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Soy hombre: duro poco
y es enorme la noche.
Pero miro hacia arriba:
las estrellas escriben.

De "Hermandad," por Octavio Paz

I am a man: little do I last
and the night is enormous.
But I look up:
the stars write.

From "Brotherhood," by Octavio Paz

Cacti outlined against the night sky.
(Photo courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.)

Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies
Fall 2017 – Winter 2018

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Cover: Cacti outlined against the night sky. The saguaro cactus only grows naturally in and around the Sonora Desert, spanning the U.S.–Mexico border. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.)

Comment

U.S.–Mexico relations have been turbulent ever since Donald Trump descended a gilded escalator in New York's Trump Tower to announce his candidacy for President of the United States in 2015. As we so well know, candidate Trump made undocumented immigration and a "big beautiful wall" signature issues of his campaign and has sought to make good on these promises as President.

Against this backdrop, the UC Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) and the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City convened the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum in September 2017 in the San Francisco Bay Area. In this Review, I discuss the ideas behind the Forum as well as its history. James Lamb, an instructor in Sociology at UC Berkeley, then analyzes the new research, critical issues, and innovative policy ideas addressed at the Forum and their relevance going forward.

The relationship between the two neighbors has begun to more resemble a rafting trip through unexplored rapids — with plenty of rocks below the surface — rather than a sometimes-bumpy river cruise. If this situation were not complex enough, pivotal elections later in 2018 — July in Mexico and November in the United States — could result in far-reaching changes in both countries. Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of the issues is more critical than ever, at the least as a point of reference, and hopefully as a guide going forward.

The issues won't wait. Climate change provides the specter of irreversible damage to the planet — truly an existential threat, as California Governor Jerry Brown has put it — and a continued failure to address immigration will become even more destructive to millions of people. In the United States, cities and states have stepped into the vacuum when the federal government has failed to act or acts in unpopular ways.

We also explore a compelling and highly original art exhibit, "Botero: A Dialogue With Picasso," which appeared at the Centre d'Art, Aix-en-Provence, France. While these two great artists never met, their work explores similar themes, often with different approaches. Simon Schama tells us that works of art have "opened our eyes, provoked us to think, and moved our emotions" — the works of Botero and Picasso do exactly that. Curator Cecilia Braschi provides context for the dialogue of their works in the exhibit.

CLAS has a special relationship with Fernando Botero and Sophia Vari, herself a highly regarded artist. Botero is Colombian by birth but international in terms of his range, vision, and acclaim. In 2007, CLAS organized a UC Berkeley exhibition of Botero's haunting paintings and drawings on the tortures committed by U.S. forces at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. As a result, Berkeley became the first public institution in the United States to display these stunning, harrowing works. They are often compared to Picasso's "Guernica" as brilliant artistic statements on defining, horrific issues of their times. With remarkable generosity, Botero donated most of the collection — 60 paintings and drawings — to the university.

Finally, we conclude with "Octavio Paz, Media, and Mexican Politics," which explores a dimension of the poet, public intellectual, and Nobel Laureate in literature. Priscila Dorella, the author, is a Brazilian professor spanning the hemisphere with her work in Mexico and current residence at UC Berkeley. A stanza by Paz graces our cover.

— Harley Shaiken

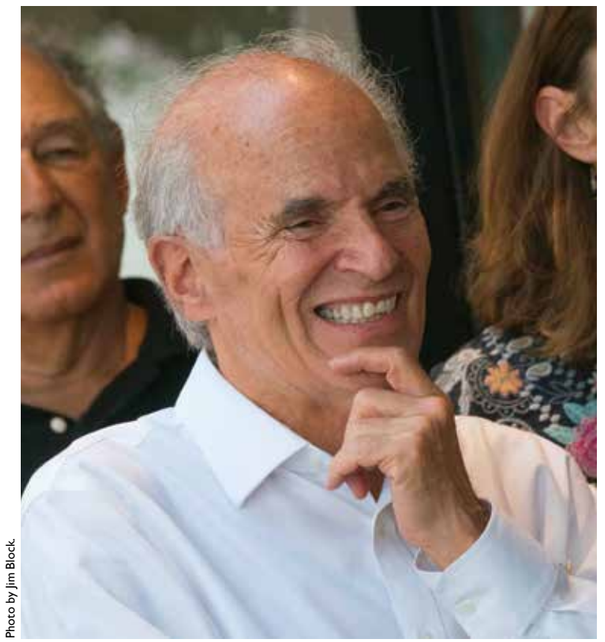

Photo by Jim Block.

Harley Shaiken, Fall 2017.

The U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum in the field: a visit to Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico, in 2011. From center to right: Harley Shaiken, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and Gil Cedillo. (Photo by Dionicia Ramos.)

U.S.–MEXICO FUTURES FORUM

15 Years of Engagement

By Harley Shaiken

These are deeply troubled, unpredictable times for the United States and Mexico. Yet, whatever the state of the U.S.–Mexico relationship, both countries are inextricably linked by a 2,000-mile border, a shared history, intertwined economies and cultures, and families that span frontiers. We have become "overlapping societies," in the words of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, who served as Mexico's Ambassador to the United Nations and presided over the UN Security Council during the lead-up to the Iraq War at the beginning of the 21st century.

Almost two decades ago in early 2001, the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum was conceived at a moment of optimism, concerned with improving the sometimes-rocky relationship between the two countries. "In early September 2001, it looked as though a window of opportunity for advancing U.S.–Mexico relations had

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finally presented itself," wrote Amy Lerman — then a Ph.D. student and now a professor at UC Berkeley — in a special issue of the forerunner to this magazine. "In a whirlwind trip to Washington," she continued, "newly elected President Vicente Fox of Mexico was greeted with a great show of friendship by a Republican administration eager to demonstrate its close ties to the Latino community." During a remarkable several days in Washington, "Fox was ready to talk business about trade and immigration, and it seemed that the time was right for movement deemed long overdue on key issues of binational import."

The moment of possibility was real, but short-lived. Three days after Vicente Fox's plane took off from Washington, D.C., the U.S. was plunged into trauma and tragedy. "Yet just as September 11 ravaged the landscape of Manhattan, so too did it irrevocably alter the international landscape," Lerman said. "When the smoke cleared, the window of opportunity for Mexico had been buried at the foot of the Manhattan skyline, as the U.S. turned its attention toward a fierce, consuming mission of security and anti-terrorism."

Fourteen months later, the first U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum took place in November 2002 in Cuernavaca, Mexico, during a much grimmer time. The dark clouds that hung over the U.S.–Mexico relationship, as it turned out, made the gathering more important than ever. The Forum began as a partnership between the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at UC Berkeley and the International Studies Department at the Instituto Technológico Autónomo de Mexico (ITAM) and was funded by the Hewlett Foundation. The idea was to bring together, on a regular basis, a diverse group of people — 10 or so from each country — to provide new perspectives on critical issues and move policy ideas as well as research in a more positive direction. Participants included governors and academics, public intellectuals and social movement leaders, entrepreneurs and journalists, among others. They were not the "usual suspects" — some had extensive experience in engaging the U.S.–Mexico relationship, while others were bringing fresh outlooks; they differed politically, at times sharply, but all had open minds. Three or so broad themes would organize the discussions at the meeting every year, and topics would range from issues heading the political agenda in both countries to concerns that were receiving far less attention.

In late August 2017, the Ninth U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum took place in Tiburon, California, 15 years after that first gathering in Cuernavaca. It was co-chaired by Rafael Fernández de Castro, Professor of International Relations at ITAM and Director of the Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies at the University of California, San Diego, and myself and supported by the Ford Foundation. Some of the original participants attended this most recent Forum, but there were also many newcomers. The gathering was defined by three themes: Climate Change: Existential Threats in a Time of Denial; Security, Violence, and Migration; and NAFTA, Wages, and Development. Initially, the themes appeared very different, but they were revealed as intersecting in critical ways. Both climate change and low wages, for example, propel migration.

Our opening article reports on these discussions and analyzes the key issues that were raised as well as the ways in which they intersect.

Harley Shaiken is the Class of 1930 Professor of Letters and Science, a professor in the Graduate School of Education and the Department of Geography, and the Chair of the Center for Latin American Studies at UC Berkeley.

The cover of the special CLAS publication on the first Forum.


The U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum: A Dialogue
Center for Latin American Studies
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY Special Issue 2002
Old Neighbors, New Era
By Amy Lerman
In early September, 2001, it looked as though a window of opportunity for advancing U.S.–Mexico relations had finally presented itself. In a whirlwind trip to Washington, newly elected President Vicente Fox of Mexico was greeted with a great show of friendship by a Republican administration eager to demonstrate its close ties to the Latino community. With Foreign Relations Secretary Jorge Castañeda behind him, Fox was ready to talk business about trade and immigration, and it seemed that the time was right for movement deemed long overdue on key issues of binational import.
Yet just as Sept. 11 ravaged the landscape of Manhattan, so too did it irrevocably alter the international landscape. When the smoke cleared, the window of opportunity for Mexico had been buried at the foot of the Manhattan skyline, as the U.S. turned its attention toward a fierce, consuming mission of security and anti-terrorism.
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Ram Ramanathan and Soffía Alarcón-Díaz confer before the start of the panel on climate change at the 2017 U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum.
(Photo by Perla Nation.)

U.S.–MEXICO FUTURES FORUM

Collaborating for Our Common Future

By James G. Lamb

The United States and Mexico not only share a 2,000-mile border — walls, fences, and patrols notwithstanding — but will remain highly integrated neighbors, whatever the quality of the relationship. As the great Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes put it, paraphrasing a famed statement by the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz a century earlier, "Poor Mexico, and poor United States, so far from God and so close to each other!" That said, the incendiary rhetoric targeting Mexico and immigrants in the run-up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election and much of what has happened since to translate that rhetoric into policies have fueled a hostile atmosphere and put sharp strains on the relationship.

"This period we are living through can be deeply troubling and often surreal," offered Harley Shaiken, Director of the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at UC Berkeley. The Ninth U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum — hosted by CLAS, August 25-26, 2017, in Tiburon, California — addressed the two countries' relationship at a crucial juncture for each. While Mexico and the United States "have been through turbulent times," Shaiken continued, "in my view, this is one of the most critical"

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moments in the contemporary era. Nonetheless, it is clear this relationship remains central to the future of both countries. Yet, even beyond the U.S. and Mexico, the topics covered during the Forum are imperative global challenges: climate change, migration, security, trade, and wages, as well as the persistent and growing inequality that frames and connects them all.

To shed light on these issues, the Forum brought together diverse and significant voices from a wide array of backgrounds and experiences. Scientists, academics, public office holders, media professionals, and leaders from civil society, labor, and social movements in the U.S. and Mexico all offered their insights. While addressing life-and-death concerns, the Forum was marked by a future-oriented focus that centered as much on thinking imaginatively and brainstorming creative solutions to these complex and interconnected problems as on retrospection and diagnosis. One such suggestion from Shaiken was to look to "California, at the state level," for "possibilities of how we can move forward" with a more constructive U.S.–Mexico relationship.

Across all of the topics addressed, a few major refrains connected and contextualized the different issues under discussion. One was the global nature of the structural forces at work in the combination of urgent questions at the heart of U.S.–Mexico relations. From climate-driven migration to economic insecurity, many of these subjects are of universal concern. In fact, globalization, along with technological change, is often cited as a primary driver of growing inequality, particularly in the context of international trade and a dramatic increase in the global labor force.

The pressure these forces bring to bear upon institutions was another resonant theme in the Forum. The case of the 43 missing students in Iguala, Mexico, reveals in stark fashion how the black-market money around border enforcement — in this case, drug interdiction strategies — created huge incentives that corrupted the Mexican state at many levels. In another area of concern, the pace of climate change demands nations collaborate to make progress that goes beyond the Paris Agreement. Yet the institutions of state, along with civil society, will need to take the lead in addressing these very pressing problems. In this context, Maria Echaveste, former Deputy Chief of Staff in the Clinton White House and a Senior Scholar at CLAS, asked at the end of the climate change session, "How do we change institutions so there are real possibilities for stability, not just keeping the problems away from our borders?"

Bloody hands claim "It was the state" on the third anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students in Iguala, Mexico.

Photo by Adrián Martínez.

Photo by Peg Hunter.

Crosses dot the U.S.–Mexico border fence in Nogales.

Part of that work will clearly be done by non-governmental institutions. The efforts of the Carbon Trust Mexico, led by Soffía Alarcón-Díaz, and the leadership of the Catholic Church on climate change as addressed by Veerabhadran "Ram" Ramanathan, Professor of Atmospheric and Climate Sciences at UC San Diego, stood out as examples of such efforts. Speaking to climate change as Executive Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Officer of the California Federation of Labor, Art Pulaski suggested that since "institutions of faith and institutions of unions have been on the forefront of fighting for workers, we have to be sure to maximize the capacity of those institutions to advance the improvements we want to achieve."

The varied and complex interconnections among the issues emerged on many occasions during the Forum. Recently returned from conducting ethnographic research and interviewing migrants in Mexico, Stephanie Leutert, Director of the Mexico Security Initiative at the University of Texas at Austin, asked, "How do you separate economic issues versus climate issues?" Honduran migrants in transit through Mexico have explained how changes in rainfall patterns and the degradation of soil quality in their home municipality have ruined their livelihood. Further research revealed that entire communities were being uprooted by such transformations. The ties between climate, migration, security, trade, and wages defy simplistic explanation or narrowly tailored policies.

Inequality: A Long-term and Growing Trend

One factor that informs these complicated dynamics is global economic and social inequality. In an opening presentation, Emmanuel Saez, Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley, reviewed his most recently published research on economic inequality. In sum, the data show that inequality in the U.S. is a growing and ongoing trend. By distributing national income across all adults on both a pre-tax and post-tax basis, Saez constructed comparisons of income inequality and the total effect of government policy on that inequality. This evidence demonstrates that in the United States, total taxes are about one-third of national income, meaning that U.S. society pools a significant share of its income, notwithstanding "free market" rhetoric or policymakers' stated ideological positions. Yet this significant pooling of income exists alongside growing, near-record income inequality.

The history of the share of national income that goes to the top 10 percent of the income distribution suggests a historical narrative defined by national, social, and economic policy changes. This top 10-percent income share declined from the early 1940s until the 1970s, the period

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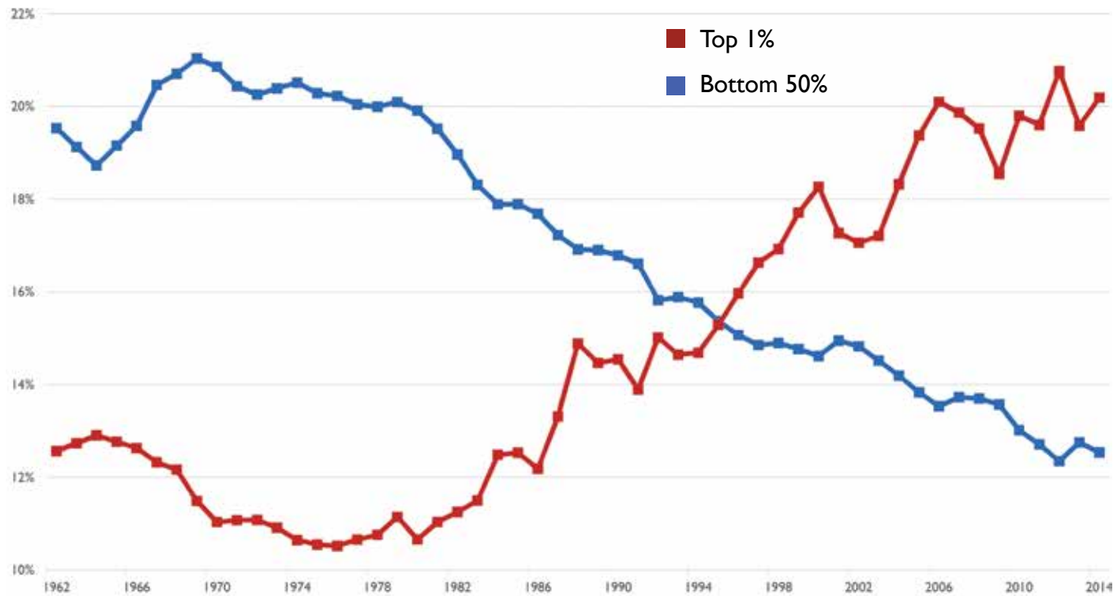
U.S. shares of income before taxes and transfers, 1962–2014
Top 1% vs. Bottom 50%

Data from Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, "Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States," NBER Quarterly Journal of Economics 133(2), 553-609.



In the United States, income inequality has been growing worse since the late 1970s.

of New Deal and Great Society reforms that economically benefitted large numbers of Americans. The share going to the top then began a steady increase that has continued until the present. Today, the share of national income going to this group has once again reached pre-war levels. However, one major difference in these two structures is that prior to World War II, a mere 10 percent of National Income was pooled in the form of taxes. Now, this great income inequality coexists with a much larger tax and state share of the economy than in the pre-war era.

The key question is the causality behind this trend: what is driving income concentration? Globalization (especially increased and more liberalized rules-based trade), the explosive growth in the global labor force as China and other economies integrated into global production, and technological change are some of the macro-level explanations most typically given. As Saez acknowledged, these factors have certainly played a role in contributing to the trend of income concentration. However, precisely because these are global factors impacting all countries, they cannot tell the whole story. In fact, Saez noted, other countries have not experienced such a dramatic increase in income concentration as the United States. As an example, Saez offered a comparison between the U.S. and France, but his insight is more general: national policy influenced how different countries experienced these global pressures — and any tendency towards inequality they bring. Furthermore, Saez argued, the data shows that national policy affects income inequality at both the pre- and post-tax levels. Through many direct and indirect channels, national policy has many different impacts on society. Thus, a world of widening inequalities helps frame the moment in U.S.–Mexico (and global) relations.

Opening Remarks: Rafael Fernández de Castro

Rafael Fernández de Castro, a professor at the Instituto Technológico Autónomo de Mexico (ITAM), Director of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego, and an expert on the bilateral relationship, stated clearly how he understood the moment: it is "about Trump." Referring to the 2016 presidential campaign and the then-fledgling administration, Fernández de Castro observed, "Mexico has been a political piñata." The mobilization of the relationship — and of Mexico itself as a demonized caricature — has taken "an emotional toll on Mexicans," he explained. Naturally, there is a popular desire to respond more forcefully in return. However, Fernández de Castro argued, the Mexican government had to be cautious, to be firm without jeopardizing crucial Mexican interests. This balance is one that the Mexican administration has been successful in achieving thus far, Fernández de Castro remarked, a state of affairs he called "intense business as usual." However, this same sentiment has driven political support towards Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA, National Regeneration Movement) party. His leftist, populist, and nationalist orientation has resonated with many Mexicans, and he took the lead for president in national opinion polls in early September 2017 and has retained this ranking through March 2018.

A second way to look at the current juncture in the relationship is through the lens of recent history. Fernández de Castro sketched the trajectory of the bilateral relationship under the various post-Cold War U.S. presidents, particularly focused on trade and migration legalization accords. The trend he outlined over these decades is one of decline, with the recent G20 conference under the new Trump administration representing a symbolic nadir. While his rhetoric was initially shocking to many Mexicans, "Trump's threats to Mexico do not have the same value" after a few months in office demonstrated that the administration's policy seldom matched his bombastic rhetoric, although the threat of rhetoric and policy becoming more aligned remains real.

Finally, Fernández de Castro closed with a sobering reflection. While analyses of the U.S. and Mexico often focus on political or institutional instability in Mexico, concerns once thought implausible, if not impossible, now preoccupy diplomats and leaders the world over regarding such instability in Washington, D.C. "It is not about NAFTA or relations with Mexico," Fernández de Castro warned. "It is about American democracy; what is at risk is American democracy." Those things that cause friction in the U.S.–Mexico relationship can easily cause domestic and global turbulence, as well.

Climate Change: Existential Threats in a Time of Denial

"A lot sooner than you think," cautioned Ram Ramanathan, Professor of Atmospheric and Climate Sciences at UC San Diego, about the arrival of drastic climate change outcomes. Ramanathan contextualized his dire future estimates by reviewing the track record of climate science in making such predictions in recent decades. "There are [many] predictions," he noted. "And they all came true."

