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Colombia: Building on Education
"Cesar Chavez"
Sustainable Energy

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Cover: Panorama of Guatapé, Antioquia, Colombia. (Photo by Federico Carranza.)

Comment

Central America was once again at the top of the news in the United States — from front pages to social media — in the summer of 2014. Photos of unaccompanied children from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala clinging to the rumbling roofs of freight trains for weeks as they crossed Mexico tore at the consciences of many while moving others to anger. "The trains are loaded with cement, iron, quartz, wheat, corn, diesel, vegetable oil, fertilizer, or wood," wrote Homero Aridjis, a Mexican poet and environmentalist, "but the human cattle along for the ride have no food, drink, or guarantee of safety."

The 60,000 or so unaccompanied children who have arrived at the border since October 2013 are mostly turning themselves over to U.S. Border Patrol agents as they seek refuge in the United States and reunification with family members. While some have responded to this exodus of children by raising the specter of "invasion" or deploying the National Guard, California Governor Jerry Brown and Archbishop of Los Angeles José H. Gomez convened a meeting of religious leaders and diplomats from Central America and Mexico at the end of July in Mexico City, where Governor Brown was leading a trade and investment mission to Mexico. I was honored to be included in this meeting convened "to discuss this very serious humanitarian challenge."

Governor Jerry Brown and Archbishop of Los Angeles José H. Gomez at a meeting on child migrants in Mexico City, July 2014. (Photo by Justin Short, Office of the Governor.)

"The problems of the border can't be solved at the border alone," the governor commented at a subsequent press conference that he and the archbishop held, adding "political divisions will not be a source of solutions."

Longer term, addressing the crisis in the home countries these children left behind requires "aid strategies that treat Central America as more than a pawn in the war on drugs and that seek to reduce poverty and improve education," writes Óscar Arias, Nobel laureate and former president of Costa Rica. This approach gives an immediate relevance to the opening article in this issue, which describes a presentation by Sergio Fajardo, governor of Antioquia, Colombia, and mayor of Medellín from 2004 to 2007. During his tenure as mayor, Fajardo developed creative, successful approaches to combat drug trafficking, violence, and social disintegration by emphasizing schools, community organizations, and social goods — from new libraries to better transportation — to create a sense of inclusion. In his role as governor, he is now adapting and expanding this approach on a much larger scale in the state of Antioquia.

On another note, CLAS was pleased to offer an advanced screening of the film "Cesar Chavez," directed by Diego Luna, who is also a highly acclaimed Mexican actor and producer. The film, which stars Michael Peña and Rosario Dawson, is the first fictional treatment of the legendary labor leader's life. It covers the tumultuous and highly significant period in the 1960s and 70s when Chavez helped make the United Farm Workers into a force to be reckoned with.

The film movingly chronicles a story of organizing success in the face of insurmountable odds. It skillfully weaves together the highly personal story of Chavez and his family with that of his consuming passion and genius as an organizer. Luna's skill and artistry as a director makes you feel the heat of the fields and the risks organizers and workers undertook. The marches, the fasts, the threats, the violence, the tense negotiations all come to life, both for those who experienced the period and for those who are being introduced to this historic struggle for the first time. And the power of nonviolence that Chavez embraced, the successful boycotts he deployed, and the international solidarity that proved critical all played a role in his subsequent successes.

The center of this issue contains a photo of the 340-mile march Chavez led in 1966 from Delano to Sacramento. On that long, hot, tiring walk almost a half-century ago, any victories must have seemed distant while painful blisters and dispiriting fatigue were immediate. Now, this film inspires a new generation.

– Harley Shaiken

COLOMBIA

Building on Education

by Sarah McClure

It seems an unlikely place to find a library park, complete with award-winning architecture, idyllic courtyards, and a gondola-style cable line. Once among the poorest and roughest neighborhoods in Medellín, Santo Domingo was besieged by drug trafficking, car bombs, and the violence brought by Pablo Escobar's drug cartels.

Today, the mountainous *barrio* is home to a modern cultural center and tourist attraction. A four-level, granite library park, or *parque biblioteca*, beckons residents and visitors from across the world to explore its library books, reading rooms, classrooms, Internet access, auditorium, and outdoor patios.

But the library park doesn't stand alone. It is one of 10 similar spaces built to transform Medellín by fostering education and dignity in the city's most disadvantaged communities.

"People laughed at us before; they don't laugh at us now," said Sergio Fajardo, governor of Antioquia, Colombia, and the mastermind behind the impressive edifices. "Nobody would ever dare to walk over there, but now it's a beautiful place," he said of Santo Domingo.

Fajardo served as mayor of Medellín from 2004 to 2007, during which time he organized the construction of the library parks.

In a presentation hosted by the Center for Latin American Studies, the South American leader spoke about education as an agent of transformation and as the path to combat violence and social inequality.

Today, he continues to push for educational opportunities across Antioquia. During his talk, he discussed his current project to build 80 library parks in his home department — an initiative developed under the slogan, "Antioquia: The Most Educated." This initiative is based on his previous work as mayor, when the slogan was "Medellín: The Most Educated."

But the transformation of Medellín and Antioquia from places of fear to places of hope is a long, complex journey — not unlike Fajardo's journey to emerge as one of Latin America's most inspirational political leaders.

Fajardo jumpstarted his career nearly 15 years ago when he and a group of friends got together to discuss the city's problems. He recalled the frustration that brought

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Students at San José Secondary School, a rural school in La Ceja, Antioquía, Colombia.
(Photo: © Charlotte Kesl / World Bank.)

