Chiapas, carries hundreds of these people. Their journeys often become an endless odyssey of victimization and repeat deportation. After each calamity, many migrants attempt another journey and another, starting again and again. If you spend a few months on the route, their faces become recognizable, because some migrants pass each place so many times. The accumulated suffering of each attempt adds to their determination, as migrants seek to transform the sacrifices already endured into something worthwhile.

Desperate to pay back debt already incurred to pay a ransom,

IN EL SALVADOR AND GUATEMALA, governments and rebel groups signed peace accords in 1992 and 1996, respectively. But in the absence of organized political violence, Central America experienced a descent into criminal and police violence, a cannibalism of the poor that reflects the disillusionment of failed revolutions and unmet promises for economic justice.⁷ That the risks have not deterred hundreds of thousands of Central Americans from migrating demonstrates that, for many of them, conditions at home are so bad that an uncertain path through Mexico still offers hope. An in-

Now fear of persecution by criminal gangs haunts residents of urban areas and countryside alike. Central America is the most murderous region in the world.¹⁰ In 2004–09, the rate of violent deaths per capita was highest for El Salvador than any other country in the world, exceeding that of wartime Iraq.¹¹ The UNDP Human Development Report for Central America 2009–10 estimates El Salvador's homicide rate for 2008 at 52 per 100,000, recently exceeded by the Honduran rate of 58 homicides per 100,000 people.¹² Homicide rates have risen dramatically across Central America since 1995, but particularly in Honduras, where migration has been accelerating rapidly since Hurricane Mitch in 1998. According to the 2010 Americas Barometer survey of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), 24.2% of Salvadorans, 23.3% of Guatemalans, and 14% of Hondurans report being victims of crime in the last year (including robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion or violent threats).¹³ Forty-four percent of Salvadorans report feeling either somewhat or very unsafe in their own neighborhood.¹⁴ According to the 2010 Latinbarómetro survey, only 3% of Salvadorans *never* fear becoming a crime victim, making El Salvador the most fearful of all Latin American countries.¹⁵ Over half of all Salvadorans and Hondurans report seeing a deterioration of security in their countries, and over two-thirds of all Guatemalans claim their country is becoming "less safe" due to criminal violence.¹⁶

Transnational extortion rackets now span Central America with phone calls to victims originating in different countries and payments made through international

While the route to the United States is like a war, many Salvadorans describe conditions at home as "worse than a war."

some migrants risk additional kidnappings that might result in their death. Some people make so many attempts to arrive in the United States that the route becomes a last refuge. Like the Guatemalan youth living along the tracks, they wander Mexico without a clear destination, able neither to cross the northern border nor to return south to the violence and poverty that initially motivated their departure. Indeed, their having attempted the trip may mark them as targets for criminal gangs, suspicious of their allegiances, upon their return to Central America. When there is neither hope of arrival nor return, transit becomes a lifestyle. In this way, we are witnessing the birth of an internationally homeless class, enduring vagabond lives along the train routes through Mexico. They are unrecognized refugees without respite from violence.

creasing number of them dare the journey to escape the violence of their home communities and reunite with their families already in the United States.⁸

While the route to the United States is like a war, many Central Americans describe contemporary criminal violence in their homelands as "worse than war."⁹ In a comparison of the past and present predicament of his homeland, a Salvadoran man echoed the sentiments of many migrants:

"It was prettier in the past. There had been a war, but there weren't *vagos* [gang members]. A soldier, often an uncle or relative, would warn you when they would come looking for you [to draft you]. They would come about every three months, you would be warned and you would hide. But the war wasn't in the towns. It was in the mountains. Now, for this reason, many people leave."



A woman searching for her missing daughter along the migrant trail.
PHOTO BY ENCARNI PINDADO

bank transfers or by money wire. These schemes target the main sources of revenue for the poor and middle class of Central America: the slim profits of street vendors and the remittances received by people with relatives in the United States. Poor women preparing food at the roadside or selling vegetables at market receive demands for exorbitant sums of money, sometimes thousands of dollars. Street toughs insist that shop owners give them “gifts”: prepaid phone cards, food, and other items. Faced with this dilemma, many people simply close shop and leave town. In urban areas, killers, extortionists, and thieves regularly board public transit, discouraging movement within cities.¹⁷ Some people fear crossing into neighborhoods controlled by competing gangs in search of work. Whole villages in

Guatemala have fled north across the border, fearing violent confrontation between drug gangs and the government.¹⁸

As a result, criminal violence and poverty have become intricately intertwined across Central America. In interviews of migrants conducted at shelters and train yards along the route from September 2010 to August 2011, many people at first said they left for economic reasons, but the longer narrative about their lives revealed that violence frequently underpins their difficult economic situations. For example, a Salvadoran man moving north by train described how he was caught between the competing gangs that control Salvadoran neighborhoods, Barrio 18 and MS 13:

“I lived in the territory of the 18. My children lived in the MS community. So, I could not visit my

children and they could not visit me. If I had gone into their neighborhood, they would have killed me. I worked where there was 18, and when I was fired, I could not work outside my neighborhood. I would be killed. They cannot leave either. This was my only exit to look for work.”

These two gangs control a patchwork of territory in San Salvador and other major metropolitan areas in Central America. Moving between the neighborhoods raises suspicions about gang involvement and loyalty. Losing his job might not have motivated this man to migrate to the United States if not for the persecution he would have faced if he had sought work in another neighborhood. Others face persecution after rejecting gang recruitment, reporting crime to police, returning from the United States, resisting extortion

or spurning the sexual advances of a gang member. For this man and many like him, the danger of the journey through Mexico is an extension of the danger of everyday life in Central America. In what is a sad truism about the everyday violence of Central America, crime reinforces poverty, while poverty reproduces vulnerability to crime. Now, decades after political violence pushed people north en masse, this social disorder drives Central Americans to risk the journey to the United States. Indeed, a 2010 study using Latinobarómetro surveys from 2002 to 2004 concluded that people from a household with a crime victim in the last year are significantly more likely to seriously consider emigration to the United States.¹⁹

The governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have taken few effective measures to ad-

dress the spiral of poverty and violence. Instead, these governments turned to *mano dura* (iron fist) policies that implement a punitive, militarized law enforcement strategy. But this approach has been counterproductive, spurring the professionalization of street gangs and leading to human rights violations committed by law enforcement.²⁰ Indeed, some people leave Central America not only because they fear criminals, but also because they fear legal persecution by broadly empowered police or extralegal actions by vigilantes.

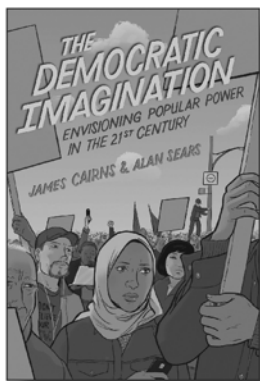
IN THE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S, the plight of Central American refugees captured the imagination of the American left and generated outrage at U.S. policies that simultaneously fueled political repression and closed

the door to people attempting to escape this violence. This outrage led to transnational organizing around a sanctuary movement that attempted to provide humane conditions for unauthorized migrants in transit across borders.²¹ Academics, journalists, and activists challenged the state narrative that Central Americans entering the United States were labor migrants and forcefully argued that they deserved asylum.²²

Contemporary Central American immigrants to the United States need broader legal and social recognition as refugees and asylum seekers, as opposed to purely labor migrants. Unfortunately, asylum cases based on persecution by criminal actors are notoriously difficult to win in the United States.²³ After having survived torture during kidnappings, rapes, threats, and assaults, many Central American migrants now arrive in the United States without access to appropriate social and psychological support for refugees and survivors of violence.

Although the U.S. asylum system and international refugee regime is not designed to meet their needs, contemporary Central American migrants are refugees. The willingness of so many Central Americans to brave the violence of Mexico exposes the extent and severity of contemporary violence in their homelands. In light of the recent mass kidnappings and killings of migrants, it is again time to challenge the narrative of Central American labor migration. According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is any person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group

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or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” Central Americans fit this definition; in Central America, the “new” refugees flee an escalating cycle of police and criminal persecution based on their social class and refusal to cooperate with criminals, just as their grandparents and parents fled political persecution.

Along the route through Mexico, the kidnappings and killings of migrants fleeing Central American violence have become so common that their mothers and other family members have begun to organize.²⁴ For example, COFAMIPRO formed in 1999 in Honduras and COFAMIDE followed in 2006 in El Salvador. These advocacy efforts

recall painful memories from the 1980s, when Latin American mothers leveraged their moral authority against the disappearances of their children by politically motivated death squads. Central American activists, together with Catholic migrant shelters and other human rights groups, have brought the new escalation of disappearances to international attention.

Meanwhile, there are some hopeful signs of solidarity against the violence on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Over 50 Catholic shelters in Mexico serve migrants during their journey, forming a front line against the abuse of migrants. While the gap between law and practice continues to undermine human rights protection, Mexican activists have won several important legislative

victories. In 2008, Mexico legalized humanitarian aid to undocumented migrants. In 2011, immigrants and their advocates won a symbolic victory when Mexico passed, but failed to implement, a sweeping reform aimed at decriminalizing transit migration. On the U.S. side of the border, several U.S. activist groups continue their humanitarian work in the Arizona desert, providing water and life-saving medical attention to border crossers. Thus, some signs of the resurrection of the social movement for Central American refugee rights have already emerged. This advocacy cannot come too soon for a growing number of people who are refugees twice over: pushed from a place that is worse than a war through a gauntlet that is like a war. ■

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Bolivian president Evo Morales together with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez on the balcony of the Presidential Palace, La Paz, Bolivia, just after Morales was sworn in as president, January 22, 2006.

PHOTO BY GUIOMAR DE MESA/FOTOSBOLIVIA/THE IMAGE WORKS

Bolivia and the Changing Shape of U.S. Power

ETHAN EARLE

IN NOVEMBER 2011, BOLIVIA AND THE UNITED STATES signed a “framework agreement” to resume diplomatic relations, more than three years after President Evo Morales ejected the U.S. ambassador on charges of conspiracy. In contrast to the diplomatic breakup, which made international headlines, the reconciliation, held in Washington and presided over by a Bolivian vice minister and a U.S. under secretary, was sparsely covered in the news media.

Afterward, Bolivian vice minister for foreign relations Juan Carlos Alurralde declared that future developments between the two countries would be based on principles of “mutual respect and shared responsibility.”¹ While at

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first glance this statement looks like diplomatic boilerplate, on closer consideration it reveals a major shift in the history of the two countries’ relationship. For the first time, the United States has let Bolivia—a small, poor, and geopolitically disadvantaged country—reframe the terms of the bilateral relationship through a progressive (and aggressive) campaign to halt what Morales has repeatedly characterized as a history of imperialism. Moving beyond Bolivia, this event also has potentially important implications for power dynamics throughout the region.

Since at least World War II, when the United States became interested in the country for its tin deposits, it has dictated the terms of its relationship with Bolivia. Ranging from its demand for natural resources to a fear of falling Communist dominoes, from military outposts to the war on drugs and experiments in neoliberalism, U.S. actions in Bolivia have in many ways been representative of its behavior in Latin America as a whole. Morales’s September 2008 expulsion of Ambassador Philip Goldberg, part

of a diplomatic firestorm in which he also expelled the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and appropriated certain U.S. Agency for International Development programs, was a fierce response to this historical dynamic of domination followed by dependency that in turn opened doors to new forms of domination.

Many on the international left have long considered Morales and his MAS party to be shining examples of an emerging political “pink tide” in South America, driven by widespread rejection of U.S.-style neoliberalism. In this context, Morales’s 2008 actions were viewed as an achievement, a mile marker in the continent-wide movement away from the long shadow of the United States. As such, the recent reconciliation has been greeted with quiet disappointment by many left-leaning observers.

There seems to have been a collective knee-jerk aversion to taking a second look at something that at first glance portends a backslide in Bolivian and indeed regional independence. Meanwhile, some in the Bolivian and international left who have become increasingly critical of the MAS see the agreement as yet another step down the slippery slope toward “reconstituted neoliberalism,” in the phrase of historian Jeffrey R. Webber, or “neoliberalism with an Indian face,” as Aymara political leader Felipe Quispe Huanca has put it.² As a result, there has been a broad failure to note something that is truly significant for anyone who feels that Bolivia and all of Latin America would benefit from more “mutual respect” in their relationship with the United States.

Notably, the November agreement is almost entirely concerned with broad principles. The document’s founding principle is the aforementioned mutual respect for national

sovereignty. The accord additionally refers to respect for human rights, non-intervention, the rights of states to choose their political and economic systems, and peaceful resolution in all disputes. It then calls for the establishment of a joint committee to oversee and approve all further actions between the two countries, particularly mentioning the allocation of U.S. financial assistance.

As the only technical point in the agreement, this proposal is a powerful one, speaking to a half-century in which Bolivia was among the world’s highest per capita recipients of U.S. aid, often distributed unilaterally with the goal of bolstering U.S. interests in the country and region.

NACLA blogger Emily Achtenberg, in one of the few English-language analyses of the accord, published in her article “A Political Victory for Bolivia,” paints a more complete picture of the agreement’s basic thrust.³ While advising a wait-and-see attitude before reaching any final verdict, Achtenberg concludes that “the framework agreement provides a powerful symbol of enforced equality between a weak and a powerful nation.”

Considered in the historical context of Bolivia-U.S. relations, this founding document is indeed a powerful symbol. As Deputy Foreign Minister Juan Carlos Alurralde points out, it is the first accord since 1951 to move beyond mere technical cooperation to include broader issues of political dialogue and shared responsibility. While Alurralde was speaking only of Bolivia, it is in fact the first time in more than half a century that the United States has signed any accord in South America that so directly addresses its position of dominance and exploitation.

Indeed, while many Latin American governments have criticized U.S. influence when trying to break

away from the country, none before the MAS have maintained their critique during the subsequent thawing of relations. Instead, some mixture of U.S. gunboat and dollar diplomacy has pressured the transgressing government into returning to the United States with hat in hand, asking for forgiveness in the form of more aid or more trade. Bolivia has taken strides to break free from this dynamic by winning not only the war—in this case the diplomatic conflict of 2008—but also the subsequent cold war, for which the November agreement effectively serves as a peace treaty. So while the 2008 conflict was the more exciting story, the recent détente has been by far the more groundbreaking, setting a diplomatic precedent that could be used by other countries in the Americas to appeal for more equal relations with the United States.

AT THIS POINT, A SKEPTIC might contend that the devil is in the details—in this case, not the document’s grandiose language but the concrete actions between the two countries. In this regard, it thus far appears that Morales and the MAS intend to do things differently. On January 20, Bolivia signed a new drug accord with the United States and Brazil, additionally including the United Nations in a supporting role. In preparing the agreement, Morales was reported to have repeatedly dragged his heels, threatening to call off negotiations if further concessions to Bolivian sovereignty were not made. This tenacity marked a clear intention to immediately apply the principles of the newly established accord.

The resulting document has created a more substantive balance of power than had previously existed in the U.S. war on drugs, certainly

in Bolivia and perhaps in the continent as a whole. While the United States will continue to provide equipment and some training, Brazil will also assist in training and monitoring duties, and Bolivia will be responsible for anti-narcotics efforts. Meanwhile, the United Nations will act as an observer. While the precise terms of the new drug accord have not been disclosed, it appears to give Bolivia greater flexibility to implement more of the voluntary “social control” programs favored by the Morales administration and never before featured in any U.S.-Bolivia drug accord.

Some may criticize any continued U.S. involvement in Bolivian drug policy, while others question the rising regional power aspirations of Brazil. Indeed, as the disastrous exploits of the United Nations’ Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) remind us, foreign intervention is always troublesome, regardless of how many countries are involved in its oversight.

However, the U.S. war on drugs has been a powerful element and symbol of its military and political domination of much of the Americas over the past two decades, and the sight of the country losing its grip over the terms of that war is a powerful affirmation of growing South American independence.

Over the next several months, as if to reassure those doubting the direction of the relationship, Morales fired off a series of sharp reprimands of U.S. power in Bolivia and the region. These included calling out the Obama administration’s foreign policy as interventionist and authoritarian, and culminated in a renewal, on March 19, of his threat to expel the United States if its embassy continued to infringe on Bolivian sovereignty. He did not reveal the specific nature of the

alleged transgression, but following the 2008 expulsion, the threat surely cannot be taken as mere empty rhetoric.

This string of accusations and threats also made apparent another possible reading of the previous months of cooperation: that Morales, in the face of dipping approval, both nationwide and particularly within his party’s base, had invited the United States back to provide the MAS with a common enemy around which to again rally popular support, much as it had in 2008 against its political opponents. While this is only one of several interpretations, it is an alternative explanation for Bolivia’s desire to reconcile that, in light of the threat, appears more logical than any intended capitulation to U.S. pressure.

One week later, on March 27 in the eastern department of Beni, Bolivian officials stopped a U.S. embassy vehicle transporting unauthorized weapons, munitions, and communications equipment. This type of extra-official behavior had been commonplace in previous years, escalating particularly in the eastern parts of the country leading up to 2008. Again, the Morales administration showed itself determined to push back against any perceived U.S. incursions, taking the opportunity to further give shape to the principles espoused in the November agreement.

Despite these recent hiccups—or perhaps in concert with them if we are to believe that the current administration has invited the United States back as a target of critique—on March 29, Morales officially ratified the “framework agreement.” Foreign minister David Choquehuanca characterized the move as an act of good faith by Morales, despite his “many bitter expe-

riences” with the United States. He again echoed the demand that the new relationship be based on “full respect for national legislation” and “the sovereignty of the people.”⁴

Aside from Morales’s continuance of fiery rhetoric—such as calling for an end to the U.S. dictatorship over South America at the Summit of the Americas in April—in the past months there have been relatively few developments in the Bolivia-U.S. relationship. Taking account of the present state of affairs, we see the Morales government again pushing back against what it considers undue U.S. influence, while at the same time reengaging the country through diplomatic channels.

As often as not, this push-and-pull is executed simultaneously, with Morales issuing combative rhetoric while other MAS officials stress points of agreement and cooperation. Regardless of whether this dynamic is the result of political calculation or a genuine rift within the MAS, it has so far been effective in permitting Bolivia to shape the contours of the relationship more than it ever had in the past.

The danger of backslide is of course still present. Various U.S. Embassy and USAID officials in Bolivia, interviewed April 2010 on condition of anonymity, repeatedly likened Morales and the MAS to Victor Paz Estenssoro and his MNR party, leaders of the country’s 1952 revolution who later gave up more radical political goals in exchange for U.S. financial assistance. The hope then is that Morales and the MAS can also be swayed by the sirens of dollar diplomacy. For the United States, the November agreement likely offers greater opportunities to work this black magic. But the United States has had to concede far more control than ever be-

fore to reach this point, and Morales and MAS thus far appear intent on accentuating their gains.

ON THE WHOLE, WHAT emerges from the November agreement and subsequent developments is a plausible blueprint for a new way of relating to the United States in the 21st century. While it might not be revolutionary, it does appear to be a relatively practical and potentially durable way forward. Regionally, another step away from United States domination has certainly been taken. The November agreement serves as an admission by the United States that it is more willing than ever to accept the terms pushed on it by a sufficiently stubborn country, regardless of size or power disparities.

Much as the 2008 expulsion of the U.S. ambassador in Bolivia was soon followed by similar moves in Venezuela and Ecuador—as well as more open critiques of U.S. power throughout the continent—so too does the recent accord create more space for other countries to redefine historic power dynamics on more equal terms.

Indeed, Argentina's April expropriation of Spain's Repsol oil subsidiary YPF was closely followed by Bolivia's May Day nationalization of its principal power-grid company, formerly owned by the Spanish Red Eléctrica Española. More recently, Ecuador's decision to protect WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in its London Embassy has received widespread support from South American leaders, several of whom—Morales included—have been quick to note the hypocritical



Bolivian president Evo Morales speaks to a press conference at a September 2008 meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York. PHOTO BY MONIKA GRAFF/THE IMAGE WORKS

rhetoric emerging from countries like Britain and the United States, both of whom have long histories of granting asylum to murderous dictators. In both cases, albeit in different ways, we see a region that appears to be gaining consciousness of an increased freedom of independent political action vis-à-vis

the 20th century's great powers, all the more so when its governments act in concert.

While the future of Bolivia-U.S. relations is far from set in stone, the November agreement serves as a quietly powerful precedent for reshaping power dynamics on the American continent in the 21st century. ■

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Reverend Donna Schaper of Judson Memorial Church with other clergy and community supporters conduct civil disobedience calling for release of Jean Montrevil, detained immigrant rights leader. PHOTO BY MIZUE AIZEKI/FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM

Our Stories Give Us Power: Working for Justice at the Grassroots

JEN ROCK

AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, THE U.S. IMMIGRATION system went through a huge transformation. Under the Patriot Act, signed into law a month after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the agency that formerly handled all immigration matters, was absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security. The INS was then broken into three separate branches: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), responsible for responding to immigration petitions and naturalization processes; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),

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responsible for detention and removal of unauthorized immigrants; and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), responsible for regulating and facilitating trade. As a result of these changes, the immigration system became even more cumbersome than it already was, and significantly more resources were dedicated to enforcement—specifically immigrant detention and deportation.

From 2002 through 2011, the rate of deportation increased by almost 45%, while the deportation of alleged terrorists has declined by almost 60%.¹ Increasingly, the federal government has demonstrated that immigration policy will emphasize detention and deportation while it ignores the obvious need for reform.

As unauthorized immigrants continue to enter the United States, the need for comprehensive reform, which includes creating pathways to legaliza-

tion, grows. Despite this need, in his first three years in office, President Obama has presided over the deportation of over 1.5 million people—more deportations than under any other president since Eisenhower.² These deportations have resulted primarily from a new strategy: the marriage of the criminal justice and immigration systems. The already broken immigration system is now entangled with the deeply flawed criminal justice system. This trend is commonly called “cimmigration.”

In response to this state of affairs, the New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia (NSM) was formed in late 2007 to help immigrant communities defend themselves from “cimmigration.”

Our storytelling uses popular education models of teaching, emphasizing that we are all expert chroniclers of our own experience.

In Philadelphia, NSM began to connect the city’s powerful and diverse faith communities with the immigrant rights movement. NSM is a grassroots member-based organization with adherents from both immigrant and allied communities. The group works within these faith communities by helping to provide education, skill building, accompaniment, and advocacy.

Our long-term vision for social justice is focused on the belief that all people should be guaranteed civil and human rights. Central to our vision is the belief that the leadership of any long-lasting movement for social justice must come from the affected communities themselves. Our work helps immigrant community members to build the skills, knowledge, and sense of power needed to

be at the forefront of our campaigns. In addition, we are constantly finding ways to connect affected immigrant communities with allied communities to build relationships and strengthen our advocacy.

WE USE A VARIETY OF strategies to achieve these ends, but our principal method relies on a technique we call “storytelling.” We see storytelling as a tool not only for advocacy but also for leadership development. We do not “give voice to the voiceless.” Rather, our fundamental belief is that while all people have a voice, the immigrant voice is consistently ignored. Our work is to make immigrant voices heard.

Blanca Pacheco, a community organizer for NSM, explains it as follows: “I want my community to know there is a space where their voice is important and will be heard; where their story is important and their struggle and their rights as human beings are respected. I want my people to know that along with the racism, breaking up of families, and pain caused by a broken immigration system, there are also organizations that are fighting with us and that they care about our struggle. But I also want my community to realize that we need to join forces to achieve what we want. We are millions of people and we need to join our hands and walk together towards a real change.”

Our storytelling uses popular education models of teaching, em-

phasizing that we are all expert chroniclers of our own experiences. Our members and leaders come together in small, localized storytelling circles. In those circles, people meet to share their experiences, identify commonalities, identify an issue and eventually strategize how to respond. We use a participant model of storytelling that happens in the setting of an interview. The group identifies the theme the interview should address, comes up with the questions the interview will discuss, and practices interview skills. Then members of the group interview each other. The interviews are audio recorded and edited to become four- to six-minute audio pieces that can be shared in a variety of public venues. They become tools to share with wider audiences.

Leaders from storytelling circles have spoken at community forums in front of hundreds of people and elected officials, at public debates, at public hearings, as well as to print and radio news media and at press conferences, and to other allied and immigrant communities. Through storytelling circles, people take control of their story and use it to exercise their community power.

One of the challenges that the storytelling circles frequently face arises from the fact that the most commonly prosecuted felony in the United States today is “illegal re-entry.”³ One faces this charge if he or she is caught returning to the United States without legal permission, after having been deported. This means that if someone previously deported returns to the country without authorization and is stopped for, let us say, a traffic violation, that individual can be arrested and ultimately turned over to ICE, which can claim to have caught a felon. In this way, the marriage of the immigration and the criminal justice systems is

creating gross violations of the civil and human rights of immigrants in the United States.

An example of “crimmigration’s” impact may be found in the personal story of a leader of the NSM. This woman’s son was arrested, transferred to two different prisons (first in western Pennsylvania and eventually in Ohio), and 22 days later was deported to Honduras. Upon being arrested by local police, he was immediately transferred to ICE custody. He was never given a day in court, neither pre-trial nor arraignment. His mother never learned what charges he faced. Although the Constitution is meant to protect the rights of all people, immigration status is a means by which those rights are denied.

When someone is arrested by a local police officer and booked at the local police station, he or she is fingerprinted. If that police depart-

ment is participating in ICE’s Secure Communities program, those fingerprints are forwarded to ICE and compared with all the fingerprints ICE has on file. If that individual has interacted with ICE in the past, the agency can issue an ICE hold, requesting that local police not release the individual until ICE can come and interview or often transfer that person into their own custody. ICE is now able to rely on the resources of local police to apprehend and identify people, who can then be transferred to ICE custody.

Under the Obama administration, the Secure Communities program has expanded rapidly. Currently, Secure Communities is operating in 3,074 jurisdictions out of 3,181—97% of the counties in the country.⁴ The expansion of the program has been progressing, as the probability of a comprehensive immigration reform has continued to fade.

STARTING IN 2009, STRONG grassroots resistance has been mounting against the growing “crimmigration” system. New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia has been a part of that effort. Philadelphia was one of the first cities to participate in Secure Communities, when it was a pilot program under the Bush administration. In the summer of 2008, grassroots community groups, including the NSM, began to see a growing crisis, in which people who were being picked up by the police were being turned over to ICE and not coming home. Many immigrants were facing deportation after being arrested, often for minor offenses, and always before conviction. Fear has escalated in our communities and trust has almost entirely eroded between immigrant communities and police.

Antonio, a leader at New Sanctuary Movement explains the



At the Brooklyn Bridge, July 29, 2010. PHOTO BY MIZUE AIZEKI/FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM

situation as follows: “My children are really bad off psychologically—they can’t stand to see a policeman. For them, the police are bad. For them all police are bad. When they see the police, they are scared. My littlest one, when he’s in the car, he wants to hide himself so that the police won’t see him. The police were the ones there when they took me away under arrest covered in blood. My daughter, she wanted to be a policewoman, because I always explained to my children how the police take care of us.”

Back in August 2008, NSM developed a “Know Your Rights” training program, aimed at raising

awareness of this new policy and educating the community about their rights. By the spring of 2009, we began our storytelling campaign, which emphasizes personal testimony as a tool for advocacy and leadership development. In the spring of 2010, NSM joined the national “Turning the Tide” campaign organized by the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, which seeks to create a coordinated network of community organizations that will turn the tide against the criminalization of immigrants.