In 1980, Ramanathan published an analysis predicting that by the year 2000, the statistical-empirical "signal" of climate warming would rise above the background "noise" of study methodologies, a prediction validated in 2001 when 1,000 scientists pronounced just such evidence at the third assessment of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In the 1960s, a Russian scientist correctly predicted that warming would disproportionately affect

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Donald Trump descends an escalator in Trump Tower to announce his candidacy for president, June 2015.

Photo by Tom Briglia/Getty Images.

The view from an aerial tour of Hurricane Sandy damage to New Jersey's barrier beaches, November 2012.
(Official White House Photo by Sonya N. Hebert.)

the polar regions, which have indeed seen "two to three times the global mean warming." And, as far back as 1895, Swedish physicist and chemist Svante Arrhenius, one of the founders of physical chemistry, provided the first quantitative estimate of global warming from carbon dioxide and predicted that a warming world would also grow more humid, exactly the pattern we see today. Finally, Ramanathan observed that in the history of climate science, when such predictions have been in error, it has always been in the direction of effects even greater than those anticipated.

Ramanathan then moved on to some basic predictions about the next few decades. "Within 15 years," he warned, "the planet will pass the threshold [of so-called] dangerous warming." "I am predicting that by 2030, the planet will warm by a degree and a half [Celsius]," he continued, the warmest level seen in more than 130,000 years. In 30 to 35 years, the 2-degree mark will be passed, he predicted. He then addressed a lower probability but high-impact event in that same short time frame: in a more dire scenario, he foresees a 5-percent chance of "catastrophic warming," change so fast "very few of us could adapt to it." If that level is reached beyond 2050, a study indicates that 74 percent of the planet, nearly 5 billion people, would be exposed to deadly heat stress. The Max Planck Institute recently released a study suggesting that by this time, close to 2.5 billion people would be exposed to vector-borne diseases like dengue and Zika.

Not only would such catastrophic warming be "too fast for our social systems" to adapt, Ramanathan continued, it would also produce inter-related "climate catastrophes" at the level of the earth's ecosystem. First, Ramanathan pointed out, "the ocean is becoming acidic because it's taking 40 percent of all the junk we have put out" in the form of polluting gases. He explained that ocean acidification is a chemical process whereby carbon in the environment is recycled into the ocean, becoming carbonic acid. Ocean acidification also causes the deoxygenated patches of seas that have been observed along the California coast. Emissions have already added 2 trillion tons of carbon to the atmosphere and are currently adding another 50 billion tons each year.

Carbon forms a large part of this smog layer over Mexico City during a pollution crisis in 2006.

Photo by Adam Medley.

Photo by Fernando Vergara/AP Photo.

A demonstration in Bogotá, Colombia, with a quote from Pope Francis: "I ask you in the name of God to defend Mother Earth."

The combined effects of climate change, ocean acidification, and ocean deoxygenation put massive pressure on ecosystems and drive the related catastrophe of mass species extinction. Ramanathan noted that paleontologists, biologists, and other experts have predicted that a sixth mass extinction event in earth's history has already begun. In fact, the current extinction rate is perhaps 100 times greater than at any time since the extinction of the dinosaurs. This type of ecological and species collapse might even imply existential ecological pressures for human beings.

Despite the dire nature of the warnings, however, Ramanathan insisted the conversation move beyond this empirical level and speak directly to the moral dimensions of these climate change crises. Three billion people, he explained, have contributed only 5 percent of global carbon emissions. "They have not experienced fossil fuels… they burn wood and dung," Ramanathan continued. "These are basically the same 3 billion who will be most directly affected" by the many hardships and dangers that climate change will increasingly bring. "This is a huge moral issue," Ramanathan insisted. In this context, he explained how he had briefed Pope Francis on exactly these tragic moral dynamics of the causes and consequences of climate change.

In fact, Ramanathan's work as part of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences is emblematic of the good news he pointed to as suggesting pathways to change the trajectory of carbon emissions, climate change, and the attendant ecological damages and human harms. The Pope, he noted, has taken a moral leadership role on the issues. Pope Francis has put his voice and the resources of the Catholic Church behind the call for climate justice, particularly with the 2015 publication of his encyclical subtitled "On Care for Our Common Home," which called for "swift and unified global action" to address global warming and environmental degradation.

Ramanathan closed his talk with a rational case for optimism, notwithstanding the serious situation. "There is still time," Ramanathan argued. "It's in our hands." On a technical level, he explained, "the solution is remarkably simple." "All we have to do," Ramanathan said, "is electrify all of the end uses… and then generate that electricity" through non-carbon-emitting renewable sources, such as solar, wind, and hydro power. While acknowledging the challenge of storing such energy, he suggested this, too, was not a technological obstacle. "The solution is hydrogen," he said. In the "daytime, use the sun to generate hydrogen and burn the hydrogen in the night." In addition to stressing the technical feasibility, Ramanathan pointed out that the

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Photo by Cristel Heinrich Bertoni.

Ahead of the curve: Forum participants meet scientist Stan Ovshinsky (right), with his award-winning prototype hydrogen car, Detroit, 2008.

rate of growth of global carbon emissions has finally leveled out, the renewable energy industries have taken off, and many cities, states, and institutions are now on a carbon-neutral pathway. He particularly singled out California in regard to forward-looking policy in this area. "We have to keep the momentum going," Ramanathan concluded. "The key thing we have to remember, it's an urgent problem requiring urgent solutions."

Soffía Alarcón-Díaz, Director of Carbon Trust Mexico, then reviewed the Paris Agreement, the most significant effort in recent decades to implement just such changes in response to the climate change threat. The Paris climate accord, adopted by 196 countries in December 2015, is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions' mitigation, adaptation, and finance starting in the year 2020. Alarcón-Díaz explained that the convention was put together 20 years ago with the sole objective of keeping warming below 2-degrees Celsius temperature increase and that the governments party to the agreement fought over the eventual accord the entire course of those 20 years.

Alarcón-Díaz reviewed several achievements of the agreement that was finally adopted. First, the governments of the United States and China, the two largest emitters, made pledges to reduce carbon emissions within the agreement's framework in 2014. The European Union also pledged and "proved that it is possible to decouple carbon emissions from economic growth." Another positive aspect of the accord was that both developed and developing countries signed it, a rift that had haunted climate negotiations for two decades. The Paris Agreement instituted the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," wherein each country commits to its responsibility to reduce carbon emissions, but those reductions are defined within the capabilities of each party. The Paris Agreement, Alarcón-Díaz noted, was also the first such accord to include the topic of adaptation to climate change in its remit. Above all, she stressed, the agreement served to coordinate broad participation. "Now there are major emitter countries that are a part of it," Alarcón-Díaz highlighted.

Despite this success, however, Alarcón-Díaz reviewed several obstacles to the accord's ability to be more effective. First, she explained, "the Paris Agreement is a legal hybrid" that contains both binding and non-binding provisions. On the binding side, countries are supposed to report their emissions every two years. Furthermore, starting in 2020, countries will have to submit another Nationally Determined Contribution, which will include another commitment to reduce their carbon emissions. The reductions themselves, however, are nonbinding, the product of the real geopolitics of the agreement: the United States and China were not willing to back binding carbon reductions. "This is an opportunity area for the Paris Agreement," Alarcón-Díaz said. There is, however, a "no backsliding" provision, mandating that pledges from countries cannot retrogress, but each must build upon the last by pledging further reductions.

Finally, Alarcón-Díaz addressed the implications of the Trump administration's recent decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. On November 4, 2016, she recalled, "the momentum was really high," as 55 countries representing 55 percent of global emissions ratified the agreement. However, she continued, "just four days later, Trump won the presidency in U.S. elections." On June 1, 2017, President Trump announced that the United States would cease all participation in the accord. He delivered on a campaign pledge, arguing that the Paris Agreement hurt the economy and disadvantaged the United States. In fact, Alarcón-Díaz suggested, Trump was "already acting like he [had] left the Paris Agreement" by cutting climate-related funding for NASA, the EPA, and other agencies, as well as by trying to "re-awaken" the carbon-based resource extraction industries of oil, gas, and mining.

Still, Alarcón-Díaz found a silver lining in the major backlash that Trump's action engendered. In 2016, at the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) to the UNFCCC, nearly 200 governments gathered for the release of the Marrakech Action Proclamation. This declaration affirmed their "commitment" to the "full implementation" of the Paris Agreement just days after the U.S. election. It stated that momentum on climate change action was "irreversible" and called for "the highest political commitment to combat climate change." This was "a call to Trump," according to Alarcón-Díaz.

The Marrakech Proclamation also highlighted another optimistic trend noted by Alarcón-Díaz: that progress "is being driven not only by governments, but by science, business, and global action on all types of levels." The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action was launched to scale-up cooperative efforts with sub-national and local governments and civil society. Alarcón-Díaz also emphasized the more than 700 cities that are part of the agreement and the statements from political and business leaders in the U.S. rejecting Trump's course of action on climate diplomacy.

Finally, Alarcón-Díaz pointed out that on a legal and policy level, it would take four years for the United States to exit the Paris Agreement, a fact the Trump administration conceded when the White House clarified that it would abide by the four-year exit process. The earliest withdrawal date is therefore November 4, 2020, one day after the next U.S. presidential election. "It will take more than four years to undo everything that has been achieved," Alarcón-Díaz noted. "The technology and the policy instruments are already in place." One example she highlighted was the California emissions tax, a "sticky" policy unlikely to change despite Trump's actions.

Echoing this last insight, Rafael Fernández de Castro opened the discussion following the presentation by explaining that Mexico has been a leader in the complicated diplomacy around the issue. Alarcón-Díaz agreed, summarizing how the Cancun Agreement in 2010, aided by Mexican diplomacy as conference host, was a key moment in climate change negotiation. She also described how Mexico had been very active in climate change diplomacy since then, both in finding consensus as well as in making financial pledges and other concrete policy initiatives.

Ramanathan countered some of the optimism regarding the Paris Agreement, arguing that even though it is "the best thing that happened for the planet, it is not going to do much." He noted that he and others are predicting up to a 30- or 40-percent probability of "warming close to 5 to 6 degrees Celsius" by 2080 or the later part of the century. With the Paris Agreement, this would decrease to 4.5 to 5.5 degrees. This is a level, Ramanathan reiterated, that many experts associate with very large-scale catastrophic outcomes. Therefore, much more significant changes will be necessary.

Gordon Hanson, economist and Acting Dean at the School of Global Policy and Strategy at UC San Diego, spoke to the economic realities of just such a large-scale transformation. Noting that economists "are good at… outlining… the costs of changing how we consume energy, how to take carbon out," he then discussed how the issue of benefits is much more complex and difficult to quantify. He noted, however, that the military or security angle was one area in which benefits would be immediate. Like Ramanathan, Hanson highlighted that 3 to 5 billion people "are extremely exposed to the consequences of climate change" and that "many of those individuals live in the only parts of the world that are going to continue to see rapid population growth." In sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, a "perfect storm" of rising numbers of young people in regions where heat stress and drought will be acute under climate change will directly affect international security. Analogous dynamics apply to the U.S.–Mexico border.

Addressing policy more directly, Gerardo Esquivel, Professor at the Center for Economic Studies at the Colegio de México and the School of Economics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), explained that from an economic perspective, a technical solution is already available. Along the engineering lines Ramanathan had laid out of end-use electrification with renewables-based power generation, Esquivel said, "Economists have a proposal of what to do with these sorts of problems … with collective action … taxing and subsidizing … that is the way to proceed."

Chris Edley, Professor of Law at UC Berkeley and former White House Senior Policy Advisor, responded, however, that "this is well understood by policymakers — the problem is politics … that is where we have been having trouble for … 40 years." Congresswoman Linda Sánchez, Representative for California's 38th congressional district and the fifth-ranking Democrat in the U.S. House, echoed this point, arguing that "public sentiment about this is essential" and "voting for the right people matters."

Paola Rojas, a Mexican journalist and presenter on television network Noticiero Televisa, addressed this issue. "I talk to people," she noted. "How would you share this message so that common people can be part of the solution? How would you do it in two to three minutes?" This question elicited a range of responses as to how a gap between public education and opinion and the technical solutions to such a large-scale problem might be bridged. Linda Sanchez recalled a memorable political ad about cleaning a California beach of litter and suggested showing extreme weather events and their impacts on everyday people.

Pete Gallego, former U.S. Representative for Texas's 23rd congressional district along the U.S.–Mexico border region, recalled an especially effective Mexican public education campaign about air quality that featured people wearing masks because of polluted air. Gallego also pointed to messaging that is personal and solution-oriented, giving as examples the concept of the carbon footprint and the consumer choice to forgo plastic bags at stores. Steve Silberstein, entrepreneur and conference host, suggested emphasizing greenhouse gases as "poison."

Finally, Alarcón-Díaz brought attention to the contributions by emissions from another industry. "The biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions comes from meat — the meat we eat every day," she noted. "It's all about decisions." As Shaiken commented, summing up the session, climate change "is a complex, long-term phenomenon, but it demands immediate, simple solutions to be effective at all."

Linda Sánchez (center) speaks with Steve Silberstein and Beatriz Manz at the Forum.

Photo by Perla Nation.

Photo by Jim Block.

James Cavallaro describes investigating the Iguala disappearances; to his right are Stephanie Leutert and Maria Echaveste.

Macro Trends: Security, Violence, and Migration

Rafael Fernández de Castro opened the second session of the conference by placing the session topic within the context of macro trends in violence in Mexico and Latin America over the past decade. In that time, violence has become "chronic" in Mexico. Fernández de Castro recalled that on a radio program in 2006, he was asked whether the situation in Mexico could become as violent as that in Colombia, to which he answered, "certainly," a prediction seemingly, yet tragically, borne out. Now, Fernández de Castro, explained, the entire region of Latin America is living through a "crisis of violence." "Today," he warned, "every country in Latin America" could be affected by such chronic insecurity. One major reason, he argued, is a lack of state capacity — "police, prosecutors, judges, prisons in the region" — an institutional "problem that spans borders."

Problems within the state institutions charged with maintaining security form the context for the infamous case of 43 students from a rural teachers' college in Ayotzinapa who were forcibly disappeared near Iguala, in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, on September 26, 2014. "The Ayotzinapa case is a window into the main human rights, security, justice, and violence challenges that the Mexican government faces," suggested James Cavallaro, Professor at Stanford Law School and member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Furthermore, he argued, "the ways the Mexican government at all levels has responded" — from the local government to the police, military, federal government, and even the presidency — reveals much about the institutions that will have to face these challenges and the seriousness of changes that will have to be made.

Cavallaro reviewed the basic facts of the case, summarizing the tragedy of the 43 disappeared students from his perspective as the IACHR Rapporteur for Mexico in 2014. At the behest of the Mexican government, the IACHR created the Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes (GIEI, Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts), whose mandate was to conduct an independent investigation into how students commandeering five buses for a trip to Mexico City ended as the victims of such macabre violence.

"The initial theory, the official truth" that the Mexican authorities provided "was certifiably, scientifically false," Cavallaro observed. To understand how grossly out of proportion the level of force employed was, he explained, one must understand that "bus commandeering" is a normal, common occurrence in Guerrero state.

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A farmer works his drought-stricken cornfield in Guatemala.
(Photo courtesy of Conred/Guatemala.)

U.S.–MEXICO FUTURES FORUM

Fleeing the Storms

By Stephanie Leutert

In October 2017, Macario Macz Tení pulled the husks off the corn in Raxruhá, Santo Pedro Carchá, Guatemala, as several of his small children looked on. The corn crop that he had tended for months, which was meant to feed his family of eight for the next year, was ruined. Three days of torrential downpour had destroyed not just the Macz Tení family's crops, but also those of another 40 families who lived nearby. Wiping tears from his eyes, Macario told the news outlets that had come to document the flood that he had no choice now but to go find other work in order to provide his family with something to eat.

Increasingly erratic weather patterns have made scenes of ruined crops and shattered livelihoods a familiar sight across many parts of Central America. Longer periods without a drop of rain or days of seemingly endless precipitation are uprooting generations of Central Americans who work the land, sending them to find employment in different industries or new locales. Some of these workers will move to a neighboring town or city, and others will head north to the United States, following generations before them. It is a familiar story of the search for a better life, but now entangled with the rapidly emerging force of climate change.

International migration from Central America's Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) dates back decades. In the 1980s, millions of Guatemalans and Salvadorans fled civil wars and ended up in makeshift refugee camps in Mexico or in rougher neighborhoods of the United States. The civil wars came to an end in the 1990s, but migration from the region did not. A new generation set out to follow in the footsteps of previous migrants, looking for better-paying jobs, escaping ongoing violence, or starting a new life after natural disasters. By 2000, the U.S. Census counted 817,336 foreign-born Salvadorans, 480,775 Guatemalans, and 283,000 Hondurans living across the United States.

Today, an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 Central Americans set out every year for the United States, attempting to join earlier generations of migrants. This latest group leaves their homes for an even longer list of reasons than in previous decades, including

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Photo by Globovision.
A young girl hauls away family possessions after a flood in Honduras.

to escape hunger, poverty, gang violence, extortion threats, domestic and family violence, ongoing political instability, or to reunify with a parent already living in the United States. The newest addition to this list is climate change, which acts both as a direct driving force and an exacerbating factor.

While Central America is feeling climate change's first consequences, it has barely contributed to the phenomenon. Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador's economies produce less than 1 percent of the world's greenhouse gases, and all three countries generate significant percentages of their electricity from renewable energy sources. Yet the three countries' geographic location in the tropics between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans places them in one of the world's most vulnerable regions for climate change's effects. Climate models predict that by 2030, the region could see average temperatures rising by around 1 to 1.5 degrees Celsius and precipitation declining or becoming increasingly unpredictable.

Yet these changes are not a problem-in-waiting for some future generation. Central American countries are already enduring the impact of unconventional weather patterns, and subsistence farming families like the Macz Tenís are on the front lines. The governments of El Salvador and Honduras report that temperatures have already risen by around 1 degree Celsius over the past 60 years, while Guatemala's government notes that some areas of the country have gotten 10 percent hotter in the last 20 years. These warmer temperatures are coupled with periods of intense drought, strong rainy seasons, and increasingly erratic weather patterns.

The infamous "El Niño" phenomenon — the heating of the Pacific Ocean surfaces that causes drier weather conditions — has triggered severe droughts across the region. While the whole region can be affected, the most high-risk areas run up the center and western portions of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, making up what is referred to as the "dry corridor." The 10.5 million inhabitants of this corridor have timed their corn and bean cultivation around the zone's cyclical wet and dry seasons, but the rains have stopped arriving on schedule.

From 2014 through 2016, three consecutive droughts destroyed farmers' staple crops throughout the dry corridor. In 2014, the lack of rain wiped out 70 percent of Honduras's corn crops, 63 percent of Guatemala's bean production, and damaged crop cultivation in 30 percent of El Salvador's farmland. Yet this wasn't even the worst year.

The lack of rain in 2015 compounded the ongoing effects and was dubbed the region's worst drought in 30 years, with Central American governments and international aid organizations struggling to attend to devastated rural residents. Things didn't get any better in 2016, when the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization noted that 3.5 million people across the region were in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

Climate change most affects industries that rely on regular weather cycles, primarily agriculture but also ranching and fishing. Without rain, cattle don't have grass to eat or water to drink, and ranchers struggle to come up with the money and supplies to keep them alive. High temperatures and late rains can also dry up lakes and rivers. In the summer of 2017, these factors combined with upstream water deviations to dry out the Laguna de Atescatempa in southwest Guatemala. By the middle of last year, the only things that remained in the once-picturesque lagoon basin were beached fishing boats and local fisherman who were newly out of work. Over the following months, thunderstorms gradually refilled parts of the lake, but without changes in the underlying conditions, these waters — and local residents' jobs — are likely to disappear once more.

El Niño droughts are often countered by "La Niña" floods. The heavy rains that characterize La Niña conditions — brought on by a cooling of the Pacific Ocean's surfaces — fill rivers and lakes beyond their capacity and send flash floods that wash away or submerge roads, bridges, homes, and farmland. Crops that were diligently tended for months can be underwater in hours. In January 2018, several days of intense rain in Guatemala pushed the Río Polochic over its banks, sending streams of muddy brown water through the surrounding communities. The village of El Estor reported that 344 families in the community had lost all their crops in the storm, and the residents were waiting in temporary shelters for the water to reside. It's far from an isolated event, with similar stories repeating themselves every year throughout the region.