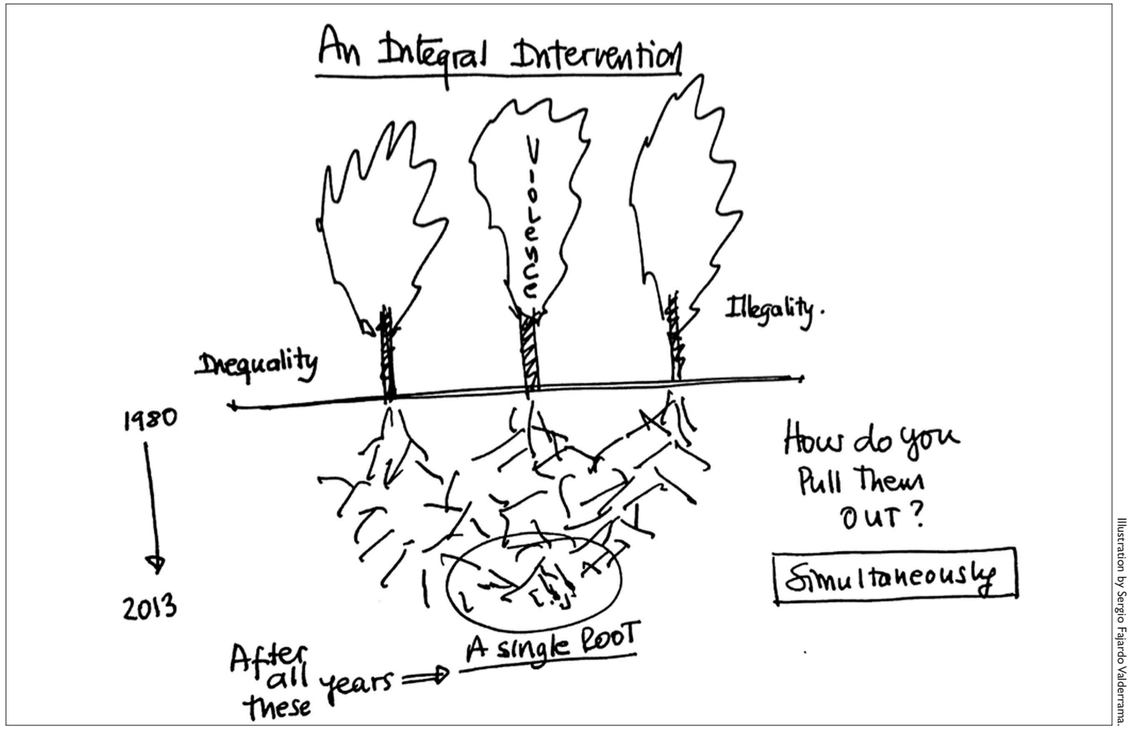

Illustration by Sergio Fajardo Valderrama.

The trees of inequality, violence, and illegality share a single root.

him to that moment, describing the newspaper columns he used to write about the importance of education. "[E]verything that I wrote… the final line was, 'This should be done,'" he said. "And then who is supposed to do it?" The conclusion he came to was that, "whether we like them or not," politicians make society's most important decisions.

"We made a decision," he said. "We are going to organize ourselves… We are going to get into power in Medellín, and we are going to transform this society." They focused their efforts on finding solutions for three social problems: inequality, violence, and the culture of illegality.

Fajardo, who studied at the University of Wisconsin, noted that in the United States, concern about inequality is new, but in Colombia, "We have known about inequality for centuries."

A mathematics professor at the time with no real political experience, Fajardo adopted an unconventional and almost mathematical approach to navigating politics. At Berkeley, he used formulas to illustrate his political tactics for the audience.

"The key to the whole thing has been something I wrote here in this formula," he said. "Every step that we take never contradicts previous steps that we have taken. We've been consistent; we have kept the same principles."

One unconventional approach he took was during his run for mayor. While other politicians invested money in buying votes, Fajardo invested his time in getting to know the people. He recalled walking across Medellín during his campaign, handing out leaflets and shaking so many hands that his arms were left sore. But it proved to be a worthwhile investment.

"We have built something that has no price, which is trust," he said. "You cannot buy trust, and that is our political power."

During his talk, Fajardo presented a slideshow of handwritten notes and illustrations — an old-school approach that he adopted during his days preparing classes as a professor.

He used a hand-sketched illustration that depicted the three social problems as three trees representing inequality, violence, and illegality. At the base of the trees is a single, tangled root.

"From the surface, they look like three different trees," he said. "But if you look carefully, you understand that they end up being a single tree." If you want to uproot them, you have to do it simultaneously, he explained.

Here, Fajardo introduced the concept of dignity as it relates to resolving inequality.

Building dignity and providing quality education for those in some of the department's poorest communities has been a driving force behind Fajardo's decision to build the library parks in underdeveloped neighborhoods like Santo Domingo and La Ladera and in towns like Anorí, which was overrun by guerillas for 50 years.

"Dignity means we are equally valuable as human beings," he said. "For everyone, we recognize that we all have capabilities, and we all need recognition."

Improving education in Medellín and Antioquia has also mobilized people living in these once-disadvantaged neighborhoods to study and dream of new opportunities.

"You have to build on education in order to be able to walk through the doors of opportunities," said Fajardo. He described the time he organized the "Knowledge Olympics," which encouraged community members to test their knowledge on various subjects and gave recognition to promising students through scholarships.

The event was aired on national television as a way to garner public support for learning in out-of-the-way corners of Antioquia. Fajardo cited an example of a student from a poor family living in a small town. "She's the best student in her town, and they have never seen a woman who is a good student. And suddenly, they see this girl appear live on TV winning a fellowship, winning things for her family," he said.