In the summer of 2010, our storytelling campaign had its first victory: an amendment to a con-

tract between the city of Philadelphia and ICE to protect victims and witnesses from ICE interrogation. In June 2011, the Philadelphia City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for the end of all collaboration between the Philadelphia Police Department and ICE. In the winter of 2012, our attention turned to Harrisburg, the state capital, to fight the passage of anti-immigrant bills on the state level. We will continue to advocate for the rights of the immigrant community and fight against all policies and bills that violate the rights and dignity of immigrants. □

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Marching through New York’s Washington Heights neighborhood for “Full Rights for all Immigrants.” March, 2006. PHOTO BY MIZUE AIZEKI/FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM

The U.S. and Ecuador: Is Intervention on the Table?

NANCY HIEMSTRA

OVER THE LAST DECADE, THE UNITED STATES HAS come to view Ecuador as a security threat for the entire Western Hemisphere. The growing population of undocumented Ecuadorans in the United States has been accompanied by the development of internationally connected human smuggling operations in Ecuador. U.S.-Ecuador relations have soured as President Rafael Correa continues to decry U.S. efforts to plug perceived holes in Ecuador's borders as violations of Ecuadoran sovereignty. While critics charge that the portrayal of Ecuador as a terrorist springboard to the United States is patently false, it has successfully propelled the expansion of extra-territorial policing efforts in South America, inadvertently solidified Ecuador as a smuggling hub, and laid the rhetorical groundwork for justifying future interventions in the region.

About 10% of Ecuador's population of 14 million lives outside the country; half of these migrants—over 560,000—are in the United States.¹ Most of this migration to the United States is unauthorized, and in 2011, Ecuador was eighth on the list of origin countries for apprehended undocumented migrants. What really began to raise eyebrows in the United States, however, was the development of illicit networks to facilitate Ecuadoran migration.

Until around 1985, unauthorized Ecuadoran migrants simply flew to Mexico and crossed the U.S.-Mexico border by land. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, amid the War on Drugs and growing public unease over increasing Latino immigration, the United States pressured Mexico to tighten its borders and visa process. Then, in 1996, the United States and Mexico established the Regional Conference on Migration, also known as

the Puebla Process, a forum through which members—Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central American and Caribbean nations—could share “best practices,” engage in joint policing efforts, and train immigration authorities. In addition, the United States spearheaded bilateral agreements with Mexico and Guatemala aimed specifically at stopping Latin American migrants before they reached the U.S.-Mexico border, including the imposition of special visa requirements by some transit countries.²

In Ecuador, a system quickly developed in response to these efforts. Ecuadorans determined to get to the United States contracted smugglers, known as *coyotes* or *coyoteros*, who for a few thousand dollars flew migrants to Central American countries that did not require special visas and then moved them north by land.³ However, after a severe political and economic crisis hit Ecuador in 1999, transporting migrants a few at a time, as air travel allowed, could not fill the demand for migration services. Smugglers looked to the sea for a new route, and vessels began to leave from Ecuador's coast to travel north to Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Mexico. The boats employed were often dangerously overcrowded and unsafe, and there were numerous reports of shipwrecks and drownings.⁴

The opening of the sea route coincided with the expansion of U.S. Coast Guard's policing activities into the eastern Pacific. In the context of the Drug War and continued Latin American migration—including surging South American migration—the United States signed bilateral agreements with over 25 Central and South American countries that allow the Coast Guard to police their territorial waters.⁵ In addition, the U.S. military established a base in Manta, Ecuador, that facilitated heightened migration policing south beyond the Caribbean.⁶ If close to Ecuador, the Coast Guard landed intercepted migrants at the Manta base. If farther afield, migrants were offloaded in Guatemala or Mexico to be detained and eventually deported. Though the sea route

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was largely abandoned as the crisis-induced migration frenzy dissipated, Coast Guard operations in the eastern Pacific served to “push out” U.S. borders by setting a precedent for international boundary policing activities. (The number of Ecuadorans interdicted by the Coast Guard reached a high of 1,608 in 2002, held relatively steady for a few years, then declined after 2006.)⁷ What’s more, an international framework for stopping migrants traveling between South America and the United States was established.

Despite—and because of—these geographically expansive policing efforts, the smuggling industry continues to play an important role in Ecuador-U.S. migration. The preferred route now is to first fly from Ecuador to Honduras, though some migrants make the entire trip by land. While few Ecuadorans today face the dangers of the sea route, those in transit still confront grave risks, as seen in the presence of Ecuadorans among the victims in the August 2011 Tamaulipas, Mexico,

massacre of 72 migrants.⁸ Smuggling fees have also climbed; migrants now pay around \$15,000 to get to the United States, a debt that typically takes years to repay.

As it became more organized in order to circumvent the U.S. enforcement net, Ecuador’s human smuggling industry also developed international connections. Migrants tapped into the network from countries both *inside* the region, such as Peru and Colombia, and from much farther away. For example, Chinese, Indians, Nepalis, and Saudi Arabians were reportedly intercepted at sea on Ecuadoran smuggling vessels. The entrance of these migrants into Ecuador was facilitated by the country’s relatively liberal visa policy, requiring a tourist visa from only 27 countries.⁹

After the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. officials viewed the entrance of such foreign nationals into the Americas with increasing concern. They feared that not only was Ecuador becoming a portal for U.S.-bound migrants from around

the world, but that Ecuador’s surging smuggling and criminal infrastructure would attract international terrorists. Indeed, as early as 2005, U.S. officials suggested that Al Qaeda could be operating on Ecuador’s borders.¹⁰ Such unsubstantiated claims suggest a failure to see links between U.S.-driven intervention in the Middle East and forced migration, as well as between hardening international borders and the rise of globally connected smuggling operations.

A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN Ecuador-U.S. relations in the mid-2000s caused U.S. alarm bells to sound. Previously, the Ecuadoran government had generally cooperated with the United States in boundary policing and smuggling efforts, as seen in the construction of the Manta base. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had also worked directly with a unit of the Ecuadoran National Police, called the Anti-Contraband Operative Unit (COAP), offering

funds, equipment, and training. In addition, the government accepted advice from the United States in efforts to thwart human smuggling, such as how to make national identity cards more difficult to falsify, according to Pablo de la Vega, of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, speaking in July 2007.

However, U.S. activities at and within Ecuador's borders were increasingly interpreted as an affront to Ecuadoran sovereignty, provoking growing public and political ire in Ecuador. For example, critics charged that ICE had too much control over COAP, even purportedly sending the police unit to exit hot spots to detain U.S.-bound migrants.

The Manta base in particular became a major source of controversy. First, the base's 10-year lease had been signed in 1999 by a short-lived president and never ratified by a legislative body, leading to persistent claims that the base was on national soil illegally. Second, the obvious involvement of the base in migrant interdiction violated provisions of the base's lease, which limited U.S. activities to those related to combating drug trafficking. Additionally, intercepted Ecuadorans complained of abusive behavior by U.S. sailors. What sparked the most controversy, however, was the U.S. practice of burning and sinking some of the captured vessels. While the Coast Guard states that it sinks only unmanned vessels and only when absolutely necessary, many Ecuadorans believed that most intercepted boats were fishing vessels sunk to scare smugglers and migrants.¹¹

U.S.-Ecuador relations deteriorated on a governmental level when left-leaning Rafael Correa became president in 2007. Much of Correa's popularity stems from his willingness to defy the United States, and he has taken numerous actions that

have frustrated U.S. efforts to police the Ecuador-U.S. boundary. In early 2008, Correa announced that he would not renew the lease for the Manta base when it expired the following year, and the United States was forced to close the base and transfer its operations to Colombia.

Then, in June 2008, Correa declared, "We are on a campaign to dismantle that 20th-century invention of passports and visas."¹² He has since promoted the idea of "universal citizenship," stating that safe and secure human mobility across international borders is a fundamental human right. In a symbolic move to back this up, Correa also altered policy so that anyone, from anywhere in the world, could visit Ecuador without a visa for 90 days, a move still unmatched in scope in South America.

The new policy dismayed U.S. officials, who saw Correa's declaration as blatantly irresponsible. And, in fact, international smugglers took note as well. The day after the policy went into effect, planes of Chinese migrants to be fed into existing smuggling networks began arriving in Ecuador. By December of that year, about 12,000 Chinese had entered the country, and Correa revised the policy to require more documentation from Chinese visitors.¹³

But there have since been reports of other nationalities using Ecuador as a transit country. Of particular concern are migrants from Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and countries of East Africa. Ecuador did add entry requirements in 2010 for nine countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia) in response to concerns, but U.S. officials believe migrants from terrorist hot spots could still piece together routes to the United States. For ex-

ample, they believe, someone from Pakistan could travel to Iran, fly to Ecuador, and purchase falsified Ecuadoran identity documents from the now well-established forgery industry, and then travel to Central American countries that allow Ecuadorans to visit without a visa.¹⁴

Further heightening tensions, Correa in January 2009 abruptly terminated U.S. cooperation with COAP and expelled two ICE attachés, alleging that ICE was requiring control over COAP in exchange for funds. In a characteristically dramatic radio address, Correa told one of the attachés to "keep your dirty money!" "We don't need it," he said. "Here there is sovereignty and dignity."¹⁵ Ecuador's relationship with the United States reached a low point in April 2011, when Correa abruptly expelled the U.S. Ambassador Heather Hodges in response to WikiLeaks' release of a report in which Hodge suggested that Correa was aware of and perhaps complicit with corruption in the Ecuadoran National Police. The United States responded with the expulsion of Ecuador's ambassador.

While diplomatic relations have been reestablished, these events accompanied a growing sense of panic surrounding Ecuador on the part of some officials and analysts. Strategic studies have warned about links between Correa's government and Colombia's FARC, cite reports of criminal organizations from China, Colombia, and Russia in Ecuador, and allege that groups like Hezbollah are operating there.¹⁶ Some analysts even interpret recent agreements with Iran to develop mineral resources in Ecuador as dangerous attempts to aid Iran's nuclear program, and see commercial and energy agreements with Cuba, Iran, and Venezuela as "government-authorized illicit tunnels."¹⁷



In February 2012, Correa made another policy change in line with the idea of “universal citizenship” that further upset U.S. officials: He significantly lowered requirements for obtaining Ecuadoran citizenship to two years of residence. Conservative U.S. analysts issued grave warnings that now “virtually anyone” can easily obtain an Ecuadoran passport to facilitate movement north toward U.S. borders. Otto Reich, former assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, and Ezequiel Vázquez Ger stated in a blog:

*The government of Ecuador has once again crossed the line between irresponsible policies and ideologically driven actions that have created a serious security problem not only for its citizens but also for the entire Western Hemisphere. The disarray created in Ecuador’s immigration policy has permitted transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups—possibly including al Qaeda—to potentially use the country as a base of operations with the ultimate objective of harming the United States.*¹⁸

In July, 1999, the U.S. Coast Guard interdicted an Ecuadoran ship, the *Canella II*, which it believed to be carrying migrants heading to the United States. According to the Coast Guard, 141 people, excluding the crew, were found on board. The Coast Guard maintains a Web site called *Alien Migrant Interdiction*, with one page devoted to operations off the coast of Ecuador. PHOTO BY U.S. COAST GUARD

Ecuador-U.S. relations have continued to sour. In June, Correa announced that Ecuador was withdrawing from the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly known as the School of the Americas, ending a long-standing relationship through which Ecuadoran military officers received U.S. training.¹⁹ Correa has also threatened to expel USAID, charging that its projects have ulterior motives of destabilizing the Ecuadoran government.²⁰ Then, in August, Ecuador granted political asylum to Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder, who is holed up in Ecuador’s British embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden and then, potentially, to the United States.²¹ Collectively, this suite of actions has led many U.S. analysts and policy advisers to view Ecuador as a serious, sinister threat.

Defenders of Ecuador have responded that U.S. fears are unsupported and illogical. For instance, Nathalie Cely, the Ecuadoran ambassador to the United States, concluded that Reich and Vazquez Ger’s blog was full of “invented conspiracy theories.”²² Indeed, the idea that hordes of “dangerous” foreigners are streaming through Ecuador appears overblown; for example, the numbers of Pakistanis recorded entering Ecuador in 2010 was 253; Indians, 192; and Afghans, 72. What’s more, such an alarmist view is based on the assumption that all non-Latin Americans who enter Ecuador are terrorists, instead of people driven from their home countries by poverty, fear, and persecution. This view also ignores recent cooperation of Ecuadoran law enforcement in the capture and extradition of international criminals

to the United States.²³ The likelihood exists, too, that international criminals are drawn to Ecuador more by the spreading effects of the U.S. Drug War than by migrant smuggling. Even Ecuadorans who do not fully support Correa generally view his actions as rightful assertions of sovereignty for a country long bullied by the United States.

Whether based on fact or paranoid fantasy, what, then, is accomplished by U.S. hysteria about Ecuador? Migration from Ecuador to the United States—with the involvement of smugglers—continues. In fact, increased extra-territorial policing has solidified smuggling operations, as migrants find smuggling services necessary to reach their destination, and smugglers expand networks and develop international connections. Indeed, policy makers and

analysts' singular focus illustrates a stubborn ignorance regarding the desperation behind circuitous migration paths and the glaring socioeconomic disparities between source and destination countries. Furthermore, such tunnel vision highlights the clash of Ecuadorans' increasingly vocal assertion of their sovereign rights with U.S. officials' assertion of their right to police human mobility far from U.S. borders.

Despite these failures and contradictions, U.S. anxiety has accomplished two possible objectives, which deserve careful scrutiny. First, it has played a role in the expansion of U.S. boundary policing into the eastern Pacific and put into place a framework to control national borders far south of U.S. territory. Second, hawkish reactions hint that the time may soon come for more aggressive action.

For example, in a February 2011 blog post, José Cárdenas, former adviser on Latin American relations for the Bush administration, wrote of Chávez and Correa's relationships with Iran: "If their actions are found to constitute a threat to international peace and security, they must be made to pay the price."²⁴ Cárdenas strongly criticized the Obama administration for maintaining diplomatic relations with the Correa government. In their April post, Reich and Vázquez Ger claimed that Ecuador was "becoming a failed state" and suggested "the time has come" to do something to stop the supposedly out-of-control flow of terrorists and other illicit goods and activities in Ecuador. The laying of such foundations for future direct intervention in the region merits critical attention and vigilance. ■

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A Venezuelan voter leaving a polling booth in Caracas. The ink on his finger shows that he has just voted. PHOTO BY ROBIN ALEXANDER

What Now?

FRED ROSEN

The voters have spoken. What now?

Elections held in five American countries this past year raised some tantalizing questions and suggested some possibilities—some hopeful and some discomfiting—for the shape of the Latin American and inter-American future.

First, there's El Salvador. There, in March 2012, the former guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) lost several municipal elections to the country's authoritarian right, but remain the principal political force in the country. Perhaps more noteworthy, while they continue to face an iron-fisted adversary, the FMLN remains committed to the electoral road to social transformation.

Later in the year, in one of the world's most closely watched elections, U.S. voters denied the presidency to the far right but reelected a president whose goals and beliefs—especially regarding Latin America and Latin Americans—remain largely

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unstated, unknown, and, it would seem, not particularly progressive. As of now, for example, the U.S.-sponsored drug war in Latin American countries appears likely to persist, as does the current closed-door policy toward Latino immigrants. Worse yet, even as democratic processes are becoming rooted in much of the Americas, the legitimacy of the U.S. electoral process is being threatened by the billions of dollars spent—or better said, invested—in senatorial and presidential campaigns.

And, finally, the two high-profile Latin American presidential decisions: Venezuela and Mexico. Voters in Venezuela ratified Hugo Chávez's leadership, though as of this writing, his uncertain health leaves some doubt about whether he will serve out a full six-year term. Physical well being aside, there are some important differences between Chávez the strong-willed, revolutionary president and Chavismo, the set of programs and policies he has set in motion, as Daniel Hellinger and Margarita López Maya imply in their respective nuanced report ("Chávez and the Intellectuals," Page 51) and strong critique ("A Dissenting Opinion," Page 53). Did voters perceive that distinction when they reelected Chávez after 14 years? We don't really know—but it doesn't seem to matter. Both Chavismo and its creator remain popular; the Chavistas won handily in December's gubernatorial elections, two months after the presidential contest.

What we can assert with surety is that Chavismo has relegitimized the electoral process in Venezuela and, perhaps, throughout the region, given its strong influence on the Latin American left. As Gregory Wilpert tells us on page 39, Chávez's motives for seeking to remain in power via transparent and efficient electoral processes are diverse, and one of the strongest may be his desire to endow his Bolivarian movement with a healthy dose of legitimate, internationally recognized political power. Whatever the reasons, and whatever the reader of these lines may think of the Chavista style of governing, over his 14 years in office, the Venezuelan president has without doubt resuscitated an electoral process that had gone stale and corrupt, and transformed it into a vibrant system of which his followers are justifiably proud. This is no small feat in a country that, for 40 years, held elections in name only, with two power-sharing centrist parties serving alternating terms in the executive, to the exclusion of all other political forces.

It is also no small thing that free and fair elections in Venezuela should be used to promote radical change, rather than quiescent stability. It is often remarked that elections ("free and fair" or otherwise) serve not only to choose among candidates for public office but also to

grant a measure of legitimacy to the state or ruling government. Thus we associate periodic, legitimate elections with political stability. Also thus, the recent U.S. concern with periodic elections as a means to promote stability—for better or worse—in the region; this political emphasis is mirrored by an academic concern among political scientists. As Greg Morton expresses it in this report,

[The academic focus] on stability [has become] more a concern about ensuring and consolidating formal democracy—holding clean elections, introducing liberal individual rights, creating participatory citizenship—all of which is distinct from popular democracy, which is based on the introduction and extension of socio-economic rights.

Clearly, free and transparent elections are not the be-all and end-all of political democracy—not to mention social democracy. Though it has frequently served as an important safeguard against authoritarian rule, electoral democracy does not, in and of itself, guarantee popular participation in governmental decision-making. When groups within civil society exercise political democracy, the result probably has more consequence for individual freedoms, political participation, and communal solidarity than when one candidate or another is elected to governmental power. Nonetheless, periodic free-and-fair elections—or elections that are, at least, perceived to be free and fair—do bring a certain level of both democratic legitimacy and political stability to a political regime.

That perception was severely tested in Mexico in July, when voters brought the once long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) back to power. The people gave 46-year-old Enrique Peña Nieto of the old corporatist party (and its dubious democratic bona fides) 38% of the vote in a three-way presidential race. The victory of the PRI, combined with its questionable adherence to Mexican campaign rules, cast doubt on the legitimacy of the process.

Though the official vote was ratified by Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) within a month of the election, the candidate of the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Andrés Manuel López Obrador, refused to concede defeat. As he did in 2006, AMLO, as he is known, alleged various frauds in the electoral process, ranging from vote buying to ballot miscounting. No doubt motivated by the more obvious fraud of the last election, which deprived him of the presidency—and by the even clearer fraud of 1988 (later admitted to by its perpetrators), which kept then-PRD candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas out of office—AMLO vowed to keep his campaign going in the streets and via civil-society organizations. Several groups, including the radical student movement, #YoSoy132, featured in our

fall 2012 issue, soon joined his campaign to delegitimize the PRI candidate and official victor, Peña Nieto.

On December 1, as Peña Nieto was sworn into office in the Federal Chamber of Deputies in Mexico City, the streets of the capital were redolent with tear gas and riddled with rubber bullets as municipal and federal police countered what began as a nonviolent protest. Many observers remarked that the violence appeared to be provoked by Federal Police, now under the command of the incoming PRI. If so, their actions may have been intended to show demonstrators that the old PRI was back in charge, perhaps providing a foretaste of how the party intends to respond to public dissent, in its new six-year term in office.

Again, though the election is behind us, we may ask whether PRI voters knew they were opting for use of the heavy hand against dissent? Did they vote for the PRI because, as one of its ubiquitous slogans had it, the

Thanks, in part, to the successful Chavista use of transparent elections to embark on a program of social transformation, a large part of the Latin American left has now embraced the nonviolent electoral process.

party “knew how to govern” in times of crisis? Did they opt for the PRI because they vaguely remembered the days of corruption, peace, and plenty? Did they vote for stability and legitimacy?

Legitimacy, however, is a curious phenomenon. It implies little about the democratic nature of a ruler or regime; rather, it refers to public acceptance. If authorities stuff the ballot boxes, threaten voters with reprisal, bribe them with free groceries, or any other such coercion, then electoral democracy becomes illegitimate because the authorities have violated the agreed-upon rules of the game. Yet many political regimes in countries lacking free elections recognize no such rules; they may nonetheless build legitimate acceptance of their reign by other means—perhaps the divine or historical right of rulers, the wisdom of the party, or its strategic ability to “deliver the goods.”

Mexico, under one-party rule from 1929 until a victory by the opposition PAN in 2000, made no pretence (until very recently) of holding fair elections. Nonetheless, the nation enjoyed a certain political stability precisely because of the ruling party’s ability to threaten

(and enact) selective violence and, most importantly in a poor country, deliver the goods.

Finally, as Stephen Maher writes in this report (“Elections, Imperialism, Socialism and Democracy,” Page 59), it was not so long ago that Latin American revolutionaries disdained the electoral process entirely. Following the midcentury overthrow of democratically elected leftist governments in countries like Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Chile, many on the left felt that only the armed construction of a new state apparatus could bring about the kind of social change that might elevate the great mass of their populations out of hunger and poverty. Elected governments that left other state structures intact, this view held, could operate only within strict limits of permissible action and discourse—action and discourse that could not make fundamental changes to political and economic structures—if they were to remain in office. Real change required rule by a strong hand, intolerant of any meaningful dissent

Democratic socialists who opposed this view (Salvador Allende, for example) accepted its validity to a certain extent. Allende always knew that the Chilean military, backed by U.S. military and economic power, was capable of overthrowing a government whose policies threatened the interests of the country’s—and hemisphere’s—elites. Allende simply countered that the democratic freedoms historically championed by the left necessarily encompassed freedom of thought, expression, and of assembly, and that abandoning these principles in the struggle for power—and the administration of power—inevitably led to the corruption of the socialist struggle itself, and its transformation into the struggle for pure power.

Thanks, in part, to the successful Chavista use of transparent elections to embark on a program of social transformation, a large part of the Latin American left has now embraced the nonviolent electoral process. The democratic bar has been raised in the region. Mexico’s PRI, on the other hand, with political roots in the Mexican Revolution, has long since abandoned whatever idealism it started out with and has become a party that struggles for and administers pure power.

There is no single message in the elections of 2012. It will be interesting to see how the fallout plays itself out over the coming years, here in the United States and south of the Rio Bravo. **□**

Stubbornness and Blindness: Understanding Mexico's Neoliberal 'Transition'

ADAM DAVID MORTON

IN THE AFTERMATH OF MEXICO'S 1988 ELECTIONS, IN which the ruling the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) conducted a massive fraud, the famed poet and Nobel Laureate for Literature Octavio Paz raised a critical question about the nature of democracy in the country. "Does a new period of peaceful transition to democracy begin," he wrote, "or again, will the stubbornness of some and the blindness of others unchain the double violence that has shadowed our history and that of the parties and the government?"¹

Twelve years later, the PRI lost its 71-year one-party dominance with the election in 2000 of Vicente Fox Quesada of the conservative National Action Party (PAN). Many regarded this as Mexico's successful "transition" to democracy. However, the "stubbornness" and "blindness" of electoral fraud has continued. In the 2006 election, fraud led to the victory of another PAN candidate, Felipe Calderón, by an official margin of just 0.56%, or no more than 238,000 votes, against the candidacy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO) of the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). There is widespread accord on the evidence of the 2006 fraud, which includes the double-counting of pro-Calderón precincts; collusion between PRI and PAN governors; and highly suspect processes of political corruption charged against the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE) as the supreme electoral authority.

The cycle of stubbornness and blindness was evident in the election held in July. In this instance, the

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PRI's Enrique Peña Nieto was announced as the victor with 38.2% of the vote, followed by 31.6% for AMLO and 25% for Josefina Vázquez Mota of the PAN. The margin of triumph was just 3.3 million votes. AMLO launched a legal challenge against the election, alleging that it "was clearly neither fair nor clean" and "riddled with irregularities."² Although he may well be right on all fronts—with evidence of vote-buying arranged by the PRI through the distribution of pre-paid Soriana chain-store debit cards to the sum of \$54 million—the IFE and the TRIFE have nevertheless confirmed Peña Nieto as Mexico's new president. This, despite Peña Nieto's campaign being marred by a scandal in which Televisa, a major television network, was revealed to have worked on behalf of the PRI. The evidence is said to consist of signed contracts, instructions, and proposals suggesting that Televisa subsidiaries and executives all worked to benefit Peña Nieto in the buildup to the crucial 2009 midterm congressional elections, which acted as a platform for his presidential bid, as well as smearing and discrediting rivals such as AMLO.³ Moreover, PRI spent perhaps more than six times the legal limit on the campaign. With the persistence of fraud and the return of the PRI under such dubious circumstances, how can we make sense of Mexico's "transition" to democracy?

WITHIN MAINSTREAM COMPARATIVE POLITICAL science, the dominant perspective revolves around the supposed "transition" in Latin America from instances of *dictablandas* (limited openings of liberalization without altering structures of authority under the tutelage of authoritarian rulers) to cases of *democraduras* (democratization without excessive expansion of freedoms so that restrictions remain). But the Mexican case does not demonstrate the change from military authoritarianism to democratization evident in so-called third wave transitions in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, or Brazil from the

1960s and 1970s onward. Neither does it relate to the conditions in Central America of widespread civil war, dictatorship, or popular revolution respectively experienced in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, in the 1970s and 1980s. Nor does it resemble the rule of elite-pacted democracies in Colombia and Venezuela that unraveled in the 1970s and 1980s; still less is it comparable with the example of Costa Rica, which has sustained pluralist liberal democracy since the 1950s. As Judith Adler Hellman has astutely recognized, “The attempt to shoehorn the Mexican case into models designed principally to explain the military domination or democratization of the Southern Cone and Brazil has frequently brought Mexicanists to grief.”⁴

Nevertheless, by the 1980s concerns about “democratization” began to replace those of “development” within the mainstream literatures of political science, as well as in the fashioning of U.S. political development assistance. In 1982, the Reagan administration launched Project Democracy, which grafted a democracy focus onto political-development assistance programs. The project was initially based on a \$65 million proposal to be managed through the State Department, USAID, and the AFL-CIO, albeit with little congressional support. More modestly, USAID in the late 1980s directed about \$20 million per year for human rights and democracy promotion activities, with the funds almost exclusively granted to recipients within Central America. In 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was created, an ostensibly nonprofit organization with an independent board of directors, management, and staff based on a bipartisan structure. The initial grant was \$18 million with the annual budget ranging between \$15 million and \$21 million across 1984–88 and funds to Latin America amounting to about \$25 million over these years, or about one quarter the size of the U.S. democracy-assistance programs in Latin America as a whole. The annual budget of the NED is more than \$30 million.

Meanwhile, the architecture of modernization and development theory also underwent modifications and shifts of emphasis. Most prominently the “transitions to democracy” paradigm emerged by advocating the construction of vibrant civil societies as supposedly autonomous realms of individual freedom and association through which democratic politics could proceed. Key foundational texts in this literature would include the collections *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (1986) and *Democracy in Developing Countries* (1989).⁵ There is a series of continuities between this literature and earlier political development



The photogenic PRlista, Enrique Peña Nieto, on the campaign trail before being elected Mexico's new president in a less-than-transparent process in July. PHOTO BY WESLEY BOCKE/THE IMAGE WORKS

theory, especially the preoccupation with safeguarding elite power and maintaining relatively quiescent political subjects within stable states. This focus on stability later became more a concern about ensuring and consolidating formal democracy—holding clean elections, introducing liberal individual rights, creating participatory citizenship—all of which is distinct from popular democracy, which is based on the introduction and extension of socio-economic rights.