Yet, even if Central America's farmers can withstand extreme droughts and floods, their crops are still vulnerable to the plagues spread by a changing climate. Devastating fungi are pushed across the region through a combination of warmer weather and intense rainy seasons. In 2013, a coffee rust fungus moved through the region's farmlands and reached higher elevations than ever before, paralyzing the industry and leading to more

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The dry landscape of Guatemala's Laguna de Atescatempa after shifts in the normal weather patterns.

Photo by Marvin Recinos/AFP/Getty Images.

Photo by Carlos Manuel Citalán Marroquín.

A father and his children plant corn on land vulnerable to mudslides.

than $1 billion in losses. Coffee workers were also left without employment as large-scale plantations slimmed down their payrolls and smaller farms struggled to pay the bills, with an estimated 100,000 Central Americans ultimately losing their jobs.

While Central America is at risk for extreme weather events, the negative effects are not spread evenly throughout the population. The region's subsistence farmers, small-scale ranchers, and fishermen are on the front lines, but they are also the least prepared. They lack the resources to adapt to or mitigate weather risks through infrastructure or access to insurance markets. When the rains subside, these workers either rely on family networks or government assistance to make it through a bad season, send family members elsewhere to earn an alternative income, or suffer months of hunger.

The rotting corn crops or desiccated bean plants hurt rural communities the most, but families everywhere from Tegucigalpa to San Salvador to Guatemala City feel the impact. Market shortages on staple goods push up domestic prices, and all Central Americans — though particularly those with the lowest incomes — feel the pinch in their wallets. Tracking the prices of these goods over time confirms the economic theory. From 2014 to 2016, the prices of white corn, red beans, and sugar were all higher in Honduras than the previous five-year average, due to the multi-year drought. Even if climate change doesn't wipe out their jobs, it makes all the region's consumers a little worse off.

While tracking international migration and documenting climate change can be straightforward, linking the two is not. Within the region, Central Americans may migrate domestically at least once before heading north, obscuring the direct link between weather and international migration. These migration patterns fall under broader patterns of increasing urbanization and may not be recorded or noticed since they follow regular migration routes to economic centers and do not cross international borders.

In Mexico or the United States, these individuals are also often categorized as economic migrants who left because of poverty or a lack of economic opportunities, further blurring the role that changing weather played in their expulsion. Also, since economic migrants do not qualify for any Mexican or U.S. protections — unlike those fleeing persecution by gangs or drug traffickers — they are often directly deported back to their countries of origin without a chance to share their complete stories.

Despite the difficulties in teasing out the connection, initial studies are beginning to recognize the extent to which migration and climate change are connected. In 2009, a U.S. National Intelligence Council report predicted that climate change-induced weather events would push Central Americans out of the region along the same paths as previous migrants. A few years later, a 2015 World Food Programme survey linked migration to food insecurity caused by climate change, reporting that 12 percent of Guatemalans affected by the 2014 drought had a family member migrate within the previous month due to weather conditions, as did 10 percent of Hondurans and 5 percent of Salvadorans. Additional studies have also documented how Central America's droughts, hurricanes, and heat waves all create rural-to-urban migration, with droughts provoking the most human movement.

Targeted government and international programs could help mitigate climate change's negative effects. To date, each Central American country has outlined a plan for addressing climate change, and international organizations have funneled investment into resilience efforts. For example, local irrigation infrastructure could help make water more reliable during droughts, crop alternation or diversification could protect against weather variability or diseases, and targeted and timely emergency assistance would help communities to recover from extreme weather shocks. However, Central American governments' efforts to address climate change have so far been insufficient to fully support rural communities and are likely to be overshadowed by other domestic priorities, such as boosting employment and reducing violence.

Today's climate change disruptions across Central America are just the beginning. As a global challenge, Central American countries can't address the issues on their own, and conditions are poised to get worse before getting better. Politicians in Washington, D.C., or other world capitals may not yet feel the effects, but rural Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans are already living through them. The Macz Tení family is among thousands of Central Americans who will leave behind their ruined crops and head to a neighboring city or send family members north to the United States. The family's tradition of corn farming is now impossible because of unpredictable and extreme weather patterns, with climate change uprooting them from their land and sending them in search of a different life.

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References for this article are available at clas.berkeley.edu.

Three simultaneous hurricanes threaten Central America, September 2017.

Image from NOAA/Wikipedia.

Photo by Néstor Fernando Hernández Candelaria.

Fishing boats line the docks in Chiapas, Mexico.

MIGRATION

Stitching Together a New Life

By Lauren Markham

Last fall, I visited a lonely port on the coast of Puerto Chiapas, Mexico, where wooden fishing boats were beached on shore or bobbed out in the bay. Here, I met a Salvadoran man, whom I'll call Adolfo, who had recently left his country behind.

After a morning of fishing, Adolfo had hung a large net, bigger than a king-size bed sheet, from a hook high on the porch of his boss's house. He was mending the places where the line had grown weak or had split, leaving holes. I was with another journalist friend, who was looking for information about migrant-smuggling routes along the coast. "Yeah," said Adolfo, "They take people out there." He motioned toward the sea beyond the bay. "Drugs, too." He shrugged and kept working on the line.

Many Central Americans come through Chiapas, Adolfo explained. But "many" is an understatement. Every year, Mexico deports tens of thousands of migrants to Central America — mostly to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras — but many more slip through unnoticed. While some are apprehended and sent home, others are able to continue on to the United States. Adolfo and his family were applying for asylum from the Mexican government, on account of "many problems" back home.

These problems were, of course, gang related. El Salvador is one of the most dangerous countries in the world, plagued by gang violence, political corruption, and endemic poverty. Communities throughout the country — particularly poor communities like the small fishing town on the coast where Adolfo had lived — are controlled by the gangs. Businesses large and small — from big hotels and bus companies to the lady selling tamales on the street — are required to pay *renta* (rent), a euphemism for extortion. If they don't turn over the money every two weeks, they risk death.

Adolfo paid the renta, but eventually, the gangs took possession of his boat. It was worth about $8,000 in cash, but far more than that as the tool he needed to earn his living from the sea.

"What could I do?" he asked. He knew no one would help him get his boat back. The police were corrupt, and any kind of *denuncia*, or official report, against the gang would put his life at risk and potentially the lives of his family, as well.

Adolfo is in his forties, with curly hair, leathered skin, and bright eyes; he dresses like a hip teenager in baggy shorts, a t-shirt, and trendy sneakers. He has two children: a teen daughter and a 12-year-old son. They are all in Mexico now, living with his sister who had moved here years ago. Adolfo's kids weren't going to school, and his occasional work helping out a local fisherman barely kept food on the table. But he was adamant that he couldn't return to El Salvador.

"They've ruined my country," Adolfo said, practically spitting the words. By "they," he meant the gangs but also, and perhaps more importantly, the politicians. They've done nothing, as he sees it, to put a stop to the violence. "They've only empowered the gangs. They are gangsters, too," he said. "El Salvador is dead." He will never go back.

Adolfo and his family are just a few of the hundreds of thousands of migrants who have left El Salvador in the past decade, and the country already has a long history of migration to the United States. Between 1980 and 1990, the most brutal years of El Salvador's civil war, approximately 371,000 Salvadorans — 7 percent of the country's population at the time — migrated to the United States. Today, more than 2 million Salvadorans reside in the U.S., approximately a third of El Salvador's entire population.

In recent years, the number of migrants has increased in almost direct proportion to the rise of gangs. None of the domestic or foreign policies of El Salvador, Mexico, or the United States has done anything to curb migration — be it El Salvador's *mano dura* campaigns or gang truce, the ramp-up of deportations in both Mexico and the U.S., or anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States. Ask Adolfo or anyone else from El Salvador — from politicians and migration officials to local fishermen and shopkeepers in this Mexican coast town — and they'll tell you: no matter what happens in the United States, no matter what the Trump administration does (or threatens to do), migration from El Salvador is not going to stop anytime soon.

As I write in my book about child migration from Central America, *The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life* (Crown, 2017), El Salvador is now hemorrhaging people. Salvadorans "are crossing into the United States in search of the fabled 'better life' that has attracted migrants, authorized and

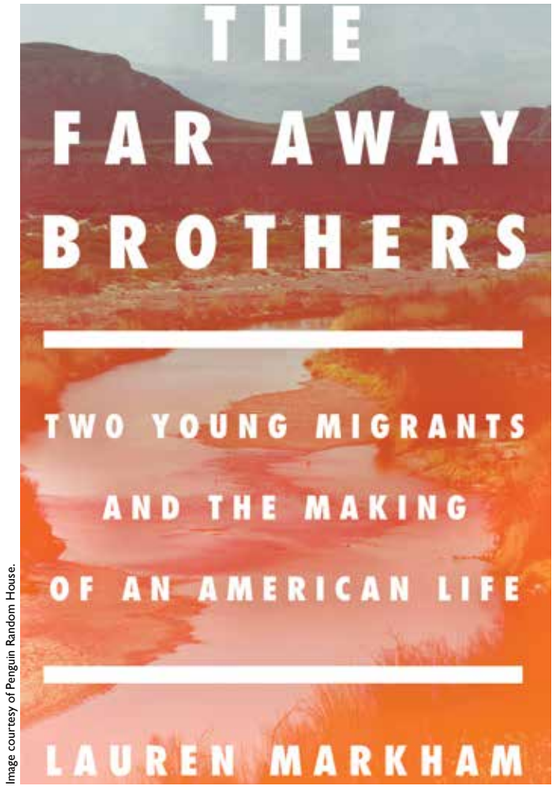

Image courtesy of Penguin Random House.

unauthorized, since before the *Mayflower* landed. But in the Northern Triangle — Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador — a 'better life,' for many, means a life where they are not afraid of being killed." Though the conditions on the ground in El Salvador have not changed much since I began reporting *The Far Away Brothers* four years ago, what has changed is the profile of the Salvadoran immigrant to the United States.

For decades, it was mostly adult breadwinners, like Adolfo, who struck out on their own for the North, hoping to get a job and send money home to take care of their loved ones. Over the past several years, however, solo adult crossers are at record lows, while solo youth crossers, as well as young families, are at record highs. I wrote *The Far Away Brothers* to better understand why so many people were leaving their homes in El Salvador and why the profile of the Central American migrant had shifted. What is happening in El Salvador that is pushing so many young people out toward the Great Northern Unknown?

Scratch the surface of this question, and the answers abound. There's the generations-old story of poverty. The Northern Triangle of Central America is plagued by economic insecurity and increasing environmental

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concerns; currently, 3.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity or are already hungry. El Salvador is also now one of the most violent places in the world, with many sectors and aspects of society dominated by brutal gangs. *La violencia*, as it's called in shorthand, is harder to escape than ever.

El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have some of the highest murder rates in the world. In 2015, El Salvador's murder rate reached 103 per 100,000 people — a figure rivaling the time of the civil war. By way of comparison, the United States, a country 50 times the size of El Salvador, had only four times the total number of homicides that same year. In 2017, El Salvador's murder rate dropped to 60 per 100,000, but it is still among the most dangerous countries in the world. In the Northern Triangle, approximately 95 percent of crimes go unpunished; to denounce a gang member is to risk retribution from the gang, often in the form of rape or murder. Meanwhile, in a crippled economy that relies heavily on remittances from abroad (the vast majority from the United States), 3 percent of El Salvador's GDP goes to extortion — the bread and butter of gangs like MS-13 and Barrio 18.

Today's violence is easily traced back to the horrific war that brutalized El Salvador in the 1980s. Adolfo watched his country battle itself (with funding from the United States), finally forge peace and begin to recover, and then launch back into another kind of armed conflict: the unconventional, pernicious struggle of gang violence. It's a strange war, and one that might be invisible to an unknowing outsider. The violence is so endemic that it is somehow normalized: daily life continues amid the homicides, the funerals, the threats to life and limb, the extortion. People go fishing, have birthday parties, sell tortillas on the street, make dinner, have babies, go to school: normal life goes on, until it doesn't. More than 50 percent of Salvadoran migrants surveyed by the United Nations state that they have seen someone close to them murdered. It's no wonder so many Salvadorans like Adolfo and his family are fleeing home to save their lives.

After the gangs stole Adolfo's boat and he couldn't do anything about it, he moved on. He kept fishing, kept trying to eke out a living with his family. They were evangelical Christians; he showed me the photo ID cards from his church, eager to offer me proof: one for him, his wife, his

El Salvador's legacy of violence: a casualty of the massacre at Archbishop Oscar Romero's funeral, April 1980.

Photo from Keystone/Getty Images.

son, his daughter. "See," he said, "We're Christians. We're good people. We didn't ask for any of this."

But one night a few years later, he had a run-in with some gang members on his way home from the piers. A group of young men stopped him — "kids," he said, most of them — maybe five or six all together. They shoved him to the ground and beat him up, kicking and punching him. Then they pointed a gun at him. They were about to shoot, he recalled, when one of them said, "I don't think it's him."

"They'd confused me with someone else," he explained. "Someone they wanted to kill." To confirm his identity, they stripped him naked in search of telltale tattoos, and when they saw he didn't have any, they realized their mistake and let him go. Adolfo walked home, bruised and battered, having just barely escaped death.

It's hard to know precisely how many people are involved with the gangs in El Salvador. A 2013 study of somewhat questionable merit by the Salvadoran government estimated that 470,000 Salvadorans — more than 7 percent of the population — had direct ties to gangs, either through family members or as full-fledged gang members themselves.

Police often arrest suspected gang members with little evidence. Just hanging out in a group on the street can be grounds for arrest according to the law against *agrupación ilicita* (unlawful assembly). The courts and penal system are so backed up that people languish in prison for months or years before being formally charged or going to trial (prisons are at 310-percent capacity). The police kill with impunity, too. Several extra-judicial massacres have been reported, including the high-profile 2015 "San Blas" case where eight people were murdered by the police, their bodies rearranged to make it look like self-defense. Such incidents give credence to the belief that the police are killing based on mere suspicion. Meanwhile, vigilante groups are also going after the gangs, which smacks of the clandestine death squads from the civil war days.

The gangs are not just fighting each another and the police, but also the government — at least those government agencies not already intertwined with the gangs. Both major political parties in El Salvador have been accused of buying votes from gang members in exchange for lighter prison sentences and reduced police crackdowns.

Yet one of the most vexing problems with the gang wars in El Salvador today is that there's no easy good guy/bad guy dichotomy. The outcomes for young people in El Salvador are dire. Only half of Salvadoran youth enroll in 7th to 9th grades, and only half of those move on to high school. More than 300,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are currently out of school and without a job. With these options in mind, it's no surprise young people are joining the gangs.

These young people are ground troops for gangs and, therefore, most likely to die or go to prison. The gangs prey on youth, using methods similar to the recruitment of child soldiers around the world: youngsters are incorporated into the ranks by brute force (they are told they'll be killed, or their sister will be raped, or their father will be killed, if they don't join) or by force of circumstance (youth who come from abusive households, who are orphans, who have no other place to go).

Migrants from Central America, like Adolfo, who are fleeing violence back home are generally shocked to learn that MS-13 is a dire — and growing — problem in the United States, too. After all, MS-13 was born within the United States among Salvadoran exiles who had fled their civil war only to land in under-resourced urban areas dominated by crime and home-grown gangs. Young migrants formed MS-13 to mimic these other gangs, and in some cases, in an effort to protect themselves from neighborhood violence. When tens of thousands of young Salvadorans were incarcerated and then deported in the late 1980s and 1990s, they brought this gang culture home with them, effectively starting a new era of Salvadoran unrest. Gang violence in the United States is not an imported crisis, but a reflection of the conditions in the U.S. itself, where inequality is so stark that gang violence has been roiling among disaffected youth for decades, if not centuries.

Yet Trump claims that young Salvadorans are smuggling themselves into the country in order to bring their gang ways to our "peaceful parks and beautiful quiet neighborhoods," which they have turned into "bloodstained killing fields." In response to the influx of young migrants, the current administration is attempting to criminalize immigration more than ever before, both in terms of the actual letter of the law and in the court of public opinion: from efforts to ban immigrants from certain countries whole hog, to attempts to increase deportations and daily detention capacities, to claims that youth crossing the border alone are taking advantage of immigration loopholes and are "wolves in sheep's clothing."

Salvadorans, in particular, have ended up in the crosshairs. In the fall of 2017, President Trump announced the end of the popular Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which provides relief to more than 25,000 Salvadorans who arrived here as young people (as well as hundreds of thousands of others). Then, in January 2018, the Trump administration announced plans to end Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for nearly 200,000 Salvadorans who had been granted this special status after

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Photo by Fibonacci Blue.

A rally supporting the continuation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for refugees, January 2018.

several natural disasters struck El Salvador in the early 2000s, with repeated extensions as a stopgap to a failing immigration system without many permanent options.

The prospect of sudden deportation for 200,000 Salvadorans who have long been in the United States isn't just horrifying to the potential deportees, but to the entire Salvadoran society. As I wrote in the New York Times, "El Salvador is home to 6.34 million people; the 200,000 deportees from the United States would mean a population increase of 3 percent. Where are these 200,000 people expected to go, and how will they possibly be absorbed?" After all, conditions in parts of El Salvador are so dire that people continue to migrate by the tens of thousands every year.

Adolfo didn't want to leave El Salvador. Even after his boat was stolen, after he'd been stripped and nearly shot point blank for the bum luck of looking too much like someone else, El Salvador was still his home. He had a trade and a calling as a fisherman. His work made him proud and earned him enough to take decent care of his family. His kids were in school; his family was close to their church community and to their extended family. Life was dangerous, and he was worried, but he didn't really think about leaving. Where could they possibly go? And then the gangs started going after his daughter.

On the way home from school one day, Adolfo's teenage daughter was stopped by some kids she thought might be in a gang. They kept her from going home; they asked her to join them, to come along and hang out with them. She demurred for long enough that they let up. She made it home safely, but it happened twice more. And then, one of the gang members started stalking her, insisting that she be his girlfriend.

Gang members reserve the right to claim their girlfriends, and refusal can be a death sentence. While most members (and most murder victims) of the gangs in El Salvador are men, young women are increasingly joining, either as full-fledged members or as girlfriends who to do some of the dirty work (transporting drugs as "mules," collecting renta, cutting drugs). But being a young woman in El Salvador already means being at risk of rape or murder, both inside and outside of the gangs. In 2012, El Salvador had the world's highest rate of femicide, the gender-motivated killing of women. Those young women who survive become pregnant at alarmingly early ages. According to a 2015 study by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 25,132 of the 83,468 registered pregnancies in El Salvador (approximately 30 percent) were girls or young women between the ages of 10 and 19. The odds are not good for young women like Adolfo's daughter.

"The problem is," Adolfo told me as he mended the net with swift hitches of a hooked needle, "She's too pretty."

Once their daughter had been made a target, Adolfo and his wife felt they had no choice. They didn't tell anyone where they were going but packed their suitcases and hit the road one night, heading for his sister's place in southern Mexico.

Adolfo has been in Mexico almost a year, preparing his asylum paperwork and waiting for good news. But despite the time and money he is spending to earn asylum in Mexico, he has no intention of staying. "It's dangerous here, too," he said. Not so much because of gang violence, he explained, but because of the *narcos*. The asylum paperwork is a long-term safety net, an elaborate one at that: if Adolfo or his family get deported from the United States, they will be sent back to Mexico instead of all the way home to El Salvador, where he fears for his daughter's life. Once Adolfo gets the paperwork, he and his family will hit the road again.

When I asked Adolfo what he'll do when he gets to the United States, he told me that a cousin of his thought he might be able to get him a job pouring cement, in Kansas, maybe. "You know," he said, "Building roads." Wouldn't he miss the fishing life, I asked, motioning toward the sea, all those colorful, bobbing boats?

"Nah," he said, shaking his head. He wanted to leave everything behind. "They have ruined my country. It's nothing anymore, nothing." Another hook of his needle. "I want to forget all that." He tied a knot, bit off the line, and started in on another hole. His life, back home, was over.

A few days ago, months after I met Adolfo that bright sunny day on the coast, I got a phone call. He'd gotten his asylum paperwork. "We're getting ready to go," he said. He'd been watching the news, he knew what was being said about El Salvador, and he understood the peril for thousands of Salvadoran migrants who had long been in the United States, as well as for those who had just recently made the journey north in fear for their lives. He knew enough about the current immigration debate and crackdown to understand what might be in store for him once he got to the United States. But these were risks he felt had to take for the sake of his family. "Primero Dios," he said. "God willing," one of these days, Adolfo and his family will race across the border, come what may once they've made it across.