For now, the governor hopes to continue promoting the path of education and mobilizing communities to create opportunities for themselves. Currently, there are several more educational parks and sports complexes as well as a university campus being built in Antioquia, including in indigenous communities.

"The most beautiful thing that has happened in this neighborhood is this building. It's a powerful message; it's a political message that we are giving," said Fajardo.

Sergio Fajardo is the governor of Antioquia, Colombia, and was the mayor of Medellín from 2004 to 2007. He spoke for CLAS on April 30, 2014.

Sarah McClure is a student at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

CLAS Chair Harley Shaiken (left) with Dr. Lucrecia Ramírez Restrepo and Sergio Fajardo, governor of Antioquia, Colombia.

Photo by Jim Block

ENERGY

Switching to Sustainability

by Daniel M. Kammen, Rebekah Shirley, Juan Pablo Carvallo, and Diego Ponce de Leon Barido

The Sustainable Energy Imperative

Emerging economies will account for more than 90 percent of new energy-generation capacity by 2035, and Latin America is no exception to this trend. In the last 40 years, the region's primary energy demand has more than doubled. In a global environment of increasingly volatile fuel prices, emerging technologies, and climate-change impacts, the continued increase in demand presents challenges and opportunities to Latin America and the Caribbean. To manage the next phase of development, the region's governments will need to develop new energy sources and pay more attention to sustainability.

By some measures, Latin America is already ahead of the game. The region has a low carbon footprint due to the large share of hydropower in its energy mix. Hydropower can't be expanded indefinitely, however, and proposed mega-dams in countries such as Chile and Brazil have generated protests from indigenous and environmental groups.

Developing alternative forms of sustainable energy will require focused effort. Challenges include the inflexibility of the region's grid systems, the difficulty of siting new transmission lines, and the political and technical problems inherent in serving politically disconnected and geographically remote populations. Using examples from Chile, the Caribbean, and Nicaragua, we present energy technology and policy-design tools being developed at UC Berkeley's Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory (RAEL) that address Latin America's sustainability and development needs.

Analyzing the Feasibility of Renewables: Chile

Chile faces challenges on many fronts as it struggles to meet increasing energy demand. Large, centralized, and disruptive projects are being successfully challenged in court. The cumbersome regulation of the transmission sector has slowed down investments, which are not keeping pace with generation capacity expansion and demand. Faced with these challenges, the government is relying on private operators to choose coal as the "safe" way out of the current crisis. Continuing with this strategy would require that imported coal be used to supply up to 75 percent of the country's energy over the next two decades, quadrupling current emissions by 2031. There's still uncertainty, however, about whether unpopular coal-fired power plants will also become mired in controversy. Meanwhile, calls for renewable resources are silenced by a pair of dogmatic arguments: they are too expensive, and they are not "baseload," or available continuously. Therefore, they can only play a marginal role.

At RAEL, we have developed a Chilean version of the lab's Switch model to tackle these arguments. Originally designed for the western United States, the Switch model identifies cost-effective investments for meeting electricity demand, taking into account the existing grid as well as projections for future technological developments, renewable energy potential, fuel costs, and public policy. Switch is designed to allow decisionmakers to balance intermittent renewable resources with reliability requirements when planning the expansion of the electricity system.

Our results indicate that Chile can choose a growth path that cuts its emissions in half while only increasing wholesale electricity prices by about 2 percent or roughly $3 per megawatt hour. The benefits from the low-emission path — which include reduced pollution, less dependence on imported fuel, and newly created jobs — would more than offset the small increase in cost.

Rather than prescribing specific investment decisions, Switch results should be used to frame a discussion about what kind of future the country wants and how it should go about pursuing that future. The figure above was generated by running multiple scenarios with Switch-Chile in which we examined the impacts of carbon cap and carbon tax policies, transmission-building restrictions, and the deployment of nuclear power, among other possible scenarios. The results show that the country can choose among several growth paths that have very different emissions and sustainability outcomes for roughly similar costs. These alternatives merit close examination since

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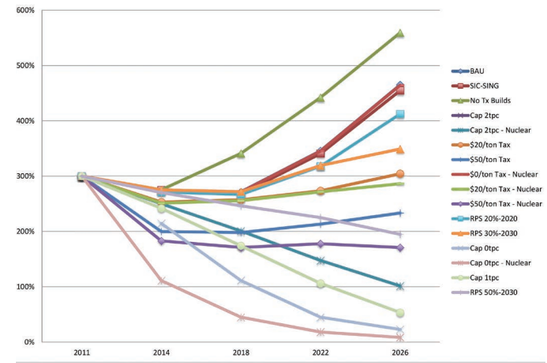
Chilean CO_2 emissions under various energy policies (1990 = 100%)



A tool developed at UC Berkeley allows for quick comparisons of different energy policy scenarios. (Image courtesy of the authors.)

A photovoltaic array in the Atacama Desert, Chile. (Photo by Rodrigo Arancibia Zamora.)

their societal impacts differ so substantially. Building the institutions necessary to decide between these options will be critical to shaping a more sustainable future at the local, national, and regional levels.