The overriding stress in democratization studies thus constituted a supposedly “objective” definition of democracy limited to the descriptive, institutional

procedures of electoral rights and democratic government, understood in the limited sense of the state and party politics. A canonical set of designations became established in the work of Robert Dahl in outlining “polyarchy” as an institutional arrangement for resolving conflicts among dominant groups. In this view, democracy is, at best, seen in a truncated way, facilitating the setting up of the rule of law and judicial reform to strengthen contract rights based on individual autonomy. It was this minimalist standard of democracy that was then taken as the locus for constructing democratic governance in Latin America.

In this definition, there is also a sharp separation of politics from economics within the gradual extension of formal associational life through democratization measures under elite control. A major problem of such democratization studies is therefore the very division imposed between state (politics) and market (economics): “We use the term democracy ... to signify a political system, separate and apart from the economic

By the 1980s, concerns about “democratization” began to displace those of “development” in the mainstream literatures of political science, as well as in the fashioning of U.S. development assistance.

and social system.... Indeed, a distinctive aspect of our approach is to insist that issues of so-called economic and social democracy be separated from the question of governmental structure.”⁶

The problem is that the polyarchy theorists view the state in an exterior relationship with the market, controlling it separately from the outside. But the state and market appear as separate entities only due to the way production is organized around private property relations in capitalism. By neglecting the central importance of the social relations of production, democratization studies thus overlook the historical specificities of capitalism and the vital internal links between state and market, with the former securing private property within civil society to ensure the functioning of the latter. The risk, then, is that a historically specific understanding of liberal democracy is formalized and institutionalized in a universal manner, leading to depoliticization as the economic sphere is removed from political control.

This results in a failure to question the class structuring of civil society and to relate liberal democracy to the historically contingent conditions of capitalist development. The identification of capitalism and democracy within such work is held to be a matter of natural law, “rather than as a specific product of historical conditions, conflict over the pursuit of interests and class struggle,” as some critics have put it.⁷

A MORE CRITICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING democratization and democratic “transition” has been made by William I. Robinson and others. For Robinson, democratization is understood as the promotion of polyarchy (or low-intensity democracy) in the sense of attempts to secure institutional arrangements for the resolution of conflicts between dominant groups. Accordingly, promoting polyarchy in Robinson’s appraisal refers to “a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is consigned to leadership choice in elections carefully managed by competing elites.”⁸ Polyarchy thus represents the institutional definition of democracy and democratic “transition” present within mainstream democratization studies as well as the practices of U.S. political development assistance and foreign policy.

This attenuated or hollow form of democracy demonstrates a preference for political contestation among elite factions for procedurally free elections, while displacing more emancipatory and popular demands. Further, once the move to separate the economic and political spheres has been made, there is a contradictory tendency to then reconnect them by claiming a natural affinity between democracy (free elections) and capitalism (free markets). At different times, the cases of Chile, Nicaragua, Panama, Haiti, Venezuela, and Bolivia demonstrate the pattern of transitions to polyarchy in Latin America in leading a reorganization of the state and the deepening of neoliberalization. In Venezuela, the NED gave almost \$1 million in the period from Hugo Chávez’s election to power in 1998 to the abortive coup d’état in 2002. Since then, USAID has been aggressively providing large-scale assistance to conservative and moderate civil society organizations and NGOs in Bolivia to de-radicalize the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS). Robinson’s outlook is that “promoting polyarchy is a political counterpart to the

project of promoting capitalist globalization, and . . . ‘democracy promotion’ and the promotion of free markets through neoliberal restructuring has become a singular process in U.S. foreign policy.”⁹

In the Mexican case, it would be a mistake to assume a straightforward transmission of polyarchy. There has been a long social struggle for popular democracy in the country that should not be overlooked. Yet, following the onset of neoliberal restructuring, increased levels of funding from U.S. democracy assistance programs in Mexico have been evident. For example, NED funds have sought to constitute new liberal subjects through discourses of democratic citizenship and civil society assistance, notably starting in 1994 with its support for Alianza Cívica. Since that period levels of NED funding in Mexico have been just over \$5 million (1994–2000), \$2.6 million (2000–6), and \$7.4 million (2006–12). Such direct funds are comparatively low when compared with other cases in Latin America, yet in both qualitative and quantitative terms, such funding has been central to adapting civil society activism in Mexico to the context of formal and increasingly institutionalized liberal democracy controlled from above.

It is then perhaps surprising, but still disappointing, to witness established authorities at the NED, such as the Senior Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, candidly stating to this author in an interview in 2002 that arguments about the promotion of polyarchy in Latin America are “sheer crap.” “It is just a joke with flow charts and scatter diagrams that are just cooked up out of some conspiracy theory,” said the NED officer. There is clearly more to the argument than this asinine dismissal, which adds credence to the view that anybody critically challenging the “common sense” of the transition paradigm comes to be presented as a “crazed heretic.”¹⁰ After all, as a member of the National Coordination of Alianza Cívica, the writer Sergio Aguayo, confirmed to me in an interview, “the problem of polyarchy” exists in Mexico “in a form of alienation from the institutionalized process of democracy.”

ONE RESPONSE TO THE PREVALENCE OF THE FORMS of co-optation and social control conducted through the practices of polyarchy has been a resurgence of popular forces renewing struggles over

state power in Mexico. Specifically, students gathered apace during the 2012 election to protest Peña Nieto and wider issues of media manipulation surrounding the presidential election. The spark was lit on May 11 during a meeting between Peña Nieto and students at the prestigious Iberoamericana University in which he was heckled with shouts of “Coward,” “Ibero doesn’t want you!,” and “Murderer!” The latter epithet referred to the repression in 2006 during Peña Nieto’s term as governor of Mexico State, in the town of San Salvador Atenco, against a mobilization known as the Popular Front in Defense of the Land, which led to the detention of 350 people and the rape of 26 women.

The media duopoly in Mexico of Televisa and TV Azteca tried to deny the student protests’ strength against the PRI candidate and suggested that they were AMLO stooges. Through social media outlets, the response was swift, involving the posting of a YouTube video by some 131 students affirming their real identity and then followed by a buzz on Twitter, using the hashtag #YoSoy132, asserting a collective identity. An

The attenuated or hollow form of democracy demonstrates a preference for political contestation among elite factions for procedurally free elections, while displacing more emancipatory and popular demands.

initial gathering centered at the Estela de Luz monument in Mexico City, which has controversially become emblematic of state largesse following its delayed inauguration in 2012 to commemorate the bicentenary of Mexico’s independence. A series of marches then followed, officially estimated to include some 46,000 protesters, demonstrating from Mexico City’s Zócalo to the capital’s central avenue, Paseo de la Reforma, and congregating at the monument to the Angel of Independence.

On May 26, the students held an assembly in Tlatelolco the site of the government massacre of students on October 2, 1968, resulting in a series of resolutions. These included affirming the movement as anti-PRI and anti-Peña Nieto, as anti-neoliberal, as nonviolent, as a “horizontal” organization without centralized leadership, as a unified movement stretching across public and private universities, and as a mobilization

that aimed to encompass wider social participation beyond student involvement.

In June, Camila Vallejo, vice president of the Student Federation of the University of Chile (FECh) and a member of the youth arm of the Communist Party of Chile, addressed student and public audiences gathered at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM)–Xochimilco and elsewhere in Mexico City. At the UAM-Xochimilco meeting, Vallejo called for the unity of social movements across Latin America. “We claim our history,” she stated. “We are heirs to many other generations who fought for full democracy.”¹¹ At subsequent public meetings in the Zócalo and

The student movement affirmed itself as anti-PRI, anti-Peña Nieto, anti-neoliberal, nonviolent and as a “horizontal” organization, without centralized leadership.

others reclaiming the space of the Monument to the Revolution in Mexico City, Vallejo also called on the #YoSoy132 movement to “transcend the electoral conjuncture” as part of a wider social and political transformation. While the student protests in Mexico have provided an example of commitment and struggle for dignity, she affirmed, the fight will also be long and difficult.

This will be even more the case considering the complicated mix of factors influencing Mexico’s ongoing neoliberalization shaped by the polyarchic condition of democracy. This includes the likelihood of renewed state repression under the PRI and Peña Nieto; the ongoing “war on drugs” and the militarization that this represents in and beyond the country; the fallout from the election that led to AMLO’s break with the PRD, calling into question the future of the left in Mexico; and where the #YoSoy132 movement now goes in forging national mobilization after the election.

IN A TEXT ON THE DIALOGUE OF MOVEMENTS, authored by Pablo González Casanova, former rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and read out at the meeting convened at the Monument to the Revolution by #YoSoy132, the key emphasis was on how past emancipation movements have added to the student protests. The Chilean movement and those in Mexico, in González Casanova’s

words, “form part of a worldwide movement that began in Mexico in 1994 with the Mayan peoples of the southeast, known as the Zapatistas, whose motto is precisely: ‘Freedom, Justice, Democracy.’”¹²

By contrast, the course of democratic “transition” in Mexico has furthered the institutional separation of the “economic” and the “political” characteristic of neoliberal polyarchy. As a consequence, the process of formal democratic “transition” in Mexico can be exposed as one element in the class strategy of shaping the ongoing reorganization and expansion of capitalism. As a restorative strategy, democratic “transition” is an aspect through which the class relations of capitalism are reorganized on a new basis within the uneven developmental conditions inscribing state space. The double violence of “stubbornness and blindness” marring Mexico’s “transition” to democracy seems set to continue.

Summarizing the ideological decay of a ruling power bloc with fragile cultural and political integration, Antonio Gramsci once stated that “between consent and force stands corruption/fraud (which is characteristic of certain situations when it is hard to exercise the hegemonic function and when the use of force is too risky).”¹³ In the absence of hegemonic conditions, the emphasis on corruption and fraud captures well the “democratic” imposition, rather than “transition,” in Mexico.

One result has been that some of the most intense pressure for democratization, as anticipated by Gerardo Otero, has come from rightward institutional processes of opposition, which have resulted in the PAN and now the PRI as obvious beneficiaries of democratization from above.¹⁴ This sober assessment reminds one of the brazen stance within the “transition” literature, that, “put in a nutshell, parties of the Right-Centre and Right must be ‘helped’ to do well, and parties of the Left-Centre and Left should not win by an overwhelming majority.”¹⁵ The problem, then, is the managed and measured institutional emergence of neoliberal democracy in Mexico. U.S. interest in democratic “transition” in Mexico has never been sought at the expense of jeopardizing elite rule itself, which has always been more concerned with maintaining political order and controlling populist-based change. Whether popular forces can enact a shift in basic class relations and command spaces of resistance is the major challenge now facing democracy in Mexico. ■

PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador greets voters at a campaign rally.
PHOTO BY WESLEY BOCXE/THE IMAGE WORKS



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Mexico's Labor Movement

After the Elections: A House Still Divided

DAN LA BOTZ

AS BAD AS THINGS SEEM TO BE NOW, THERE WILL BE even darker days ahead for working people in Mexico. The Mexican elections of 2012 amounted to a victory for all that is worst in the country's political and social life, and sent a disheartening signal of defeat to the country's workers.

The election to the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) will strengthen the politically dependent, thoroughly bureaucratic, and profoundly corrupt labor unions that belong to the PRI, while weakening the position of the country's independent unions and democratic labor movements. Peña Nieto and the PRI, most likely in alliance with the conservative National Action Party (PAN), may well attempt to pass a labor law reform that would weaken workers' rights to form unions and to strike, thus undermining job security and increasing part-time and temporary work. With or without such reform, as Peña Nieto showed in his violent suppression of a popular movement in the municipality of Atenco when he was governor of the Mexico State, he is prepared to use his power—and savagely if need be.

The unions, which entered the elections thoroughly divided, have come out of them with a choice of either reaching an accommodation with the PRI or fighting a battle for their lives. Employers—most of whom backed the PRI—will take advantage of this situation to resist unions, to drive down wages, and to speed up work.

Mexico's independent unions and democratic labor movements did not fare well during the outgoing administration of Felipe Calderón. The PAN's secretaries of labor generally favored entrepreneurs and bosses, ignored violations of labor law, and effectively eliminated

the right to strike. They acted, comments labor attorney Néstor de Buen, "as if it were a sin to have good working conditions."

WHEN VICENTE FOX OF THE PAN BECAME president in 2000, many observers saw his election as an opportune moment to dismantle the entire corporate system of state-party control over the labor unions. What happened, however, was quite different. While most of Mexico's major labor federations—like the Congress of Labor (CT) and Federation of Government Unions (FSTSE)—retained their affiliation with the PRI, they reached an accommodation with Fox and the PAN. The Mexican government's overriding interest proved to be maintaining a policy of labor peace—that is, no strikes—along with a policy of low wages. Many union officials were happy to oblige the government, as long as they retained their positions as union leaders, and often as congressional representatives or senators as well, with their salaries, perquisites, and, above all, opportunities for graft.

With the tacit support of presidents Fox and Calderón, the union movement in the private sector became even more corrupt as employers brought in ghost unions (unions unknown to the workers) and protection contracts (which provide only the legal minimums) to keep out real unions and to damp down real demands. These came to represent 80% or 90% of all labor agreements. At the same time, the two biggest public-sector unions, the National Teachers Union (El SNTE) and the National Social Security Workers Union (SNTSS), drew closer to Calderón, supporting his calls for educational reform and the continued narrowing of social security.

The most significant development of the recent period, however, was the PAN's attack on the two of the country's most powerful and more independent labor unions, the Mexican Miners and Metal Workers Union (SNTMMRM) and the Mexican Electrical Workers

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Union (SME). In the last days of the Fox administration, Napoleon Gómez Urrutia, the head of the SNT-MMRM was falsely accused of embezzling \$55 million from the union's members, leading him to flee to Vancouver, Canada; he has led the union from exile ever since. The Calderón government then supported a corporation called Grupo México in its struggle with the miners union at the huge Cananea mine, where after a long complicated struggle the union was finally eliminated.

Then, in October 2009, the Calderón government suddenly sent police and military units to occupy the installations of the federally owned utility, Central Light and Power, whose members belonged to the independent SME. Within 24 hours the company was liq-

uidated, its 44,000 workers terminated, and the union devastated. Despite the union's heroic struggle since then to fight for its life and for its members' jobs, the government has refused to make any concessions. We might add to this the Calderón government's neglect of the 6,000 workers of Mexicana Airlines who lost their jobs when the company went bankrupt in August 2010. They too are still fighting for their jobs.

THE MEXICAN UNION MOVEMENT BEGAN TO fragment back in the 1990s as a result of the impact of the PRI's adoption of neoliberal policies beginning in the mid-1980s under presidents Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas, and Ernesto Zedillo. A group of unions left the PRI's official Congress



Union members march through Mexico City's Historical Center to celebrate May Day. PHOTO COURTESY ROBIN ALEXANDER

of Labor and founded the National Union of Workers (UNT), a labor federation, while another created the Mexican Union Front (FSM), a union coalition. The UNT and the FSM tended to collaborate with the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Most unions are “official” and so they naturally supported Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI in the recent election. The Congress of Labor, the powerful Confederation of Mexican Workers, and the industrial unions remained loyal to the PRI, especially with the PRI’s Peña Nieto leading in the polls from the beginning. The loyalty to the PRI was cemented by commitments to put union leaders into political office. Carlos Romero Deschamps, for example, the corrupt labor dictator who heads the Mexican Petroleum Workers Union (STPRM), ran for the Senate as a PRI candidate.

Yet some major unions opted to support the conservative National Action Party, having been won over by that party’s blandishments during its 12 years in power. Most important among the unions that have swung over to the right is the National Union of Social Security Workers (SNTSS) headed by Gutiérrez Fragoso. During the 1990s, the 350,000-member broke with the political establishment, moving to the left and joining the new independent UNT, which tended to align politically with the center-left PRD. But in the 2000s, Calderón succeeded in wooing Gutiérrez, supporting the union leader in his election as a congressional representative on the PAN ticket. In return, Gutiérrez supported the PAN and its candidate, Josefina Vázquez Mota. This was no small thing; his union members work in thousands of facilities of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) in large cities, small towns, and rural areas.

Another major union, the National Teachers Union (El SNTE) has had quite an erratic political career under the leadership of its powerful and opportunistic leader, Elba Esther Gordillo. Following a rank-and-file rebellion in the 1980s, Gordillo—never a rebel herself—came to head the teachers union through the support of then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the PRI. She remained loyal to the PRI and became one of the party’s top leaders until 2006, when after a fight with another PRI leader she was expelled from the party. Not to be deterred in her quest for power, she formed an alliance with president Felipe Calderón. However, as it became clear that the PAN was likely to lose the national elections in 2012, she changed sides again, returning to the PRI.

Gordillo does not go to any party empty handed.

Her teachers union has over 1 million members, the largest union in Mexico, with locals in every state and teachers in every city and town. Using her union as the base, in 2005 she also created her own New Alliance Party (PANAL), allowing her to run her own candidates but also to coalesce with other parties when it served her interest. This year, however, when she attempted to return to the PRI, her asking price—expressed as the number of senators, representatives, and governors she expected to be given—must have been too high, and once again the party drove her away. So Gordillo’s PANAL put forward its own candidate, the environmentalist Gabriel R. Quadri de la Torre.

Mexico’s labor unions on the left, including many dissident teachers union locals, the Mexican Electrical Workers, the Miners and Metal Workers, and others supported Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the former mayor of Mexico City. López Obrador’s coalition included the PRD and two smaller parties, the Workers Party (PT) and the Citizens Movement. While the PRD tended to ignore the unions, the PT put independent union leaders such as Martín Esparza of the SME and Francisco Hernández Juárez of the Mexican Telephone Workers Union (STRM) on the ballot, though both eventually lost.

In the end, Peña Nieto led the PRI and its satellite, the Green Party, to victory, not only taking the presidency, but electing (PRI and Greens together) 241 of 500 congressional deputies and 61 of 128 senators. Among those PRI deputies and senators, will be the heads of several of the official unions. And while Gordillo’s PANAL presidential candidate received only 2% of the vote, her party’s 10 congressional deputies will be key to the PRI controlling the Congress, so perhaps once again she has turned out to be the real winner.

THE IMPACT OF THE PRI PRESIDENTIAL AND congressional victory could be seen immediately in the response of union leaders to the call for post-election protests by supporters of López Obrador or by others who thought the elections had been fraudulent. Both the Mexican Mine and Metal Workers Union and the National Union of Workers announced that they accepted the legitimacy of the election and would not be joining in such protests. After six years of persecution, the Mine Workers are obviously hoping that if they hold out an olive branch, the PRI will respond in kind. Similarly the UNT, most of whose members are government employees, is hoping for some respite from the assault on labor.

Luis Videgaray, coordinator of public policies for the Peña Nieto transition team, has dusted off the PRI's historic workerist rhetoric, proclaiming that Peña would be a pro-union, pro-worker, pro-labor-rights president. But this pro-union rhetoric will almost immediately come into conflict with the PRI's and PAN's plans for labor law reform intended to weaken unions.

The PRI's pro-worker rhetoric will almost immediately come into conflict with the party's plans for labor law reform, intended to weaken unions.

The PRI will not be able to reestablish the one-party state that existed before 2000. The old corporate state, as it was called, depended upon the existence of a national economic model, state ownership of much of industry, and a vast social welfare system, all created during the long capitalist post-war boom and in the midst

of Mexico's oil bonanza. All of that, however, has been either swept away or profoundly altered over the last three decades.

Yet the PRI and its captive unions are back, still with enormous political power, and the independent unions are girding for battle. Fearing that they will come under a sustained government attack, leaders of the Union

Association of Aviation Pilots, the Mexican Telephone Workers Union, and the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, gathered recently at the 31st regular convention of the Union of Workers of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (STUNAM), to discuss the creation of a labor union front to resist the PRI's call for a labor law reform that

would make it more difficult for unions to organize and strike while also encouraging employers to hire sub-contracted, part-time, and temporary employees. It's not only labor law reform they fear, it's the whole shift in political power. Even if it is not the old PRI establishment, that is back it is still frightening enough. ■

Truncated Transnationalism: The Migrant Vote in the 2012 Mexican Presidential Election

ADRIÁN FÉLIX

At a June 2012 voter registration training in Modesto, California—where eligible Latino voters are chronically under-registered—activist Dolores Huerta shared her lifelong experience with a group of college student volunteers. “Voter registration is not simply about signing people up,” Huerta said. “It’s about educating voters.” When asked whether the July 1 Mexican presidential election—then

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only a week away—was beyond the scope of this push to register Latinos to vote in the U.S. presidential election, Huerta stood up from her seat, vigorously shaking her head, and reminded the students that in years past, many Mexican migrants were hesitant to cast a ballot in U.S. elections for fear that it would make them ineligible to vote in Mexican ones. This is no longer the case, she explained, because migrants “can now have dual citizenship.”

With these words of wisdom, the students took to the streets and worked the mostly Mexican crowd at Latino supermarkets in the area encouraging people to register. When asked if they had registered, women and men alike commonly replied by

asking, “Here or in Mexico?” With Election Day around the corner and ample coverage in the U.S. Spanish-language media, the Mexican presidential election was on Mexican migrants' minds.

Indeed, in a pre-election survey of registered Latino voters in key battleground states (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, Virginia) conducted by the independent polling firm Latino Decisions, 43% of Mexican-born respondents reported paying a lot or some attention to the Mexican presidential race. Interestingly, their candidate preferences did not mirror those of Mexican society. Among U.S. migrants surveyed, Josefina Vázquez Mota of the incumbent PAN had a comfortable lead over Enrique Peña

Nieto (PRI), with Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD, PT, Movimiento Ciudadano) trailing third. This was a partially accurate forecast of the migrant vote, with 42% backing Vázquez Mota, 39% supporting López Obrador, and a bit over 15% supporting Peña Nieto.¹ Yet despite considerable interest expressed by migrants in the Mexican election, participation levels were low, with 40,700 votes cast from the United States and beyond, not a dramatic improvement from 2006.²

Why has migrant voting in Mexican presidential elections been consistently low? The short answer is that the same institutional barriers that constricted the migrant vote in 2006, chiefly among them lack of access to the Mexican voter-identification card, dampened migrant participation in 2012.³ Chicago-based migrant activist Carlos Arango described Mexican extraterritorial voting rights as incomplete. He and other transnational suffragists have been pushing for legislation that would effectively enfranchise migrants and fully allow them to participate in the Mexican electoral process. “What the [Mexican] Congress ultimately approved,” he explained, “was what we have come to call *el voto mocho* [the truncated vote]. Yes, you have the right to vote, but there is no viable way to enact it.”

For one, the Mexican Congress has failed to allow the issuing of Mexican voter ID cards in the United States. As the electoral law currently stands, Mexican nationals must register in Mexico. As Arango pointed out, for migrants this turns out to be “the most costly vote imaginable.”

Decades of empirical research in political science show that high costs to engagement in elections leads to low voter participation. In the words of Arango, Mexican authorities drafted a law “that was designed to fail.”

While there was more continuity than change between the 2006 and 2012 Mexican presidential elections, insofar as the migrant vote is concerned, there were some reforms within the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) worth noting. With a new team of electoral advisers in 2008 came a renewed effort to reach out to migrants in anticipation of the 2012 election, said the IFE’s Dalia Moreno to a group of migrant leaders in Los Angeles in May 2010. Moreno met with migrants in her capacity as director of a newly created IFE office designed to liaison with migrant organizations in the United States. IFE reforms and outreach strategies included an information campaign at major ports of entry along the border and at international airports, reminding vacationing migrants to process or renew their voter ID card while in Mexico; radio advertisements in high-emigration regions in Mexico prompting locals to remind visiting migrants about applying for their voter ID card; and reduced processing times for the voter ID card to 10 working days with an extended hold period of one year for migrants to pick up the card upon their annual return, if necessary.

None of these reforms were meant to tackle the structural impediments to extraterritorial voting for the majority of Mexican migrants in the United States. The undocumented

still have no viable way of acquiring the voter ID card other than returning to Mexico. This issue was not lost on migrants. At an unofficial campaign event for Vázquez Mota in Los Angeles in January 2012, a migrant leader remarked that the policy instrument that could “open up democracy in Mexico includes providing voter ID cards outside of Mexico.” He asked that the presidential hopeful provide “the key to the vehicle of democracy.” “That key,” he said, “is the voter identification card.”

The incoming PRI administration does not seem any more promising for migrant rights, judging from the policy proposals made by Peña Nieto campaign operatives to a group of migrants in San Jose, California, in April 2012—proposals that included an “online consulate” and an office in Washington with the goal of turning the Mexican diaspora into the equivalent of a “Jewish ethnic lobby.” In a post-election Latino Decisions national survey of Latinos in the United States, Mexican-born respondents expressed high perceptions of fraud in the 2012 Mexican presidential election. More than 55% felt that the election was not very or not at all “free and fair.” Moreover, more than 61% agreed in some measure that electoral fraud in the 2012 election questions the credibility of the president-elect. Whether perceptions of fraud will politically alienate or agitate Mexican migrants remains to be seen. However, without the full enfranchisement of the Mexican diaspora in the United States, the migrant vote will continue to be truncated and unrepresentative. ■

1. Daniel Hernandez, “In Second Mexico Vote, This Time of Migrants, Vazquez Mota Wins,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 2012.
2. Ibid.

3. Robert C. Smith, “Contradictions of Diasporic Institutionalization in Mexican Politics: The 2006 Migrant Vote and Other Forms of Inclusion and Control,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008): 708–41.

Democracy, Elections, and Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution

GREGORY WILPERT

ON FEBRUARY 4, 1992, WHEN HUGO CHÁVEZ launched his failed military rebellion to topple the government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, he was convinced that only an overthrow of what he would later call Venezuela's "Fourth Republic" could bring about real change in Venezuela. Six years later, however, he had changed his mind about the electoral process and in 1998 ran for and won the presidency of Venezuela. Fourteen years after that, on October 7, 2012, Chávez ran for and won the presidency for the fourth time (with the first term lasting only 18 months due to the implementation of a new constitution), impressively winning with 55% of the vote. This was almost the same percentage he received in 1998, but more than double the raw number of votes, going from 3.7 million in 1998 to 8.1 million in 2012.

Over the years Chávez has seemed to be intensely interested in winning elections by increasingly large margins, which did indeed increase between 1998 and 2006, from 56% to 63%. During the 2006 campaign he even adopted a campaign slogan that explicitly stated that his goal was to win 10 million votes, even though two years earlier, in the 2004 recall referendum vote, he had obtained "only" 5.8 million votes (representing 59.1% of votes cast).

What is it about Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution that engenders the need not only to be ratified in almost annual electoral contests (there have been a total of 16 national elections or referenda in the 14 years between December 1998 and December 2012), but to win by ever greater margins?

The Chavista emphasis on elections and on winning them by overwhelming majorities has its roots in at least three factors. The first is the negative experience

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that those who are now in government had with electoral fraud in the pre-Chávez era. Concern with fraud was the main reason that Chávez did not consider the electoral route to power in 1992, when he launched his coup attempt. The most notorious example of fraud during this time was the 1993 election, when substantial evidence appeared that Andrés Velasquez of the leftist party *La Causa R* (the Radical Cause) might have had the election stolen from him. But since the 1958 revolution that overthrew dictator Carlos Andrés Pérez, it has been general knowledge among Venezuelans that the two main centrist parties, Democratic Action (AD) and the Social Christian Copei, divided up votes for smaller parties between the two of them, a practice that gave birth to the Venezuelan saying *acta mata voto*, meaning that the falsified voting record beats the actual vote.

The Bolivarian movement's concern with fraud led to the creation of the National Electoral Council (CNE), which became an independent fourth branch of government when Venezuelans approved the 1999 constitution. The CNE is now an important symbol of the changes in the management of elections in the country, having instituted a transformation of the way in which Venezuelans conduct elections.