Lauren Markham is a writer and works at Oakland International High School, which serves recently arrived immigrant youth in Oakland, California. She spoke for CLAS on October 27, 2017.

References for this article are available at clas.berkeley.edu.

A woman watches neighbors flee their homes following gang threats in Tunamiles, El Salvador.

Photo by Salvador Melendez/AP Photo.

Fernando Botero at his studio in Bogotá, 1959.
(Photo © Fernando Botero.)

Botero and Picasso:

An Imaginary Dialogue

By Cecilia Braschi

(translated by Anais Moutarlier)

"My dream, like that of all young artists, was to move to Paris and be like Picasso." Thus, Botero began his fascination as a young man with this brilliant, versatile figure who had been upsetting the canon of modern painting since the beginning of the 20th century. Botero discovered the European avant-garde at the age of 15, in Argentine Julio E. Payró's *Pintura Moderna* (1944), the incontrovertible reference for an entire generation of Latin American artists who sought to rethink painting outside of the traditional and regional schools. Picasso appeared as a global "phenomenon," who Botero admired, primarily, for his "non-conformism." In an enthusiastic and vehement text that resulted in his expulsion from a Jesuit school in 1948, the young Botero paid homage to a Picasso who "struggles, debates, attacks his former mentors," but whose "eloquence is found more in his work than his impassioned word."

A talented artist, exceptional colorist, great experimenter of style and technique, Picasso was, in Botero's eyes, the universal artist capable of expressing the gamut of all human emotion in his work — "the subtlest and the darkest," the most "aggressive" and the most "tender." He was also a useful point of reference for the Colombian painter who was at the beginning of his career and hoping to influence international modernity with his principle visual references, such as pre-Columbian art, popular folk art, and colonial-period Baroque. While he admired Picasso's paintings from the Blue and Rose Periods, Botero had already been seduced by the artistic revolution of the great Mexican muralists (Orozco, Siqueiros, Rivera) and was unsurprisingly particularly sensitive to Picasso's gigantomachies, which he described as "monumental and sensual," two words that in combination would come to be instrumental in his own career.

But upon his arrival in Paris in 1952, Botero's encounter with the actual works of Picasso in the Musée d'Art Moderne was a disappointment, no doubt due to the format, which was smaller than he had anticipated and tempered his "monumental" image of the master's work. However, less than a year later, he rediscovered Picasso with surprise and enthusiasm in an exposition at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon. This time, it was the colors in the paintings that struck him, colors that he had been unable to appreciate from books. By then, his fascination was such that Botero decided to go in search of the man, who at the time had settled in Vallauris. However, Picasso was not in his studio. Nor was he in his usual café, where Botero waited for hours in vain. Nor was he to be found on

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Pablo Picasso at his studio in Paris, 1948.
(Photo © Herbert List/Magnum Photos.)

Pablo Picasso, "Portrait of a Young Girl, After Cranach the Younger II" (Cannes, July 4, 1958). Engraving, 64x53.5 cm.
(Museu Picasso Barcelona, Don de Jaume Sabartés, 1962. © 2018 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Photo: Museu Picasso Barcelona / Gasull Fotografia.)

the beach of Juan-les-Pins, the scene of so many paintings of swimmers that Botero had admired in his youth. Disheartened, Botero resigned himself to the failure of his trip: he would never come face to face with Pablo Picasso.

The exposition "Botero: A Dialogue With Picasso," at the Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art in Aix-en-Provence, France, from November 24, 2017, to March 11, 2018, presented an opportunity to look back on this crossover, for even though these two men never met, one can decipher an imagined dialogue between their work, maintained by their shared mother tongue: painting. Despite their different origins, histories, and trajectories, these two great artists of the 20th century — both of them widely popular and immediately recognizable by their respective styles — share geographic references and cultural communities, as well as artistic perspectives and specific techniques. Both artists took guidance from a strong connection with Hispanic culture, imbued upon Botero's Colombia by the Spain of Picasso through a secular colonization that stretched from the iconography of bullfighting to the ex-voto to popular illustrations in the grand pictorial tradition of El Greco, Velázquez, or Goya. Indeed, in another commonality, the works of these two artists likewise include a perceptive combination of erudite and popular cultures, allowing them to attain the universal sensibility of a very large audience by superimposing multiple levels of meaning.

In an artistic sense, Botero and Picasso also share a steadfast, tacit understanding of painting, in the noblest sense of the word. Technical mastery is a *sine qua non* of their artistic engagement. Without ever being tempted by acrylics, Botero excelled in traditional techniques that withstood the test of the centuries (oil, pastel, pencil, charcoal, etc.). These are also techniques of which Picasso was a confirmed master. What is more, the resolutely figurative Botero, like Picasso, was never tempted by abstract art. During his 1958 residence in New York, he mingled with artists of abstract expressionism, while sharing neither their ideas nor their commercial success. Like the Spanish master, Botero clung with determination and bravery to classic genres in the figurative pictorial tradition: portraits, still lifes, and war scenes. Also like Picasso, Botero's use of figuration never corresponded to a preconceived or fixed notion of realism. As a close observer of Picasso, Botero knew that to be faithful to the act of painting, one must also be able to "risk" the freedom it offers, and that imagination, subjectivity, and poetry must take precedence over the constraints of verisimilitude. From there come a richness of color, a distortion of forms, and a judgment of proportions that, in response to purely aesthetic and pictorial demands, willingly bypass the rules of optics, composition, and perspective.

There is no better way to understand the relationship that Botero reached with the work of Picasso than to look at the way in which he contended with the other main protagonists of art history. Botero never responds by repeating clichéd or stylistic forms, but rather by defining, through comparison or contrast, his own language and his own contribution to the history of art. Among the modern artists, Picasso is probably the one who most frequently played the same game of appropriation and diversion with the history of art from every era. Some of his references are shared with Botero, such as Ingres, Cranach, and especially Velázquez, of whom the single Picasso museum in Barcelona contains more than 50 "versions" (as Botero would call them), 45 of which are from the "Las Meninas" series.

Moreover, it was in the tradition of Hispanic and European still life, which grew from the "bodegónes" of Luis Meléndez, Sánchez Cotán, or Zurbarán all the way to Cezanne, that both artists reached the most radical results of their artistic endeavors, revolutionizing this ancient, modest, and seemingly conventional genre from within. In the era of cubism, Picasso and Braque made the genre of still life into the fundamental point of reference for their theories. Bottles, newspapers, and musical instruments are decomposed into geometric forms that celebrate plasticity while multiplying points of view. As he sketched a mandolin in 1956, Botero, for his part, discovered the monumental beauty to be found

Fernando Botero, "Cranach" (2016). Oil on canvas, 172x140 cm.
(Private collection. © Fernando Botero.)

in exaggerating form, thus laying the keystone to his own inimitable style. While Picasso eliminates the unity of volume with an explosive, centrifugal force that breaks down forms, Botero, on the other hand, is guided by a centripetal force to call the object back to the values of mass and volume, which he intensifies through a disproportionate deformation of objects. Both artists exhibit a willingness to override the codes of composition and perspective established since the Renaissance.

Where Picasso abolished the vanishing point, Botero abolished proportions. Thus, for the first time in the pictorial genre, Botero's still lifes can reach monumental size, such as the big pear ("Pear," 1976) or the triptych of immense colored bouquets ("Flowers in Blue," "Flowers in Yellow," "Flowers in Red," 2006). Similarly, in the nudes, the disproportion of shapes in impossible spaces (a too-small bathroom or a too-small bedroom) further accentuates the abundance of bodies. These voluminous forms and planes also correspond to a desire to express the sensuality that Botero sees as one of the fundamental virtues of

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ABOVE: Pablo Picasso, "Family at the Seaside" (Dinard, Summer 1922). Oil on wood, 17.6x20.2 cm.
(Musée National Picasso – Paris Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979. MP80. © 2018 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée National Picasso–Paris) / Mathieu Rabeau.)

RIGHT AND FOLDOUT: Fernando Botero, "Woman at the Beach" (2002). Pastel on canvas, 69x104 cm.
(Private collection. © Fernando Botero.)

painting — the same virtue that he had always admired in the works of Picasso. Thus, Botero makes no distinction between a nude and a still life; a body, a face, and a fruit are all treated exactly the same way. The abundance, equanimity, and magical suspension adapt themselves to any object, but in contrast to Picasso, without their intrinsic sensuality overflowing into excess or eroticism.

Militant and revolutionary in his youth, a more mature Botero inscribed and channeled all of his engagement — including the political and social — into the act of painting. His pieces represent the injustice and drama of the modern age in scenes of violence and pain, born from a need for coherence, which demands that one "reflect life in all of its aspects, not only the pleasant, but also the tragic." From the South American dictatorships of the past century to torture in the Iraqi prisons of Abu Ghraib in 2003, from earthquakes to assassinations on the streets of Colombia, Botero has been an attentive spectator of the tragedies of his era, convinced of his responsibility as an artist to be a man of his time. Even here, Picasso

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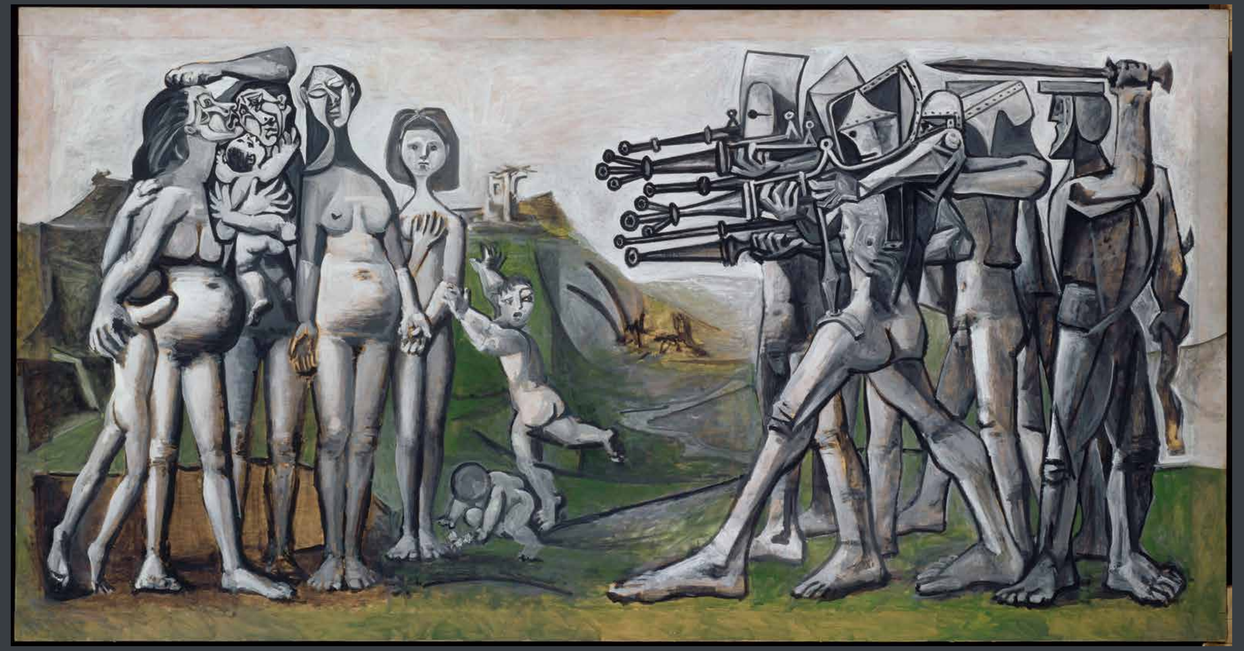
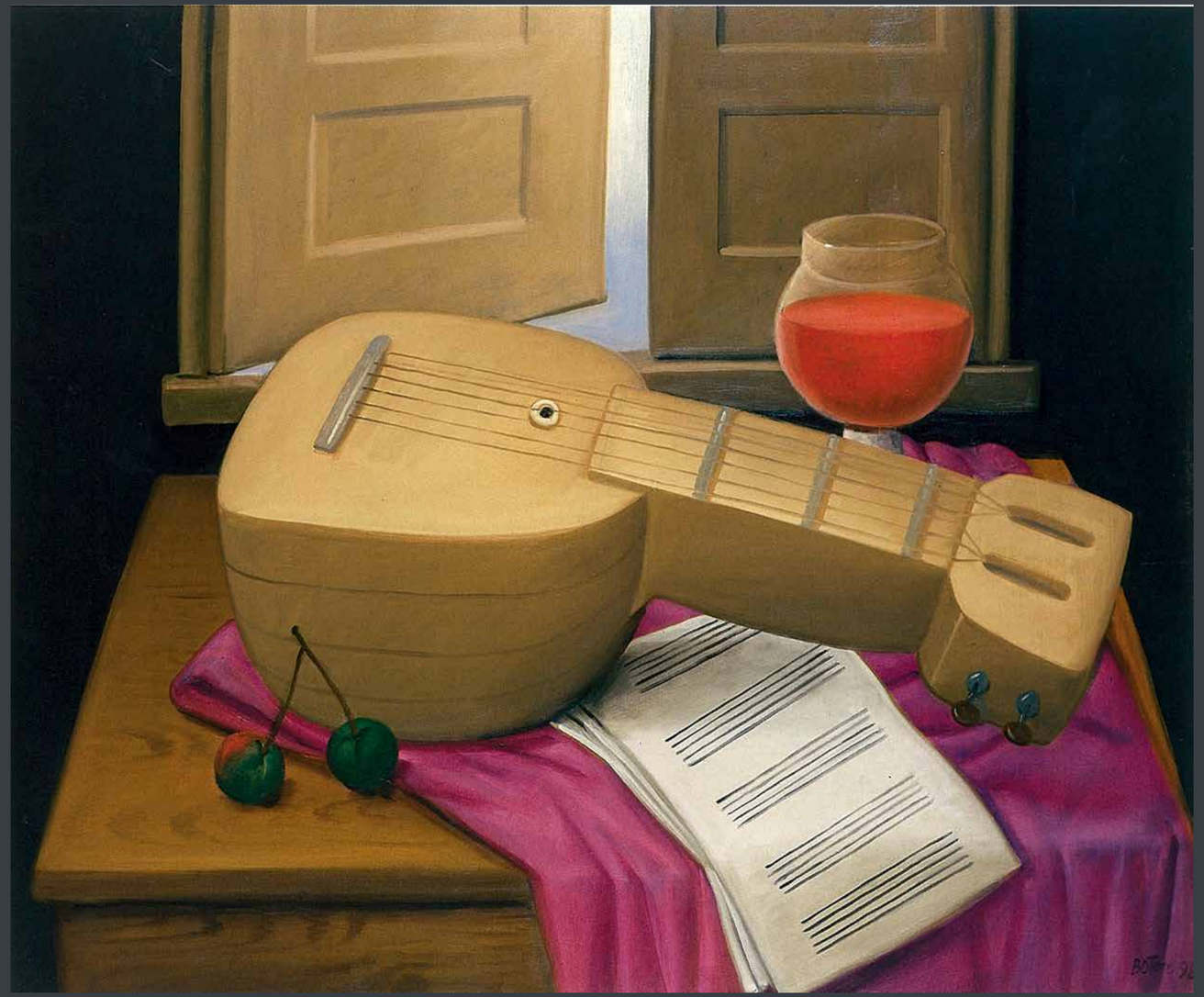
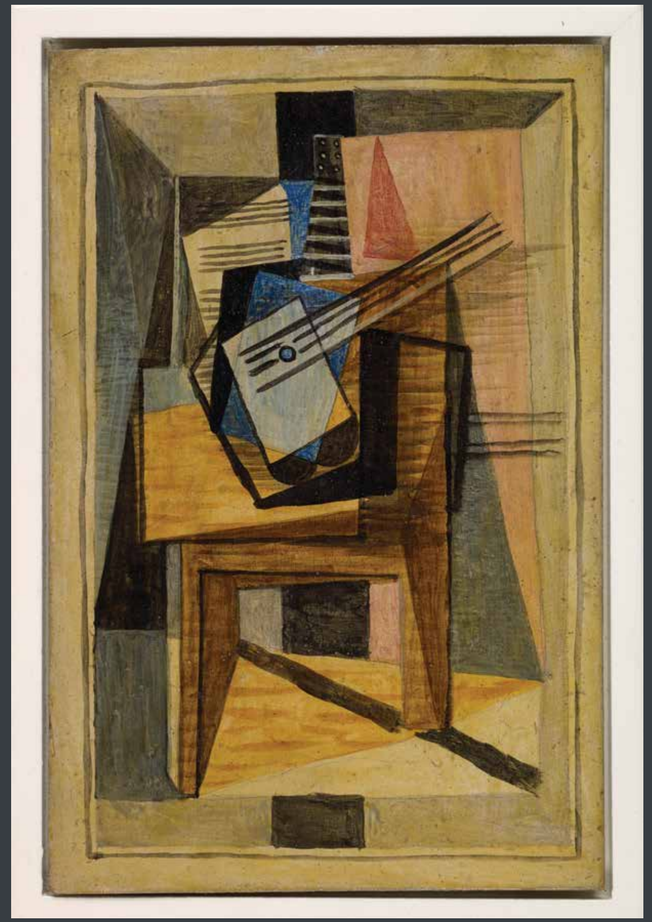


Left: Fernando Botero, "The 20:15 Massacre" (2004). Oil on canvas, 146x209 cm.
(Private collection. © Fernando Botero.)

Above: Pablo Picasso, "Massacre in Korea" (Vallauris, January 18, 1951). Oil on wood panel, 110x210 cm.
(Musée National Picasso – Paris Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979. MP203. © 2018 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée National Picasso–Paris) / Jean-Gilles Berizzi.)





LEFT: Fernando Botero, "Still Life With Mandolin" (1998). Oil on canvas, 98x118 cm.
(Private collection. © Fernando Botero.)

ABOVE: Pablo Picasso, "Musical Instruments on a Table" (Paris, 1922). Oil on wood, 15x9.9 cm.
(Musée National Picasso – Paris Dation Pablo Picasso, 1979. © 2018 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée National Picasso-Paris) / Sylvie Chan-Liat.)

Botero and Picasso: An Imaginary Dialogue

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remains an incontrovertible reference for Botero's work: he fervently opposed the barbarism of the Spanish Civil War and the conflict in Korea in paintings that have since become icons of the modern genre, respectively "Guernica (1937) and "Massacre in Korea" (1951).

However, the violence that Picasso causes to explode on the canvas with deformed bodies and faces ravaged by pain and rage, Botero contains and sublimates into the round, polished shapes that are typical of his style. The faces painted by Botero, like those in the funerary steles of Egypt and the magnificent battle scenes painted by Piero della Francesca in the Arezzo cycle, maintain the equanimity of all his figures, even in the most troubled and agitated contexts. It is a calm and a balance that denies all sentimental excess. Thus, even while the initial framework expresses the hatred and repulsion that are at the source of the piece, the act of painting, as the supreme comfort, also serves to recompose our state of mind. Treating each motif with the same benevolence reserved for still lifes and nudes, which caters to the aesthetic balance of colors and composition, Botero applies the same grace to dictators, victims, and bystanders. In the end, for Botero, painting is a "caress," capable of sublimating hate and rage with the tenderness of color and form: "When one paints, one must caress, one must make oneself useful through color […] through painting, hate is transformed into an act of love."

All dialogue, even the imagined one between Picasso and Botero, is a confrontation that sometimes veers into disagreement, insomuch as every artist is also a "critique" of those who precede him, as Botero repeats incessantly. It is useless to try to paint with preconceived notions or codes. When Botero tried to imitate the colors of Picasso — "this marvelous blue: the deep outer sea with a bare breath of white" — by searching for the same exact pigments, he inevitably exposed himself to failure. It remains to each artist, then, to find his own sources. Botero often insists that in art, personal style prevails; although they may deal with the same themes, every artist who thinks and has something to say will achieve very different stylistic results. This notion is present in each of the themes selected for this exposition, which Picasso as well as Botero confronted: from the portrait to the copies of other artists, from still life to nude, through circuses, festivals, bullfights, and scenes of violence.

In fact, from a stylistic and formal perspective, the proposals of the two artists reveal themselves very differently. Against Picasso's exuberance, Botero juxtaposes the equilibrium and equanimity of his round figures; compared to the fragmentation and multiplication of points of view in Picasso's work, Botero constructs a world that is solid and compact, polished and sublimated by the painting itself.