Unlocking Renewables Potential: The Caribbean

Most Caribbean islands depend almost entirely on petroleum products to supply their current electricity demands, and oil imports represent a significant proportion of total spending. Even in U.S. territories such as the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and Puerto Rico, retail electricity rates are high: as much as 35 cents per kilowatt-hour compared to average rates of about 12 cents per kilowatt-hour in the continental United States. While many islands — including Jamaica, Barbados, and several eastern Caribbean countries — are planning and deploying small-scale renewable energy installations, there are significant barriers to widespread adoption. In the Caribbean, core issues include economies of scale, aging and inflexible grid infrastructure, access to capital, risk management, monopoly utility ownership, and a lack of enabling legislation that supports the industry. RAEL has been working on the policy front in both the eastern and western Caribbean by quantifying the co-benefits of moving toward renewables, which include reduced carbon emissions, new jobs, energy security, and improved access to energy for remote populations.

In 2010, John de Jongh, the governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, pledged to cut fossil fuel use 60 percent by 2025. To help meet that goal, he signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy to create a clean energy development strategy for the territory. RAEL contributed to this effort by creating a carbon calculator that identifies opportunities for energy conservation and efficiency. To create the calculator, we first used local census and household survey data to find out how much people spend on utilities, transportation, food, and other goods and services. We then estimated how much carbon is emitted throughout the lifecycle of the various products islanders use. Our findings show that the average per capita carbon footprint in the territory is about 13 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, roughly 35 percent less than in the United States. In the USVI, electricity is the major contributor to emissions, despite the fact that annual household electricity use is three times less than in the continental United States, where transportation is

Solar panels power a school in the Caribbean.

Photo by Dom Sagolla.

the major carbon contributor. In fact, the carbon impact of utility services in the USVI is almost double the global average. Utility efficiency is therefore key to reducing emissions on the islands.

To understand the impact on jobs per unit of electricity delivered, we also developed a green jobs estimator for the USVI that has since been adapted for many other islands. The model is based on direct construction, installation, and maintenance jobs as well as indirect (non-energy sector) job multipliers for different energy resources. We found that if efficiency and renewable energy deployment were to account for a 60-percent reduction in fossil fuel electricity by 2025, more than 800 jobs could be created. The majority of these green jobs would come from energy efficiency: workers would be needed for retrofits and to service energy-efficient appliances. These jobs would include everything from carpentry to landscaping to sheet-metal working. The carbon calculator and the green jobs estimator are two simple yet effective tools that support the planning process in the region and serve to highlight issues other than per unit energy costs in the policy conversation.

A carbon footprint estimator developed for households in the Virgin Islands. (Image courtesy of the authors.)

Designing Low-Carbon Grid Systems: Nicaragua

In the next few decades, Nicaragua's ability to fulfill its development potential will be tightly linked to the long-term sustainability of its energy system. Over the past 20 years, Nicaragua's gross domestic product (GDP) and its national energy consumption have grown at 4.4 percent and 5.7 percent per year respectively. Today, oil accounts for over 80 percent of all energy imports, and more than 55 percent of Nicaragua's export revenue goes towards oil, dwarfing investments in education and health. For a country that, despite strong growth, still holds the 129th position in the United Nation's Human Development Index, such an expenditure of precious resources comes at great cost to development. Furthermore, the World Bank forecasts that Nicaragua is one of the countries most at risk from climate change due to future extreme weather events, so a continued reliance on highly polluting bunker fuel is not in the country's long-term best interest.

Recently, Nicaragua has developed a vision to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels and become a regional leader in renewable energy. The government has set ambitious goals for sustainable energy development, and Nicaragua is now cited as the second-most attractive country in the hemisphere for renewable energy investment. However, the country's vision lacks detail, legal obligations, and concrete measures for implementation. Although a complete change in the nation's energy mix has been proposed — the goal is to reach 79-percent renewables by 2017 and 93 percent by 2026 — the country is far from hitting those targets.

In Nicaragua, RAEL researchers are pursuing both top-down and bottom-up strategies for sustainable energy development. Through the use of energy modeling and appropriate technology at both the urban and rural levels, we plan to develop rapid-implementation strategies for making Nicaragua's renewable energy goals a reality. The development of Switch-Nicaragua is the central component of our top-down strategy. The model, which we are working on with colleagues at the Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, identifies energy investments that would minimize system-wide CO_2 emissions while reliably meeting demand.

Our bottom-up approach is to develop a low-cost but highly effective micro-grid in either the capital city of Managua or in the Wawashang Nature Reserve on the Atlantic Coast. The micro-grid would be built in partnership with local renewable-energy entrepreneurs and would serve as a demonstration model that shows how decentralized smart-grid applications could work. The main idea is to depict how decentralized energy systems can both reduce the country's oil dependence and provide reliable energy access. The decentralized electricity generation provided

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Photo by Wellesley Engineer.

Engineers visit a geothermal plant in Nicaragua.

by micro-grids is particularly important in Nicaragua, where more than 20 percent of the country remains largely unelectrified due to the difficulty of supplying power to remote villages. Installing decentralized generation that is both sustainable and renewable would show communities that there are cleaner and cheaper alternatives to the diesel-powered generators on which they currently rely.

Connecting Energy Systems: Analysis to Action

New advances in renewable energy technologies, demand-side resources, and energy efficiency are challenging the way we think about providing energy services. As we have shown, these innovations have many benefits compared to a paradigm based on supply-side, centralized systems. New jobs, a reduced carbon footprint, greater energy security, and improved access to electricity are just a few of the benefits of distributed, sustainable energy systems. While complex models like Switch can help clarify the costs and feasibility of developing cleaner power systems, they should be used to support democratic deliberations on how nations and regions should grow in a sustainable way. Furthermore, both bottom-up and top-down modeling approaches are necessary to provide a holistic analysis of the energy service needs of urban and rural areas, particularly in developing economies. Thus, a systems approach to quantitative analysis will be critical to informing sound energy policy in the coming decades. RAEL's approach integrates environmental, technical, social, and cultural factors in an effort to advocate for democratic and pluralistic public and private decisions about energy.