Between 1998 and 2012, for example, the CNE gradually increased the computerization and automation of the vote-counting process to 100% of votes cast, while also maintaining a duplicate system of paper balloting, so that paper and electronic votes could be compared. This double-vote tallying, along with the use of fingerprint scanners that make sure that no one votes more than once, makes Venezuela's voting system one of the most secure and fraud-proof voting systems in the world. Also, during the same period the CNE increased both the voter registration rate, which went from 81.5% to 96.5%, and the number of voting booths—especially in the poor neighborhoods—which increased five-fold, thereby significantly shortening the time it takes to vote.

The reason for the combination of electronic and paper ballots, which represents a centralization of vote counting because results are transmitted electronically to Caracas, is to make sure that votes in outlying areas cannot not be stolen when smaller parties lack election observers in these areas. Also, despite frequent opposition criticism of the voting process, the CNE has made an effort to involve the opposition in 15 auditing procedures, before, during, and after every voting process. It is precisely because of this involvement in the audits that opposition officials who are aware of them regularly tell supporters that the voting process is to be trusted.

THE SECOND FACTOR LEADING THE BOLIVARIAN movement to place such a strong emphasis on elections and referenda is that these are important tools with which Chávez and his supporters counter the opposition claim that the Chávez government is an authoritarian regime—with an emphasis on the term *regime*, which the opposition uses in place of the word *government*. This is also the impression that international media have by and large created of Ven-

Some discontent recently developed among the base of the PSUV because the party's leadership unilaterally nominated candidates for the December 16 regional elections of mayors and governors.

ezuela during the Chávez era, both among the general public and among foreign academics. Among the latter the favored conception of the Chávez era is to describe it, in the words of the political scientist Javier Corrales, as a “refashioning of dictatorship for a democratic age.”¹ The frequent recurrence of verifiably transparent elections in Venezuela effectively undermines the claim that Venezuela is a dictatorship in disguise, even if the more sophisticated version of this claim argues that elections do not matter.

The third factor contributing to the Bolivarian movement's emphasis on elections is Chávez's desire to give legitimacy to Venezuela's transition to “socialism of the 21st century.” That is, according to Chávez and his supporters, elections in Venezuela do not represent merely a choice among politicians and parties, but a choice between two fundamentally different political-economic systems: capitalism or socialism. Since this is a very

fundamental choice, Chavistas believe it is absolutely crucial to be certain that the option that wins has the support of a large majority of the population.

This emphasis on an electoral path to socialism is reflected in Chávez's description of 21st century socialism, as a form of socialism that is different from 20th century state socialism in that it has a political dimension that emphasizes democracy. “Socialism of the political: this has a combination of elements, but one is central: participatory and protagonist democracy. This is the central axis of socialism in the political [realm], democracy from below, from inside, full democracy...”, said Chávez in 2005.²

As this quote and Venezuela's 1999 constitution indicate, the idea is to create not only a representative democracy in Venezuela, but also what the Bolivarian movement calls a participatory democracy. The most important implementation of participatory democracy has been the creation of tens of thousands of communal councils throughout Venezuela, which group together 150 to 400 families and provide communities the opportunity to work on neighborhood-improvement projects and to coordinate the implementation of various social programs (public housing, community doctors, urban land reform, financial assistance to single mothers, etc.).

It is probably due to these two types of changes, in the electoral system and on the level of communal councils, that Venezuelans rate their democracy higher than citizens of nearly all other countries in Latin America rate their respective systems. According to the opinion research organization Latinobarómetro, in 2011 Venezuelans gave their democracy a score of 7.3, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning the country is “completely democratic.” This is the third highest score, after Uruguay (7.7) and Costa Rica (7.5), with the regional average being 6.4. Similarly, the percentage of Venezuelans who say that they are satisfied with their democracy increased from 35% in 1998 to 59%—the second highest in Latin America—in 2007, which is the greatest increase of any country in that period.

A common complaint, however, is that the communal councils are often used as a mechanism for clientelism, whereby the councils that receive financial support are supposedly the ones that in turn support the government's political line. It is impossible to know how common this type of clientelism is, since no

Continued on page 49



PHOTOS

The moment before: Before the results are announced, silence reigns over the people of Santa Elena de Uairen as they crowd around a public television at 10 p.m.

Celebrating the Election in an Indigenous Village

ZOË CLARA DUTKA.

THESE PHOTOS WERE TAKEN IN SANTA ELENA DE Uairen, on Venezuela's southeastern border with Brazil. This region is home to some of the largest communities of Pemón indigenous people

in the nation. Polls were set up even in the most far-flung communities, with international witnesses present. Chávez won by substantial margins in almost all of them.



The winner is announced: Tension melts into euphoria as Chávez is announced as the winner after the closest electoral race that has taken place since his initial election in 1998.



In front of the Tepui Akurimar: Indigenous youths from the community of Wará travel to take part in the September 28 rally in support of Chávez's reelection. Behind them is the mountain Akurimar, one of many flat-topped mountains known as a *tepuyes*, in the southeastern plateau region of Venezuela.



Generations of change: An old Pemón woman waits patiently outside the campaign headquarters for a march to begin as her grandson entertains them both.



The candy seller: He leaves his goods at home to come out and show his support for Chávez.



Children hiding from the sun: Five young children take refuge from the midday sun in a neighbor's car as the campaign rally is set in motion.

Triumph: Women celebrate the reelection of Chávez with tears of triumph. Indigenous people have dramatically increased their interest and participation in political processes since Hugo Chávez was elected in 1999, for the simple reason that he is the first leader in their lifetimes who has taken an interest in them.





A freight train on its way to Iztepec, Oaxaca, Mexico. Thousands of migrants use freight trains as a means of transportation northward. They are exposed to all kinds of weather conditions and possibilities of serious injury or death should they slip off while asleep or simply from exhaustion. Transit police and common criminals frequently extort sizable sums from migrants to allow them on the trains. Entire trains have been known to be kidnapped for ransom.

Central American Migrants on the Perilous Journey North

ENCARNI PINDADO

FOR CENTRAL AMERICANS SEEKING TO MIGRATE TO the United States, the journey across Mexico is fraught with peril (see “‘Like a War’: The New Central American Refugee Crisis”, p. 7, this issue). These photos document some of the dangers they face.



Migrants waiting for the train to pass in Tutitlán, Mexico State. At nightfall, they try to rest before continuing their journey. There used to be a shelter for migrants here, but local residents pushed the government to close it down. Now migrants are forced to sleep outdoors, becoming even more vulnerable.





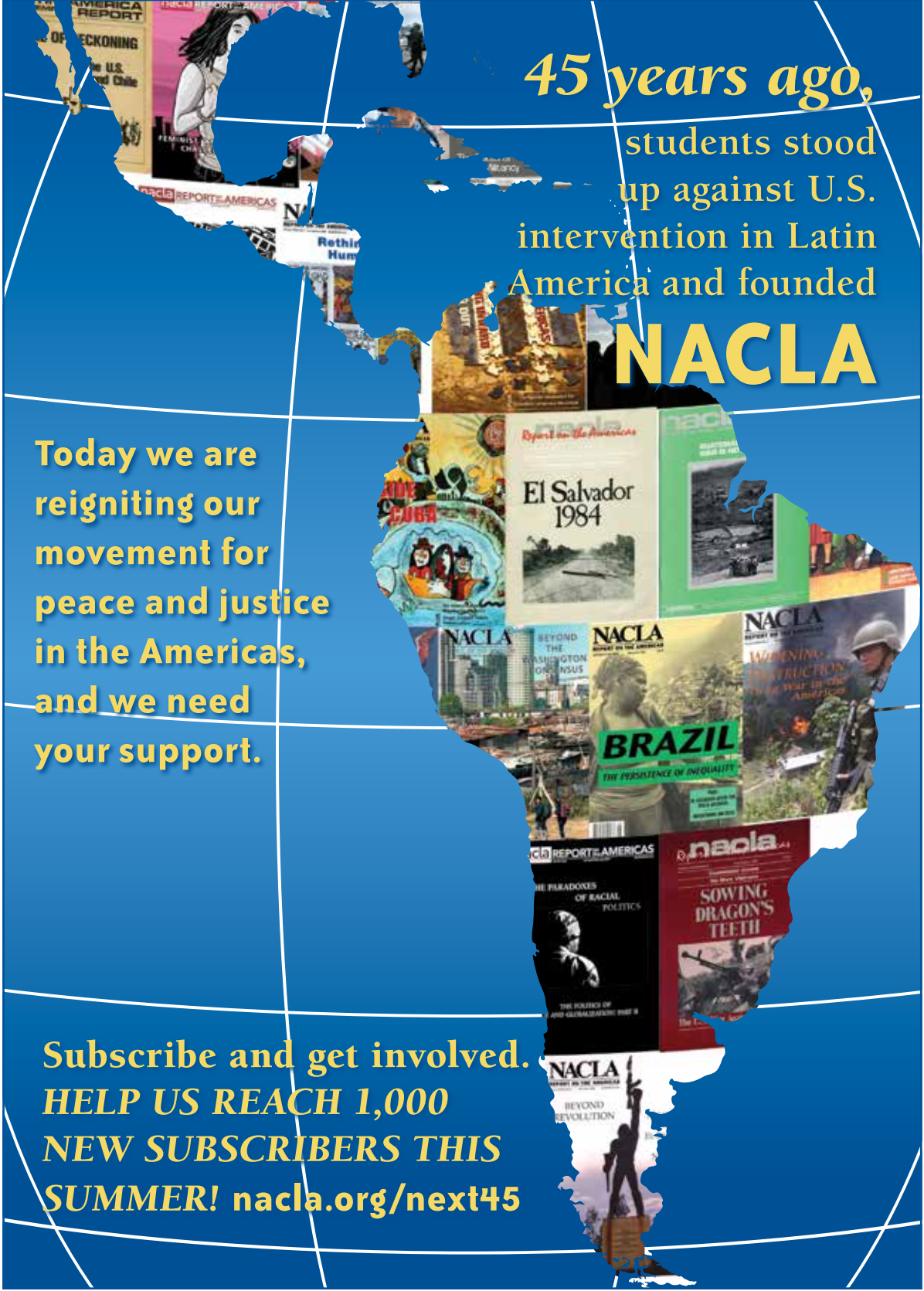
Migrants waiting at Esquipulas, Guatemala, for the bus to depart to the Mexican border. This is part of the route that migrants travel when they leave Honduras for the United States. The whole route is notorious for assaults. They will first travel to San Pedro Sula, and then take what the locals call "the migrant bus," a bus that leaves at night to the Guatemalan border. Local gangs are constantly robbing migrants, especially as they have to walk around the migration checkpoint in a very isolated area. Once they managed to get into Guatemala, they still have to walk about six miles to get to the city of Esquipulas, and from here take the bus to the north of Guatemala.



Migrants at rest at one of the rare shelters along the way.

A migrant woman and her son, after being released from kidnappers at the door of a hospital in northern Mexico. Eight out of 10 migrants will face some form of violence on their journey to the United States, and 60% of women are raped while crossing Mexico. According to the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico, more than 20,000 migrants were kidnapped in 2011. Ransom money is between \$2,000 and \$3,000. Not paying can be lethal.





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quantitative research has been conducted on this issue, but there are anecdotes on both sides of the claim. Having said that, though, we also need to be clear that clientelism in Venezuela is nothing new. It used to mostly involve local representative governments and now has the potential of also involving participatory communal governments. Unless the Chávez government tackles this problem head-on by institutionalizing nonpartisan funding mechanisms for the communal councils, this legacy is bound to reappear in the political system.

In an open letter to Chávez early last year, Santiago Arconada, a well-known community organizer in Caracas, gave an example of this problem when he quoted one of the members of a communal council, who complained, “I stopped coming to the Communal Council because it was like being in a meeting of the PSUV [Chávez’s party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela].” Arconada goes on to lament that many PSUV members mistakenly believe that the party can construct socialist hegemony by making sure that communal councils are mostly run by the PSUV, when in reality this kills grassroots organizing and grassroots

Chávez meets the press in Caracas. PHOTO BY LAINIE CASSEL

participation.

THESE TYPES OF COMPLAINTS HAVE CROPPED UP periodically among grassroots movements, along with efforts to organize an independent coalition of pro-Chávez organizations. The most recent such effort has been the creation of a new grouping of grassroots organizations known as the Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APR), which was founded on May 15, 2012, and includes a variety of independent but pro-Chávez community organizations, peasant organizations, women’s groups, an LGBT group, the community media association ANMCLA, and leftist political currents within the PSUV. The APR’s objective is to bring together grassroots groups and to formulate their interests within the Bolivarian movement, but independently of the PSUV.

In a similar vein, some discontent recently developed among the base of the PSUV because the party leadership unilaterally nominated candidates for the December 16 regional elections of mayors and governors, instead of organizing primaries among the membership.

The leadership defended this move with the argument that there was not enough time to organize primaries between the presidential election and the regional elections. A Trotskyist current within the PSUV, known as Class Struggle, issued a statement shortly after the nominations were announced, saying that the nomination process didn't provide "our membership with the opportunity to grow politically, to develop their ideas and political consciousness." Rather, the statement argues, "if we want a strong party, we should debate and elect candidates from the grassroots."

Previously, for the 2008 regional elections, the PSUV did hold party primaries and the party was on its way to become the most internally democratic party in Venezuela (which isn't saying much, considering how internally undemocratic practically all other Venezuelan parties are). Since then, democratic processes within the PSUV appear to have stagnated and the tension between the party leadership and the party grassroots has increased.

Despite these internal conflicts, within the Bolivarian movement as a whole and within the PSUV, Chávez supporters came together and waged a vigorous campaign for Chávez's reelection. The enthusiasm among supporters could be seen quite clearly in the massive final rally of the campaign, on October 4, when somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million Venezuelans came out in the pouring rain to support Chávez.

To the extent that Chávez enjoyed "only" an 11-point margin of victory on October 7, which was significantly smaller than his 26-point margin in 2006, this is bound to have been a significant disappointment for Chávez and the Bolivarian movement. Polls that were conducted by pro-government polling organizations had indicated a far larger margin of victory, and in his speeches leading up to the election, Chávez had promised "a resounding victory" ("*una victoria aplastante*").

T HIS RELATIVELY SMALL MARGIN OF VICTORY IS primarily a sign of the growing dissatisfaction with the problems of PSUV dominance, bureaucracy, inefficiency, lack of housing, and insecurity. However, the fact that Chávez still won by a comfortable margin indicates that most Venezuelans nonetheless believe that his government has improved democracy in Venezuela and that it has improved the opportunities of most Venezuelans for a better standard of living, for health, and for education. Indeed, all

quantitative indicators in these areas indicate that Venezuela has advanced significantly in each one of these areas in the last 14 years.

Of course, the opposition argues that the main reason Chávez won at all was because he took advantage of state resources for his campaign, mainly by deploying state media, by inaugurating new public works during the campaign, and by requiring all TV and radio channels to broadcast these inaugurations. According to the opposition, these practices gave Chávez an unfair advantage over challenger Henrique Capriles Radonski. This argument, however, ignores the fact that most Venezuelans get their news from the private mass media, which is decidedly pro-opposition and thus slanted its coverage in favor of Capriles.

The bottom line, however, is that Chávez was re-elected on the basis of two main campaign promises. First, that his third full term would address the remaining problem areas of insecurity, housing, and state inefficiency. The first two of these areas are already being addressed via new investments in a national police force and in the public housing sector, which aims to build 300,000 new homes per year between 2013 and 2017. If fulfilled, this would represent a nearly 10 fold increase over the housing construction rate during Chávez's first two terms in office. The plan to address the issue of inefficiency remains unclear, however, beyond the creation of a new government oversight ministry.

The second main campaign promise is to "deepen" 21st century socialism in Venezuela. Exactly what this second promise means is spelled out to some extent in Chávez's "Second Socialist Plan 2013–2019." A key element here is the plan's stated effort to "go past the point of no return" in terms of instituting "21st Century Socialism" in Venezuela. For critics and opponents of Chávez, this probably sounds like confirmation that Chávez intends to dismantle democracy. The plan itself, however, does not outline any such effort. Rather, the plan wants to deepen participatory democracy by making sure that an ever-larger portion of the population is involved in communal councils and that these come together on larger geographical scales. This process would probably weaken the position of mayors, but as long as no changes are made to the constitution, Venezuela will, for the foreseeable future, maintain parallel representative and participatory democratic structures. ■

1. Javier Corrales "Hugo Boss: How Chávez Is Re-fashioning Dictatorship for a Democratic Age," *Foreign Policy*, Jan/Feb 2006, p. 32-40.

Chávez and the Intellectuals

DANIEL HELLINGER

IN JUNE 2009 SEVERAL LEFTIST SCHOLARS AFFILIATED with the Caracas-based Centro Internacional Miranda (CIM), an independent agency funded by the Education Ministry, convened a conference to discuss the role of intellectuals in Chavista Venezuela. Several presenters argued that “hyper-leadership” on the part of President Hugo Chávez endangered the future of the Bolivarian Revolution. They did not have to wait long for a response from Chávez and the government.

On his June 14, 2009, broadcast of *Álo Presidente*, Chávez said that the CIM criticism was playing into the hands of the revolution’s enemies. “There needs to be more criticism every day, as long as we are not using the daily means of communication for self-criticism. This is something else, especially in a climate such as in Venezuela, where an array of communications media snatches anything said [in order to] try to generate distortions and convert criticism to something destructive.”

Diario VEA, a pro-Chávez newspaper, said on June 6 that CIM members were “confused” and merely using the conference to “let off steam” at Chávez. Nicolás Maduro, foreign minister at the time and now also vice president and Chávez’s heir apparent should the president’s illness force him to resign, warned the CIM intellectuals to “put themselves in harmony” with the agenda of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and “not to damage the leadership of the president.” He advised: “There are sufficient topics to which they can dedicate their work and not talk trash, because there are those who prefer to make pronouncements while others of us are dedicated to construction.”¹ (When Chávez announced in December that he would have a third operation for cancer, he urged supporters to unite around Maduro in the event of his incapacity or death.)

To a degree, the intellectuals’ discontent is symptom-

atic of the general distancing of the middle class from the government since 1998, but the concerns about “hyper-leadership” echo to a considerable degree discontent expressed by grassroots activists about top-down decision making and the lack of political space inside Chavismo for criticism and exposure of inefficiency and corruption.

Ernesto Villegas, a respected author and journalist for the state television network (VTV), worries about compromising his own objectivity. “I know that I have many detractors in some government circles and within pro-government parties who would like to see me replaced with a propagandist instead of a journalist,” he says, “and they are just waiting for the day I leave the show.” Referring to his former bosses both in the private media and the VTV, he once compared journalists to “firefighters who have been told by their chief not to put every fire out.”²

After the narrow defeat of a package of constitutional amendments in December 2007—the only outright electoral setback that Chávez has ever suffered—Chávez called for debate in order to give a “new thrust” to the revolution. But Steve Ellner, a historian and a U.S. citizen who has lived in Venezuela for 35 years, says “the intellectuals are reluctant to be too critical of Chávez because of his record of chastising the bureaucrats and invigorating (and empowering) the rank and file.” He thinks they may be more assertive now that Chávez has a new term.³

Following the referendum defeat, keen debate broke out among Chavistas on *Aporrea.org*, a website that was founded by Trotskyists in the “socialist tide” tendency but that welcomes commentary from varying perspectives. *Aporrea* roughly translates as “the beat,” and it was formed shortly after the short-lived coup of 2002, when popular radio, cell phones, and Internet communications were crucial in rallying popular defense of the Chávez regime.

While government officials blamed an effective opposition propaganda campaign for “misleading” the people about the amendments, the prevailing sentiment on *Aporrea* blamed the professional political class and accused it of undermining the initiative. Some contributors echoed the *oficialista* media, but many others dared to question the desirability of the reform package itself, some even

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questioning Chávez's leadership.

While CIM brings together mainly left academics and other professional intellectuals, *Aporrea*, though including commentary and papers by the former, serves as a sounding board for "organic intellectuals"—the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci's term for those who articulate the perspective of a revolutionary class as a result of their immediate, "organic" work as organizers of the new society, with whom traditional intellectuals may or may not join cause.

The intellectuals of the CIM, while expressing a variety of Marxist currents, generally define their own role from this Gramscian perspective. The CIM's Juan Carlos Monedero, who coined the term "hyper-leadership," argued that it is "typical of countries with scarce social cement, with a weak system of democratic parties and with large percentages of social exclusion."

However, Monedero also acknowledged, "I understand that hyper-leadership fulfills an important role; it has the advantage of articulating the unstructured and uniting the fragments, in a way that Gramsci called 'progressive Caesarism,' that helps us to retake the path of the revolution in moments of political vacuum or of ideological confusion. But this leadership also comes with problems. Hyper-leadership ultimately deactivates a popular participation that trusts too much in the heroic abilities of the leadership."⁴

Monedero says, "Some of us saw the difficulties of continuing this process [Chavismo without Chávez]," but "now we have lost this fear because I see dozens of people who could continue the process without any problem." And the concerns expressed by the CIM are clearly on the minds of the "organic intellectuals" in the field as well.

Intellectuals are divided in a variety of academic and cultural areas. Filmmakers like Gabriela Medina ply their craft at Villa de Cine, a government-sponsored studio that Chávez created to counteract Hollywood's influence. Medina's 2007 film, *Miranda Returns*, glorifies the independence hero Francisco Miranda and portrays him as a prophet of Latin American unity, a topic high on the president's foreign policy agenda. The dean of Venezuelan cinema, Román Chalbaud, has endorsed Villa de Cine and credited it with spurring Venezuelan cinema to

new heights.

But veteran filmmaker Alfredo Anzola complains that too much money is going into big-budget productions promoting the president's agenda. The filmmakers at Villa de Cine "want to make good films," he says. "What I don't like is that they'll only be the films [government officials] want to make. We fought for years to make films that were decided by the film community."⁵

For most of the international left, Chávez remains valued as a crucial voice of criticism of U.S. hegemony. For many Venezuelan intellectuals who have distanced themselves from Chávez, these foreign intellectuals have a romantic, misinformed view. Among them is the respected historian and political sociologist Margarita López Maya (See interview, p. 53) who once attributed polarization in Venezuela mainly to the opposition, but who now believes it is mainly provoked by Chávez as a strategy to maintain power. While some intellectuals have been alienated by "the personalism and growing power of the executive," for her there is a deeper disagreement. She says Chávez has replaced the participatory democracy of the 1999 constitution with this 21st-century socialist model. "The communal state is very close to the 20th-century socialism and the totalitarian state that it developed," she says. "Besides, the Venezuelan people rejected this proposal in the referendum of 2007, and Chávez disregarded this rejection."⁶

Nicmer Evans, a political scientist at the Central University, who has lived and worked politically in Catia, a Chavista stronghold in west Caracas, recently called for greater tolerance on both sides. "What I am asking today is a moment of respite from this diatribe, and at the risk of sounding hypocritical, now that politics is based on dissensus and not consensus, I maintain that dissensus needs spaces of tolerance and respect for the other, regardless of the differences regarding democratic advance in the development of our country." Referring to the 44% of voters who opted for Capriles in the recent election, Evans said, "Just as I rejected being labeled 'ignorant' for having voted for Chávez, I refuse to believe that 6.5 million Venezuelans are oligarchs, bourgeois, *majunches*"—slang for mediocre or ugly, a term used by Chávez in the campaign.⁷ ■

1. "Chávez and Nicolás Maduro descalifan a intelectuales chavistas por sus críticas al gobierno," *LaCl@clase.info*, June 16, 2009, available at laclase.info/.

2. Paolo Miola, "Interview With Ernesto Villegas Poljak," September 10, 2004, available at atpaolo-miola.it/.

3. Steve Ellner, "Venezuela's Social-Based Democratic Model: Innovations and Limitations," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43 (2011): 444–445, and personal communication, October 4, 2012.

4. Quotations from the conference are taken from English translations on *Hrvatski antiglobalis-*

ticki, available at hap.blogger.hr/.

5. James Ingham, "Venezuelan Cinema, Chávez Style," *BBC News*, November 1, 1997.

6. Personal communication, October 3, 2012.

7. Nicmer N. Evans "Ahora sin 'Majunches,' y sin 'jajabolas' o 'ignorantes.'" available at evansnicmer.blogspot.com/.



Margarita López Maya.
PHOTO BY M. CALABRESI

A Dissenting Opinion: Interview With Margarita López Maya

MARGARITA LÓPEZ MAYA, A VENEZUELAN sociologist, has been a close and cogent observer of Venezuelan politics and the Venezuelan left for the past three decades. In the pre-Chávez era, she was one of most incisive critics of the truncated democracy under the control of the country's two then hegemonic parties, *Acción Democrática* and *Copei*. Now, while not a partisan of either of the current electoral coalitions, she has grown more critical of Chávez and the *Chavista* movement. She is a professor and researcher at the Center for Development Studies (CENDES) at the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas. She spoke with NACLA's editor, Fred Rosen, by telephone on October 9, two days after the Venezuelan election. They communicated again on December 9, the day after Chávez announced that he would travel to Cuba for additional cancer treatments.

What are some of the implications of the reelection of Hugo Chávez for the short-run and long-term future of Venezuela?

In the short run the country is facing a number of problems that haven't been resolved. We have a coun-

try that is very divided, with a government that is trying to impose a socialist model that is not very viable and that furthermore has many authoritarian traits. Opposing that government we have a large part of the population, organized in civil society and in political parties, that is trying to resist. This conflict has produced a governmental attack on civil society that has strengthened the role of the state.

At the bottom of this is an economic program that has no clear project for a strategy of production. We are still dependent on an oil-based *rentista* [rent-collecting] strategy. Chávez has based everything on this oil-based model so that we now have *rentista* socialism replacing the *rentista* capitalism of the past. There is no clear idea of what a productive model might look like. There is a model only of distribution. This is important, but distribution without production gives us a model that is not viable and I fear we are heading toward a precipice. The model is based on ideology, not reality.

In the long run, the country is devouring itself. A productive model has not yet appeared that is based on economic criteria, not just ideological criteria. Soon

we will have to abandon this *rentista* model. We have to readjust the model because no model in the middle-to-long run can survive that is based solely on the collection of oil rents.

While Chávez has put together a clearly leftist coalition, several groups on the Venezuelan left have withheld their support and have joined the opposition, supporting the candidacy of Henrique Capriles. Which groups are these?

Practically all of them that stand for democratic socialism are members of the Alliance for Unity [La Mesa para la Unidad Democrática, the opposition electoral coalition]. This is a strong electoral alliance, opposing the leftist populism of Chávez. Nearly all the groups on the left that have a democratic vocation are represented in the coalition. This includes the MAS [Movement Toward Socialism], La Causa R [Radical Cause], Bandera Roja [Red Flag], and a small newly formed group called Progressive Movement of Venezuela, which split off from PPT [Homeland for All] when a portion of the

latter decided to again embrace Chavismo. These are the leftist groups that have the most visibility.

Can they maintain their own identity? Do the deputies elected by the opposition alliance represent their own parties or do they represent the Alliance for Unity?

They will represent their own parties, but I imagine they will coordinate with one another, having supported the same presidential candidate.

But the key thing is that Chávez has lost his absolute parliamentary majority in these elections. He can no longer rule by decree. He now has to negotiate with the opposition. He once had three-fifths of the seats in Congress, which allowed him to impose “enabling laws” that allowed him to essentially rule by decree. He also does not have two-thirds to appoint members of the other public powers. So now he has to negotiate, hoping to split a few legislators off from the opposition to pass his laws. For the enabling laws he only needs a few.