In theme after theme, the dialogue Botero has with Picasso also ends up encouraging the liberty and originality of the former with regard to the latter, these being, definitively, the most authentic and long-lasting heritage of all great artists for the generations that follow. Botero knows this well, having established a rich and dialectic confrontation with a great number of past artists throughout his life. Thus, even in his relationship with the works of Picasso, the dialogue is a "curious combination of admiration and critical judgment," which confirms the autonomy of the artist and the need to follow one's own path and invent one's own style.

Just as he had hoped since his days in Medellín at the end of the 1940s, Botero arrived in Paris a few years later. He continued his artistic journey on to many other cities that enriched his visual and cultural inheritance. Far from "being like Picasso," he instead "became Botero." While he nourished himself with similar ideas and comparable artistic ambitions, the "non-conformism" of his painting expresses itself in terms quite different from those that he had found at the age of 16 in the works of Picasso. For Botero, this consisted more of "turning away from conventions […] and frenetic experimentation (the conformism of our era) to look among the masters who founded the modern plastic sensibility, the formal and artisanal resources to undertake, for our days, a work that has the solidity, ambition, novelty, and permanence that they attained in theirs."

Cecilia Braschi is an art historian specializing in 20th-century Latin American and European art. She was the curator for the "Botero: A Dialogue With Picasso" exposition at the Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art in Aix-en-Provence, France, from November 24, 2017, to March 11, 2018.

References for this article are available at clas.berkeley.edu.

RIGHT: Fernando Botero, "Portrait of Picasso" (1998). Oil on canvas, 187x128 cm.
(Private collection. © Fernando Botero / Photo: Christian Moutarde.)

CENTRAL AMERICA

From Positivism to YouTube: Music and Nationalism

By Leonel Alvarado

Nations are made up of things we choose to remember and things we choose to forget. This idea still stands, even though the French philosopher Ernest Renan first expressed it in 1882. Choosing what to remember and what to forget about a nation's past is based on a selective perception of what that nation was in the past, what it is in the present, and what we want it to be in a future we are busy shaping. But who chooses? The choice always comes from above, from those with the power to imagine a future that will affect the lives of the majority.

My concern here is with the way in which nationhood is channeled through a discourse that is bound to be long-lived, despite being based on an anachronistic perception of what a nation should be. I am referring to national anthems, particularly to the national anthems of Central America. However, these observations also apply — with some distinctions — to most national anthems around the world.

National anthems are intriguing because they have an enormous impact on our idea of nationalism, even though they're anachronistic, full of clichés, and of little or no poetic merit. As in many other instances, such was the conclusion of the panel of judges tasked with selecting a new anthem for Ireland in the early 20th century. The award was 50 guineas (approximately $4,000 today), but according to the Nobel prize-winning poet W.B. Yeats, not a single entry was deserving of such amount. And so, "The Soldier's Song" still stands as the Irish national anthem.

Many countries have attempted to replace or make changes to their national anthems, and some have succeeded. In June 2016, the Canadian parliament decided to make a significant change to "O, Canada." The line "True patriotic love in all thy sons command" was replaced by "True patriotic love in all of us command" to include people of all genders. This change was not merely cosmetic, but reflected a change in policy and, above all, a renewed social inclusiveness.

Order and Progress

In Central America, which is my focus here, the road to selecting the current national anthems was tortuous.

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A military-style boys' band poses with their instruments, 1903.
(Photo from Wikimedia Commons.)

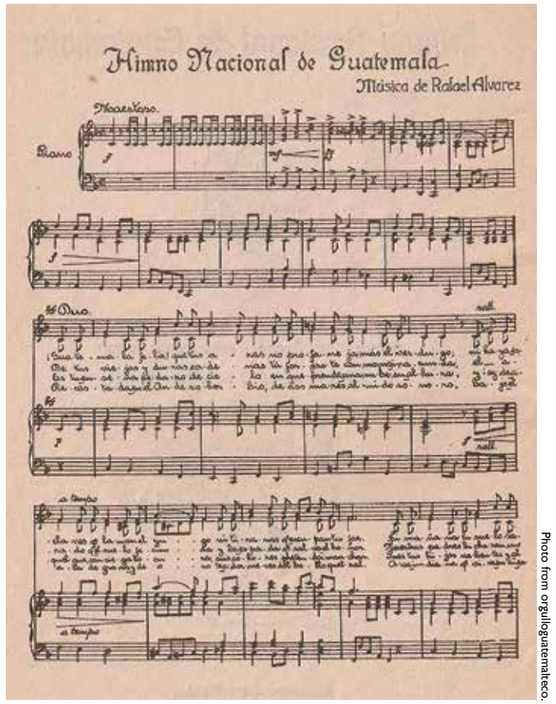

Photo from orgulloguatemalteco.

Sheet music for the Guatemalan national anthem, 1937.

During the 19th century, the anthems changed almost every time there was a new government, and these transformations spilled into the 20th century. For instance, in 1934, under the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico, the Guatemalan national anthem underwent a few significant changes. The line "Tinta en sangre tu hermosa bandera/ de mortaja al audaz servirá" (Drenched in blood your beautiful flag/will be the brave's final shroud) became "Libre al viento tu hermosa bandera/a vencer o a morir llamará" (Free to the wind your beautiful flag/will call to victory or death). In the second verse, "Nuestros padres… te arrancaron del potro sangriento" (Our fathers… rescued you from the bloody horse) was changed to "Nuestros padres…lograron sin choque sangriento…" (Our fathers… achieved in a bloodless battle…). The regime was interested in erasing all references to bloodshed and rebellion; the anti-colonial stance could potentially instill in people's mind the idea of a revolt against the regime.

But Ubico was not the only dictator to choose peace as a nationalistic trope. In Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza went even further — or more precisely, backwards — because he returned to the positivistic creed of Orden y Progreso (Order and Progress). Peace was imposed by decree so that prosperity could be achieved. In 1939, a contest was called to choose a new national anthem. The guidelines were clear: "hablar únicamente sobre la paz y el trabajo" (talk only about peace and work), avoiding any references to war or uprising at a time when the country transitioned from occupation by the United States to dictatorship. The winner of the contest, poet Salomón Ibarra Mayorga, opted for a religious hymn that would move away from the "bellicose" influence of "La Marseillaise," which had been the paradigm of many national anthems around the world.

The vast majority of national anthems from all over the world stems from two sources: "La Marseillaise" and "God Save The King." In other words, national anthems tend to be either military marches or religious hymns. In Latin America, national anthems written after independence from Spain — those of Chile, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela, for example — are military marches. In the case of Central America, the anthems of Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador are also clearly military marches, while those from Nicaragua and Costa Rica are religious hymns.

Panama poses an interesting case. The music of the national anthem is a military march, but the lyrics are aligned with the tenets of positivism: "Es preciso cubrir con un velo / del pasado el calvario y la cruz" (It is an imperative to cover with a veil / the suffering and the cross from the past). The ground is covered in flowers, the light of human fraternity illuminates the sky, and progress caresses the land. People should not dwell on the past, but pick up "la pica y la pala" (the hoe and the shovel) and work the land "sin más dilación" (without delay).

Forgetting the bloody past and stressing the importance of working for a better future had to do with a government policy of economic development. The country was ready for business. The national anthem of Costa Rica also stresses the importance of working the land, specifically the land around the Valle Central, which becomes the axis not only of development, but of nationhood. The emblematic figure of that development imagined by the elite is "un labriego sencillo" (a humble peasant) who lives in the Valle Central. The coast is excluded and with it, its African-descendent inhabitants. Costa Rica is, according to this narrative, a homogenous nation, without any racial obstacles — also denying the existence of any indigenous population — that could hinder progress and detract foreign investment. The national anthem declares, once again, that the country is ready for business.

Needless to say, the "humble peasant" is male. Like other minorities, women were excluded from the national discourse, as nations were masculine projects. When they appear, as in the national anthem of Honduras, it is in the image of the "india virgen" (virgin Indian girl) who is seduced by Columbus, the brave sailor who impregnates her. Both women and nature are objects of desire ready to be possessed. They give birth to new subjects and to the new prosperity at the core of positivism.

Positivism swept through Latin America, from the Mexican "Científicos" to the "Campaña del desierto" in Argentina. Land was to be cleared, obstacles (meaning the indigenous population) were to be removed (i.e., exterminated, like the Quilmes in Argentina). The insidious creed of positivism filtered through patriotic stanzas that children learned in school and, not surprisingly, still lingers; such is the case of Brazil's national motto, "Ordem e Progresso" (Order and Progress), adopted in 1889 at the height of Auguste Comte's influence in the region and inscribed on the Brazilian flag.

Through order and progress, positivism sought to achieve happiness, the common good for the majority. Like peace, happiness became a mandate. Most national anthems from Central America, except those from Honduras and Belize, adhere to the notions that the "Pursuit of Happiness" is the ultimate goal and that the state should ensure the well-being of its citizens. Happiness was linked intrinsically to prosperity. The progress of the nation ensured individual progress and vice-versa. How could this objective be achieved? By a strong government determined to eliminate any obstacle that stood in the way of progress. Imposing happiness as a decree was also a way to "cubrir con un velo" (cover with a veil) any social issues from the past or the present as well as any form of dissent.

Reinterpreting the Nation

Nineteenth-century mentality, with feudalism at its roots, is undisguised in these national anthems, but no longer understood by the majority. A call to defend the nation from a colonial invader or a call to work the land with hoe and shovel may not make much sense now. But these discourses have found new arenas and new meanings over time, be it a street protest or, especially, a football match, in which the players become soldiers who defend their nation's honor.

The 2009 coup d'état in Honduras gave new meaning to the national anthem. While the de facto government hurried to "legitimize" its power in congress, the national team played a football World Cup qualifying match in >>

Protests following the 2009 coup in Honduras.

Photo by Yamil Gonzales.

North Carolina. The national anthem was performed at both events, practically at the same time. Patriotism, or an interpretation of it, was at play in both cases. Football became another distraction, particularly considering the importance of the match. Thus, nationalism was performed using a 19th-century rhetoric that was employed with different purposes.

Another interpretation of the Honduran anthem appeared when people took to the streets, and soon after, singer Karla Lara recorded a new version replacing the military march with the style of revolutionary Cuba's Nueva Trova. In this version of the national anthem, the colonial oppressor is replaced by the *golpistas* who had just seized power by force. It was another way to perform patriotism, selecting what people should remember, in this case, the authoritarian regime the country was plunging into.

It is fascinating to see how a patriotic song based on 19th-century paradigms can find ways to never go out of fashion. At the core is the role played by the national pedagogical discourse, which instills in children's minds an idea of nation that, subconsciously, becomes an integral part of their nationalism. It does not matter that the lyrics are old fashioned or full of clichés, what's important is their spirit.

Nationalism is based on the idea that individuals belong to a nation that is unique or even better than the rest. An entrenched sense of exclusivity is a tenet of nationalism. National anthems are not the exception. It is fairly common to hear people say that their national anthem is the best or the most beautiful in the world. In Central America, people will say that their national anthem is second best only to "La Marseillaise." This assertion is not based on any aesthetic consideration, but on a claim to exclusivity. By the same token, some countries will have the best football team, the best beaches, the best food, and so on. Making these claims is essential to the performance of patriotism.

YouTubeing the Nation

In recent times, nationalism has undergone a rapid process of digitization. Patriotism is now performed online, opening a new arena that turns anonymous individuals into political subjects. This phenomenon has had a significant impact on the role played by national anthems as vehicles to redefine both national and cultural

National pride is at stake when a Panamanian player defends against Ecuador.

Photo by César Muñoz/Andes.

Photo by Shawn Millin.

Historic architecture becomes another facet of national pride, as in this town square in Granada, Nicaragua.

identity, particularly for people living away from their countries of origin.

National anthems and immigration feed one another's need to find a new sense of belonging to a nation that was left behind. Nations are YouTubed through video and written postings of the national anthem. Videos are based, like the anthems themselves, on a selective representation of what a country is and what it offers. Individuals are interested in showcasing three main elements: natural beauty, the colonial past (and the indigenous past, in a few cases, but mainly as folklore), and the country's modern constructions.

Architecture plays an important role, highlighting both the Spanish heritage and a new take on modernization. This aspect is interesting because during the last decades of the 19th century, modernization was key to turning the country away from the colonial past; it was a capitalist stance against the feudal past. New avenues, boulevards, government buildings, theatres, and so on appeared, breaking away from the closed mentality of the *hacienda*. In other words, the colonial patio was opened to make way for broad avenues that would carry the country into modernity. The prevailing style was neoclassicism, which rested upon columns that were as solid as the image of the nation being portrayed. YouTube videos put modernity — with its icons of modern bridges and glass buildings — and colonial architecture at the same level of nationalistic pride. National anthems provide background music, transforming image and music into symbols of nationalism.

The YouTube videos see natural beauty with the same sense of pride, adding the marketing aspect of tourism: here is what the country offers; here is what is waiting for you on your holiday. Nature is again useful; it is viewed from a utilitarian perspective, but the hoe and the shovel have been replaced by suntan lotion and tropical drinks. National anthems celebrate nature's beauty but view it mainly as a natural resource, the place from which development will begin to take shape. The national anthem of Belize exemplifies this duality of both beauty and usefulness: "Nature has blessed thee with wealth untold, / O'er mountains and valleys where prairies roll." In a third role played by nature, the countryside becomes a battlefield. Men are called to work the land and to fight to defend it to the point of giving their lives for it: "Arise! ye sons of the Baymen's clan, / Put on your armor, clear the land!"

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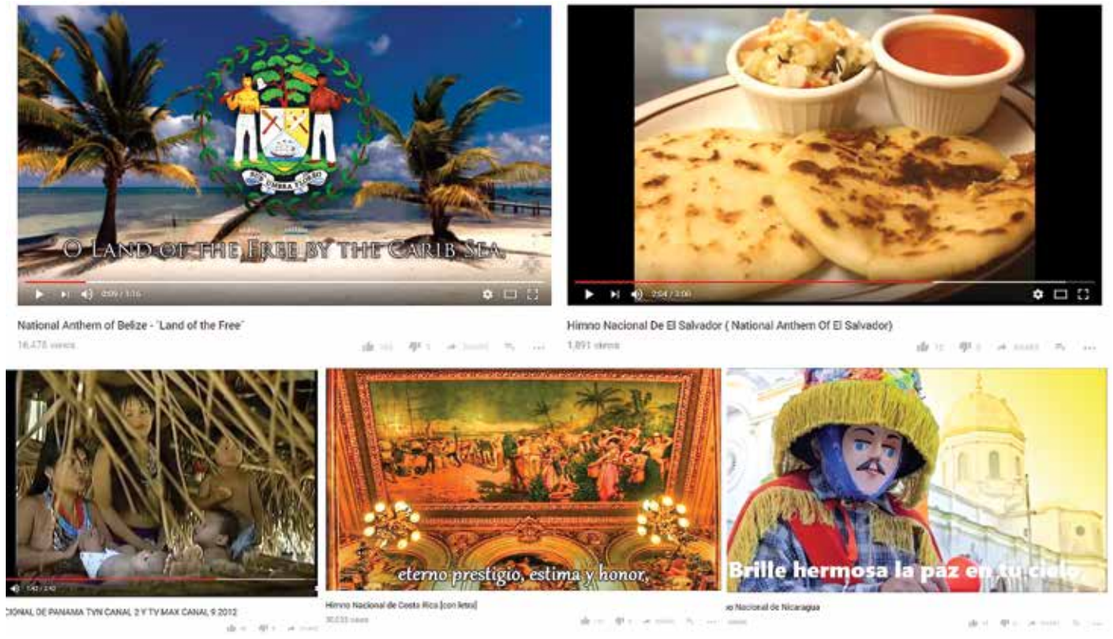


Patriotic symbols serve as backdrops to national anthems on YouTube.

The videos themselves become battlefields. Individuals defend their anthems — and through them, their nations — with pride. The comments that follow each video make use of a simplified verbal arsenal characterized by obscenities, grammatical errors, and spelling mistakes. The verbal exchanges can easily end up in racial insults. Capital letters and exclamation marks are used to convey pride or anger. In other words, the linguistic tools are extremely limited. That is not a factor that prevents the exchange from continuing. Once again, what is important is the sense of patriotism that towers above the visual tools individuals have at their disposal.

Like nationalism itself, the videos are based on a selective representation of what the nation is and what the country offers, according to specific individuals. Thus, these videos repeat a 19th-century paradigm. Yet, this time, the selection is not made by the social, economic, and political elite in government, but by anonymous individuals. Paradoxically, the democratization of the medium does not prevent the re-enactment of the same nationalistic tropes.

One element seldom missing from this patriotic montage is food. Nicaraguan or Costa Rican *gallo pinto* (rice and beans), Panamanian *chicheme* (a sweet drink made with corn and milk), and Salvadorian or Honduran *pupusas* (stuffed corn tortillas) become emblems of cultural identity and national pride. Like architecture or beaches, these dishes act as national synecdoches. A country's pride and uniqueness rest upon them. All these elements are as exclusive as the national anthem and the countries themselves.

The country that was left behind is reassembled through a selection of specific elements that speak both to the individual who organizes them and to the cyber community that comes together around each video. It is a nationalistic reconstruction based on nostalgia, and it rests upon what Michael Billig calls "banal nationalism," which puts gallo pinto and pupusas at the same level as colonial architecture and beaches. All of them become as essential as the emblems upon which each nation was founded: the flag, the coat of arms, etc.

In the realm of cyberspace, the anthems and the individuals who perform them transcend the geographic and discursive limits of the nation as well as the traditional places of performance, such as a civic ceremony, a schoolyard, or a football stadium. The renderings of the anthems have undergone an endless process of transformation, to the point of becoming global entities, rather than just local and selective representations of the homeland, which is the main role they were meant to play at the time of composition. By helping immigrants reconceptualize their belonging to their countries of origin, national anthems are transnational entities that bring together issues of music, nationalism, immigration, and cultural and virtual identities in a globalized world.

Even though they were composed towards the end of the 19th century as part of the foundational discourses that appeared as most Latin American nations were coming to terms with their own identities, the virtual renderings of the national anthems contribute to an understanding of the way in which immigrants perceive their relationship with the countries they left behind, creating a long-distance nationalism rooted in a nostalgic representation of the homeland. Videos posted on YouTube and the discussions they generate reveal a great deal about the way in which immigrants re-enact their patriotic and civic identities through transnational digital networks.