CLAS hosted a panel discussion on sustainable energy on February 10, 2014. Panelists included Rebekah Shirley, Juan Pablo Carvallo, and Diego Ponce de Leon Barido, all graduate students in the Energy and Resources Group and at the Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory at UC Berkeley, as well as Daniel M. Kammen, a professor in the Energy and Resources Group and the director of RAEL.

Photo by Eneas de Troya.

Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto.

PERSPECTIVE

Mexico Under the "New" PRI

by Denise Dresser

Mexico waking up. Mexico moving forward. A country that — according to the new narrative — has shown that it's ready to pact, negotiate, propose reforms, and approve them. A country that no longer wants to be hostage to archaic traditions and entrenched practices. A country ready to leave behind the nationalist position on sovereignty. Tossing out its heavy ideological baggage. Prepared to surmount 15 years of few reforms and little growth. The future is promising, the foreign press says. Mexico has crossed the threshold and approved reforms that had been politically unpalatable and historically rejected. Mexico has said goodbye to authoritarianism and need not fear its return. The ruling party, the PRI, has reinvented itself and so has the country, the optimists insist. And the "new" PRI has been willing and able to push through the reforms it promised on the fiscal, telecommunications, energy, judicial, and political fronts.

The problem with this argument is that it underestimates the complacency of the political class. The weight of the vested interests that are aligning against the reforms. It underestimates the ties that bind President Enrique Peña Nieto and how they will tighten as the implementation of the reforms takes place. It doesn't give enough weight to the commitments that the president and his party have made to the veto centers, which are poised to sabotage, undermine, and dilute the reform process.

In order for "Peñastroika" to succeed, the president and the PRI would have to disarticulate the interests that carried him into Los Pinos, the presidential residence. The TV networks. The union gerontocracy. The business monopolies. The corporatist bases of the PRI. All of the accomplices of Mexico's system of crony capitalism that the PRI engendered and is still benefitting from. All of the veto centers that pay lip service to the reforms but are aligning themselves to make sure that the reforms create new cronies instead of dismantling the economic structure that makes crony capitalism possible.

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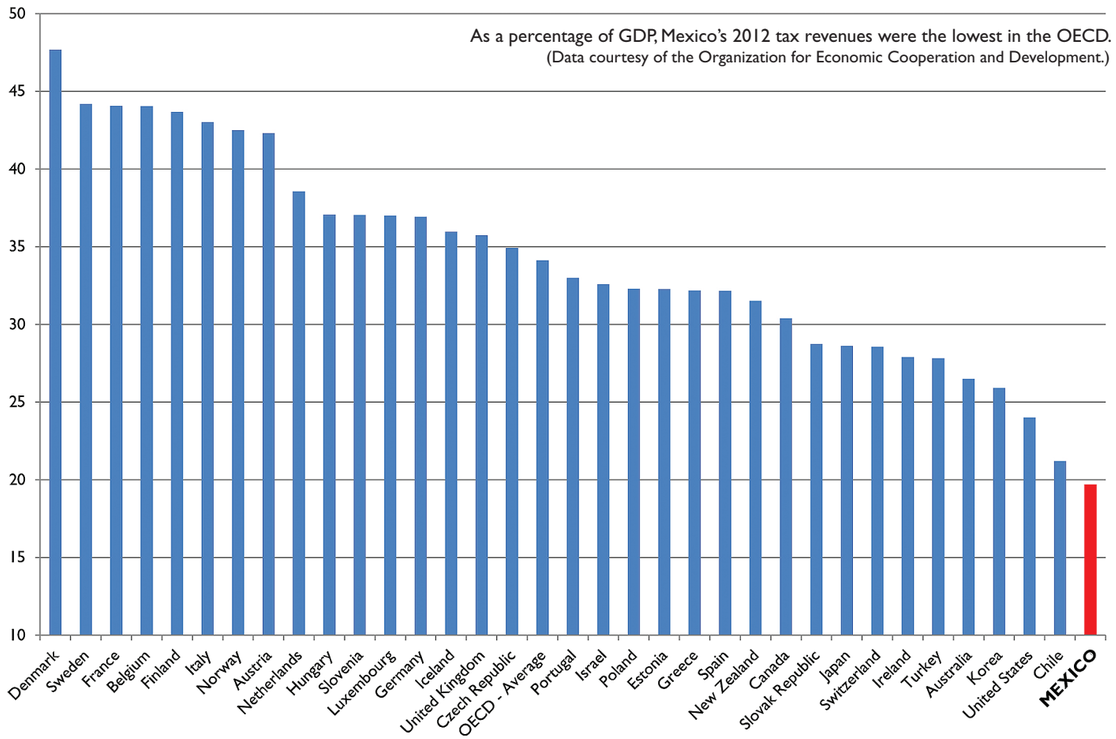
It's true: Mexico today does have a credible narrative for the future. But in order to actually write it, the PRI would have to become what it has never been: a party capable of creating a new paradigm for economic growth, economic inclusiveness, and political representation. And at the helm of it, a president who sees the reforms through, beyond the celebration of their approval. Who is capable of keeping the reformist impulse alive, despite the pressures to quell it. Who goes beyond the photo shoot and the applause and the imagery that has accompanied the reforms and makes sure that their implementation and the approval of pending secondary legislation doesn't amount to just window dressing. So let's examine each reform: the underpinnings, the implications, what has happened, and what comes next.