A group of Venezuelans await the results in Caracas. PHOTO BY LAINIE CASSEL



So the opposition is stronger now, but it is also much more diverse (perhaps even self-contradictory), ranging from left to right, or in today's terms, from democratic socialist to neoliberal. With so much diversity can it maintain its unity and its strength?

It is certain that the opposition is very diverse. But it has been strengthened by this election. It has shown that it has the support of half the country, receiving almost 45% of the vote. And this has become a stimulus for staying united. It's a stimulus that indicates that

Given the style and personality of Chávez, it is not likely that he will change the behavior that has been so successful for him over the past years—a style that has produced so much polarization and intolerance.

their strategy was correct, that it is a strategy that is producing electoral results.

But on the other hand it is true—and this is the great challenge—that there is a great ideological and political diversity here. And so it is natural that there are tensions among them after the defeat, because there were great expectations that they would win. So the situation has produced internal tensions and mutual accusations. I myself thought until the last days that they might win. So this presents them with a great challenge. They have won many parliamentary seats and that presents them with the option of continuing with this strategy, and continuing united.

What are the major proposals that the opposition alliance has put forward?

The Alliance for Unity has rectified its position regarding the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It has made it clear that upon gaining power, or access to the government, it would govern in accordance with the present Venezuelan Constitution and not call for a new constitutional convention. This is a major change from the opposition's last campaign. It wants to see that participatory democracy can return to Venezuela.

Capriles also called for a return to a policy of industrialization, though he never made it clear just what this would consist of, nor how he envisioned a future

relationship between the government and the state-owned oil company, PDVSA.

Chávez seemed to be conciliatory in his victory speech. Does this indicate a new attitude on his part?

It all depends on the political moment. Given the style and personality of Chávez, it is not likely that he will change the behavior that has been so successful for him over the past years—the style that has produced so much polarization and intolerance. Neither in his campaign nor on the night of his victory speech did he talk about dialogue, about finding a way to communicate. He referred to Capriles as a “nothing,” as a person who didn't exist. So we will have to see if the president is willing to change a style that has borne so much fruit for him.

Another topic that has helped define the political moment is the question of Chávez's health. The day before his December 9 trip to Cuba for additional cancer treatment, he designated Nicolás Maduro as his successor. Can you tell us something about Maduro?

He is one of the Chavista leaders closest to Chávez. He was a founder of the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). As opposed to Diosdado Cabello [another powerful member of Chávez's cabinet], he has ideological origins on the left, having belonged to the Liga Socialista, one of the parties founded after the defeat of Venezuela's armed struggle. He was a union leader of the Caracas Metro system, during which time he drove a city bus. He was a “constitutionalist” in 1999, and he is now foreign minister and vice president.

He has always gone to Havana when Chávez has undergone treatments for cancer. Cabello never accompanied Chávez, which suggests that the Castro brothers look favorably on Maduro. Another thing is that Maduro has been the partner of Cilia Flores, another important leader of Chavismo, who was also president of the National Assembly. As Chávez's lawyer when he was a prisoner in the 1990s, she introduced him to Maduro I believe. Both Maduro and Cabello are more pragmatic than Chávez, but Maduro may be a more convinced member of the Revolution. ■

Elections in Venezuela and Pennsylvania: Lessons in Democracy?

ROBIN ALEXANDER

IS IT FAIR? WILL PARTICULAR GROUPS OF PEOPLE BE excluded, disenfranchised? Will the outcome of our next presidential election really reflect the will of the people? These are some of the questions we have been asking recently in Pennsylvania about our state's strict new voter-registration law, which requires the presentation of extremely limited types of photo identification in order to vote.¹ Michael Turzai, Pennsylvania Republican House Leader, euphorically characterized the new law: "Voter ID, which is going to allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania—done."² His comment underscored both the law's partisan nature and its inherent unfairness, leaving me pondering the question: What should a democratic election look like?

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to travel to Venezuela for the October 7 presidential election as part of an international delegation of 245 people to take a very close look at their election. I had done some reading before I left and knew that former president Jimmy Carter had commented that the Venezuelan system was "the best in the world," but was still unprepared for what I found.³

The 1999 Venezuelan constitution establishes the three branches of government that the United States has—executive, legislative, and judicial—with an additional, independent electoral branch, headed by the National Electoral Council (CNE). The president of this new branch of government is a sociologist, Tibisay Lucena, who is passionately committed to developing a process to "foster and guarantee democracy and participation, to put at the disposal of popular sovereignty the technical advances, knowledge, and skills in order to strengthen that sovereignty, which is the

main source of institutional legitimation and democratic transformation."⁴

Since 2008, the CNE has conducted 10 elections, including primaries for the opposition parties, indicating an unprecedented level of support for the institution. On television a few nights before the election, opposition candidate Henrique Capriles Ransonski conveyed his conviction that he would win, urged his supporters to vote, and expressed his total confidence in the electoral system.

While in the United States we have been experiencing increased attempts to diminish votes among certain groups of voters—the elderly, the young, the poor, and people of color—the CNE has been implementing a massive voter-registration effort to close what it calls the gap between those eligible to vote and those who are registered. The result is that 3.5% of eligible Venezuelan voters are unregistered today, compared with 20% in 1998. In the presidential election this meant that almost 19 million Venezuelans were eligible to vote. Over 80% of them participated in the election.

A number of factors resulted in the massive turnout: First, elections take place on Sundays, businesses are closed, and those people who must work on election day, like poll workers, medical workers, and so on, are allowed to go to the head of the line. Second, the number of polling places has also nearly doubled since 1998, reaching almost 14,000, with more than 39,000 voting machines for the October 7 election, facilitating participation especially for voters in rural areas. In addition, we saw evidence of a massive education campaign, both encouraging voters to go to the polls and explaining the process.

Third, there was major involvement throughout Venezuelan society—the election was an event. Several hundred thousand people were directly involved, as poll workers who were selected at random from the voter roll by the CNE and then trained; as witnesses for the two major party coalitions at each voting ma-

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chine; as technicians charged with ensuring the proper operation of the voting machines; and as security to ensure that the election was peaceful (a role performed by the military). Finally, a series of measures further encouraged thoughtful participation and security—a period of reflection before (and the day following) the election when no alcohol could be purchased, no candidates could make campaign speeches, and no one wearing clothing with a candidate's name would be allowed in a polling place.

But beyond questions of infrastructure and logistics, this particular election served as a referendum on President Hugo Chávez's leadership and vision for the future. Chávez's five-point platform addressed that vision in detail, including social and economic development plans as well as commitments to national sovereignty, regional integration, world peace, and preserving life on the planet. Interestingly, the opposition vowed to continue the "missions" founded by Chávez that provide health and housing to poor communities, but to run them more efficiently. Capriles's plan, leaked shortly before the election, revealed a much more neoliberal approach. Although Capriles denied that it represented his position, the leak resulted in the defection of some of his supporters.

All of the Venezuelans I spoke to strongly supported one candidate or the other. Capriles supporters complained about inflation, corruption, crime, and Chávez's length of time in office. Some told me they had voted for Chávez in the last election. "Time for a change," they said. Chávez supporters, meanwhile, told me about the new labor law that reduces the work week to 40 hours, increases and expands coverage

An international delegation of election observers representing the National Lawyers Guild. The author is second from the right.
PHOTO COURTESY ROBIN ALEXANDER

of social security, prohibits subcontracting, makes it more difficult to discharge workers and increases penalties for unjustified discharge, and greatly expands protections for women, including the increase in post-natal maternity leave from 12 to 25 weeks, increased protection from dismissal for two years following the birth of a child, and inclusion of the feminine term for women workers throughout as well as in the name of revised law (*Trabajadores y Trabajadoras*). They also told me about the number of new houses that are being built, the reduction of extreme poverty, the more equitable distribution of land, and the new police academy designed to emphasize human rights and eliminate corruption. "We are not going back," they said. All were proud of the election process and told me they didn't think there would be violence, despite media pronouncements and rumors to the contrary.

Can technology really be foolproof? I had my doubts. However, after viewing the assembly of the voting machines, speaking with experts, learning that there are 17 audit processes, and then watching the machines in operation, I was convinced. Voting technology has improved greatly in Venezuela since 1998, when less than 35% of some 20,000 polling places were automated. Today, nearly twice as many sport fully automated machines. A Venezuelan company designs and manufactures these machines, and they have been improved over time. The newest technology used in this election was a fingerprint reader linked to

a database containing the voter ID and prints of the registered voters.

A few days before the election, machines are sent out from the assembly and service plant in Caracas. They are set up and tested, and then on the morning of the election, they are tested again with the poll workers, party witnesses, and soldiers present. They are then unlocked with a code and generate a tape that indicates that no votes have yet been registered. For the rest of the day, voters follow a series of steps at stations arranged in the shape of a horseshoe: First they show their credentials to a poll worker, and then place their finger in the reader to generate their ID number and photo. This unlocks the voting machine, where they select the picture of the candidate and party of their choice and press the Vote key. The machine then spits out a paper receipt with the name of the candidate, permitting the voter to double-check that his or her vote was properly recorded. A bit further down the voter places the folded paper in a ballot box. The final steps are to dip one's pinky in indelible ink and to sign and place a fingerprint in the registry as a final backup check.

When the polls close, 54% of the paper ballots cast are checked manually against the final tally issued by the voting machines. For me, this was the most moving part of a long and exhausting day. Along with eight other representatives from Latin America and Europe, I had visited eight other polling places in the state of Zulia, a conservative, petroleum-producing region. Despite long lines in some locations and occasional minor glitches with the machines, the day was peaceful. Of Zulia's 4,580 machines, only three had problems that were serious enough that they couldn't be fixed, requiring that new machines be brought in.

At the ninth polling place I visited, the final stage in the election drama played out. Before being shut down with great care, the voting machine issued its final tape of the day: a breakdown by candidate and party of all the votes that had been cast—290 votes for Chávez, 94 for Capriles, none for the other five candidates, and four null votes. Seated on tiny chairs in a grade school classroom, two young women carefully listed the names and parties of all of the candidates. Then, in complete silence, with intense concentration,

the ballot box was opened and another poll worker began pulling out the small, folded pieces of paper one by one and reading the candidate and party while the young women marked the results on their master sheet. Almost 400 names later, they confirmed a perfect match. It was a tiny piece of a democratic process that was repeated in schools throughout the country.

No exit polls are permitted, so we all waited, anxious for the results of this hard-fought campaign. While history suggested that Chávez would win, the opposition clearly had many supporters, and the margin of victory would be important. CNE director Lucena reported the results at 10 p.m., within hours of the close of the election's closing: With 90% of the votes counted, the results were 54.4% for Chávez, 44.9% for Capriles. (The final tally expanded Chávez's margin to almost 11%.) A short time later, Capriles appeared on national TV to give his concession speech. He began by saying, "The will of the people is sacred." Chávez later spoke from the balcony of the National Palace. "The candidate of the right and his campaign command have just recognized before the country the victory of the people. This is a very important step in building peace. ... I extend to you these two hands and this heart because we are brothers in the country of Bolívar. I call to all of those who go around promoting hate, I invite them to dialogue, to debate and to work together for Bolivarian Venezuela." "I congratulate the opposition leadership, which recognized the victory of the people," he said.

The country did not go up in flames. The violence predicted by the media did not occur. Instead, Chávez supporters flooded into the streets of Caracas for a giant party.

Meanwhile in Pennsylvania, the new voter ID law was put on hold because the state could not ensure that all voters could obtain IDs. However, the court has yet to determine whether it will apply to future elections. And in the interim, poll workers requested identification—although not disqualifying voters who did not possess it. Confusing at best, it is far from what I experienced in Venezuela, where voting is encouraged by outreach and education, and elections are viewed as a democratic process to determine the will of the people and the future path of their country. ■

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Elections, Imperialism, Socialism, and Democracy: Coups and Social Change in Latin America

STEPHEN MAHER

IN 1960, FIDEL CASTRO DECLARED THAT “CUBA’S example would convert the Andean Cordillera into the hemisphere’s Sierra Maestra,” referring to the mountains in eastern Cuba that served as the guerrillas’ base during the revolutionary war.¹ After seizing power from U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, Cuba’s revolutionaries actively promoted “continental revolution” to destroy the network of military states that constituted the U.S. empire in Latin America, and eliminate the capitalist order that sustained them.

Armed revolution has long since subsided in Latin America, but over the past decade the revolutionary vision of sovereign, socialist development has resurfaced—though in modified form. The success of Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution, followed similarly in Bolivia and Ecuador, has again raised the banner of socialism and regional independence, but this time through electoral means. For Latin Americans pursuing social change, Venezuela, rather than Cuba, has become the model to follow.

The Cuban revolutionary model was based on complete social and institutional reconstruction, which entailed the total destruction of the existing state apparatus. Only such a radical approach, the revolutionaries believed, could prevent the region’s tremendous wealth from continuing to flow into the pockets of multinational corporations and their local oligarchic allies who, together with the U.S. government, worked to perpetuate a social order that relegated millions to lives of desperate poverty.

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Drawings by Rini Templeton.

The Venezuelan model has taken a significantly different course. In stark contrast to the Cuban method, the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador—not to mention a decidedly leftward turn in many of the region's other governments—have used existing electoral mechanisms and state apparatuses to compel the capitalist social order and its beneficiaries to make compromises with the masses of the poor.

The achievements of these regimes have been considerable: In Venezuela, for example, the Chávez government succeeded in cutting the poverty rate in half in just five years (2003–08), while extreme poverty was reduced by 72%.² Furthermore, these governments are the leading voices in a growing chorus of opposition to U.S. hegemony, objecting in particular to the neoliberal “Washington Consensus” developmental model that has aggravated social inequalities and produced the worst long-term economic growth in a century.³

Although the new “revolutionary” regimes have accomplished a great deal, the electoral approach to social change has inherent weaknesses that the United States and its allies have shown an increasing ability to exploit.

But in each case, capitalism remains alive and well—in fact, healthier than ever—though the national wealth is distributed more equitably and political participation broadened.⁴

And although the new “revolutionary” regimes have accomplished a great deal, the electoral approach to social change has inherent weaknesses that the United States and its allies have shown an increasing ability to exploit. Following a template designed to counteract the new revolutionary model, the U.S.-backed coup in Honduras in 2009 and the recent impeachment of Paraguay's President Fernando Lugo highlight some of the difficulties of pursuing progressive social change through existing state structures.

AFTER HAVING SIGNED THE WASHINGTON-BACKED Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), Honduran president Manuel Zelaya began to move closer to the socialist camp, joining the Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) in 2008.⁵ Then, on June 28, 2009, Zelaya was

kidnapped by the military in the middle of the night and removed from the country.⁶ While most of the world denounced the coup, the Obama administration did everything it could to assist the culprits. Though the administration admitted it knew of the plot in advance, Washington refused to officially condemn it as a “coup,” which would have legally required the full cessation of aid. Though the coup leaders justified their actions by falsely claiming that Zelaya was illegally attempting to extend his presidential term, diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks reveal the classified judgment of U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens: It was an “open and shut case” of an “illegal and unconstitutional coup.”⁷

Again, while the entire region and much of Europe repudiated subsequent sham elections, Washington instantly recognized the “victory” of Porifiro Lobo and pressured multilateral organizations to readmit Honduras.⁸ Honduras

has since been transformed into a raging hurricane of violence and intimidation, with the highest homicide rate in the Americas. Chief among the victims have been journalists, human rights advocates, dissidents, politicians, and campesinos fighting for land reform.⁹ Meanwhile, Honduras's new leaders seem intent upon using the country as a laboratory for far-right experimentation, including proposing the construction of “model cities”

under the control of private companies and financed by a U.S.-based venture capital firm, in which constitutional rights and labor protections would be permanently annulled.¹⁰ Alongside such enlightened and progressive measures, U.S. military and other assistance to Honduras has grown under the guise of the “War on Drugs.”¹¹

Predictably, right-wing elements throughout the region took note of the success in Honduras and were encouraged to follow suit: In September 2010, leftist Ecuadoran president Rafael Correa barely survived a similar attempt.¹² Zelaya's overthrow has inaugurated a new template for coup making designed to exploit the inherent weaknesses of the electoral revolutionary approach, which relies on existing institutions and procedures for legitimacy. As Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner said, “It would be enough for someone to stage a civilian coup, backed by the armed forces, or simply a civilian one and later justify it by convoking elections. . . [T]hen democratic guarantees would truly be fiction.”¹³ As she feared, a similar blueprint has now been implemented in Paraguay, where the removal of president Lugo

again highlighted the difficulty of using existing electoral processes to bring about deep social change.

Paraguay has long been one of the most unequal countries in the hemisphere, with among the highest concentrations of land ownership. In 2008, after 61 years of rule by the right-wing Colorado Party, just 2.6% of landowners owned 85.5% of the land.¹⁴ That year, the party's six-decade rule came to an end with the election of Fernando Lugo, a Roman Catholic bishop supported by Paraguay's poor majority.¹⁵ Lugo refused to accept the presidential salary because it "belongs to more humble people."¹⁶ He instituted free health care for the poor in public hospitals, supported low-income housing programs, cash transfers for the desperate, and tried to advance other modest social reform.¹⁷ But even these limited measures proved too much for Paraguay's tiny class of fabulously wealthy oligarchs and their Colorado Party representatives, who relentlessly blocked his proposals for land reform.¹⁸

Then on June 15, 2008 100 landless peasants took matters into their own hands and occupied lands illegally seized by one of the wealthiest men in the country, who is also a member of the Colorado Party. When 300 police officers descended on the farm and the peasants refused to leave, an eight-hour gunfight ensued in which 10 campesinos and seven police officers were killed.¹⁹ Lugo immediately condemned the incident, and the minister of the interior and the police chief resigned. In a last-ditch attempt to preserve his position, Lugo replaced these officials with Colorado Party members, thereby effectively surrendering control of the repressive state apparatus and galvanizing the Liberal Party against him.²⁰ The Colorado Party then drew up articles of impeachment accusing Lugo of "encouraging land seizures and fomenting violence," and he was given 24 hours, notice of the proceedings, in which he would have just two hours for his defense.²¹ On June 21, the Chamber of Deputies voted 76 to 1 to impeach, and the next day the Senate voted 39 to 4 for the same.²²

Before the final vote, all 12 foreign ministers from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) traveled to Paraguay to insist that the move to impeach Lugo violated UNASUR's democracy clause. Brazil's moderate president Dilma Rouseff proposed suspending Paraguay from both UNASUR and MERCOSUR (the regional trading bloc of Southern Cone states), both of which did so soon thereafter. Argentina's Fernández de Kirchner, the Dominican Republic's Leonel Fernández, Bolivia's Evo Morales, Ecuador's Correa, and Cuba's Raúl Castro announced they would not recognize Franco as President. ALBA, the socialist bloc of Latin American countries, issued a statement condemning the act as a coup. Even Colombia,

Chile, and Mexico, the few remaining pro-U.S. conservative bastions, criticized Lugo's removal. Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico all recalled their ambassadors. But, in an ominous echo of Honduras, as the entire region denounced the obvious chicanery, the United States stood behind Paraguay's reactionary feudal oligarchs. As the State Department put it, "As a general matter, we haven't called this a coup because the processes were followed."²³

DESPITE THE JUSTICE IN LUGO'S GOALS, HE WAS unable to marshal the existing state apparatus to challenge the power of the oligarchy and achieve the social transformation that is so desperately needed in Paraguay. The reactionary forces that dominate both the existing social formation and state institutions are formidable and have demonstrated an unwillingness to permit even modest changes to the status quo while the United States stands solidly in support. This backing was made possible, in part, by the oligarchs' ability to turn the very mechanisms on which Lugo based his legitimacy against him.

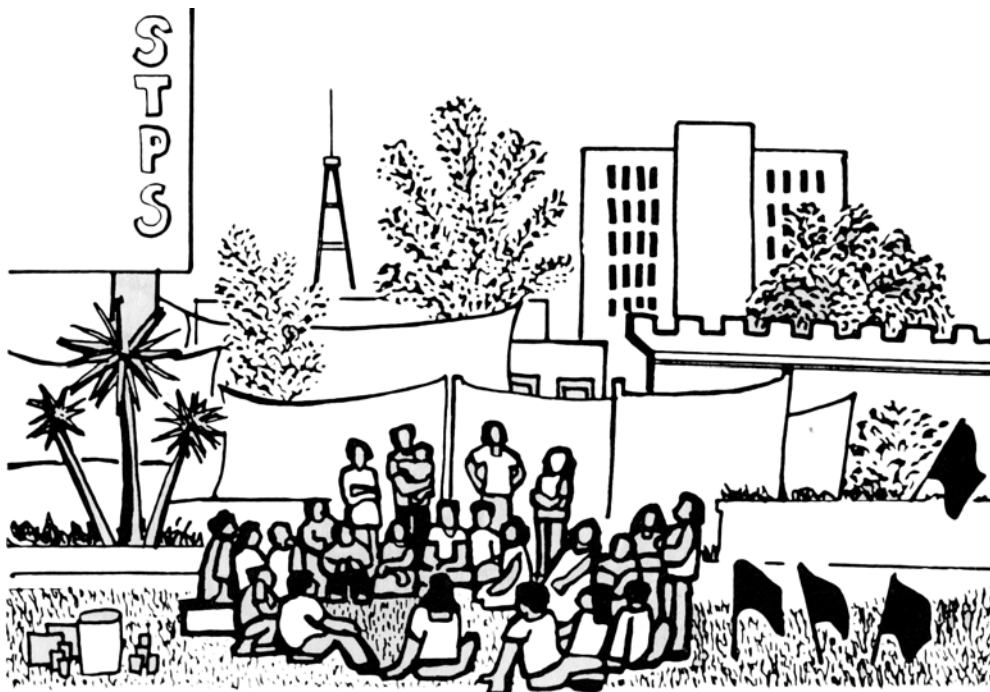
The historic solidarity against Lugo's removal is encouraging, and a clear message to the United States that times have changed. Still, it is hard to take this defeat as anything other than what it clearly seems to be: an indication of the shortcomings of relying on existing structures to bring about fundamental change in deeply ingrained social inequities, especially in cases where progressive forces do not control an overwhelming majority in rep-



representative bodies. In Venezuela and Bolivia, for instance, such majorities have enabled wider institutional rearrangements, including the drafting of new constitutions, seemingly impossible in Paraguay. This means that the landless peasants and indigenous organizations, so long the subjects of brutal state repression and social exclusion, could be more promising bearers of social progress than those operating within the state, however well-intentioned the latter may be.

The peasants courageously occupying land under the

slogan “Occupy, Resist, Produce,” risked—and lost—their lives in direct action against a grotesquely unjust social order. Though few tears have been shed for them, they are the true revolutionary martyrs, not Fernando Lugo. And unless the feudal barons and their Colorado Party guardians sense the shifting direction of the winds, and permit the changes that are so clearly necessary through electoral means, they may find themselves visited by the specter of Che Guevara: the swift and brutal fire of revolutionary justice. ■



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El Salvador's 2012 Legislative Election: Implications and Opportunities

ESTHER PORTILLO-GONZALES

THE LONGTIME COMMANDER OF THE FARABUNDO Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), Schafik Handal, once remarked that while El Salvador's civil war had ended, the historic project of the Salvadoran working and peasant classes would continue through electoral competition. Indeed, one of the major accomplishments of the 1992 Peace Accords was the former guerrilla organization's recognition as a legal political party. In 1994, the FMLN competed in the first post-war election, winning in 14 municipalities and electing 21 deputies, to the country's National Assembly. Today, the FMLN is the country's leading political force, governing 96 municipalities and holding 31 seats in the National Assembly. Many of its former combatants and founders hold key positions in the executive and legislative branches of government, including Vice President Salvador Sánchez Ceren, Minister of Foreign Relations Hugo Martínez, and National Assembly president Sigfrido Reyes. Above all, former journalist Mauricio Funes, a member of a new generation of progressive leaders who did not fight in the war but who sympathize with the goals and political project of the former guerrillas, was elected president in 2009 as the candidate of the FMLN. These are astonishing accomplishments for a guerrilla army founded 32 years ago, made up mostly of peasants, students, and workers who were constantly under fire from the Reagan White House and its ruthless civilian-military allies in El Salvador.

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In the most recent mayoral and legislative elections, however, held March 11, the FMLN lost several of its major mayoral strongholds in what is known as Gran San Salvador, the second-largest urban center after the capital city of San Salvador, often referred to as the bastion of *los rojos*, the Reds. The Gran San Salvador municipality of Soyapango had been governed by FMLN member Carlos Ruiz since 2003, but the leftist party lost here by 267 votes. In the City of Mejicanos, the FMLN candidate Blandino Nerio lost by 599 votes, while in 2009 he had taken 55% of the vote. In addition to these losses, in the department of San Salvador the cities of Apopa, Ilopango, San Martín, Tonacatepeque, and Ayutuxtepeque were lost to the right-wing National Repub-

Many speculate that FMLN voters may have stayed home in a silent protest against the inability of municipal governments to provide such basic services as timely trash pickups, street cleaning, adequate lighting, and security.

lican Alliance (ARENA) party.

Many speculate that FMLN voters simply stayed home, without transferring their allegiance to other parties. This may have been a silent protest against these municipal governments inefficiency.

Before Election Day, FMLN leaders privately acknowledged that voters in the urban sector were disgruntled and felt ignored as a result of municipal governments' inability to provide efficient services such as timely trash pickup, street cleaning, adequate lighting, and security. This is no doubt true, though one of the fundamental reasons for the lack of efficient services is the minuscule budget approved by national legislators for municipal

government spending. It is estimated that only 8% of the country's general budget is allocated for municipal services, which translates to \$299 million to cover the costs of all 262 municipalities, including salaries for administrators and employees. The key to increasing the budget for municipalities will depend on the alliance the FMLN can build with allies in the National Assembly. Until then, municipal governments will have to find creative ways to provide needed services to residents. It is clear that in order to avoid future electoral losses and regain control of key cities, the FMLN will have to struggle against the country's corporate interests and the powerful ARENA party, which still exercises considerable power over the country's economy and National Assembly, and which has little interest in improving services to its political enemies.

Despite the loss of several urban municipalities, the FMLN has increased its popularity in rural areas and gained control of several rural municipalities. This

The FMLN government has invested heavily in agricultural development, which has secured self-sufficiency in the production of corn and beans. Reforms to education and health care have also contributed to the positive appeal the FMLN has in rural areas.

comes as no surprise, since Funes was elected, most reforms initiated by the federal government have focused on rural communities, which under the rule of successive ARENA governments of the 1990s and 2000s had been ignored. Under Funes, for example, the central government has invested heavily in agricultural development, which has secured self-sufficiency in the production of corn and beans, reducing costly imports of basic grains. This has proved an efficient path toward eradicating poverty and malnutrition, two long-standing scourges of El Salvador's rural communities.

Reforms to education and health care have also contributed to the positive appeal the FMLN enjoys in rural communities. In education reform, a groundbreaking program known as the *Vamos a la Escuela* (Let's Go to School) program was implemented under the leadership of Vice President Salvador Sánchez Ceren, with the goals of improving primary education enrollment and child nutrition. The *Vamos a la Escuela* program sup-

plies free uniforms, shoes, and supplies to 1.3 million students, with needy rural communities seeing most of the benefits. The government has also institutionalized a program that provides a free glass of milk to students every day for the entire school year. To date the program has reached over a million pupils. These programs, never before instituted in rural communities, have also been instrumental in creating jobs: Over 2,000 cooperatives have been able to obtain small loans to increase milk production in places like Chalatenango and Sonsonate. The government buys about 4.3 million liters of milk every year from these milk cooperatives in order to run the program. The FMLN is committed to ensuring the sustainability of all these programs and to continue working with rural communities for their collective upward mobility, something that has never been done before. On the other hand, ARENA's 2014 presidential candidate, Norman Quijano, has vowed to eliminate all of these programs if elected.