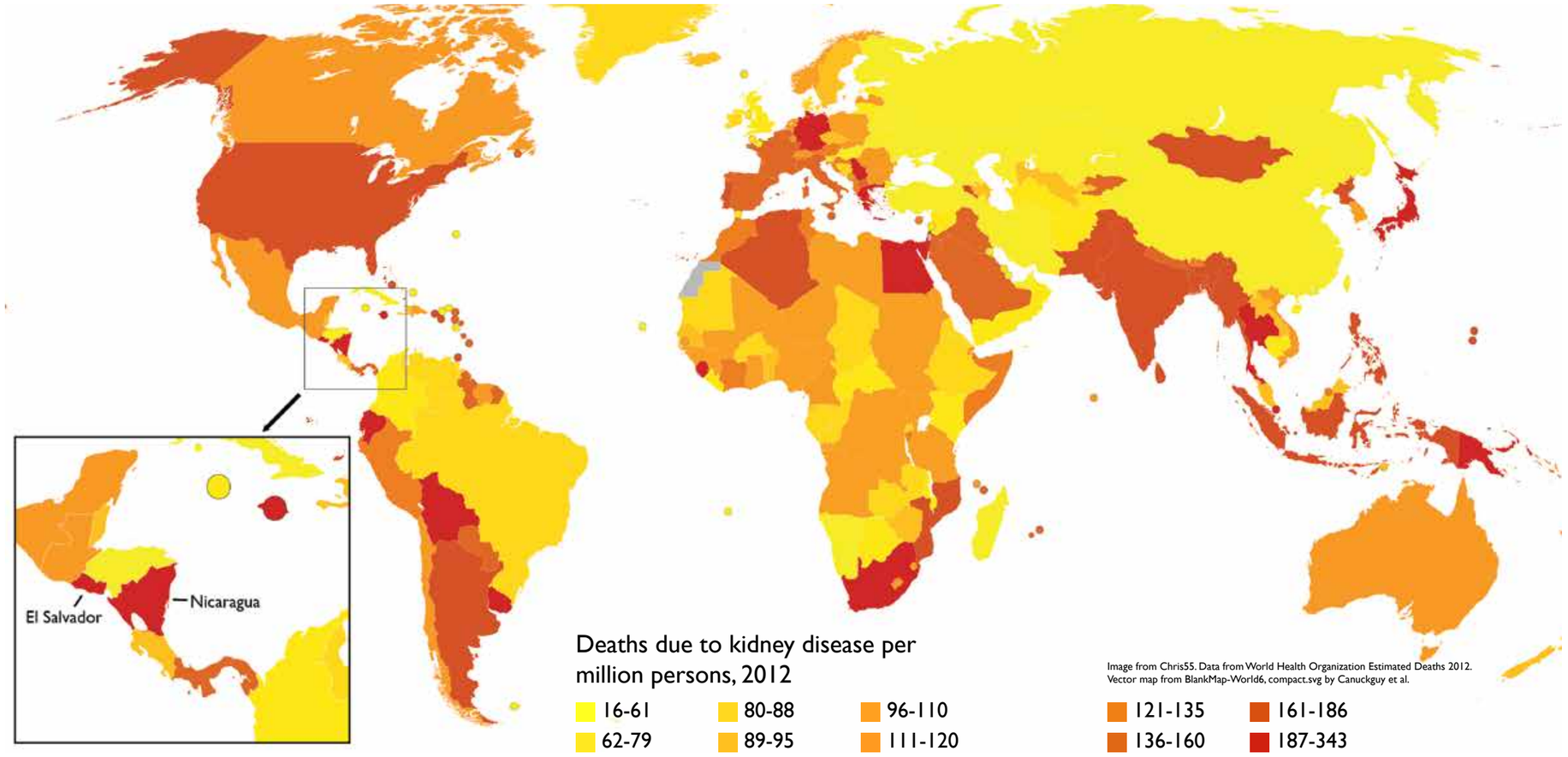
Returning to Renan's definition, videos are based on a selection of things someone chooses to remember and things that are best to forget. None of the videos, for instance, plays the national anthem with images of misery, violence, or militarism in the background. This approach is no different from that of Ubico or Somoza. To paraphrase the Panamanian anthem, it is imperative to put a veil over things that would put the country to shame. Like the expression of nationalism at a football match or during a street demonstration, this new online identity of the national anthem repeats nationalistic paradigms of the 19th century, thus making it evident that these very dated and poorly written lyrics still hold sway.

Nationalism is performed in acts of reckless pride, sentimentality, or patriotic nostalgia that re-enact a mythical and historical narrative transmitted by the national pedagogical discourse. National anthems are an ideological invention that constructs collective memory. Their sublime and selective representation of national history promotes good citizenship, individual sacrifice, and national pride. Despite being epic and romantic discourses whose bucolic and warlike undertones could be considered anachronistic, national anthems turn people into a unified political subject. The mediums used to express patriotism and nationalism have changed over time, but the spirit of the discourse — handed down from regimes that could have never imagined the future of the nations they sought to create — prevails.

Leonel Alvarado is a Honduran poet. He directs the Spanish Program at Massey University of New Zealand and spoke for CLAS on April 4, 2017.

A children's marching band in Costa Rica.

Photo by MadriCR.



El Salvador and Nicaragua (see inset) have among the world's highest rates of death from kidney disease.

RESEARCH

Silent Massacre: The Politics of Chronic Kidney Disease

By Carlos Martinez

In Chichigalpa, Nicaragua, everyone knows their creatinine level. Or at least it seems that way. Creatinine blood tests are used to measure the state of a patient's kidneys. Too much creatinine in the blood — anything above 2.0 milligrams per deciliter — is an indication that the kidneys are seriously impaired. When I began meeting people in Chichigalpa for my research in the summer of 2017, they often introduced themselves to me with their creatinine level — without any solicitation on my part — as if it were their last name.

Chichigalpa is a small town in western Nicaragua, known primarily for its mammoth sugarcane production and for being the home of the Flor de Caña rum distillery, one of the country's most iconic exports. But, in recent years, Chichigalpa has also gained notoriety for being ground zero of one of Central America's largest, deadliest, and most mysterious epidemics: chronic kidney disease (CKD).

Over the past two decades, CKD has claimed thousands of lives, primarily among young men living on the Pacific coasts of El Salvador and Nicaragua. It is estimated that since 2000, the disease has killed more than 20,000 people in these two Central American countries alone. Along with violence, kidney failure is one of the top causes of death for young men in El Salvador. Indeed, the epidemic so heavily impacted a specific area in Chichigalpa — Guanacastal Sur — that this neighborhood was dubbed "La Isla de Viudas" (The Island of Widows), after many of the community's young men died.

Although it has received greater attention from epidemiologists in recent years, the etiology of the disease continues to elude researchers. This peculiar outbreak of kidney disease has been so extensive in Central America that some epidemiologists created a new name for it: Mesoamerican nephropathy. But other researchers — like Dr. Ramón García-Trabanino, a nephrologist based in the capital of El Salvador — simply call it a "silent massacre."

García-Trabanino put the CKD epidemic on the map by publishing some of the first journal articles on the phenomenon. While working in San Salvador's Rosales National Hospital in the late 1990s, he unexpectedly began seeing cases of young men — mostly residents from coastal towns — with late-stage kidney disease. These young men, he recounted, often died within days or weeks of their first visit to the hospital. Out of sheer necessity — and a healthy dose of curiosity — García-Trabanino began to research this odd influx of CKD patients. After nearly two decades studying the disease, García-Trabanino seems to have more questions than answers.

Fortunately, García-Trabanino is no longer the only person researching the epidemic. Countless articles on studies using multiple methods and reaching various conclusions have now been published on CKD in Central America. As research has progressed, several theories have emerged on the cause of the disease. For his part, García-Trabanino proudly states that he is more committed than ever to scientific doubt, rather than certainty.

Yet this uncertainty shouldn't be mistaken for indifference. García-Trabanino speaks passionately about the need for a more comprehensive response to an epidemic that has remained silent partly due to the nature of the disease and partly because it impacts poor rural communities that tend to be neglected by the medical system. While García-Trabanino doubts that any single cause will emerge as the primary culprit for CKD, there does appear to be a growing consensus on some common factors among its victims.

Agricultural work, particularly in the sugarcane industry, is one of those key factors. But what about this work could possibly be leading to kidney disease? Studies by Dr. Carlos Orantes, a nephrologist and researcher with El Salvador's Instituto Nacional de Salud (National Institute of Health), pointed to pesticides as a possible factor. In response to this research, El Salvador's legislature approved a decree prohibiting the sale of 53 agrochemicals in 2013.

However, some researchers, including García-Trabanino, remain doubtful about the role of pesticides, arguing that studies conducted by Orantes's team never actually showed a statistically significant connection between exposure to pesticides and CKD prevalence. Pesticides, some researchers argue, were simply a politically expedient culprit used by the current left-wing Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación (FMLN,

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Photo by Carlos Martinez.

The narrow bridge to Guanacastal Sur, the "Island of Widows."

Farabundo Martí Liberation Front) government to challenge the power of Alfredo Cristiani, the former president of El Salvador from the right-wing Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA, National Republican Alliance) party and owner of a subsidiary of the agricultural biotechnology giant Monsanto.

While some epidemiologists — including Sandra Peraza with the Programa de Trajabo y Salud en América Central (Program on Work and Health in Central America) at the Universidad de El Salvador — applaud the banning of pesticides, they don't believe that this initiative will put an end to the CKD epidemic.

Peraza and García-Trabanino both argue that stronger links have been made between CKD and climate. Agricultural workers in the coastal lowland areas of El Salvador, where the climate is hotter and more humid, have a higher prevalence of CKD than their counterparts in higher-altitude inland areas. Thus, heat stress and dehydration from toiling in intense heat during long work days has emerged as another popular theory for the epidemic's cause. Peraza hopes that this research can be used to advocate with El Salvador's Ministry of Labor for stronger oversight of occupational health standards, such as the provision of rest breaks and water.

García-Trabanino is also quick to point to research indicating that agricultural workers are not the only ones being diagnosed with CKD: some of the men suffering from CKD work in the fishing industry or as truck drivers. While incidence of the disease continues to be much higher among men, he says that more women are also being diagnosed. Moreover, nephropathy epidemics among young men are beginning to be studied in other parts of the world, such as Sri Lanka and Egypt. García-Trabanino explains that these epidemics are all being registered in locations somewhere between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer.

Such research raises the alarming possibility that a young person does not necessarily need to work in a highly strenuous job to acquire CKD if they live in areas with extreme heat. What might this hypothesis imply as these areas and other parts of the world grow hotter with climate change? Could agricultural workers in Central America simply be "climate canaries," the first to be impacted by conditions that will spread?

For the young men who are living and dying with CKD in Chichigalpa, there is only one culprit: the Ingenio San Antonio (ISA), Nicaragua's largest sugarcane refinery. This accusation makes sense, since Chichigalpa has essentially been a factory town for more than a century. For the most part, sugarcane production provides the only jobs. All of the men who have CKD have worked at the sugar mill, and they all place the blame squarely on the company. Most of the men I spoke with tend to believe that pesticides used by ISA had a role to play.

Grupo Pellas, the Nicaraguan conglomerate that owns the refinery, has consistently denied any responsibility for the disease. That is, until recently.

After years of promoting research and generating news about the CKD epidemic, La Isla Network (LIN), an international non-governmental public health organization, was finally able to convince the company to collaborate with them in implementing an occupational health protocol that they believe will curb the spread of the disease. The LIN protocol, dubbed the Worker Health and Efficiency (WE) Program, emphasizes that workers must use heat-appropriate clothing and have access to water, rest, and shade. Former rivals Grupo Pellas and LIN will now work together to pilot the program for the next two years.

But both Grupo Pellas and the Nicaraguan government have yet to take full responsibility for the plight of the sugar refinery's former employees who are still struggling with kidney disease. One former employee, Nelson, explained to me that if he goes to receive dialysis, he won't be able to feed his two children. While the dialysis is covered by the social security from Nelson's years of working at ISA, he must travel to Managua to receive the treatment, and the cost of the trip is not covered.

Former employees have founded a number of organizations to demand a response from the company and the government. But they say that their protests have been suppressed by the police or ignored by the media and that some of the organizations have been co-opted by the company. Indeed, when former workers occupied the entrance to the sugar mill in a protest in 2014, two men were shot by the police — one was killed, and the other was left paralyzed.

Bloodshed in the desire to get their blood cleaned. In Chichigalpa, blood and creatinine mean everything. While the mystery of CKD continues unresolved, life for these sugarcane workers goes on, and Chichigalpa recently opened its second cemetery.

Carlos Martinez is a Ph.D. student in the joint program in Medical Anthropology at UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco. He was the recipient of a Tinker Foundation Fellowship from CLAS in the summer of 2017.

This man worked at the Ingenio San Antonio sugarcane refinery in Chichigalpa and now suffers from late-stage chronic kidney disease.

Photo by Carlos Martinez.

Photo by Jim Block.

Discussing the challenges facing the United States and Mexico at the Futures Forum.

Collaborating for Our Common Future

(continued from page 17)

The bus companies even build it into their procedures. In this case, however, dozens of people ended up dead, including some soccer players from an unrelated group of students whose bus was inadvertently targeted that day. "The response was brutally disproportionate," noted Cavallaro, "the question is why."

Several specific aspects of the government's story did not withstand scrutiny, according to Cavallaro. To account for the disappearance of the bodies, the official narrative posited incineration at a garbage dump and then disposal in a nearby river. However, Cavallaro explained, the intensity of such a blaze would have required 60 hours of fire with flames 20 feet high and smoke up to 1,000 feet high. No evidence of such a tremendous fire in that area on those days has been offered, despite satellite records. On October 28, 2014, the day before human remains were "found" on the Río San Juan, there is film of federal investigator Tomás Zerón, a close associate of the president of Mexico, on the same river with a black garbage bag like the one later "discovered" as supporting evidence to the official story. Moreover, the "investigation of the investigation" by the internal affairs division of Mexico's federal investigators was never entered into the record, and the investigator was "summarily dismissed."

The GIEI discovered that one of the buses that was commandeered by the students did not appear in the official investigation: the so-called "fifth bus." Noting that "local police, state police, federal police, and military were involved and around the site" on that evening, Cavallaro continued, "one and a half hours were blocked out of the recordings of their radio traffic." Given the many problems with the official investigation and narrative, tensions with the GIEI were all but guaranteed. After the expert group issued two reports, the Mexican government withdrew the GIEI's invitation, "and they left," said Cavallaro.

Cavallaro proceeded to offer his views on a plausible theory of the case. The "fifth bus," he proposed, "might have been a bus running heroin between Iguala and Chicago." The students "took the wrong bus," he continued. The cargo on this bus would have been worth millions of dollars, suggested Cavallaro, and its seizure may have led "the traffickers to call all their contacts in the local police, several municipalities, in the state police, in the federal police, and … in the military," with a message along the lines of "no buses with young men leave Iguala tonight." This theory would also explain why a bus carrying a soccer team, not the students from Ayotzinapa, was also targeted in the crackdown and shot at.

"If that's what happened," continued Cavallaro, drawing out the implications for the key institutions in Mexico, "drug traffickers … have infiltrated every level of government … able to shut down buses leaving from Iguala, kill 40-odd people, but they're also able … to have an investigation done that reaches a conclusion that is physically impossible … and have that version sold at the highest level" — all the way to the president — "and have that version defended over and over for two-plus years." Indeed, after the GIEI left Mexico, it was discovered that the Mexican government had eavesdropped on and monitored the group, despite its diplomatic immunity. According to Cavallaro, the identity of the agency or group within the Mexican state that conducted the prohibited activities remains uncertain.

Finally, Cavallaro addressed the broader inferences about the human rights situation in Mexico that the Ayotzinapa disappearances bring into focus. He talked about the group Los Otros de Iguala (The Others From Iguala), a civil society organization of more than 400 people, including family members seeking justice for the many other victims of violence in and around the city. In an area that Cavallaro noted was not very heavily populated, such a large total — including some in mass graves — speaks to a profound human rights crisis. Cavallaro recalled the mother of one of the missing "Others" bitterly exclaiming, "I hate to say this, it's painful, but thank God for the disappearance of the 43, because now people know about us and about all the other people who are disappeared in our region, and maybe there will be some justice." However, Cavallaro argued, the state response showed that the government cares more about public relations and damage control than acknowledging and responding substantively to this human rights crisis, one Cavallaro believes is only likely to get worse with time.

Stephanie Leutert, Director of the Mexico Security Initiative at the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at UT Austin, addressed another dimension of the intertwined security and human rights crises in Mexico. Specifically, she spoke to the surge in "transit migration" from Central America through Mexico with the intent of entering the United States. In 2014–2016,

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A woman holds a photo of her husband, one of "Los Otros de Iguala," the other disappeared whose cases have gained new attention.

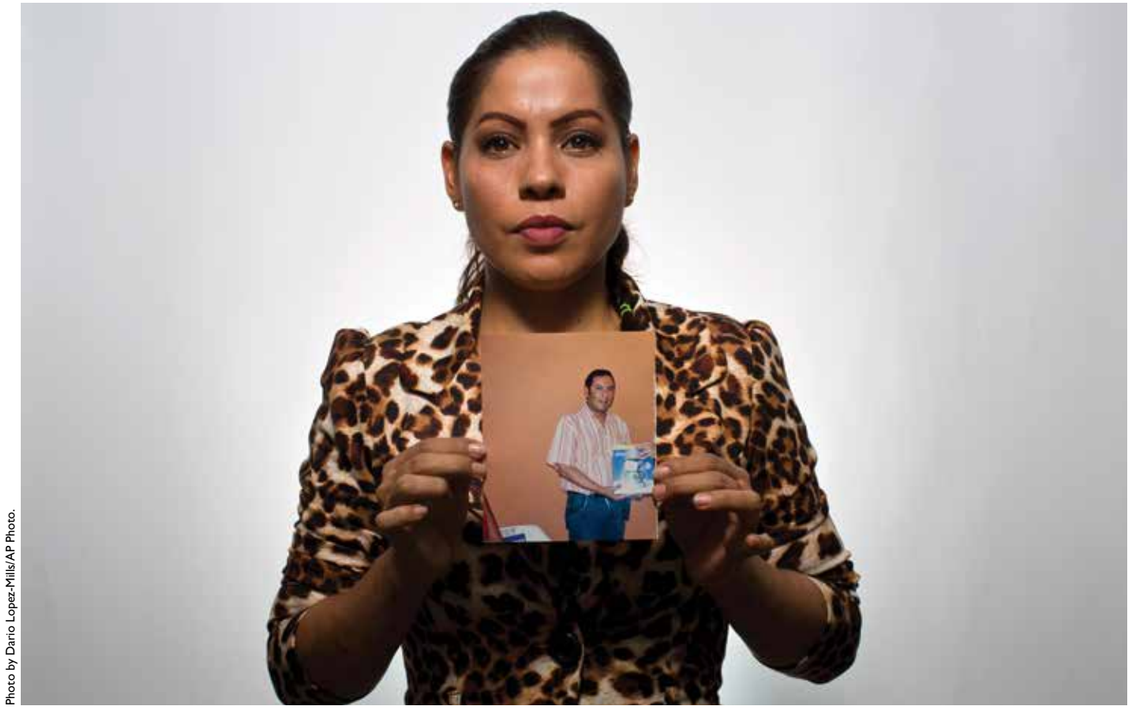

Photo by Dario Lopez-Mills/AP Photo.

Leutert noted, people from the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, were transiting through Mexico at a rate of 400,000 people per year. This figure represents more than 1 percent of the population per year from a region that numbers roughly 30 million people. Their reasons for migration are many and complex, including climate change, economic issues, family reunification, and more recently, security issues. In fact, a recent demographic shift has seen more unaccompanied minors and family units, as well as greater numbers of asylum applicants and those citing security concerns. Leutert reported data that asylum applications in Mexico have increased from 800 in 2013 to more than 8,000 in 2016, with a projection for more than 20,000 in 2017, a rate of increase mirrored on a larger scale in the United States.

In interviews with Central American women seeking asylum in the United States — as part of the "credible fear" process mandated by U.S. asylum law — a broad range of motivations for migration were articulated, even among those seeking asylum; these motivations also varied from country to country. For example, Leutert noted that based on those 167 interviews, 90 percent of women from El Salvador reported "gang-related" fears for their security, compared to 55 percent of those from Honduras and 45 percent of those from Guatemala. For these Honduran and Guatemalan women, the most commonly cited reason for seeking asylum was an abusive partner, with gang-related reasons appearing second and third on the list of reasons given, respectively. These factors and complexities are generally neglected in both analysis and policymaking.

Once the decision has been made to migrate, Leutert continued, migrants enter an "extremely well-organized" yet "incredibly decentralized" people-smuggling system. The smuggling networks need connections with authorities to operate, driving the well-organized nature of the groups even as the networks are not very large. "The costs are very high," she explained, with $7,000 to $10,000 being a current norm. The methods vary greatly for the smuggling transit itself, but "the common factor" Leutert summarized, is "you have to pay someone at some point, or multiple people." That could take the form, she explained, of either payment at checkpoints or to the gangs that control the railroad lines. The most universal cost is collected to cross the U.S.–Mexico border, a transaction Leutert estimated at $400 dollars per crossing in Nogales, Arizona. This amount, if multiplied by the number of apprehensions at the border last year, implies $164 million in "fees" to "la Mafia," two organized crime groups that mainly control border crossing. Leutert observed that when these funds are combined with income from kidnapping and other illegal activities, "these numbers are massive."

Finally, Leutert spoke to solutions that might allow the U.S. and Mexico to "work together to move forward." She pointed to the centrality of addressing "the root causes" and "structural issues" that drive migration. Leutert recalled a migrant telling her, "if all governments did their jobs, you wouldn't see this migration." This observation stands in marked contrast to policy today and over the past decade, which has focused on "stopping migrants in transit" without addressing these underlying dynamics.

However, Leutert also emphasized the need for more short- and medium-term solutions to reduce some of the harms associated with mass migration. "In the short term," she insisted, "the efforts have to be on protection." This undertaking would mean "finding, prosecuting, and getting convictions for the people who are the worst offenders, the people who are kidnapping and torturing and disappearing migrants," she continued, explaining that over the past decade, as many as 70,000 migrants have disappeared attempting to cross through Mexico. She also spoke about the "need to improve detention centers" and "immigration infrastructure" to "improve the whole migration experience" in the short term. On a medium-term scale, Leutert addressed regional integration, burden, and information sharing to address the crisis.