Fiscal Reform

A mini reform. A Band-Aid. A patch. Something that doesn't resolve the substantive problem but rather seeks to temporarily relieve it. That is the reform that has been approved by the Peña Nieto government. That's the way it should be interpreted. Not as a grand bargain but as a small intervention. Not as something that is going to revolutionize the relationship of the Mexican taxpayer to the state but as something that will keep it intact. Not as the renegotiation of the prevailing fiscal pact but as the continuation of the one that already exists. With the same petrolization, with the same evasion, with the same base of captive taxpayers. Peña Nieto has not sought to change the preexisting fiscal pact, based on little taxation, a lot of spending, and the use of oil revenues to cover the gaps. He wants to give it CPR.

It is not a reform that contemplates the end of ample spaces for corruption, that entails plugging up all the holes, that attempts to depend less on oil revenue or to rationalize public spending. And that's why it falls short. That's why it constitutes just an effort to raise some taxes, not an effort to use them better. That's why it reflects a state that wants to intervene more in the economy without having to spend better or with more transparency. Because what the reform does contemplate is spending. Spending. Keep on spending. It is going to generate permanent pressure on the budget by introducing universal pensions and unemployment insurance. It's going to raise spending over revenues and widen the budget deficit.

There is no way of dealing with the budgetary allocations that are growing the most, like pension payments for public-sector employees. There is no way



of reducing the excessive resources that are channeled to the political parties. Instead, there is a rise in public spending per se. Net public spending under Peña Nieto will reach historic levels. And the problem is that we don't know whether the additional resources will line the pockets of the bureaucrats or go to the construction of highways and schools.

Because the reform doesn't seek to resolve the deep-rooted problem of Mexico's terrible fiscal pact. It doesn't resolve the dilemmas generated by taxes that are insufficiently collected, by spending that is inefficiently assigned, by public resources that are badly distributed. It doesn't attempt to change the historic dynamic of a state that has little legitimacy to demand more when it spends so badly. If that doesn't change, no tax collection effort will be enough. And Mexican citizens will continue to evade taxes. And business oligarchs will continue to evade payment. And the government, instead of rewriting the dysfunctional fiscal pact, will continue to place Band-Aids upon it.

Telecommunications Reform

The last 20 years have been full of unfulfilled promises in the telecommunications sector. Twenty years in which the Mexican government has not been able to unleash the potential of a crucial sector, due to the monopolies and duopolies that strangle it. Twenty years of weak or captured regulatory authorities that don't seem able to promote the transition from analogue to digital TV, to open more than two fiber optic cables in the Federal Electricity Commission in order to build an information superhighway capable of competing against Carlos Slim. Twenty years in which the government allowed dominant

Photo by Kino.

An out-of-service telephone.

players to avoid competition instead of facing it.

And suddenly, the shock of the student movement "Yo Soy 132." The public finger pointed at Televisa and TV Azteca as manipulative and anti-democratic forces. And thus, the impulse that caused all the political parties to embrace the need to change the law. Take on the pending task. Confront the veto centers in the media and reach an agreement to restructure the underpinnings of media power that has become abusive. Immune to competition. A key reason that explains Mexico's dysfunctional democracy.

The reforms presuppose that the government will reclaim public goods previously sold as concessions. That those who exploit public goods will be subjected to norms and will not be able to act of their own accord, as they had been doing. That the

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president will not be able to simply give away concessions as he did in the past. That newly created regulatory bodies will have the power to enforce their decisions. That they will have the capacity to impose substantial fines on those who do not fulfill the obligations of their concession. That the public interest will prevail over the interests of Emilio Azcárraga or Ricardo Salinas Pliego.

But that doesn't mean the war has been won. On the contrary, the television networks are poised to dilute, veto, block, and use any weapon in the arsenal to make sure that the reforms don't touch them. They have already achieved the elaboration of secondary legislation that goes against the spirit of the proposed reform, without any consequences. They are trying to make sure that "must carry, must offer" doesn't happen. And although the new regulatory entity — the Ifetel — has the capacity to fine, open up bids for spectrum, declare the existence of dominant players, and regulate interconnection fees, its role is currently limited by the nonexistence of new rules that Congress should have created but hasn't. Because congressmen are too busy slicing up the budget and opening up the oil sector. Because they haven't understood that the telecommunications battle is the right battle, at the right time, against the right enemy. And instead of waging it, they are wondering how to declare a truce before the battle even begins.

Energy Reform

The government seems willing to compromise the content and implementation of other reforms in order to assure the passage and success of the one it really wanted all along. The one it hopes will be the catalyst for growth. The one that will cement the changing international narrative about Mexico: energy reform. A badly needed reform given the diagnosis recently published by the Mexican Competitiveness Institute in a study that lays out the cost of falling behind. The cost of maintaining the status quo for so many years. The cost of staying at the margins of global energy reform. Mexico has been stuck in the same place for more than a decade, according to the Competitiveness Index, because we haven't created the conditions for the economy to take off.

In Mexico, for decades, we have been wasting our potential. Wasting our time. Channeling more resources into the pockets of Carlos Romero Deschamps than to the vast majority of Mexicans. Channeling resources from Pemex to the government that it should have obtained through taxes. We needed an energy reform that allowed for strategic associations and the liberalization of energy markets. We needed an energy reform that liberated Pemex from its ideological bindings, from the stranglehold of the union, from the fiscal exploitation by the government.

It was supposed to be about taking advantage of lessons offered by other countries that manage their oil sector better than we do. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Cuba, Brazil and Colombia, Norway and Canada that have reformed their energy sectors in a flexible and pragmatic way. To attract investment. To create robust regulatory frameworks. To allow the state operator — like Statoil in Norway — to effectively maximize oil revenues. To transform Pemex into a real business run with transparency and accountability. To promote private investment in refineries and the transportation and distribution of oil. So as to not keep on perpetuating the myth that oil belongs to the Mexican people, when in reality it has belonged to the few who siphon off its wealth for private gain.