The FMLN will certainly need to reflect and adjust its strategy for the presidential elections of 2014. On the other hand, the party has never limited itself to the electoral arena and has made the consolidation of its strategic alliances with Salvadoran popular movements a priority. In fact, the historic strength of the party is being used to turn the electoral loss in Mejicanos into a generator of momentum for the social movement that has been organizing to oppose the construction of a new Wal-Mart Supercenter. The Arenista Juana de Pacas ran on a campaign to bring 500 new Wal-Mart jobs to Mejicanos, while the FMLN mayor, Blandino Nerio, had refused to approve permits on the grounds that the Supercenter would bring low-wage, insecure jobs to the city, while displacing small businesses and informal street vendors. Soon after the swearing in of the new ARENA mayor, Pacas approved every permit requested by Wal-Mart and raised her own monthly salary from \$1,900 (established by Nerio in 2006) to \$4,000. Currently, there are also disputes about the firings of former municipal employees by the new mayor. The FMLN, alongside the Salvadoran social movement has continued, to resist Wal-Mart in what promises to become a long and drawn-out fight. Struggles like these will reinforce the FMLN's popular roots, address the causes of inequality, and provide fertile soil for the party to galvanize the popular classes and grow back, bigger and stronger, for the 2014 presidential elections. ■



- **First District**
(3 Congressmen Elected)
- **Second District**
(2 Congressmen Elected)
- **Third District**
(2 Congressmen Elected)

RAMONA HERNANDEZ

DOMINICANS WENT TO THE POLLS MAY 20, AND AS in past years, the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), both founded by the legendary Juan Bosch, dominated the political scene. Danilo Medina

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of the PLD won the election with 51% of the vote, while the PRD's Hipólito Mejía, finished with 47%. There is a plethora of political parties in the Dominican Republic, and the PLD was helped to victory with the votes received by its coalition partners. The party made electoral alliances with 13 minority or emergent political parties, which, in total, delivered 13.5% of its votes. The PRD, on the other hand, received only 4.8% of its votes from its six electoral allies.

Bosch, the founder of both contending parties, had been elected to the presidency in 1962, in the country's first free election following the assassination of longtime dictator Trujillo, who ruled the country from 1930 until 1961, when he was gunned down in an attack orchestrated by his domestic enemies, acting with the help of his former sponsors the U.S. government. As electoral democracy gradually returned to the country, an increasing number of political parties sought to win the presidency, though the process was initially dominated by the PRD and by the conservative Reformist Social Christian Party (PRSC), the party of the ex-Trujillo aid, Joaquín Balaguer.

With the rise of the moderate left-wing PLD as a third strong political party in the 1990s, the two-party model of the 1970s and the 1980s was challenged. The PLD slowly gained the support of the Dominican electorate, bucking Washington's disapproval of Bosch's ideology and political affiliations. A three-party system, composed of the PRD, PLD, and PRSC, remained

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this year's election was the role played by Dominicans living in the diaspora. Dominicans living abroad could not only cast their votes but could actually run for office.

in place until the decline and death of Balaguer at the turn of the century; since then the PRSC has survived in electoral politics only by forming electoral alliances with one of the two major parties.

Leonel Fernández Reyna rose as the undisputed leader of the PLD after Bosch retired from the political scene in the 1990s. Fernández ran three times as the presidential candidate of the PLD, in 1996, 2004, and 2008, winning on all three occasions. Over that period, only Mejía was a successful PRD candidate, bringing the party to the presidency in 2000.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this year's election was the role played by Dominicans living in the country's sizable diaspora. A 2010 amendment to the Dominican Constitution created seven new congressional seats for deputies representing Dominicans who live outside the country. Voters living abroad are now divided into three districts, all containing a large number of Dominican citizens. The first district includes the northeastern United States and Canada

(though in 2012 Canada did not allow the organization of electoral sites for Dominicans to vote); the second is made up of Miami, Puerto Rico, and Panama. The third and most geographically diverse district consists of Europe, Venezuela, and the Caribbean islands. For the first time, voters living abroad had the opportunity to elect candidates of their own who were to serve in the Dominican Chamber of Deputies.

The 2012 election generated a great deal of enthusiasm in those districts—even more than usual—because members of the community abroad were not only casting their votes but actually running for office. In Dominican neighborhoods in New York City, for instance, it was difficult to miss the Dominican elections. New York is home to over 600,000 Dominicans, and many are involved in politics, both in the Dominican Republic and in the United States. Over 50 Dominicans have been elected to U.S. public office, including 10 to represent New York State and City (two state senators, three members in the State Assembly, and five members of the City Council).

In these recent elections, public appearances of the candidates combined colorful and lively caravans with loud speakers playing merengue and repeating candidates' slogans, permeated the various Dominican communities. This activity was magnified as the Spanish-language media competed to cover

the latest news and controversies related to the elections.

The inclusion of emigrants in homeland politics is the result of years of intense struggle and demands of Dominicans who lived in foreign countries. Indeed, the number of registered voters from abroad, which has more than tripled since the 2004 presidential elections, increasing from 108,000 to over 325,000 in 2012, could have a decisive impact on the elections. If the two major parties are running neck and neck, as most surveys showed in the previous election, the 5% represented by the vote from abroad could potentially choose the next president.

The vote from Dominicans abroad may represent a challenge for future elections in the Dominican Republic. Dominicans have been increasing their participation in electoral politics in the places they live and the fact that now they can run for office in their home country may further intensify their political activism and aspirations. ■

Light and Darkness at the End of the Tunnel: Immigrants in the Aftermath of Obama's Reelection

JOSEPH NEVINS

IMMIGRATION U-TURN HAS HISPANICS SEEING 'LIGHT AT End of Tunnel,' " asserts a Reuters headline.¹ Published eight days after the recently concluded U.S. presidential election, the article suggests favorable implications for those championing immigration reform due to the drubbing suffered by Republicans at the polls.

Part of the reason for such expressions of hope is not only the Democratic victory, but a seeming resulting openness among some leading Republicans to reassess the wisdom of their hyper-restrictionist ways after a strong majority of Latino voters cast their ballots for the Democratic ticket.

Strong evidence of such a reassessment emerged only two days after the vote, when House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) voiced support for broad immigration reform—something he had opposed—saying that “a comprehensive approach is long overdue.”²

And Boehner is not alone on this question among the GOP's leading lights. “Haley Barbour, a Republican elder statesman and former governor of Mississippi, echoed Mr. Boehner,” *The New York Times* reported, “and Sean Hannity, the conservative talk show host—in a startling turnaround—joined calls for measures opening pathways to legal status for illegal immigrants.”³ As another *Times* piece explained, some Republican leaders are now arguing “that basic mathematics dictates that the party must find new ways to talk about issues like immigration.”⁴

These “new ways to talk” appear to bode favorably for many of the millions of unauthorized immigrants, the majority of whom are Latino, living and working in the United States. Many in the immigrant rights community were concerned about what a Romney victory

might mean. At one point during the Republican primary, the former Massachusetts governor advocated “self-deportation.”⁵ And late in the presidential campaign he suggested that he would overturn the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (while promising not to engage in mass deportations and to seek a “real, permanent immigration reform”).⁶

In this regard, the outcome of the national election seems to indicate that, at the very least, the hundreds of thousands of youth who will benefit from DACA will likely see a four-year extension of their deferrals. There is also a strong possibility that something more far-reaching, more “comprehensive,” to use Boehner's term, will emerge.

If this is a result of the election, so, too, is something less obvious, but perhaps more significant: an endorsement of what already exists. In other words, whether voters like it or not, or are even conscious of it, a vote for the incumbent amounts to a vote for the status quo, given the narrow set of viable options available on a national level and the Democratic-Republican consensus on the fundamentals. And it is in this area where there seems to be little “light at the end of tunnel.”

Obama asserted a couple of weeks before the vote that he was “confident” that immigration reform would “get done next year” were he to win. In doing so, he suggested that Republicans would have an interest in bringing this about as his victory would speak to the growing clout of “the fastest-growing demographic group in the country, the Latino community,” a demographic with which the GOP would need to curry favor.⁷ With the comments of Boehner and his fellow Republicans shortly after the election, Obama appears to have been clairvoyant.

Five days after the vote, Senator Charles “Chuck” Schumer (D-NY) appeared on the Sunday talk show *Meet the Press* and gave further proof of Obama's prescience. He told host David Gregory that he and Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC) were resurrecting talks broken off two

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years earlier to finalize a broad reform plan that will win bipartisan support.

The question is, what might such a plan look like?

While “comprehensive immigration reform” signifies many things to many people, in Washington circles its range of meanings is pretty narrow—what Department of Homeland Security head Janet Napolitano, in representing the Obama administration’s vision, has referred to as the “three-legged stool”: (1) more “security” and policing—along the country’s perimeter and within, (2) an expansion of employment-related (temporary) immigration, and (3) a long path to the regularization of status and, eventually, citizenship for many, but far from all, of the millions of unauthorized migrants living in the United States.⁸ Thus, as Schumer explained, his and Graham’s “detailed blueprint” has these components:

First of all, close the border, make sure that’s shut. Second, make sure that there is a non-forgable document so that employers can tell who was legal and who was illegal. And once they hire someone illegally, throw the book at them. . . . [T]hat

will stop illegal immigration in its tracks. Third, on legal immigration, let in the people we need, whether they be engineers from our universities, foreign, or people to pick the crops. And fourth, a path to citizenship that’s fair, which says you have to learn English, you have to go to the back of the line, you’ve got to have a job, and you can’t commit crimes.⁹

What “closing the border” might mean is unclear given the massive growth in the enforcement apparatus—in terms of infrastructure and personnel—that has already taken place over the last two decades. But it certainly doesn’t bode well for the civil and human rights of many in the border region given the myriad abuses perpetrated by U.S. border authorities, a number of which have resulted in the deaths of migrants (at least 15 since 2010)—including unarmed and non-resisting migrants in federal custody.¹⁰ This is on top of the hundreds of migrant remains now recovered in the border region ev-

May Day, New York City, 2008. PHOTO BY MIZUE AIZEKI/FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM



ery year, the deadly results of the structural violence embodied by the regime of exclusion and the nature of the relations between the United States and migrant-sending countries “south of the border.”¹¹

As for the “path to citizenship,” it is certainly not imagined in as expansive a fashion as that signed into law in November 1986 by President Ronald Reagan as part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which made unauthorized migrants who had lived in the United States continuously since at least January 1, 1982, as well as those who had labored as agricultural workers for at least 90 days in a one-year period beginning on May 1, 1985, eligible for permanent residency (and eventual citizenship). An estimated 3 million people eventually benefited from this program.

Today, almost three decades later, what appears to be on offer for those living and laboring in the United States without legal status is far more limited. By invoking crime, Schumer and Graham are undoubtedly casting aside large numbers of unauthorized migrants who might

otherwise be eligible to walk down that “path to citizenship.” (Like Obama’s record-setting deportation regime, this delimitation of eligibility sets the stage for ever more divided families.¹²)

What percentage of people would be denied is unclear. However, given the ever expansive category of crime and its highly elastic nature, Schumer’s qualifications are certainly cause for great worry, not least because the very “illegal” status of unauthorized immigrants often compels them to violate the law—by using false documents to secure employment, for example, or to participate in the “underground” or illicit economy to survive. They also often live in low-income, heavily policed communities where the likelihood of arrest for all sorts of activities that many people in the United States regularly engage in is greatly heightened. In other words, the percentage of unauthorized immigrants disqualified from the would-be

Dominican New Yorkers protest deportations, 2008. PHOTO BY MIZUE AIZEKI/FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM



regularization process is likely to be significant.

Such matters manifest the present-day power of the U.S. state—materially and ideologically—which, in regard to immigration and the borderlands, was dramatically less in 1986 than it is today. For example, there were about 3,700 U.S. Border Patrol agents at the end of Reagan’s second term in office. For fiscal year 2013, there are 21,370 Border Patrol agents, with another 21,186 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers stationed at ports of entry along the country’s perimeter.¹³ The Department of Homeland Security also now has 34,000 beds available on a daily basis to detain migrants—a doubling of capacity since 2004.¹⁴ Given the power and size of the enforcement that such growth embodies, the ability of the related bureaucracies to shape policy, and to ensure their own interests, is similarly heightened.¹⁵

Thus, when Schumer and Graham talk about “closing” the border, it is imperative to keep in mind how much the federal government’s capacity—and the institutional momentum to realize that capacity—has grown. Its legal and organizational power to police the country’s boundaries and interior, and to exclude, detain, deport, and divide families is vastly superior to what it was less than 30 years ago when IRCA came into being, far greater than Reagan could have probably even imagined.

As such, were “reform” to pass today, not only would it likely offer a program of legalization far more limited than that of IRCA, it would also build upon and strengthen a dramatically more formidable enforcement apparatus—at the border and within—than occurred as a result of the 1986 legislation.

It is for this reason and many more that the advocates

of immigrant and border communities’ rights need to be extremely wary about talk of comprehensive immigration reform, given that it embraces the very enforcement buildup (and more of it) that has been so damaging to those whose well-being they champion.¹⁶ This necessitates exerting great caution to avoid sacrificing long-term changes for short-term gains. Imagining something far better than the old poison in Schumer and Graham’s new bottle—and posing the very question of whether a “comprehensive” approach is the way to go given that it would undoubtedly end up strengthening the very apparatus that has created the problems now in need of redress—is a key step in doing so.

The election and the Latino electorate’s growing power that it demonstrates provide an opportunity. The resulting question is not so much—as was put by one analyst—if Obama will be brave on the immigration front.¹⁷ Rather, it is how much immigrant and border community advocates, activists, and organizers will exploit this opening.¹⁸

Efforts to achieve far-reaching change no doubt should entail a push for policy that provides relief to those living in the United States without legal status as well as the rights that legal status embodies. It also should involve institutional changes that lead to de-escalation and demilitarization of the U.S. “war” in the borderlands writ large and a downsizing of the apparatus of repression. But, at the very least, it requires a set of initiatives that do not strengthen the institutions and mechanisms that have created the need for “comprehensive reform” in the first place. ■

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Putumayo, Colombia. Children hold up food crops wrongfully destroyed by spray planes. PHOTO BY SANHO TREE

U.S. Elections and the War on Drugs

COLETTA A. YOUNGERS

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ELECTION IN 2008 RAISED hopes that Washington would finally put an end to the decades-long "war on drugs." After all, Obama had admitted using drugs himself and actually enjoying it—going well beyond former President Bill Clinton's ridicule-attracting assertion that he had smoked pot but "did not inhale." In contrast to this year's electoral campaigns in which drug policy was never even mentioned, in 2008, candidate Obama promised that if elected, he would seek to change the disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine, reverse the federal government's interventionist stance on state medical marijuana laws, and end the

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ban on federal funding for needle exchange. While little was said about Latin America, enthusiasm ran high that the Obama administration would recognize that the drug war has failed demonstrably in meeting the government's stated objectives, while causing tremendous collateral damage across the region.

Upon taking office, the Obama administration immediately changed the bellicose terminology that has long characterized U.S. drug control policy, ceasing to refer to it as a "drug war." Obama's top drug official, Gil Kerlikowske, a former police chief who became director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), announced that he would not use such language, since you cannot wage war on your own people. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publicly admitted that drug policies had failed and that as the major consumer of illicit drugs, the United

States must take more responsibility in confronting the demand problem. While she was stating the obvious, it marked a first for a high-level U.S. official. And the administration did implement some changes to domestic drug policies.

Yet as far as Latin America is concerned, the change in rhetoric did not transform the policies and programs implemented on the ground. For all practical purposes, the U.S. drug war is still going strong and is even being dangerously ratcheted up in Central America. Yet while Washington's approach to drugs remains impervious to change, grassroots initiatives are threatening the status quo. On November 6, voters in two states, Washington and Colorado, approved referendums to create legal, regulated markets for cannabis. Thus, part of the United States is now at odds with the very international drug control regime that Washington created and so staunchly defends. The message will not be lost on Latin American countries already questioning the prevailing drug policy paradigm and calling for debate on more effective alternatives.

Now elected to a second term, Obama has the opportunity to join the presidents of countries like Guatemala, Colombia, and Uruguay who are calling for reform. To do so would take firm political commitment and a willingness to stand up to accusations that would no doubt be hurled by his domestic political opponents of being "pro-drugs." Unfortunately, the president has given little indication that this is a battle he is going to stake political capital on in his second term.

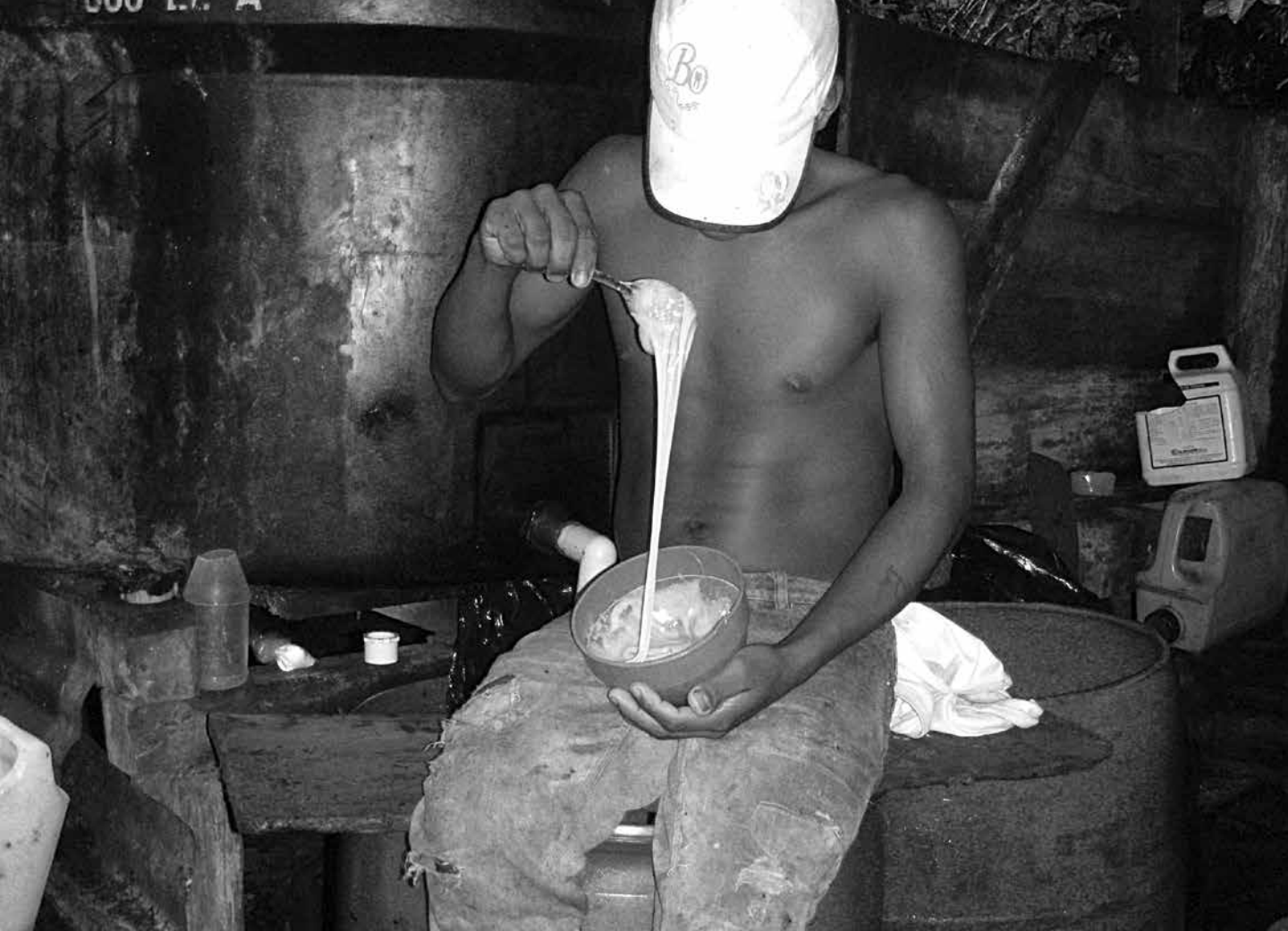
THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION DID IMPLEMENT modest but important changes to domestic drug policy, some of which might have been reversed had Mitt Romney won the election. The administration followed through with two of his three promises described above: At the end of 2009, Obama signed a law ending the prohibition on most federal funding for sterile needle-exchange programs, which have proved effective in stopping the spread of HIV and other infections among injecting drug users; unfortunately, the U.S. Congress later reinstated the ban. He also encouraged legislation to reduce significantly the disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine, which was passed in August 2010. In general, the Obama administration has shown greater interest than its predecessors in reducing incarceration rates.

Perhaps the most noticeable advance, however, is the greater priority placed on reducing demand for illicit drugs, with modest increases in funding toward

that end. The Obama administration's annual drug-control strategy now emphasizes community-based prevention programs and integrating drug treatment into mainstream health care in order to expand access to such services. Of particular importance, drug treatment will be covered by health insurance under "Obamacare." A reversal on that front—as would likely have occurred if Romney had won the election—would have been a major setback to efforts to ensure that problematic drug users had access to effective treatment programs.

In regard to U.S. drug policy in Latin America, the administration has proved more diplomatic than its predecessors. Whereas in the past, the White House has been quick to criticize drug legislation or other actions not to its liking, the Obama administration has for the most part remained silent. Apart from diplomacy, however, U.S. drug policy remains on autopilot. When Obama took office, expectations ran high among drug-policy activists that at the least the new administration would discontinue spraying dangerous herbicides over the Colombian rain forest. Not only has aerial spraying continued, but forced eradication of coca and poppy, used to manufacture cocaine and heroin, remains at the center of U.S. drug policy, despite overwhelming evidence that it fails to reduce cultivation, generates violence and social conflict, and pushes some of the world's poorest farmers deeper into poverty.

Plan Colombia, touted by the U.S. government as a major success story, has wound down, but in its wake came the Merida Initiative in Mexico, which—as with the Andean Initiative launched in 1989—was front-loaded with U.S. military and police assistance. U.S. anti-drug aid to Central America's security forces has steadily increased through the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). A cornerstone of U.S. drug policy toward the isthmus is the DEA's Foreign-Deployed Advisory Support Team, or FAST. Initially operating in Afghanistan to disrupt the poppy trade, FAST teams are now deployed in Honduras, along with U.S. Special Forces, whose Green Berets have been training Honduran Special Operations forces. The dangers of further militarization in a region with a tragic history of internal conflict, violence, and extremely weak institutions was made painfully clear on May 11, 2012, when Honduran forces accompanied by DEA agents on an anti-drug mission near the town of Paptalaya opened helicopter gunfire on a boat that police initially claimed was carrying illicit drugs, killing four people—two women (one of them



A coca “lab” in Guaviare, Colombia. The coca is processed into coca paste. PHOTO BY SANHO TREE

pregnant), a 14-year-old boy, and a 21-year-old man. All had legitimate reasons for being on the river early that morning. Investigations into the killing are moving at a snail’s pace.

Three key factors help explain why continuity has prevailed over change in U.S. drug-control policies, and each presents a possible impediment to a change in course during Obama’s second term. First, for the most part drug “warriors” on Capitol Hill continue to have the upper hand on drug-policy issues debated in the U.S. Congress. As the elections reaffirmed the status quo in Washington, there is no reason to expect that to change. Second, the drug-war bureaucracy remains bloated, firmly entrenched, and extremely resistant to change. Apart from a few notable exceptions at ONDCP, the same officials continue to be the driving force behind U.S. drug policy, in some cases for decades. And over the years, the drug-policy bureaucracy has obtained a great deal of autonomy from the broader official policy-making community. Finally, because of these dynamics, high-level and committed leadership from the President is needed to begin to

change the status quo. Yet the Obama administration is engaged in major debates on a range of salient issues that continue into its second term. Based on his comments following his reelection, the president’s political capital will more likely be spent on issues such as climate change and immigration reform.

Given the continuity in U.S. drug policy, a Romney victory would probably not have led to a significant change in strategy or programs implemented on the ground in Latin America. However, it would likely have led to a change in rhetoric and tone, potentially contributing to the growing distance between key countries in the region and the United States on a range of important policy issues. As noted, the Obama administration has sought to be more diplomatic and less interventionist in its approach to the region and to drug policy, refraining from public criticism of reforms that contradict U.S. policy. Between hardliners in the U.S. Congress and their Republican

counterparts in a Romney White House, one could imagine, in particular, escalating tensions with Bolivia and Venezuela. In both cases, the Obama administration routinely “determines” that they have failed to comply with international drug trafficking objectives (an annual process mandated by the U.S. Congress), but has done so with little fanfare. Perhaps of greatest significance, it is likely that a Romney White House would have vociferously opposed the increasing calls for drug-policy reform emanating from the region, potentially creating a tense standoff between Washington and those countries advocating such reform.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION FACES AN IMMEDIATE drug-policy test—and political conundrum—as it defines its response to the cannabis legalization initiatives approved in Washington and Colorado, which pit state law against federal law. (The federal Controlled Substances Act prohibits the production, sale, and possession of marijuana.) In Washington State, 55.4% voted to “legalize the production, distribution and possession of marijuana, and establish regulations.” A similar initiative passed in Colorado with 54.8% of the vote. In both cases, possession for personal use will become legal and, ultimately, cannabis could be sold at state-licensed stores. Colorado will also allow individuals to cultivate six plants. Washington’s 66-page regulatory proposal was carefully written to stand up to federal pressure.

The Obama administration will be weighing many factors as it decides how to respond to the initiatives in Washington and Colorado. A range of policy tools are at its disposal, including stepping up DEA enforcement activities, taking action in the courts, or threatening to seize marijuana tax revenues. It will also likely be looking at the impact of its actions on the regional drug-policy debate and reform efforts.

As noted, Obama initially promised to respect state laws on medical marijuana. However, the DEA publicly expressed opposition to that position and over time has significantly increased its raids of medical marijuana facilities, apparently with no objections from the White House. In 2010 when California voted on Proposition 19, which would have legalized marijuana, Attorney General Eric Holder spoke out forcefully against it. In 2012, however, the Justice Department remained silent before the voting in Washington and Colorado. (Some speculate that the silence prevailed because Colorado was a battleground state and Obama needed the youth vote.) Since the elections, officials have made only broad statements, indicating

that they are reviewing the ballot initiatives and that drug-enforcement policy has not changed. Such prudence is warranted given the broad popular support received in each state.

If Washington and Colorado are able to more fully implement their legislative initiatives, they would be the only places in the world (with the possible exception of Uruguay) where marijuana could be cultivated, sold, and consumed legally—a fact that is already making waves across Latin America. (Even in Holland production remains illegal, though individuals can legally buy small amounts of marijuana in coffeeshops.) In public comments immediately following the U.S. elections, Luis Videgaray, who leads incoming Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto’s transition team, called the vote a game changer, stating that “obviously we can’t handle a product that is illegal in Mexico, trying to stop its transfer to the United States, when in . . . at least part of the United States it has a different status.” In other words, countries already weary of waging the U.S. “war on drugs” are even more likely to resist U.S. pressure to comply with its drug policies.

ALL THIS COMES AT A TIME WHEN WASHINGTON’S ability to influence drug policy is rapidly waning. Latin America’s growing independence from the United States—evident in the creation of bodies such as UNASUR, CELAC, and ALBA and in Brazil’s emergence as a regional powerhouse—has also been manifest in the emergence of a regional drug-policy debate. Various factors have fueled this debate. Decades after following Washington’s repressive drug policies, most Latin American countries face even worse drug-related problems. Drug use has spread across the hemisphere, jails are overflowing with low-level drug offenders, and organized crime has skyrocketed with devastating effects marked by of corruption and violence. Some Latin American officials, such as Guatemalan president Otto Pérez Molina, are openly expressing frustration that their countries are paying a high price for failed policies, while in Washington debate on the issue has stagnated and the United States refuses to stem the flow of weapons over its borders or seriously tackle reducing demand.