Photo by Miller Gruppe.

A house in El Salvador is marked by the slogan: "In this house we want a life free from violence against women."

In the longer term, Leutert suggested, it is realistic to consider building more "sustainable economic bases" that would address some of the most pressing structural motivations to migrate. She likewise advocated for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States, although she acknowledged that this was also not a short-term prospect, given current dynamics in U.S. politics.

During the discussion that followed the presentations, Leutert expanded on some of the empirical trends of violence in Mexico. She cited homicide data showing that 28 of 31 Mexican states saw increases from 2016 to 2017 and that where murders had decreased, it was by 5 percent or less. Violence "is everywhere now," she concluded. Raphael Fernández de Castro noted violence began climbing dramatically in Mexico in 2008–2009 and recently began rising again after plateauing for the preceding three years. He suggested a multi-causal explanation that went beyond narcotics trafficking to issues of mass urbanization, inequality, and lack of state capacity.

As a way of addressing "how to deal with the structural problems" brought out in the previous presentations, Maria Echaveste framed her own comments and reflections around the line of "if the governments actually did what they were supposed to do." Specifically, she argued, "we need to take a closer look at … the weakness of the institutions" as well as "the weakness of civil society." These ought to be "the fundamental building blocks of holding your government accountable, your corporations accountable." The weakness of these institutions is evidenced by "the levels of corruption" at local, state, and federal levels, as well as "inequality and concentration of wealth," which itself "contributes to that weakness of the institutions," she added.

In considering potential solutions, Echaveste reflected on historical instances of large-scale U.S. government intervention in foreign countries that helped stabilize situations and contributed to building strong institutions. She mentioned post-World War II developments in Germany and Japan and in South Korea after the war in that country. Echaveste acknowledged, however, that "Unfortunately, given U.S. history, especially in Latin America, I can't imagine a situation in which a country would really want the United States, particularly at this point … to be a true partner in trying to rebuild the institutions." Echaveste specifically pointed to the Cold War intervention of the United States in Central America and U.S.–Mexican history as negatively effecting attitudes towards further U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, Echaveste continued, "I would argue that notwithstanding that checkered and — in fact — difficult history, the U.S. does not have the luxury of abstaining."

In that vein, Echaveste discussed the more recent history of "the success the U.S. had in Colombia" in the form of the security cooperation agreement between the U.S. and Colombian governments called Plan Colombia. According to Echaveste, that policy concentrated heavily on "investments in hardware, in military, in strengthening the police force in Colombia." Still, "there were resources both in Plan Colombia," as well as in the more recent Plan Merida security cooperation agreement between the U.S. and Mexican governments, Echaveste explained, "for modernizing, for institution building." However, "it gets very little attention and it gets very little support within the U.S. government at times because the results take so long to see." While "it's so much easier to see a tank," Echaveste insisted that "strong institutions" are "absolutely essential … to create the conditions in which a society can function so that its people don't move."

In the discussion following Echaveste's presentation, James Cavallaro brought up concerns with Plan Colombia

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as a model for U.S. intervention in Mexico, noting the well-documented human rights violations associated with some of the military and police actions under its aegis. One example of the "massive abuses" he cited was the "false positives" scandal in Colombia. In that scheme, Cavallaro recalled, 3,000 poor or mentally impaired civilians were lured by the military and murdered, their bodies presented as guerrilla fighters to inflate enemy body counts. While Echaveste conceded that "there is plenty to criticize about Plan Colombia," for many Colombians there had been "a change for the better."

Another perspective on U.S. involvement in the deteriorating security trends in Mexico was provided by Amalia García, Secretary of Labor of Mexico City and a leading figure in the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD, Party for the Democratic Revolution). She spoke to the region's structural links that connect the U.S. and Mexico with respect to the issues of violence and insecurity. One example she gave was the U.S. weapons industry, the point of origin for nearly 90 percent of the weapons used in crimes in Mexico and Central America. García expounded upon the large and growing economic interest this type of border-crossing trade represents "in one of the most violent regions in the world." Just as violence is chronic in Mexico, "Honduras and El Salvador have the highest number of young people killed with a weapon."

A second issue linking the regional political economy of violence, García continued, is the massive U.S. market for illegal drugs, the final destination for nearly the entire trade. She noted that while many U.S. states were relaxing penalties and decriminalizing and legalizing marijuana and other drugs, "millions are still suffering" from the effects of this trade, especially insecurity, in Mexico and the region as a whole.

García also addressed a final issue: the wages and development differential between the United States and Mexico. She argued that most migration from Mexico to the United States continues to be driven by severe inequality in Mexico and the enormous difference in wage rates, a differential built into the structure of the current economic and trade relationship between the two countries.

Gordon Hanson next spoke to the economic theory behind potential solutions to the current dysfunctional migration system that would address migrant safety, economic realities, and the immense negative externalities of illegal migrant smuggling discussed in the session. He urged people to "think about some fanciful alternatives to our current immigration policy," which he reiterated "has been very good for the smuggling business." Hanson

Amalia García and Chris Edley discuss wages, development, and migration at the Forum.

Photo by Jim Block.

Photo by Perla Nation.

At the Forum, Maria Echaveste advocates policies for strengthening Mexico's institutions to enhance security.

explained that the $7,000 to $10,000 cost migrants pay to reach the United States owes in large part to "the way in which we've militarized the border since 2000 … spending on the order of $30 billion a year on border- and immigration-related enforcement in the United States." Granting that low-income immigrants bring some fiscal burden — mainly in the form of schooling and health care for their children — he supposed $8,000 per year in such initial costs for a family of four, based on the high-end estimate of a recent National Academy panel. Comparing that cost with the smuggling fee, he imagined the possibility of the U.S. government charging a legally migrating family of four that $8,000 instead. Such a policy would "drive the smugglers out of business," while it might also "neutralize one source of political opposition to immigration," he argued. Despite its political unfeasibility, the point of such an economic thought experiment is the realization that "what we are doing is creating a massive loss for ourselves, and there is no reason to do so," Hanson concluded.

C.R. Hibbs, a donor and foundation consultant and an expert on Mexican civil society and development, offered a critical view of the state of civil society and governance institutions in Mexico. She described a Mexico with "restricted movement" and "issues around territorial control" because of violence and increasing levels of corruption in the private sector and the judiciary. "This issue of institutions being so incredibly weak," she explained, drives the crucial importance of personal relationships, which in turn drives rampant corruption. "The civil society organizations that over the last decade have been at the forefront of… fighting corruption," she continued, "are really also under siege" from state surveillance, interference, and lack of funding. "We're seeing perfect storms in many places," Hibbs concluded. "And the dimension… is much bigger than we're acknowledging or wrapping our heads around."

Chris Edley noted that such institution-building efforts had been a standard part of aid and development programs for decades, in Mexico as elsewhere. Therefore, he suggested, the reasons for the failures of previous efforts needed to be closely studied. Steve Silberstein offered a suggestion "as to why it's been more difficult to build these institutions," which he attributed in part to the "background of widening" inequalities. This trend of growing differentials, both within and between countries, drives both crime and corruption, he noted, and needs to be addressed by policy in its own right.

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Photo by Ginette Riquelme.

An employee of Mexico City's Department of Labor takes information to help a recently returned deportee find a job.

Finally, Amalia García and Harley Shaiken closed the session reflecting on two programs that offer ideas about pathways that might address the deeper structural issues and social dynamics under discussion. García looked at the Mexico City public policy geared towards migrants called "diversity and cultural recognition." Under this law, non-Mexican migrants are considered "guests." For example, three times a week 135 deported migrants are flown from the U.S. to Mexico City. While they take off in handcuffs and leg chains, they are released before landing and are received at the airport by city workers offering aid. They are given six months of unemployment insurance, training, certification, and job-search assistance. This approach is a matter of both dignity as well as security, since having access to a job and basic security make crime a considerably less attractive alternative.

Harley Shaiken addressed programs in Medellín, Colombia, that directly spoke to the issues of education and jobs. Shaiken noted that at its peak, the city "had the astronomical murder rate of 370 per 100,000." Under the leadership of then-Mayor Sergio Fajardo, the city administration concentrated on three things: "education, building civil society, and jobs." In part, these social programs helped lower the murder rate to fewer than 60 per 100,000. Like the program García discussed, the approach in Colombia can "prevent young people from being sucked into criminal activity" and violence by investing in civil society and public works infrastructure at the neighborhood level. This type of investment might address the most important underlying causes of violence and migration in the region.

On the Table: NAFTA, Wages, and Development

Harley Shaiken opened the concluding session by framing the discussion of NAFTA within the context of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. NAFTA was "a critical issue" in the election, he noted, and "the decision of the Trump administration to re-open it in the current context has created a lot of controversy."

Gordon Hanson began by summarizing the main economic and development challenges faced by the United States and Mexico. For the U.S., it is "wage stagnation for the bottom 50 percent of wage earners in the United States," a trend Hanson dated to around 1980. He explained that the U.S. experienced "a spectacular century" from 1870-1970, growing at an average annual rate of greater than 3 percent. "In the 1970s," Hanson continued, "things changed for a complicated set of reasons." He pointed to the growth in productivity driven by innovation as the key factor that "started to sputter" in the early 1970s. Since then, Hanson explained, the U.S. has not been able to recover the previous rate of productivity growth. "Compounding this," he stated, "after 1980 … the fraction of income, growing at a slower rate, going to the bottom 90 percent of income earners was getting ever smaller." Hanson reviewed reasons identified by economists: "Technological change — automation in particular — globalization, including NAFTA in various manifestations, changes in the mobility of workers … that we've kept minimum wages low and the fact that unions play a smaller role in the American labor force all matter."

For Mexico, he identified income distribution as one area in which Mexico had gradually improved in recent decades. Hanson instead emphasized "the absence of productivity growth" as the cause behind "Mexico's slow growth episode" in that time. Indeed, in a comparison Hanson published nearly a decade ago, Mexico was "the worst-performing country" with the exception of Venezuela. At least Mexico has become a "stable place that's not growing very fast," having "gotten rid of the currency crises, the financial crises that plagued the country from the 1970s until the middle 1990s." Mexico has the challenge of "the missing middle" Hanson explained. "They don't have productive middle-sized firms that are the typical source of innovation and productivity growth in most market-based economies." This problem has actually gotten worse as Mexico has modernized because development has tended towards "a completely segmented economy." As a result, small firms in Mexico are generally trapped in the informal sector, don't pay the Value Added Tax (which was made crucial after a recent tax law reform) and are thus legally excluded from NAFTA trade and the production chains and income that it generates.

In this overall context, Hanson evaluates NAFTA as "disappointing." For the United States, it was unrealistic to expect a dramatic impact from the trade agreement, Hanson argued, because "at the time the U.S. signed NAFTA, the size of Mexico's economy was equivalent to that of Ohio." It did, however, "help make the U.S. auto industry more globally competitive," as well as benefit parts of the aerospace, medical device, and electronics industries. For Hanson, "it's hard to imagine that NAFTA has the potential to do much for the U.S. in confronting this challenge of … middle-income workers," as "NAFTA is still primarily about manufacturing when it comes to employment," and that sector now only employs 9 percent of the U.S. labor force.

For Mexico, "NAFTA has been much more significant," Hanson said. Still, the agreement has not lived up to the unrealistic expectations in that country, either. Whereas

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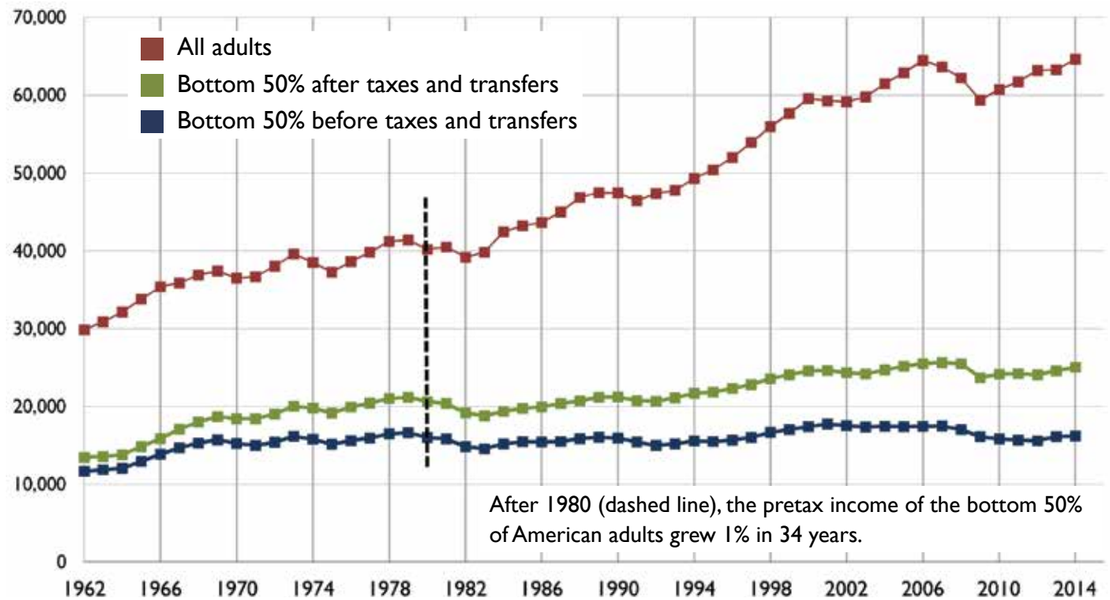
Growth in U.S. national income per adult, 1962-2014 (in constant 2014 dollars)

Data from Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman, "Distributional National Accounts: Methods and Estimates for the United States," NBER Quarterly Journal of Economics 133(2), 553-609.



the hope was that NAFTA could help Mexico break out of the maquila form of manufacturing integration with the United States — even making Mexico "a global manufacturing powerhouse" — in reality, the country "in many senses is still the *maquila* arm of the U.S. economy," despite the fact that "the level of manufacturing happening in Mexico is much more sophisticated than 25 years ago." Ultimately, NAFTA did not bring the macroeconomic growth that was expected.

With respect to "NAFTA 2.0" that might emerge from current re-negotiations, Hanson doubted that the trade agreement would make a significant difference to the "key challenges" facing Mexico: "How do you rearticulate an economy that's become quite segmented?" Thus, the re-negotiations hold out little hope for addressing the main issues in either country.

Finally, Hanson noted that both the U.S. and Mexican manufacturing sectors had been held back by the "China Shock," the Asian country's emergence as a major global manufacturing and trading power. However, he noted that this effect "is over [because] China's period of incredible productivity growth came to a surprising halt in 2008," reducing competitive pressure on the U.S. and Mexico.

Gerardo Esquivel contextualized his remarks within what he termed "the NAFTA paradox": in all three NAFTA countries, public opinion tends to view the effect of the trade agreement as generally good. Yet, according to polls from each country, the public feels that the other countries are the primary beneficiaries of the agreement. Esquivel noted that while Mexico had the largest expectations for major change and growth — especially if there were any significant wage convergence — it was exactly this expectation that then-Mexican President Carlos Salinas used to sell the agreement in the public forum.

Esquivel went over some other crucial economic trends in the more than two decades since NAFTA came into effect. In terms of growth, the country averaged only 1 percent per year between 1994 and 2016. In terms of inequality, while Mexico began the NAFTA period with a rate of poverty comparable to the Latin American average (around 45 to 46 percent), poverty had only declined slightly to 41.2 percent by 2014. Yet, in the region as a whole, the poverty rate had fallen by nearly half. Even with respect to wages, Esquivel noted a strange phenomenon: little convergence has occurred. Wages in Mexico stand at a quarter of those in the United States, the very same ratio as in the pre-NAFTA era.

In addition, Esquivel explained that NAFTA had exacerbated regional economic disparities within Mexico, particularly in the north and center of the country as compared to the south. He referred to the Zapatista uprising on January 1, 1994 — the day NAFTA came into effect — as in many ways driven by such regional inequality. He called this uprising a warning about the ways in which "NAFTA has failed to deliver for the Mexican people."

Photo by Eneas de Troya.

A tale of two Mexico Cities: Wealthier neighborhoods on flat land, poorer ones climb the hills.

Despite being a supporter of integration, which can benefit consumers and make the region more competitive, Esquivel expressed pessimism about the current NAFTA re-negotiations, particularly because of the perspective and rhetoric coming from the Trump administration. In fact, Esquivel argued that the instability of the U.S. administration on an issue of such crucial economic importance to Mexico highlights the country's vulnerability to changes in U.S. politics and trade policies.

Finally, Esquivel spoke to the disconnect between productivity and exports, which have grown in recent years in Mexico, and wages, which have stagnated. Esquivel argued that "this has to do with the way that labor and unions work in Mexico, how labor laws work … that has meant that productivity gains have not translated to wage gains for the workers." This labor union mechanism for limiting inequality, assuring the connection between rising productivity and rising wages, has been a missing link in the U.S. and Mexico and exacerbated inequality in both countries.

Harley Shaiken picked up on precisely this mechanism as the main theme of his remarks. Like Esquivel, Shaiken expressed confidence that "trade can bring real benefits to people, communities, and economies." Yet, despite being "an internationalist," Shaiken is "very critical about NAFTA." Noting that the U.S. economy is more than a dozen times larger than Mexico's at $18 trillion and $1.4 trillion, respectively, and that a limited impact on the larger country is to be expected, Shaiken targeted his comments at "the NAFTA model." Shaiken characterized this model as "high productivity and advanced manufacturing without that productivity being translated to workers and communities in both countries." A trade agreement that actually worked for the people of both countries would insure trade does not come at the expense of either Mexican or American workers.

As an example of shared prosperity, Shaiken discussed the economic history of the post-World War II United States. Until the mid-1970s, he explained, the U.S. saw "rapid productivity growth" and "rapidly rising wages and benefits during that same period." The link, since broken, between the two trends in this "virtuous circle" was "strong labor unions and collective bargaining." This, in turn, provided a basis for "expanded purchasing power" and, as a result, robust economic growth. Noting that NAFTA undermines this dynamic, Shaiken argued that "the missing link between the very real benefits of trade, particularly in advanced manufacturing in Mexico — and Mexican workers benefitting — is the fact that you do not have independent unions or independent collective bargaining, virtually at all, in the export sector." Furthermore, due to the highly integrated nature of the North American economies after nearly 25 years of the NAFTA framework, these low-wage trends in Mexico "impact Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin." "And of course," Shaiken continued, "that is going to have a political reaction, as we've just seen."

He emphasized this point with the contemporary example of a new BMW plant in San Luis Potosí, Mexico. Despite state-of-the-art technology and production quality, a premium-price brand-name consumer product, and a massively profitable company, the extremely productive workers in this new plant were paid $1 per hour in 2014. These very low wages do not provide the basis for the type of purchasing power that might drive demand for U.S.-made goods. Moreover, they put downward pressure on the wages of U.S. auto and auto-parts sector manufacturing workers. Auto-parts workers have seen "a sharp decline in real compensation as a result," said Shaiken. "What these low wages reflect," he contended, "is a completely dysfunctional labor system in Mexico that is designed to keep wages low to attract investment." Although this model is "very profitable for investors" in the short, or perhaps even medium term, "it stymies growth … ironically, it limits trade, and it creates a very troubling situation for U.S. manufacturing workers."

The means of addressing the disconnect between rising productivity and declining real wages and benefits in the manufacturing sector in Mexico "is the ability for workers to decide to have independent unions if they choose, and the ability of those unions to bargain collectively in an open manner," concluded Shaiken, "absent that, there is no way to translate the potential gains to workers." The key factor he highlighted was the need for "rules of the game in place that result in wages harmonizing upwards, not in pressures that

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Photo by Thomas Hawk.

NAFTA negotiators failed to take into account the explosive growth of China's economy.

push downwards." That type of downward dynamic "is not in the interests of Mexico" and "not in the interests of the United States." After 23 years of NAFTA, Shaiken lamented, "none of the labor promises have been met."