So how has the reform addressed these issues? Incompletely and dangerously, by those who believe that private investment in Pemex is the only way to address problems of productivity, efficiency, corruption, and corporatism. And who, in an effort to break the statist stranglehold, run the risk of repeating the mistakes of the past and leaving the real beast alive: the structure of Mexico's crony capitalism and the true evils that it has engendered.

Too many politicians, analysts, and investors have celebrated energy reform because they are centering their gaze on an easy target. They recommend silver bullets against the oil workers union and close their eyes to the fact that this reform doesn't touch the union's privileges. They excoriate the rapacity of public monopolies without taking into account the weak regulation that explains the same rapacity in private monopolies. They see private investment as a panacea, without understanding that if the rules of its participation don't change, the alleged cure will be worse than the disease. The silver bullet that the reform put in the gun will not bring about the promised benefits but rather renewed opportunities for other cronies, in this case those close to Peña Nieto and his administration

What Mexico has to think through and didn't was how to modernize the energy sector without just passing on to private hands the wealth it produces. How to extract oil without simply transferring its gains to private investors. How to strengthen Pemex's financial structure without simply creating conditions for more concentration of wealth. How to promote investment in a key sector while distributing the gains for development. Mexico has not answered these questions well and thus runs the risk of repeating past mistakes.

The problem lies in what wasn't contemplated. In what wasn't proposed, in what wasn't part of the debate.

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The Centenario deepwater drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico.
(Photo by Dario Lopez-Mills/Associated Press.)

Something that the political and business class evades: the promotion of competition, the need for strong regulation, the protection of consumers, the imperative of the public interest regarding oil and its future. Measures that countries like the UK and New Zealand and the state of Texas implemented when they privatized their energy companies under the supervision of efficient and powerful regulatory enterprises capable of setting clear rules among new players. Measures necessary to transform the country's economic horizon through the construction of energy markets that benefit Mexican citizens and consumers. And not just the private companies that pressured the government to open up the oil sector with the objective of extracting more rents from there, too. The beast of oligopolistic capitalism survives thanks to a way of governing Mexico in which vested interests have been able to guide public policy in a way that benefits their interests. And that is why energy reform will not be a sign of progress unless the regulatory conditions that accompany it improve.

Violence

Up to this point, I've focused on the good (the reformist impetus) and the bad (the specifics of several reforms and their implications). I'd like to now address the ugly. What Reforma newspaper calls the "Ejecutómetro": a monthly measurement of the number of executions that have taken place. It reveals that the same number of executions occurred in the first 100 days of Enrique Peña Nieto's administration as took place in Felipe Calderón's last 100 days. The crime statistics in Mexico are among the worst in the Western Hemisphere, and according to Latinobarómetro, more than 40 percent of Mexicans say that either they or a family member have been victims of violence. Insecurity, according to a study by JP Morgan, shaves off 1 percent of the country's GDP annually. The New Mexican Miracle has yet to reach the highways of Michoacán or the streets of Acapulco. Because violence and insecurity persist even though the conversation about them has changed. Impunity continues even though no one in the government wants to talk about it.

And there is much to talk about, given the recent approval of the National Code for Penal Procedures. A Code we should applaud and also lament. Applaud for the fact that it introduces oral, adversarial trials in a country that needed them. Lament because it deals with what happens in the courts but does not regulate the police. Thus, it leads to people being apprehended and then tortured. To interrogation processes that are not standardized or supervised. To policemen who are badly trained. To processes for obtaining eyewitness testimony that do not follow international best practices. Mexico will have clear rules for judges but not for policemen.

Photo by Eneas de Troya.

A 2013 commemoration of those killed in Mexico's ongoing violence.

And in places like Michoacán, the police are the problem. The courts are the problem. The absence of the rule of law is the problem. In the plazas and on the streets, in Apatzingán and Zitácuaro, in Morelia and Tierra Caliente. Signs of the emergence of a parallel state, signs of a microcosm of what happens elsewhere throughout the country. In places where the government doesn't govern but rather La Familia or the Caballeros Templarios. Where instead of calling the police in search of protection, people prefer to turn to a cartel or a criminal group. Where self-defense groups have burgeoned in the absence of a state that can carry out its most foundational task: the legitimate monopoly of violence.

When citizens don't believe in the police or in the courts, criminals or self-defense groups fill that role. When the state cannot assure security or employment or avenues for social mobility, cartels begin to do so. That is the challenge for Mexico: a war centered less on the apprehension of drug kingpins and more on the seizure of their money. A war centered less on killing capos and more on creating functional courts. An effort that would require not just using the army as a deterrent and peacekeeper in places like Michoacán but also a financial strategy to confiscate accounts and a political crusade to combat corruption wherever it may lie: in the courts and in the municipal presidencies and in the governorships and in every corridor of power in Mexico.

Conclusion

Throughout this journey through contemporary Mexico there is one constant, recurring theme. The persistence under the "new PRI" of the old "veto centers": the capacity of certain groups to stall or dilute or block public policies geared towards the public interest. And in the face of these veto centers stands a weak society and an oftentimes captured state, incapable of dismantling the web of privileges that has strangled the country for so long.