For the first time, sitting presidents are calling for a discussion of drug-policy alternatives with all options on the table, including legalization. At the April 2012 Cartagena OAS summit, the presidents mandated a study to examine present policies and explore alternatives. Most recently, the governments of Mexico,

Colombia, and Guatemala formally requested that the UN begin preparing for an international conference to review the current international drug control system, again insisting that all options be reviewed. For their part, U.S. officials have made clear U.S. opposition to any debate that moves beyond the confines of the existing international drug control conventions.

The cannabis legalization initiatives in Washington and Colorado will no doubt give further impetus to the debate in Latin America, as well as the reforms that are already under way. Bolivia has temporarily withdrawn from the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in order to re-adhere with a reservation allowing for the use of coca in its natural state. (The convention erroneously classifies the coca leaf as a dangerous drug, along with cocaine and heroin.) Countries as diverse as Argentina and Ecuador are debating new drug laws. A movement has emerged in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay to allow for the cultivation of marijuana for personal use.

Most significantly, the Uruguayan government has proposed creating legal, state-controlled markets for cannabis. At the time of this writing, the government is putting the finishing touches on a draft law that could be voted on in the House of Representatives by the end of November, and then by the Senate next year. The proposed legislation also includes allowing cultivation for personal consumption. The legalization initiatives in Washington and Colorado will no doubt boost the Uruguayan government's arguments for the policy reform, and has harmed the U.S. government's

column Toke Signals

Growing the Legend

Herban Legends is both a great pun and a great dispensary.
BY STEVE ELLIOTT

Whenver I enter a bud room with 30 strains on the wall, I think "I could spend some serious time exploring this menu." It's not a scenario that happens often, but I was fortunate enough to experience it recently at Herban Legends, a well-run medical-marijuana dispensary in White Center.

Herban Legends goes to extra trouble to look out for your health. Every single one of the strains sold there is organically grown, according to knowledgeable, friendly budtender Chris. Because it uses seeds like "good ones," "we're kind and respectful" and "retaining authenticity" in an advertisement, even before visiting I got the feeling that Herban Legends had its priorities right when it came to making patients feel comfortable. And that feeling was definitely borne out by the visit.

But let's get back to that fantastic menu first. Handwritten on a big whiteboard, it's divided into sections. And not just the basic indica and sativa, either—there's one section devoted entirely to Kush strains, for instance (Prilly, Indigo, Strawberry, Lavender, Blueberry, Dank, and Toad, to be exact). Strains are priced from \$9 to \$13 a gram, with a preponderance of \$10 indicas, \$12 sativas, and hybrids. (Chris explained that since sativas take a couple more weeks to mature when flowering, it's a little more expensive to grow them.) Dumbo prices range from \$240 for the \$4 strains to \$390 for the \$13 varieties.

Feeling like a kid in a candy store, I eventually narrowed my selections, with assistance from Chris, to his top-of-the-line indica, The Hog, at \$13 a gram (top-of-the-line sativa, Jack Herer, also \$13; an interesting 50/50 hybrid, Blueberry, at \$12; and Blue Dream, a \$12 sativa).

The Hog was just as robust as its name sake, delivering a reliable 100-percent indica body blow that definitively relieved pain while decreasing motivation to leave the couch.



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credibility in critiquing Uruguay's actions. Moreover, these states' initiatives mean that Uruguay may not be the only country in defiance of the international drug control conventions on the marijuana issue.

At the very least, one would hope that in his second term, Obama would show greater tolerance for the debate on drug-policy alternatives that has blossomed across Latin America. More significant, of course, would be the president's active participation in that debate, now that he has another four-year mandate. **□**

Aspen Logic

JILL REPLOGLE

HIPPIES AND RADICALS HAVE LONG MOCKED Aspen, Colorado, for its artificial grandeur amid some of the most breathtaking natural terrain in the lower 48 states. In their book *The Slums of Aspen*, University of Minnesota sociologists Lisa Sun-Hee Park and David Naguib Pellow focus their scorn on what they see as Aspen's "nativist environmentalist" nature.

This plays out in two major contradictions. The first is what they call the "Aspen Logic," the idea that through green consumerism, the rich convince themselves that they are environmentally conscious while ignoring the real impacts of their extravagant lifestyles—on the earth and on humans occupying lower economic strata. The second is the town's anti-immigrant mentality and actions, while it depends heavily upon immigrants to cook, clean, and take out the garbage.

By highlighting the realities of Aspen and its environs, Park and Pellow offer a biting critique of both this exclusive, ostensibly "green" community and of the mainstream environmental movement. At times, they overgeneralize and confuse the two.

The book's starting point and the authors' primary example of Aspen's nativist, environmentalist nature is a 1999 resolution from the Aspen City Council beseeching the federal government to restrict immigration into the United States by enforcing existing laws and reducing the number of legal immigrants allowed into the country each year. Park and Pellow then highlight local newspaper articles and letters to the editor, subse-

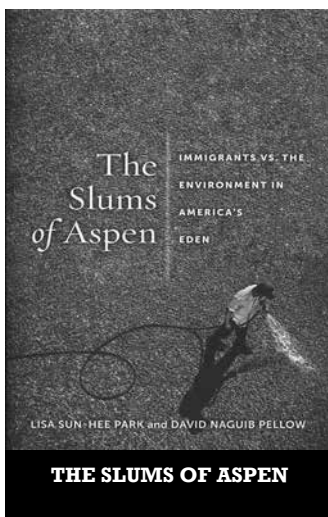
quent events, and interviews with local immigrants and immigrant rights advocates to build their case against Aspen.

The authors review the town's alternately working-class, upper-class history, and past battles for the soul of Aspen. (Sadly, they leave out the most entertaining chapter: Hunter S. Thompson's run for sheriff of Pitkin County.) They also highlight nativist strains in the environmental movement and link environmentalists with some of the more nefarious motives behind population control.

As a text for undergraduate students at a place like the University of Colorado, this is valuable reading. If you're fairly familiar with anti-immigrant politics (e.g., if you've read any news over the past few years), what Park and Pellow have to say on the subject probably won't surprise you. If you consider yourself both an environmentalist and advocate of immigrant rights, some of their conclusions will probably offend you. Generally, the authors assume that environmentally privileged, nativist Aspenites represent environmentalists everywhere.

Nevertheless, I agree with many of the authors' points. They provide a good overview of the sharp divide between rich, white Aspen residents and visitors, and the mostly immigrant workers who serve them. In the Roaring Fork Valley, this divide is geographic—wealthier residents tend to live "up valley" in Aspen and Snowmass Village, while the immigrant workforce lives "down valley," crowded into mobile home parks and apartments in towns like Carbondale and Glenwood Springs.

The divide is almost entirely racial—white vs. Latino. It's sociological and economic. One Latina interviewed by the authors recounted this story about feeling unwanted in a high-price Aspen boutique:



By Lisa Sun-Hee Park
and David Naguib Pellow,
NYU Press, 2011,
288 pp, \$30 Hardcover

Jill Replogle is a reporter for the public radio collaboration Fronteras Desk, and is based at KPBS in San Diego, California. She has been reporting on Latin America and environmental and social justice issues since 2001.

"I went with one of my best friends to buy a sweater—a very expensive one. So when we get in there [the store], we were looking, and the lady told us, 'Oh, that sweater is like eight hundred bucks. Do you have enough money to pay for that?' You don't see people like us in that kind of stores. . . . They always think that [Latinos] don't have enough money to spend in those stores, or just they don't deserve to buy whatever stuff they have."

The divide is also environmental. Within the valley, Park and Pellow point out, mobile home parks are often located in flood plains, exposing their low-income residents to an extra level of environmen-

Park and Pellow criticize the Aspen Institute's top-down approach to change in the world and its embodiment of the Aspen Logic. Thus, guests of the Aspen Institute might spend a day discussing the effects of climate change on the world's poor, and then head up heated driveways to their luxury condos to relax in private spas.

The authors promise to unmask the hypocrisy of the Aspen Logic by taking us to the heart of what they call "environmental privilege," the flip side of environmental injustice and environmental racism. During their research, they claim to have "traveled up and down Aspen's social pecking order," from 2000 to 2004. They write early on in the

pen's nativist environmentalists and the environmentally privileged, of whom the authors speak so caustically. Instead of meeting the presumed bad guys, I met a number of local Latino immigrants and social justice activists from Aspen's neighboring, more immigrant-inclusive communities (closer to the "ghetto" Park and Pellow say they won't visit in this book).

The authors did present the views of the co-founders of an anti-immigration group, ironically called the Valley Alliance for Social and Environmental Responsibility. However, it's unclear how much local support or influence the group ever had. (One of the founders, Mike McGarry, ran for an Aspen City Council seat in 2001 and came in sixth place. He died in early 2012.) The authors also interviewed a few anonymous, self-proclaimed "liberals" who seemed not at all liberal on immigration issues, which was the authors' point.

Rather than taking the authors' word for it, I would have found it much more compelling to hear some of Aspen's wealthy inhabitants justify their own ideas and actions surrounding the environment and immigration. There didn't seem to be any effort to challenge these people to justify their contradictions. In fact, there didn't seem to be much effort to even talk to them.

I don't doubt that anti-immigrant sentiments are plentiful in the Aspen area, as they are in many parts of the country, and in nearly all service-oriented communities, which inevitably depend heavily on immigrant labor. These sentiments in Aspen are likely more latent than overt.

Park and Pellow dedicate a good chunk of the book to crafting the argument for the close relationship between environmentalism and

I would have appreciated being introduced more thoroughly to Aspen's nativist environmentalists and the environmentally privileged, of whom the authors speak so caustically.

tal risk. Open space, and perhaps more importantly in this context, the leisure time to enjoy it, are less accessible to the valley's working poor. Of course, the Aspen ski resort's high-priced lift tickets are out of the question for many minimum-wage-earning immigrants.

At the same time, elite visitors hash out ideas for solving world hunger and transforming the United States into a green-energy economy at the prestigious Aspen Institute, which was founded in 1950 by a Chicago businessman named Walter Paepcke. Upon visiting the town, Paepcke deemed it the perfect place for the world's elite to leave behind the daily grind and reflect on big, humanistic ideas.

book: "We believe that in order to understand poverty we need to go not to the ghetto but to Aspen; in order to understand the Mexican border and immigration politics, we need to move beyond the barrios and go instead to Aspen."

But I finished the book feeling as if I spent very little time in Aspen. I met, as a reader, almost no one on the upper end of the pecking order. Instead, the authors seem to gather (and then share) their findings about the town's nature and residents through historical digging and second-hand sources, such as letters to the editor in the local newspaper. These are not bad sources, but I would have appreciated being introduced more thoroughly to As-

nativism, loosely using Aspen as an example. They focus particularly on the Sierra Club and its historic, nasty internal battle between a nativist, anti-immigrant environmentalist faction and its opponents. This occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, when overpopulation became a popular concern, thanks in large part to Paul Ehrlich's alarmist book, *The Population Bomb*, which was jointly published by the Sierra Club and Ballantine Books. The club's board of directors subsequently passed several resolutions calling on the United States to curb its population growth. Neither of the resolutions mentions anything about immigration control.

The population issue became more heated within the club in the following years, and in 1996, the club's board adopted a resolution stating that it would "take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration." The issue continued to crop up, however, and nativists within the organization have thus far been consistently outnumbered. Notably, venerated environmentalist David Brower resigned from the Sierra Club's board of directors in 2000 out of frustration with the club's lack of action on population and immigration control.

Still, to date the environmental organization has remained officially neutral on the issue of immigration. Nevertheless, Park and Pellow state that "it would be incorrect and impossible to try to distinguish between the nativist or 'anti-immigrant' faction [of the Sierra Club] and the rest of the club." The basis for this assertion is the club's "long-standing love for people-less nature, including its long-term relationship with nature photographer Ansel Adams."

Yes, the club and Adams share a

love for natural landscapes free of *Homo sapiens*, but does that, therefore, make them anti-immigrant? The Sierra Club battles certainly merit study and reflection. But I can't agree with the authors' conclusions about their ultimate meaning for the mainstream environmental movement—namely, that "nativism and environmentalism [are] part of the same, broad continuum of movements."

The authors also link the history of nativism within the environmental movement to the concept of Aspen's environmental privilege. The premise of this link is summed up in the following paragraph, which is worth quoting at length:

If Aspen is a defining space that embodies the best of environmentalism, then much of that movement becomes wed to the condition of the privileged. Thus, environmentalism is not progressive politics but a politics of the rich and comfortable that claims progressive ideals. Mainstream environmentalism thus becomes entirely consistent with—and a close cousin of—nativism and racially exclusionary politics, and has been since the beginnings, when environmental organizations defined themselves as part of America's white, affluent citizenry.

True, environmentalism has historically, and continues to be, primarily a concern of the middle and upper classes. But I take issue with the premise that "Aspen is a defining space that embodies the best of environmentalism." I, for one, would never say that Aspen embodies the best of environmentalism, and I'd like to think that many of us who consider ourselves environmentalists are appalled by the very idea of heated driveways and mansions butting up against wilderness areas.

Therefore, to use the example of Aspen to extrapolate a conclusion about the entire environmental

movement is unfair. The environmental movement is and always has had incredibly diverse motives—for example, cleaning up polluted air- and waterways, halting nuclear development, and, yes, preserving natural resources and controlling the population. The authors seem to believe it focuses primarily on these last two goals. But environmental justice is a strong and growing element of the overall movement. Aspen's particular brand of environmentalism (if you can call it that) is just that, Aspen's.

Finally, 13 years after Aspen's mostly toothless anti-immigration City Council resolution, the book feels out-of-date and somewhat trivial in the face of a much changed environmental movement and much bigger battles on the immigration front. Far more serious and advanced anti-immigrant politics are at work in Arizona, Alabama, and other parts of the country that are following their lead. And while the 2012 elections surely demonstrated the rising voting power of Latinos and other minority groups, the spread of exclusionary voter ID laws across the country threaten to seriously undermine this power.

Population growth remains a sticky, but also real, environmental concern, coupled with the likely bigger problem of over-consumption by the world's upper strata. I believe the environmental movement—at least some important strands of it—are focusing ever more on the latter as climate change threatens our very existence. Are there contradictions within this movement? Of course.

Perhaps as these issues morph, *The Slums of Aspen* will be seen as an important scholarly contribution to the history of immigration and environmental politics in this country. On a micro level, it is so today. ■

The Rise of ‘Horizontalism’ in the Americas

JOHN L. HAMMOND

ACCORDING TO THE TWO AUTHORS REVIEWED here, a new kind of social movement is arising in several Latin American countries. These new movements are nonhierarchical, territorially based, and autonomous—they tend to reject involvement with the state (though not absolutely); instead they propose to solve their problems of survival with their own resources.

These movements are different from traditional community or working-class movements, as well as the movements that opposed dictatorships and called for democratization in the 1980s. They have a territorial base and address the concrete problems of a particular locality in which people live and work. They reject the top-down model of organizing, which they argue has prevailed in past movements; they do not seek state power nor do they primarily seek benefits from the state. They emphasize affective bonds and personal interaction as the basis for solidarity. They reject the prevailing conception of power as domination, seeing it rather as the ability to carry out projects collectively and to develop activists’ capacities to cooperate. Beginning in the 1990s, people in marginal communities as well as people who have suffered sudden losses due to economic crisis have formed most of these movements.

Raúl Zibechi, author of *Territories in Resistance: A Cartography of Latin American Social Movements*, is a journalist covering all of Latin America for the Uruguayan weekly *Brecha*. Marina Sitrin, author of *Everyday Revolutions*:

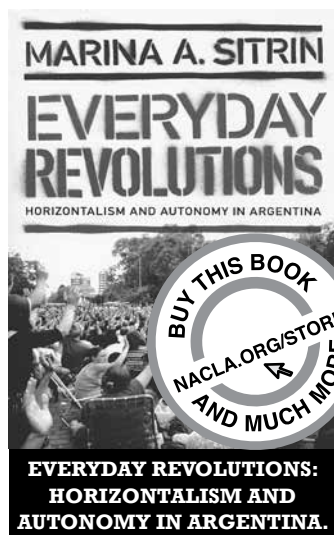
John L Hammond is the author of Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador and Building Popular Power: Workers’ and Neighborhood Movements in the Portuguese Revolution. He teaches sociology at the City University of New York and is a member of NACLA’s editorial committee.

Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina, is a sociologist at New York’s City University and a member of NACLA’s editorial committee. Zibechi characterizes the new movements as “movements of resistance,” Sitrin as “autonomous movements.” Zibechi highlights their opposition to the state, Sitrin their autonomy and creativity. They therefore differ in emphasis—but there is a strong overlap.

Sitrin focuses on Argentina and presents the neighborhood assemblies, self-managed workplaces, and the *piqueteros* (movements of unemployed workers) that arose after the country’s economic collapse and popular uprising of December 2001. Zibechi seeks a broader compass, including all the Argentine movements of Sitrin’s account but also indigenous people in several countries, women’s social action collectives in Peru, the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), and the Zapatistas in Mexico (as well as some others that are mentioned more briefly). Sitrin emphasizes the horizontal and affective relations among activists, to which Zibechi pays relatively little attention. She is more interested in portraying the movements from the inside, while he looks at their relation—or deliberate avoidance of relation—to the outside world.

The three sets of movements on which Sitrin focuses all arose or grew during the Argentine financial collapse of 2001. The collapse was due largely to a previous government’s pegging the Argentine currency to the U.S. dollar, which led to a balance-of-payments crisis. In response, the government froze bank accounts. Massive protests shouting the slogan “*Que se vayan todos*” (“throw them all out”) toppled governments in rapid succession: Five presidents held office in less than a month.

Sitrin accompanied these movements intermittently for



by Marina A. Sitrin,
Zed Books, 2012,
256 pp, \$24.95 (paperback)

a decade. She tells about marching with them and joining in their occupations. Middle-class people, those most directly affected by the bank closures—because they had bank accounts—formed neighborhood assemblies and flooded the streets in *cacerolazos*, demonstrations accompanied by the loud banging of pots and pans. Unemployed workers in more marginal areas formed the *piqueteros*—the name comes from their picket lines that closed roadways to demand unemployment subsidies that would be managed by the associations of the unemployed themselves. As capitalists dismissed workers or abandoned their firms because of the crisis, workers asserted authority over those workplaces and began to run them themselves.

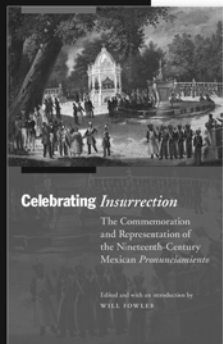
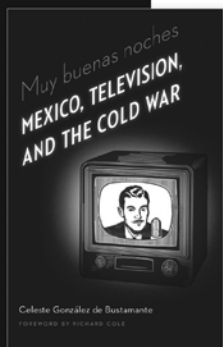
In all of these sites, the new activists created horizontal forms of organization, rejecting the hierarchical

leadership of earlier movements that had failed to respond to the crisis adequately. In horizontal organizations, people developed what Sitrin calls affective politics, a political practice of deepening human relationships and respect for individuals, rejecting strategic manipulation. She includes dynamic descriptions and extensive quotes from those who experienced the movements' solidarity and problem solving through bonds of mutual respect and affection. Close personal relations, she argues, sustained people in the movements and motivated them to work on their collective projects.

But the three types of organization were different, depending largely on whether they had concrete tasks to perform. The workplaces had to organize to produce and sell their products or serve their customers, as well as to fight off the repression that the

state brought down on them, complying with the demands of the ousted owners. The *piqueteros'* organizations in poor neighborhoods on the periphery of Buenos Aires and other cities, though they fought for unemployment subsidies, mainly organized mutual self-help to allow people to survive on their own resources. The neighborhood assemblies had less reason to exist once the immediate financial crisis was past and bank accounts were unfrozen; traditional political parties often intervened in the assemblies that survived, and partisan strife hampered their functioning.

Sitrin's ethnographic account includes many testimonies of participants in the movements, describing not only how the organizations worked but also the transformation that participation has brought about in activists' lives. As a woman in a local movement of unemployed work-



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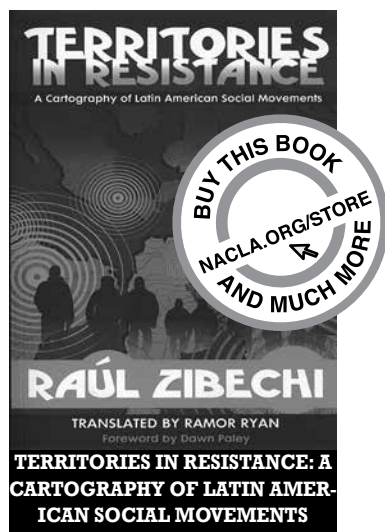
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ers put it, “We . . . started to love each other as neighbors. We discovered that we were a lot happier when we were confronting the crisis together.”

Sitrin is attentive to the way language is transformed as well. Many words took on new meanings. *Autonomy*, for example: At first it had the mainly negative connotation of freedom from control by the external



by Raúl Zibechi,

AK Press, 2012, 363 pp., \$19.95

(paperback)

forces of government and parties, but it came to be something positive: an “active form of being”, a creation of something new rather than just a response to an external power.

ZIBECCHI, IN ESSAYS THAT WERE originally published separately, not only has a broader geographic reach, but offers a more structural account of what he refers to as movements of resistance, both of their origin and of their current relations to the larger society. He regards the new movements as a response to neoliberalism. Older movements that had represented the working class, most notably trade unions, were decimated by neoliberalism in the waning

years of the last century. Most of the movements he discusses are based not in workplaces but in communities and are concerned with identity and everyday life.

He pays little attention to horizontality and affective relations in these movements. For him, their most distinctive feature is their territoriality. They exist on the margins of society, spatially as well as socially, where they are beyond the reach of the powerful. They can therefore resist subjection to the dominant institutions of society, including the state, and organize their own institutions. The workplaces he discusses have all come under worker control, usually after a struggle to oust owners or to pick up the pieces after owners had abandoned them.

Where Sitrin strongly emphasizes the language with which activists express their experiences, Zibechi emphasizes their epistemology. In their relative isolation, activists control knowledge-based activity and reject the beliefs imposed by colonizers. The knowledge they transmit in community-controlled schools (in the Bolivian Andes and in the Brazilian MST settlements) or in providing medical care (in Chiapas and the *piqueteros*' communities) is derived from their received traditions. In the schools they can teach their own culture, not the ruling ideology propagated in official schools, which belittle that culture.

In health care they take advantage of modern medicine, but selectively. The movements that can do this most effectively are those that control territory. Overall, his argument fits movements that are more physically separate, hence more autonomous, than the other movements.

In his concluding section, Zibechi deals with these movements' relation to the new progressive governments that have won elections in many Latin American countries in this century.

The governments of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Lula in Brazil, and the new governments in Bolivia and Ecuador, he says, have not really broken with neoliberalism; instead, despite programs to alleviate the worst of the poverty left by the preceding neoliberal decade, they have followed the same neoliberal prescription promoting the free market, resource extraction, and economic growth for its own sake. He draws on Foucault's concept of biopolitical power: The state represses movements while incorporating the poor through social benefits (in the Southern Cone) or community action (in the Andean countries), and reinforces its position vis-à-vis the movements by seducing their leaders with government offices. He is hardly friendlier to the more radical governments of Bolivia and Ecuador than to the center-left Argentine, Brazilian, and Uruguayan governments. (His treatment of Venezuela is less harsh.)

These governments offer inducements to co-opt social movements, he says, and traditional movements have succumbed. The movements of resistance have maintained their autonomy more successfully. While their territorial base can protect them from repression, Zibechi argues, governments work hard to co-opt them. In general, however, the movements' isolation protects them from co-optation.

These two books differ in their coverage, and partly for that reason they also differ in their emphases. Together, however, they give us a portrait of a new kind of movement of the last decade or more whose activism is a welcome antidote to the quiescence and incorporation of many of the more traditional urban and class-based movements. Neither book gives a full-scale analysis either of the neoliberalism or of the allegedly post-neoliberal governments. Though the

authors show that those governments have repressed social movements, they do not clearly explain why—except that Zibechi seems to assume that states are necessarily repressive.

Recognizing the danger of co-optation, both authors insist that the movements must guard their autonomy jealously. Some readers will be skeptical about both the movements' staying power and about their ability to achieve the desired social transformations without using the tools of the state. Sitrin talks explicitly about staying power. As she acknowledges, many participants have dropped out and some movements have opted for accepting state benefits even at the cost of autonomy. She nevertheless declares the movements successful at fostering caring, cooperative relations and achieving their goals. She insists that their success must be measured by the testimony of the activists themselves—not by a numbers game counting those who have remained active and dedicated to horizontality and autonomy in comparison to the number who have dropped out or compromised with the state. If the experience of participants is the measure of success, however, then the experience of those who responded differently should also be accounted for.

Both authors count these movements' autonomy from the state as their greatest strength. But their own evidence shows that the movements thoroughly imbricate themselves with the state even as they attempt to escape its strictures. And in the end, both authors qualify their claims and show that instead of complete separation, the movements are working out a more complex relation with the state that, they say, maintains a critical stance and avoids being taken over.

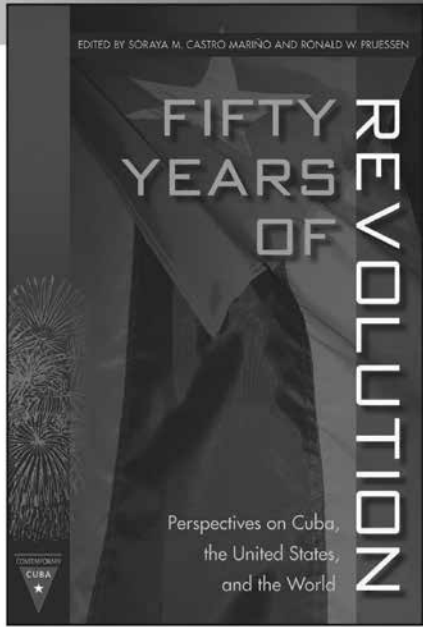
In Zibechi's case the discrepancy arises in part because the essays in the book were written separately: He offers broad generalizations in early

chapters claiming that the movements he has studied “not only [reject] the state form, but [they acquire] a *non-state form*”; later in the book, however, he presents details about particular movements that make them appear considerably less autonomous. The Brazilian MST, for example, while clearly a movement of opposition, relies heavily on the country's agrarian reform bureaucracy for legitimization of its possession of occupied land and for support in the form of agricultural credit and technical assistance.

Sitrin, in her concluding chapters, argues that over time the movements developed a more sophisticated analysis of the state and learned to engage with it without making it the point of reference. Both authors' claims of autonomy, however, are highly qualified by descriptions of the actual practice.

On the whole, these two books provide us with graphic pictures of a

new kind of movement that maintains a critical stance toward the state while living within it. They show what resources make that stance possible. A similar movement has arisen in the United States since 2011: Occupy Wall Street and its extensions across the country have generally adopted the horizontal, leaderless style of organization. The occupation of territory, even if only for a short period, has given them an identity and a platform for asserting, at least rhetorically, their refusal to join in state-oriented politics. Sitrin herself has been an active participant and mentor to the movement in New York. The movements discussed in these books, despite the considerable differences between their social/political environments and our own, offer examples to inform us about the possibilities open to movements for social transformation in the United States as well. ■



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New & Noteworthy

CATESBY HOLMES

OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS OR SO, THE CONCEPT OF citizenship has become increasingly broad in Latin America. Thanks in large part to democratization in the 1990s, previously excluded populations, from indigenous groups in Ecuador and poor people in Bolivia to women in Argentina, have gained substantial rights. Governing the Americas these days just ain't what it used to be, what with all these newly empowered sectors of society clamoring for recognition, cultural protection, political participation—sometimes even leadership positions (ye gads).

