

Comment



Photo by Jim Block.

CLAS Chair Harley Shaiken.

As President Obama stepped off Air Force One under a cloudy Havana sky in late March 2016, this first visit by a sitting U.S. President in nine decades clearly triggered hopes that a new direction in Cuba–U.S. relations might be possible. This issue’s first article, “A Whole New Ballgame,” examines the context of this opening, the roadblocks and possibilities lying ahead, and the implications for the rest of the Americas.

Latin America and the world faced the existential threat of

climate change as 2015 drew to a close. Academy Award-winning director Charles Ferguson addresses the urgency of an effective response in his cinematically compelling and tightly argued new film “Time to Choose.” The Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) scheduled an advance screening and conversation with the director between the appearance of Pope Francis’s encyclical in June and the UN Conference in Paris in December. “The question,” Ferguson emphasized, “is whether [action] is going to happen in time.”

In our third article, Manuel Castells and Fernando Calderón take a highly original look at the “process of profound transformation” that Latin America has been going through in the new millennium in social, cultural, economic, and institutional terms. Against the backdrop of economic uncertainty and political instability in 2015, they point out that Latin America has superseded neoliberalism and is “in search of a new model yet to be discovered.”

CLAS continues its collaboration with the Mexican Museum in San Francisco through a talk on “The Mexico of My Father Diego Rivera” by his daughter Guadalupe Rivera y Marín, who directs the Diego Rivera Foundation. In conversation with Andrew Kluger, president of the museum, Rivera y Marín discussed her father’s times and legacy as an artist. Her wit, insight, and love for her father illuminated new dimensions of his art and the tumultuous historical context that shaped it.

Finally, we conclude this issue with a photograph of Parque Pumalín in the south of Chile. Doug Tompkins — an ecologist, philanthropist, and founder of the North Face and Esprit clothing companies — established this stunning nature reserve in 1991 and then greatly expanded it with his wife Kristine McDivitt Tompkins. We mourn his death and celebrate his signal contribution to the environment, not only for Chile, but for the planet. The Chilean government has announced that Pumalín will become a national park in March 2017.

— Harley Shaiken