Art Pulaski and Gordon Hanson discussed the role of labor unions in building a prosperous middle class in the post-World War II period. "Manufacturing wages in the U.S.," said Pulaski, "created the middle class." He also commented on the fact that most manufacturing jobs that left the United States did not go to fellow manufacturing powers like Germany, but to "areas where corporations were able to exploit low wages and the environment." He also insisted that electoral backlash in 2016 in key Midwestern manufacturing states was, in part, due to many workers in that region blaming candidate Hillary Clinton for NAFTA because of its passage during the administration of President Bill Clinton.

Hanson agreed that "manufacturing was the vehicle by which those with high school or less education were able to achieve a middle-class lifestyle." But when manufacturing began to decline as a share of the U.S. workforce in the 1950s, "that vehicle started to break down." He further agreed that "trade has played a role in the decline of manufacturing presence in the U.S. workforce." Hanson pointed to "the China Shock in U.S. manufacturing," which, his research suggests, can account for about a quarter of the decline in the share of employment in this sector from 13 percent to 9 percent, from the 1990s to the mid-2000s. He argued that NAFTA's role would be smaller than that. So "globalization certainly has a role, but there is a whole constellation of factors at play," particularly highly capital-intensive technological change. For this reason, Hanson did not find it remotely realistic that a revision of NAFTA might bring back a meaningful amount of manufacturing jobs. "In terms of going back to the 1950s," he insisted, "in terms of manufacturing being a source of middle-class incomes, those days are unfortunately past."

Beatriz Manz, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, discussed the potential for labor union alliances across the U.S.–Mexico border as a way to boost Mexican wages and help the pressure on U.S. jobs, as well. She also pointed to NAFTA re-negotiations as a theoretical point of intervention on labor rights issues.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, President of the Fundación para la Democracia (Foundation for Democracy) and mayor of Mexico City (1997–1999), argued that the whole development model pursued by Mexico was in need of fundamental change. He noted that while exports have increased significantly along with manufacturing, the benefits have been concentrated among a small group of corporations. On the other hand, employment has increasingly concentrated in the informal sector.

Gerardo Esquivel offered support to both analyses. He spoke to the importance of both the development of the internal market and the translation of export growth to wages and benefits for workers. "The reason why workers cannot get the benefits from this foreign direct investment — in the auto industry, for example, but this is true for any industry — is that the labor laws in Mexico do not favor the creation of authentic unions," said Esquivel. He noted that Mexican labor law was soon to change, an effect of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, something Esquivel expressed hope might be a start towards incorporating stronger labor rights standards within trade agreements.

Amalia García reiterated that the Mexican government needed to move away from a development strategy and trade negotiation position based on the offer of cheap labor. She noted that the dollar value of the Mexican minimum wage had fallen by two-thirds since the 1970s and is currently not even enough for the basic basket of goods.

García also discussed two recent labor legislation reforms in Mexico. The first, in 2012, worsened the labor rights problems associated with outsourcing and subcontracting. A recent labor justice reform appears very promising regarding union democracy, García suggested, yet she expressed grave concern about a constitutional-level provision that creates a new state labor-regulating institution under the direct control of the executive branch. García noted that this legislation goes along with a recent strategy to promote Mexico as a safe place for investment because "there are no strikes." Of course, she explained, workers do strike, but they are not officially recognized, and this new state power risks a tight centralized control of unions.

Harley Shaiken re-emphasized García's point addressing "a new constitutional reform that has been passed in Mexico that does add transparency" and added that García had "raised real questions about the secondary legislation and the likely proposed implementation, which will be defining." Lamenting that "the whole process of labor reform has been done very secretly," Shaiken said, "you can't call for collaborative and transparent reform, and then do it in a secretive or unilateral way." He also emphasized that independent union leaders he had spoken to on a recent trip to Mexico had communicated that they perceived the pressure on labor rights from U.S. unions as "very positive." While Shaiken insisted that "nobody is calling for" U.S. interference in Mexico — which those unions reject and which is difficult in terms of Mexican domestic politics — labor and other interests actually welcome that pressure. Shaiken addressed this tension, noting that the official Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM, Confederation of Mexican Workers) was "raising strong campaigns" against cooperation

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Independent Mexican labor leaders meet with Congressman Sander Levin and Harley Shaiken in Mexico City.

Photo courtesy of Sander Levin.

with U.S. union leaders, casting their efforts in a highly distorted way as "an imperialist grab."

Soffía Alarcón-Díaz returned to the point of environmental regulation under NAFTA. She explained that "Mexico has very weak regulations when it comes to protecting the environment" and asked whether trade deal negotiations might be a forum in which to strengthen environmental safeguards. However, noted Gordon Hanson, since China has been a significant source of pressure on competition to lower environmental standards, trade negotiators had to face the fact that a stringent regulation regime might only "lose the most pollution-intensive industries." He suggested the World Trade Organization as a more appropriate venue for addressing the issue in a multilateral fashion. Harley Shaiken drew a direct parallel with the dynamics of the close integration of the U.S. and Mexico meaning that harmonization could occur upwards or downwards with respect to environmental standards, just as with wages.

Finally, Rafael Fernández de Castro offered an important exception to an overly negative assessment of developments in Mexico during the NAFTA period. He noted, for example, that in terms of the health and education components of the Human Development Index, Mexico had gone some distance towards "bridging the gap with the United States" in that time frame.

The U.S.–Mexico relationship exemplifies the dense interconnections across international borders that have increasingly come to define the modern world in an era of globalization. Just as the main issues that affect one country will inevitably affect the other, so the main issues in the bilateral relationship — climate change, migration, security, trade, and inequality — are all pressing global challenges. They are also complex and closely interrelated dilemmas. These macro trends have been key drivers of the dynamics of the bilateral relationship, from the effects of NAFTA on economic inequality and migration patterns to the pressures for institutional corruption arising from the international illegal drug trade. These large-scale dynamics and associated social problems are also driving a great deal of the tensions affecting the fraught U.S.–Mexico relationship in the current moment.

With a wide and diverse array of voices and expertise, the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum not only explored these issues in their nuance, complexity, and inter-connection, but also pointed the way towards creative, future-oriented solutions that can address the crucial concerns of these "overlapping societies."

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References for this article are available at clas.berkeley.edu.

The Futures Forum and the San Francisco Bay Area both specialize in building bridges.

Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum 2017
Tiburon, California

PARTICIPANTS

Front row (from left):

Ram Ramanathan
Professor, UC San Diego; Director, Center for Atmospheric Sciences

Maria Echaveste
Senior Scholar, Center for Latin American Studies;
White House Deputy Chief of Staff, 1998–2001

Harley Shaiken
Professor, UC Berkeley; Chair, Center for Latin American Studies

Rafael Fernández de Castro
Professor, ITAM

Linda Sánchez
U.S. Representative, California;
Vice-Chair, Democratic Caucus, U.S. House of Representatives

Soffía Alarcón-Díaz
Director, The Carbon Trust, Mexico

Yulma Rocha Aguilar
Representative, Guanajuato, Mexico

Amalia García
Secretary of Labor, Mexico City

Chris Edley
Professor, UC Berkeley School of Law

(Photo by Jim Block.)

Back row (from left):

Pete Gallego
U.S. Representative, Texas, 2013–2015;
Member, Texas House of Representatives, 1991–2013

Dionicia Ramos
Vice Chair, Center for Latin American Studies, UC Berkeley, 2009–2017

Beatriz Manz
Professor, UC Berkeley

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas
President, Fundación para la Democracia (Foundation for Democracy);
Mayor of Mexico City, 1997–1999

Paola Rojas
Television Host and Journalist

Gerardo Esquivel
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Steve Silberstein
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Octavio Paz.
(Portrait by Arturo Espinosa.)

LITERATURE

Octavio Paz, Media, and Mexican Politics

By Priscila Dorella (translated by Deborah Meacham)

Mexican poet Octavio Paz (1914–1998) died well aware of the success of his intellectual contributions. In addition to winning a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990, over the course of his career Paz received more than 200 awards from around the world and witnessed the emergence of numerous studies devoted to the analysis of his poetry, literary criticism, and essays like *El laberinto de la soledad* (The Labyrinth of Solitude, 1950). But while the poet receives unconditional praise for his literary works in Mexico, his political ideas have often been stifled and ignored.

It is not unusual to see a well-loved poet, one endowed with a profound and creative love for words, be the object of tremendous discord in political affairs. Literary history boasts many examples, including Pablo Neruda, Jorge Luis Borges, Federico García Lorca, and André Breton. Still, one ponders the reasons why Paz felt it necessary to express his political thoughts publicly and the possible meanings of the controversies his ideas provoked in Mexico.

Paz was a vanguardist poet who contributed to the renewal of literary forms and the critical perception of language. He also served as a diplomat, the editor-in-chief of two magazines, and a television host. In an effort to foster the documentation, creation, dissemination, and awareness of Mexican politics, among other issues, the poet embraced a commitment to modern criticism, as he frequently explained. In adopting this position of rigor and experimentation, Paz sought to stand apart from the dogmatic intellectual perspective of Latin America, influenced during the Cold War by rigid political positions like the military dictatorships of the right and the many guerrilla movements of the left.

From his ideas about modern poetry to his notion of "being Mexican" or even his blatant controversy with the left, the poet took a combative stance. With great care and perseverance, Paz began to write political essays in the 1940s, motivated by his disillusionment with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, his most controversial opinions appeared in Latin America from the 1960s onwards in public speeches and written works such as *Posdata* (Postscript, 1970), *El ogro filantrópico* (The Philanthropic Ogre, 1979), *Tiempo nublado* (Stormy Weather, 1982; published in English as One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History, 1986), *Pequeñas crónicas de grandes días* (Small Chronicles of Great Days, 1990), and *Itinerario* (Itinerary, 1993).

> He was always important.
> He was always relevant.
> – *Susan Sontag*

According to the Mexican journalist Elena Poniatowska, Paz liked controversy and enjoyed a worthy opponent but was ferocious when he argued. He debated with Mexican intellectuals and political parties about things like "real" socialism, the role of intellectuals, the Mexican state, the Latin American left, and democracy. His temperament was described as choleric, mordant, ironic, sarcastic — all characteristics that made him a fearsome character of Mexican letters. It's easy to imagine that many "misunderstandings" may not have been gratuitous but collectively contrived to boost his fame. With regards to the discomfort he provoked, the poet stated in his book *Itinerário*: "My literary and aesthetic opinions confused some and bothered others; my political opinions exasperated and outraged many." Yet the intellectual justifications given by Paz (and many of his readers) to explain the intensity of the impact, relevance, and provocation of his work in Mexico rarely take into account an important historical dimension of his trajectory, that is, his insertion in the mass media.

Photography, film, television, and computers are spheres of visual communication that have completely restructured our understanding of culture and the role of the intellectual in recent times, intensifying the idea of the need for images to be perceived as real. The fact that Paz was a poet who published books and articles and helmed such important Mexican magazines as Plural and Vuelta facilitated his recognition, but it was his televised appearance on programs widely disseminated in Spanish-speaking countries by the Mexican telecommunication company Televisa that helped make him a public "celebrity" who was certainly more often seen than read.

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Photo by Pepe Franco/Cover/Getty Images.

Octavio Paz gives a television interview.

Like Paz, several other writers of the Latin American Boom experienced the massive circulation of their works hand in hand with significant participation in the mass media, fueled by a few broadcasting networks directed at millions of people. Since the 1960s, writers like Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Antonio Skármeta (Chile), and Gabriel García Marquez (Colombia) have been elevated to rock-star status in Latin American culture through televised appearances. Yet their audiences have never been as expressive as those of entertainment programs (soap operas, football, daily news, etc.), which were especially captivating — and occasionally addressed the writers' personal lives.

In 1976, Paz began presenting weekly commentaries for the conservative "24 Horas" television news program, and then went on to collaborate on the famous interviews "Conversaciones con Octavio Paz" (Conversations With Octavio Paz, 1984). A series of documentaries were his definitive launch to the general public: "México en la obra de Octavio Paz" (Mexico in the Work of Octavio Paz, 1989). In addition, in 1990 he organized a conference to discuss world politics after the fall of the Soviet Union, with a live broadcast on Televisa entitled "El siglo XX: La experiencia de la libertad" (The 20th Century: The Experience of Freedom). Many Mexican intellectuals, including Carlos Fuentes and Jorge Castañeda, strongly opposed this conference due to the predominance of neoliberal ideas and reductionist interpretations of Marxism in the debate.

Despite initial optimism about television's democratic possibilities, which Paz expressed in essays like "Televisión: cultura y diversidad" (Television: Culture and Diversity, 1979), "El pacto verbal" (The Verbal Pact, 1980), "Democracia: lo absoluto y lo relativo" (Democracy: The Absolute and The Relative, 1992), and "El pacto verbal III" (The Verbal Pact III, 1995), his remarkable relationship with the media sparked tremendous controversy, primarily concerning his appearances on Televisa. Since 1950, the station had held hegemonic power and maintained a problematic relationship of favoritism and back-scratching with the Mexican government under the Partido Revolucionário Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party).

Some prominent Mexican intellectuals, such as Enrique Krauze and Miguel León-Portilla, praised Paz's presence on Televisa and even took part in some of his programs, emphasizing how his critical and moral authority contributed to public debate as well as the expansion of his influence in society. But the question that should be asked is: How could a poet who was committed to freedom, democratic values, intellectual independence, and criticism of the patrimonial state be on such friendly terms with Azcarrága Milmo, the owner of Televisa, turning a blind eye to the conservative and unscrupulous measures of his telecommunications company?

This very question was raised by Mexican intellectuals, specifically by the Mexican left, which has associated Paz with the imperialist interests of the right since the late 1970s. Strikingly, just a few years earlier, in 1968, Paz had been held up as a moral standard by the left when he renounced his diplomatic career in protest of the Mexican government's authoritarian repression of students in the Tlatelolco Massacre.

One of Paz's most heated controversies with the left in his country occurred at the 1984 Frankfurt International Book Fair, where he was recognized for his literary achievements. The essay "El diálogo y el ruido" (Dialogue and Noise, 1984), written to commemorate the award, presents a critical analysis of the developments of the 1979 Sandinista Revolution. It was read by Paz in Germany and broadcast throughout Mexico on the Televisa news program "24 Horas," sparking significant protests in the country.

This was during the first democratic election in Nicaragua, after the Nicaraguan Revolution had overthrown the Somoza dictatorship. The Mexican left supported this electoral process, while Paz criticized the viability of democracy in the country, associating the elections with Cuba's authoritarian experience. The consequence was a huge public demonstration of intellectuals, journalists, artists, deputies, and militants of the left, who accused Paz of taking an illogical and unfair position because Sandinista Nicaragua was fighting a civil war against the Contras' paramilitary army, which

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Mexican troops confront demonstrators in the days leading up to the Tlatelolco Massacre in 1968.

Photo from Cel-li/Wikimedia Commons.

was financed by the government of U.S. President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989).

In "El diálogo y el ruído," Paz stated that in the modern world, revolution was understood as a utopia, capable of breaking with the established order and building another, hopefully better, world that was simultaneously equal to the original. This debatable ambivalence in the meaning of revolution was not unrelated to Paz's recognition of the importance of the state in society. However, the poet believed that the only state able to establish conditions of peaceful coexistence was the democratic republican state, since it has a duty to guarantee critical and pluralistic freedom of expression. The problem of revolutionary movements would then be that they enabled the creation of authoritarian and violent states in the name of peace.

In this regard, the case of Nicaragua was quite emblematic for Paz. The Sandinista Revolution gained legitimacy by overthrowing a corrupt authoritarian government in the name of constituting a democratic government. In his speech at Frankfurt, Paz stated: "The actions of the Sandinista regime reveal their desire to establish a bureaucratic-military dictatorship in Nicaragua according to Havana's model, thus changing the original meaning of the revolutionary movement." His position on Sandinista Nicaragua came under considerable scrutiny, since at that time the country was substantially different from the Cuban experience: it had a plural political system and an economy that did not eliminate capitalism. It's no wonder, then, that Paz's perspective was interpreted as biased, hasty, and even illogical.

The response of the Mexican left to the poet's presentation at Frankfurt was meaningful: it was not merely an isolated episode but a good indication of the mood in Latin America during the Cold War. Some of the intellectuals associated the declarations of Paz with the right, linked with the defenders of unqualified democracy, neoliberalism, and politics allied with imperialist interests, clearly incompatible with revolutionary nationalism.

It is important to remember that under the influence of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, resistance movements in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador gained strength in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements were impacted by serious economic crises, anxious for national sovereignty, and determined to reject U.S. imperialism. The success of the Sandinista Revolution in 1979 not only inspired other countries in Central America and gained support from a significant segment of the international community, but brought in its wake the option of democracy, pluralism, and independent foreign policy. However, the Sandinistas' military confrontation with the opposition armed by the U.S. government resulted in serious political and economic problems, as well as thousands of deaths.

Few Latin American intellectuals, like Paz, openly opposed the Nicaraguan government and condemned the censorship imposed by the Sandinistas on the country's opposition newspaper La Prensa. Paz's political stance even differed from that of the Mexican government, which eventually recognized the 1984 elections as legitimate. In the opinion of the Mexican left, the poet's discourse in defense of democracy in Nicaragua was clearly linked to U.S. foreign policy interests.

The Nicaraguan election not only spawned intense controversy because of violent actions by both the left and right, but also spurred debate about the real ability of the revolution to establish a democratic political system in the region. Mexican historian Aguilar Camín argued that throughout the 20th century, a portion of the Mexican left believed that revolutionary violence was a constituent component of legitimate social transformation. In society's mind, leftist revolutionary violence was "good violence," with its adepts and heroes like Pancho Villa, Augusto César Sandino, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, among others.

Thus, over time, Paz's relationship with the Mexican left became increasingly problematic. Nonetheless, the poet bluntly clarified the need for dialogue with this ideological stance: "I always believed — and I still do believe — that my natural interlocutor was the so-called leftist intellectual. I have come from so-called leftist thinking. I do not have anything to say to anyone else." Marxist historian Arnaldo Córdova disagreed with Paz and argued that the poet didn't really want to talk with the left, but had a simplistic understanding of it.

Paz's discourse provoked strong indignation for many reasons, and one of the most important is related to the way in which his views were transmitted by Televisa: on prime time, reaching millions of viewers. According to many intellectuals, the impact of Paz's televised discourse was unparalleled in comparison to the written press and, consequently, led the public to question the viability of the Sandinista Revolution precisely at the moment when it needed more support. The unequal power of the United States over the Sandinistas had not been adequately taken into account by Paz or Televisa.

However, according to the Peruvian writer Vargas Llosa, who was already in line with the neoliberal perspective at that time, Paz always condemned U.S. intervention in Latin America and distrusted the benefits of the free market, so he did not deserve to be pilloried by left-wing intellectuals or have his image burned in a public square in Mexico City with shouts of protest like "Reagan rapaz, tu amigo es Octavio Paz" (Reagan, man, Octavio Paz is your friend). For Vargas Llosa, this response was an example of the level of "sectarianism and idiocy" that public debate had reached in Latin America.

Paz himself responded to the criticism by explaining that he was never in favor of U.S. intervention in Central America, but rather supported genuinely democratic political conditions. As for the hatred expressed by the left in reaction to his statements, the poet said: "Not only have my sentences been taken out of context, but my words have been disfigured or things have been attributed to me that I did not say." The heated intellectual debate on Latin American politics — so often unforgivable, as evidenced by the aforementioned political protests — was a fundamental element for the disenchantment with the revolutionary movements, the questioning of binary positions (United States vs. Latin America, capitalism vs. communism, reform vs. revolution, right vs. left), and the resurgence of the debate on democratic values.

Reactions to Paz's discourse likewise highlight the need to reevaluate the suspicion that television news broadcasts are mere strategies to anesthetize the dissatisfied, wronged, or oppressed. Resistance also takes the form of spectacular action. Public demonstrations, such as the protests against Paz, are aimed at drawing everyone's attention. They make public space a "public display" insofar as they may also be broadcast by the mass media. The recent history of Latin American political and social struggles is intimately intertwined with the media and intellectual discourse. And Paz soon realized that television was capable of projecting beyond the local context by connecting to a more complex, varied structure with many possibilities.

Tuning to television allowed Paz to enter a universe of broader dimensions that has the potential to help people better understand the plurality of the world if it is clearly regulated, without market pressure or state censorship. And if he understood this potential, despite all the questioning, how could he not jump on the chance of communicating events by establishing multiple relations with the media and contributing to democracy?

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A Mexico City Day of the Dead sculpture honors Octavio Paz in 2014.

Photo by Abril Cabrera A./Secretaria de Cultura