The general—though far from universal (remember Honduras's 2009 military coup?)—"opening up" of Latin American society has produced an explosion of scholarly literature on social inclusion in the region. This essay reviews four recent books examine the tactics, achievements, and challenges of women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and LGBTQ communities as they shoulder their way into the Latin American political sphere.

Selecting Women, Electing Women, Magda Hinojosa's discerning exploration of women in Latin American politics, opens with a series of female success stories. In 2006, Chile elected Michelle Bachelet president. Then came the wins of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina (2007), Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2010), and Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica (2010). And they're not the first modern Latina leaders: In the 1990s both Nicaragua and Panama elected female heads of state (Violeta Chamorro and Mireya Moscoso, respectively). Not too shabby for the region that coined the term *machismo*.

A chart in Chapter 1 shows that nearly every Latin American nation has markedly increased its fraction of female legislators since 1980. Three

decades ago, many places had exactly zero female senators. By 2010, percentages had spiked to 47% in Bolivia, 35.5% in Argentina, and 32% in Ecuador. In comparison, today less than 20% of the U.S. Congress is composed of women.

So what sea change ushered Latin American women into influence? That's an interesting question, but it's not Hinojosa's point. "The fact that [Bachelet et al.] . . . have been elected to their nations' . . . most visible office should not obscure the unequal gender balance in politics," she warns. The rest of the book's 170 pages strive to determine why "[w]omen in the region remain inadequately represented at all levels of politics," occupying just one in seven legislative seats and one in 20 mayoral posts.

To sort out this puzzle, Hinojosa examines candidate-selection dynamics, contending that this under-studied and distinctly unsexy process is the central factor limiting women's leadership. She handily disproves the leading explanations for female under-representation, refuting both supply-side arguments (i.e., there aren't enough qualified women running for office) and demand-side excuses (i.e., people won't vote for a woman) with a parade of data on women's progress. Nearly everywhere in Latin America, women's literacy is approaching men's, and female workplace participation has tripled since 1960. While some gender-based voter bias does remain, it is diminishing and unable to thoroughly sideline women.

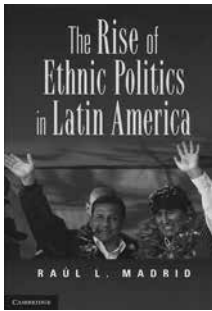
Therefore, concludes Hinojosa, the "bottlenecks . . . occur in the second and third stages" of the path toward office: "when eligibles become aspirants and, later, as aspirants transform into candidates." *Selecting Women, Electing Women* supports this claim primarily with detailed case studies on Chile and Mexico, drawing the surprising conclusion that it may in fact be the primary process—often thought of as the most democratic of all nominating systems—that keeps Latin American women disempowered.

THE STORY IS A HAPPIER ONE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WHOSE political star has risen markedly in recent years, pronounces Raúl Madrid in *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America*. From



**SELECTING
WOMEN, ELECTING
WOMEN: POLITICAL
REPRESENTATION AND CANDIDATE
SELECTION
IN LATIN AMERICA**

by Magda Hinojosa
Temple University Press,
2012, 240 pp, \$32.95
(paperback)



**THE RISE OF
ETHNIC POLITICS
IN LATIN AMERICA**

by Raúl Madrid
Cambridge University
Press, 2012, 239 pp.
\$28.99 (paperback)

cutting identities. The result is a work that is nuanced and credible, as well as adeptly written.

Madrid argues that the election of indigenous presidents in Latin America did not result from some groundswell of support for its *indigenas* but rather a hybrid movement he dubs “ethnopopulism.” Evo Morales founded MAS as an indigenous party, yes—but he also championed pro-poor policies; Peru’s Ollanta Humala was a Quechua candidate of a traditional party, Union por el Perú, who also made indigenous appeals. In both cases, Madrid argues, indigenous mobilization took on an unanticipated populist character, whereby candidates wooed not just their ethnic cohort but also peasants, the urban poor, and other marginalized sectors. MAS leaders “employed nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric”; Humala “rail[ed] against the traditional parties, the legislature, and the political class....”

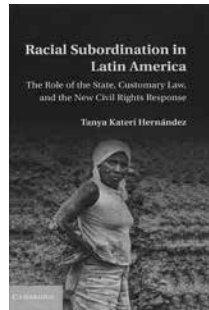
The book leaves readers uncertain how to feel about the ethnopopulist trend. On one hand, “both the MAS and Ecuador’s Pachakutik have actively recruited white and mestizo candidates and have developed broad and inclusive platforms,” ensuring ethnic politics won’t destroy Latin America as they did Yugoslavia. Yet their effect on institutions has been mixed. As populism often does, ethnopopulism in the region, argues Madrid, has “weakened democracy” and “undermined the rule of law.”

THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF INDIGENOUS GROUPS STANDS

in contrast to the enduring marginalization of Afro-descendants. With *Racial Subordination in Latin America: The Role of the State, Customary Law, and the New Civil Rights Response*, Tanya Kateri Hernández joins a small but devoted group of English-language scholars bringing to light the historic oppression and present-day struggles of this community of 150 million, whose enslaved ancestors

Bolivia’s election of the Aymara unionist Evo Morales to Ecuador’s new “multicultural” constitution, the 21st century has seen indigenous issues move into the forefront of political consciousness, at least in the Andean region.

Through an in-depth parsing of electoral data from Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru, Madrid seeks to explain how this shift—which is little short of miraculous after four centuries of elite white rule—transpired. His topic is ethnicity, but he understands that race in a *mestizo* continent is a fluid thing, and judiciously allows for cross-



**RACIAL
SUBORDINATION
IN LATIN AMERICA:
THE ROLE OF THE
STATE, CUSTOM-
ARY LAW, AND THE
NEW CIVIL RIGHTS
RESPONSE**

by Tanya Kateri Hernández
Cambridge University
Press, 2013, 247 pp.
\$90 (hardcover)

played a formative role in Latin American nation-building, society, and culture. Hernández’s book begins by eviscerating the myth of racial democracy that prevails in Latin America—that is, the notion that Latinos, by virtue of being majority mestizo, cannot possibly be racist. This trope of “racial innocence,” as Hernández calls it, ignores a legacy of racial inequality that traces back to slavery. Her aim is to expose how Latin American society has invoked seemingly egalitarian national ideologies to maintain white supremacy, disguising powerful barriers to Afro-descendant progress.

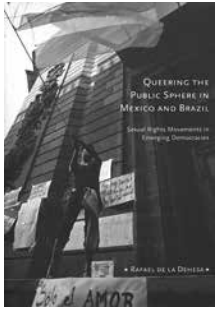
She does so persuasively, making good use of statistical information, case studies, linguistic analyses of the colloquialism *negro*, and historical immigration laws. Hernández’s findings are telling: Across the board, Afro-Latinos experience socioeconomic disadvantage (80% of Afro-Colombians subsist below the poverty line), social exclusion (Afro-Latinos are “disproportionately illiterate”), and political under-representation (in biracial Uruguay, just one congressman is black).

The good news comes in Chapter 5, which details regional advances in racial justice. Mounting domestic activism and a 2001 United Nations conference on racism have spurred governments into passing anti-discrimination legislation, including criminalizing racist displays (Peru), prohibiting employment discrimination (Mexico), and protecting cultural diversity (Colombia). In Brazil, President Henrique Cardoso established quota-based affirmative action in universities and federal agencies, a policy Dilma Rousseff is expanding.

Among the book’s novel contributions is its linking of racial-democracy myths in North and South America. “President Obama’s election in 2008 is viewed as the culmination of U.S. racial transcendence,” writes Hernández in her conclusion, “so that now the United States presents itself as ‘racially innocent’ in much the same way Latin America has long claimed to be.”

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON IS AT THE HEART OF

Rafael de la Dehesa’s *Queering the Public Sphere in Mexico and Brazil: Sexual Rights Movements in Emerging Democracies*, which analyzes the tactics of the LGBTQ coalitions in Mexico and



QUEERING THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN MEXICO AND BRAZIL: SEXUAL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

by Rafael de la Dehesa
Duke University Press,
2010, 297 pp, \$24.95
(paperback)

de Janeiro “cleanup operation” in the 1950s that apparently equated tight pants with homosexuality, “officials would drop an orange down the pants of a suspect, and if it did not come out the bottom, the suspect . . . was subject to

Brazil in achieving same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination laws.

The title of the introductory chapter, “Hybrid Modernities, Modern Sexualities,” should give readers a hint of the dense critical queer theory that’s coming. Brandishing such phrases as “hegemonic transnational identities” and “polyvalent sexual landscapes,” de la Dehesa’s prose is noun-laden and comma-happy.

Despite occasional clunkiness, the author’s history of homosexuality in Brazil and Mexico is lively. For example, homosexual acts have never been illegal in either country—though that didn’t stop the police from consistently and creatively repressing men who “flaunted” their sexuality. In a Rio

detention.”

By the 1970s, leftist groups in both Brazil and Mexico had shattered the public-private divide by broaching public debates on homosexuality. Here, they were taking their cue from the gay-rights movement in the United States. It is in this era that a transnational “gay identity” emerged and, with it, the international rights discourse that eventually led to anti-discrimination laws around the globe, including in Brazil and Mexico. De la Dehesa shows how LGBTQ advances in Brazil and Mexico emerged, in part, from the convergence of national and international activism.

He is right, of course. Gay people, like women, Afro-descendants, and indigenous communities, have achieved full(er) citizenship thanks in no small part to the international rights agenda and the identity politics of liberal democratic societies. But there’s an important footnote here: In recent years, hate crimes against homosexuals in Brazil have spiked drastically, and gender quotas in Argentina’s congress have led some to perceive female leaders as mere proxies of their husbands (the so-called *mujeres de* phenomenon), undermining their credibility. Top-down changes in policy do not necessarily lead to cultural shifts. But in Latin America, as these authors show, today the grassroots are rising to the challenge. □

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Reporting on Romer's Charter Cities: How the Media Sanitize Honduras's Brutal Regime

KEANE BHATT

ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, human rights lawyer Antonio Trejo stepped outside a wedding ceremony to take a phone call. Standing in the church parking lot of a suburb of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, he was shot six times by unknown assailants. Despite his requests, he had been granted no police protection in the face of death threats; Trejo had believed he would be targeted by wealthy landowners over his outspoken advocacy on behalf of small farmers seeking to reclaim seized territories.¹ In his death, Trejo joined dozens of fallen peasant leaders whom he had defended, as well as murdered opposition candidates, LGBT activists, journalists, and indigenous residents. All were victims of the violence and impunity that has reigned in Honduras since the 2009 coup d'état against its democratically elected and left-leaning president, Manuel Zelaya.

Earlier that day, Trejo had appeared on television, denouncing the powerful interests behind the government's push for *ciudades modelos*—swaths of land to be ceded to international investors and developed into autonomous cities, replete with their own police forces, taxes, labor codes, trade rules, and legal systems. He had helped prepare motions declaring the proposal unconstitutional.

This concept of “charter cities” has been promoted for a couple of years by Paul Romer, a University of Chicago-trained economist teaching at New York University. He described his brainchild in a co-authored op-ed as “an effort to build on the success of existing special zones based around the export-processing *maquila* industry.” A “new city on an undeveloped site, free of vested interests” could bypass the “inefficient rules” that hinder “peace, growth and development” worldwide, he argued. With new and stable institutions, the charter city could become an “attractive place for would-be residents and investors.”²

The international press swooned over Romer's revo-

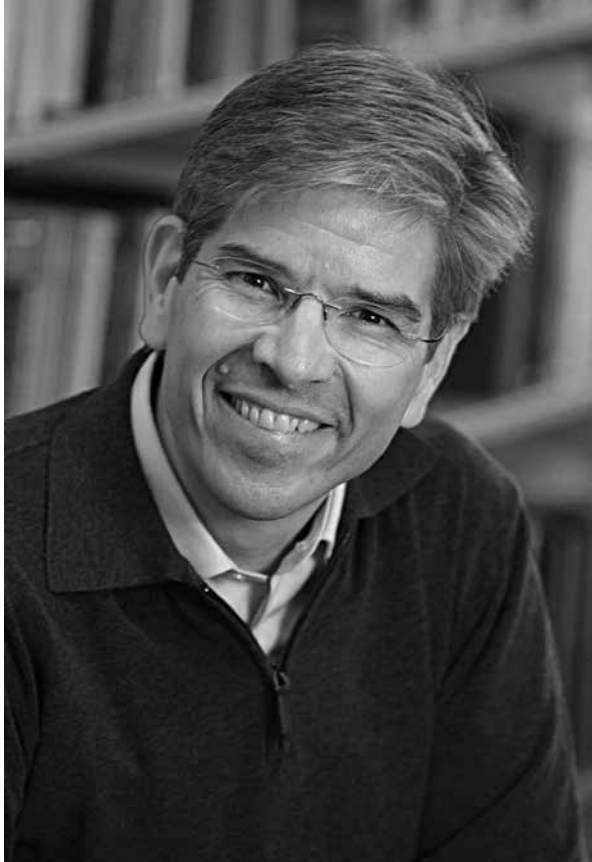
lutionary idea: *Foreign Policy* magazine named him one of its Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2010 for “developing the world's quickest shortcut to economic development”;³ that same year, *The Atlantic* dedicated a 5,400-word paean to Romer and his “urban oases of technocratic sanity,” which held the promise that “struggling nations could attract investment and jobs; private capital would flood in and foreign aid would not be needed.”

But the applicability of Romer's radical vision in Honduras always depended on the enthusiasm of the authoritarian, post-coup government of Porfirio Lobo. Lobo owes his presidency to the sham elections of 2009, which took place under the U.S.-backed de facto military government that overthrew Zelaya and were marred by violent repression and media censorship. With the exceptions of the U.S.-financed International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute, international observers boycotted the electoral charade that foisted Lobo into power.

Romer's lofty theories also remained utterly detached from the brutal nature of the collaborating government. “Setting up the rule of law” from scratch in a new city, he contended, would be an antidote to “weak governance” (weak in no small part due to Lobo's appointment of coup perpetrators to high-level government positions).⁴ In a co-authored paper, Romer also mischaracterized his allies, the “elected leaders in Honduras,” as earnest in their intent to end a “cycle of insecurity and instability that stokes fear and erodes trust.”⁵ (Romer offered no comment when Lobo designated Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla, accused of past ties to death squads, as the national chief of police.)⁶

Even on its own terms, Romer's development theory is disconnected from reality. He has repeatedly invoked Hong Kong as the sunny inspiration for the remaking of Honduras: “In a sense, Britain inadvertently, through its actions in Hong Kong, did more to reduce world poverty than all the aid programs that we've undertaken in the last century,” he claimed.⁷ Romer neglected to add that the city developed as a hub for the largest narcotrafficking operation in world history, through which Britain

Keane Bhatt is a regular contributor to the MALA section of NACLA Report and the creator of the Manufacturing Contempt blog on the NACLA Website.



Economist Paul Romer. PHOTO FROM PAUL ROMER'S WEBSITE

inflicted untold misery on the Chinese mainland. Britain dealt a humiliating military defeat to China (which had attempted to prohibit illegal British opium from entering its borders), took over Hong Kong, and forced China to abandon its tariff controls in 1842. Given that Hong Kong was one of the spoils of a drug war, and that its inhabitants were permitted democratic elections only 152 years after its incorporation into an empire, Romer's dream for Honduras could just as easily be considered a nightmare.

Romer's focus on good rule making is similarly fanciful; his effort to change the rules that engender poverty conspicuously excludes the international legal privileges that allow undemocratic leaders to sell a country's resources and borrow in its name (he wrote positively of a trade agreement that Lobo struck with Canada this summer).⁸ Romer also approved of the legal architecture that "gives the United States administrative control in perpetuity over a piece of sovereign Cuban territory, Guantanamo Bay," through a 1901 treaty that he failed to mention was ratified by a militarily occupied Cuba. Whether Romer knows it or not, his endorsement of power politics is clear: Investor-owned cities would be safe from future efforts by governments to repossess sovereign territory, because "Cuba respects the treaty with the United States, even as they complain bitterly about it."⁹

Romer rebutted criticisms that his idea smacks of neo-

colonialism: "There are some things that it shares with the previous colonial enterprises," he admitted, "but there's this fundamental difference: at every stage, there's an absolute commitment to freedom of choice on the part of the societies and the individuals that are involved."¹⁰ Which choices are available to individuals living under a coercive, illegitimate government is a question left unanswered, and the adulating press could not be bothered to probe further.

After all, it would be impolite to reveal Romer's close cooperation with a government whose security forces—many of whom are personally vetted, armed, and trained by the United States—killed unarmed students Rafael Vargas, 22, and Carlos Pineda, 24, as well as pregnant indigenous Miskitu women Juana Jackson Ambrosia and Candelaria Trapp Nelson, among others.¹¹ Indeed, the Committee of Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras observed that more than 10,000 official complaints have been filed against Honduras's military and police since the coup. Such unsavory details might have chastened *The Atlantic's* ebullient portrait of the "elegant, bespectacled, geekishly curious" professor, and would have tarnished President Obama, who praised Lobo for his "strong commitment to democracy" while providing his brutal security apparatus with \$50 million in aid last year.¹²

In their coverage of Romer's charter cities, the media have almost entirely excised the innumerable human rights violations occurring under the undemocratic Honduran regime. *The New York Times* is a case in point. About a week after Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and even the U.S. State Department were compelled to release statements of condemnation over Antonio Trejo's assassination, *Times* reporter Elisabeth Malkin fawned over Romer's idea while ignoring the killing of one of its most prominent critics. (Romer himself offered no public statement in the wake of Trejo's death-squad-style killing.) Charter cities promised to "simply sweep aside the corruption, the self-interested elites, and the distorted economic rules that stifle growth in many poor countries," asserted the imperturbable Malkin. She added with uncommon journalistic authority, "Nobody disputes that impoverished, violent Honduras needs some kind of shock therapy."¹³

This is not the first instance in which the *Times* has glossed over inconvenient facts to laud shock therapy, a doctrine of massive privatization and investor-friendly deregulations developed at the University of Chicago.¹⁴ Many years after Chile's coup government pushed through a rash of measures designed by economist Milton

Friedman and his acolytes, the Chicago Boys, the *Times* reported that “Chile has built the most successful economy in Latin America, and one of the vital underpinnings of that growth was the open economic environment created by the former military dictator, Gen. Augusto Pinochet.”¹⁵ Leaving aside Pinochet’s torture and murder of tens of thousands of dissidents, Chile’s per capita gross domestic product was practically unchanged 13 years after the coup; Pinochet’s “free-market” experiment also ended with re-nationalizations in banking and copper extraction, the institution of capital controls, and continuous state support for Chile’s exports.¹⁶

Following in this dubious tradition of portraying a reactionary societal experiment as a formula for prosperity, the *Times*’ first piece on Honduran charter cities appeared in its Sunday magazine in May 2012. Author Adam Davidson, co-creator and host of National Public Radio’s *Planet Money* program, considered charter cities a “ridiculously big idea” for fixing an “economic system that kept nearly two-thirds of [Honduras’s] people in grim poverty.” Davidson related the story of Octavio Sánchez, Lobo’s chief of staff, who met with Romer to develop a “secure place to do business—somewhere that money is safe from corrupt political cronyism or the occasional coup.”¹⁷ Davidson, however, scrupulously avoided Sánchez’s own role as an apologist for the 2009 military overthrow of Zelaya. Days after Zelaya’s ouster, Sánchez advised *Christian Science Monitor* readers not to “believe the coup myth,” and in an Orwellian flourish, the Harvard Law graduate declared that “the arrest of President Zelaya represents the triumph of the rule of law.”¹⁸

In November, *Planet Money* provided an obsequious follow-up on Romer and Sánchez’s collaboration, scrub-

bing any mention of the 2009 coup and Lobo’s emergence from it, and portraying Sánchez as an idealistic dreamer. “Instead of fighting to do two, three or four reforms during the life of a government,” Sánchez asked, “why don’t you just do all of those reforms at once in a really small space? And that’s why this idea was appealing. It’s really the possibility of turning everything around.”¹⁹

Planet Money’s co-hosts unwittingly conveyed the fundamental obstacle to shock therapy: “Paul Romer has this killer idea and no real country to try it in; Octavio has the same idea, but no way to sell it to his people.” They acknowledged that even with “a government that’s ready to go,” the “people in Honduras” viewed Romer’s plan as “basically Yankee imperialism.” The episode concluded by explaining the apparent collapse of the charter cities initiative, resulting partly from the post-coup government’s lack of transparency (Romer was “stunned”), as well as a Honduran Supreme Court ruling in October that found charter cities unconstitutional. Romer remains unfazed, the hosts said. He has a promising lead in North Africa—another opportunity to answer “one of the oldest problems in economics: how to make poor countries less poor.”

Regardless of what Romer and his media sycophants think of the charter city’s (questionable) efficacy, their deafening silence on its antidemocratic implications and Honduras’s human rights abuses is unconscionable. In this insulated world, Honduran victims of economic hardship and state terror, and their own proposals to solve poverty, remain invisible. Pinochet, the original administrator of shock therapy, distilled the insouciance of today’s intellectual and media culture when, in 1979, he remarked, “I trust the people all right; but they’re not yet ready.”²⁰ ■

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NACLA as Coalition

BRADY TYSON

THIS ESSAY WAS WRITTEN BY ONE OF THE FOUNDERS of NACLA in 1967, as NACLA was debating its future and forming its identity. It appeared in the second issue (vol. 1, no.2) of what was then called the NACLA Newsletter. Tyson's brief discussion of the debates among the early Naclistas tells us as much about the world and the U.S. left in the 1960s as it does about the origins of NACLA. It is also interesting to note the presence of the same debates—with perhaps a distinct style, vocabulary, and discourse—that we all enter into today. As we reach the end of our 45th anniversary year, and move into a new setting, it is worth remembering our roots in a somewhat different world.

It is important for everyone who is interested in NACLA to keep in mind that it is being formed by a diverse group of individuals and groups. We have been drawn together by 1) our common sense of dismay as we perceive the obstructionist role of the United States in Latin America; 2) our common commitment to the necessity of a far-reaching social revolution in Latin America; 3) our common sense of inadequacy because of the fewness of those of us interested in Latin America; 4) the geographical dispersion of those of us interested in Latin America; and 5) a general feeling among us that our own perspectives (whatever they may be) need to be further developed and expanded.

From the beginning, several distinct groups have consciously tried to work together to create NACLA. Organizationally, the prime movers were SDS and University Christian Movement personnel. Also participating were new Peace Movement people, "traditional" pacifists, left-Catholics, labor movement people, returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and various young professors and graduate students. SNCC has been interested and participated from the beginning. Many people can be identified with several groups, or with no particular group.

Because of this diverse background, NACLA has developed what Steve Weissman has called a "pragmatic

approach," or a "popular front." All of us work together in what Bill Rogers at Cornell called in a statement made at the February 11 meeting at NYU, a series of "uneasy alliances." But, as Bill went on to say, these alliances are not based on suspicion but on honest differences in opinions and/or attitudes. And they need not be disruptive but can perhaps provide the creative

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February 11th NACLA Meeting, by Fred Goff

The February 11th New York-East Coast NACLA meeting brought together about 85 individuals active in (or representing) such diverse groups as the AFSC, FOR, University Christian Movement, SDS, Peace Corps returnees, Committee for Independent Political Action, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dubois Clubs, various religious groups, Canadian groups, and several other peace groups. Also present were professors, journalists, and Latin Americans studying and teaching in this country. Due to the size and diversity of political convictions, and different degrees of previous contact with NACLA, it was often difficult to arrive at a clear consensus. (Elsewhere in this newsletter, Brady Tyson outlines the different positions which emerged)

After a morning and luncheon presentation of committee reports (magazine proposals, financial problems, action possibilities, research priorities, and methods of making closer ties with Latin American revolutionaries), the afternoon session was devoted to debate and recommendations to the board.

All agreed that the type of publication proposed by John Gerassi (outlined elsewhere in this newsletter) was needed. But it was felt that NACLA staff time should not be used for preparation and distribution of the "dummy" issue—several volunteers offered to help with this. It was, however, recommended that NACLA help raise the initial \$1,500 needed for the "dummy" issue and promotion.

Top priority was given to finding a full-time fund raiser. On the question of NACLA's purpose, there emerged three often overlapping schools of thought: 1) It should work to create a broad-based coalition of groups and individuals building a radical foreign policy public, which would pressure for reforms in US Latin American policy. 2) It should work to create small cadres of committed, knowledgeable researchers and activists who would work to identify and remove obstacles in this country which impede revolutionary change in Latin America. 3) It should be primarily a group facilitating communication among various individuals and groups interested in changing US Latin American policy.

People outlined plans for testifying at the military aid hearings, for injecting the whole issue of the Vietnamization of Latin America into the April Mobilization and into the arena of political debate for the 1968 campaign. Tim Harding, from Los Angeles, told about study groups being set up on the West Coast (i.e. people who would be willing and able to take on coordination of research and action), and the plans for holding a West Coast meeting at the end of April with at least one representative from the NY NACLA staff present.

(continued on next page)

stimulation needed to force the birth of a radical, new conceptual framework for the study of Latin America.

For instance, there are some of us in NACLA who are convinced that “violence is reactionary” (Glenn Smiley), while others hold that there is no hope for Latin America except through a violent, social revolution. Some feel that the major task is to educate the American public, or to create a radical alternative to present attitudes and policies. A few feel that it is legitimate and helpful to appeal to officials in the establishment in the hope of modifying some policies. Still others look upon NACLA as a way to form a cadre for the radical re-organization of American society, since “there is apparently no public conscience in the United States that can be appealed to” (Mike Locker). Some are most interested in establishing alliances and conversation with the Latin American revolutionists to help them make their own revolution, while others feel that the Latin American revolution is largely contingent upon some form of revolution in the United States.

At the New York meeting in February, a Latin American (Paulo Singer) insisted that a new, general theory of imperialism and the Latin American situation must be a high priority, and disagreed with the tendency among American scholars to multiply monographs that deal with specific and limited aspects of the overall problem. John Gerassi is interested in a “non-academic” magazine that will report what is now absent from U.S. news media, and that will carry interpretative articles by North and Latin Americans. Many of the young professors and graduate students are interested in coordinat-

ing “independent research” of the type that the establishment is not likely to fund.

Further, we have the tensions between the “Christers” (Catholic and Protestant) and those who have no particular religious motivation. There is also an occasional “conflict of generations” in NACLA. There is a difference in emphasis between the academically and the agitationaly oriented, and between those who are interested in dialogue with all sectors (as exemplified by Brazilian Archbishop Dom Helder Camara) and those who are convinced that talking with some people is a waste of time.

As long as the essentially associational nature of NACLA is remembered, and it is conceived as a forum and not as a movement,

these differences can contribute to a common, deeper understanding of U.S.-Latin American relations and can aid in defining common action projects. In coming together in NACLA it is hoped that now and then groups with specific interests will “spin-off” and form their own groups. Perhaps such groups can and will stay in NACLA also. And perhaps NACLA will find unanimous or near-unanimous opinion on specific problems as they arise. Until something better appears, it seems to me that NACLA affords a good opportunity for study, action and dialogue among those of us who are committed to the liberation of Latin America from North American imperialism, and the preservation of the integrity of Latin American culture. ■

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