Think of the rapacious public-sector unions: untouched. The businessmen entrenched in monopolized sectors: untouched. The corporatist *campesino* organizations taking advantage of subsidies like Procampo: untouched. The obese and unproductive bureaucracy comfortably installed in the public sector: untouched. Dominant actors that behave according to the corporatist logic of the past and thus sabotage the future. Accustomed to defending privileges instead of accumulating merits; accustomed to extracting rents instead of competing to diminish them. And this extractive, rent-seeking, exclusionary system — so well described by Darren Acemoglu and James Robinson in *Why Nations Fail* — is perpetuated by political parties that defend their own fiefdoms, their own cartloads of public money.

And the worst thing is that we have grown accustomed to this state of affairs. The accepted and tolerated dysfunction. We believe that the unbound privileges and the excessive rent-seeking and the absent or intermittent rule of law are an unchangeable part of our national identity. We don't understand that the entrenchment of the clientelist, corporatist, rent-seeking logic is worse than in other countries and a defining reason of why it is so hard for Mexico to grow and to change and to prosper.

And this is an unacceptable situation. It leaves us out of the fold of rapidly growing, emerging economies. It condemns 50 million Mexicans to live in a rich country that is poor and unsafe for them. It makes us incapable of promoting investment, competition, equal opportunities, and social mobility for the many. We insist on being an exceptional and unique country in so many ways. Exceptional in the permanence of so many privileges in the hands of so few. Unique in the social tolerance of this fact. And therefore, the real solutions for Mexico do not lie only in the implementation of reforms from above; real hope lies in the creation of a context of greater demands from below. With the emergence of citizens who fight for rights and not just for government distribution of the spoils.

Those who, to paraphrase Eleanor Roosevelt, would rather light a candle than complain in the dark. Those who continue to believe in Mexico's capacity to change despite evidence to the contrary. Our wide, melancholic, beautiful country. A place — described by Efraín Huerta in his poem "Declaración de amor" (Declaration of Love) — of fields sick with poppies and mountains spiked with thorns. I think about our future, a grain of wheat, the ample Mexican heart of stone and air. And that makes many people like me believe in patriotism, in social

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justice, in creative indignation, in participation, in service, in individual rights, in what goes beyond the cynicism of cold men with eyes of *tezontle* and granite. The daily decisions of extraordinary Mexicans I know who jump and move and act, paralyzing the mediocre noise of the streets, calling attention to what ails us. Voices of hope, of progress. Voices to fight against fear, corruption, impunity, abuse, the arbitrary use of power, the stream of fatigues.

Voices that help us understand that the real awakening of Mexico lies not just in legislative reforms; it entails the dismantling of what still remains of the old authoritarian system and the beginning of new codes of citizen conduct. A united front against the return of some of the worst vices of the past under the new PRI. A citizen coalition so that our eyes don't remain wide shut. The task is Herculean, and it involves us all; every person reading this text who cares about Mexico. As for me, I am ready to work with more determination than ever in the only way I know: with words. And affiliated to the only party I belong to. Ours.

Perhaps today I am being a bit of a romantic, but I think of Mexico, and I think of more than the good, the bad, and the ugly. I think about my daughter Julia's wild, curly Mexican hair; the nostalgia for Carlos Fuentes and Carlos Monsivaís and Germán Dehesa who left such a good legacy behind them; the growing urgency that I and many feel for justice and dignity for all. I think of the sun setting over the sea in San Pancho, a miniscule town north of Punta Mita; the sound of the organ grinder walking down the streets of the Condesa; the majesty and the mystery of the intricate ruins in Mitla; every meal I've ever had at Dulce Patria restaurant; or simply riding a bike down Paseo de la Reforma amidst the boisterous crowds on a Sunday morning. I think about the risk of losing our home — our *patria* — like those who have suffered that fate due to the omnipresent violence in Michoacán, and I think about the opportunity of recovering it. Of achieving what Rosario Castellanos wanted: "that justice be felt among us." It is exciting to be Mexican in these times, even if one does have to coexist with the return of the PRI. I am grateful for that grace. I don't believe we are unchangeable; I don't believe we are unmovable; I don't believe we are inferior to others or that we deserve any less. We are from the most transparent region of the air. Fortunately, we are from Mexico.

Denise Dresser is a professor of Political Science at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) and a columnist for the newspaper Reforma and the news weekly Proceso. She spoke for CLAS on February 10, 2014.

An organ grinder in Mexico City.

Photo by Israel Gonzalez.

Photo by Juan José Estrada Serafín.

A member of the community guard of Turícuaro, Michoacán.

MEXICO

Communities Up in Arms

by Lorena Ojeda

The emergence of armed self-defense groups in the state of Michoacán has catapulted the region to the top of the Mexican federal government's list of security concerns. Not all of these groups are alike, however. While the indigenous P'urhépecha community guards and the mestizo self-defense groups share many common grievances, they have arisen in response to different histories and different contemporary circumstances.

Concentrated in central and northwestern Michoacán, the P'urhépecha home area is divided into four sub-regions: the Sierra P'urhépecha; the Lake Pátzcuaro basin; the Ciénega de Zacapu; and the Cañada de los Once Pueblos. Disputes about land ownership and access to natural resources have long made the region a hot spot for both intra- and inter-community violence. Although agrarian conflicts in the region date back to the colonial era, they were exacerbated by the agrarian reform initiatives following the Mexican Revolution, in large part because the distribution of lands to one community almost always impacted the interests of its neighbors. The reforms resulted in bloody clashes that sowed distrust between the communities. To further complicate matters, this infighting made it easier for outside interest groups to gain a foothold in the area. Revolutionary and post-revolutionary bandits devastated indigenous villages, taking advantage of their divisions. It was from this complex stew of conflicts that the community guards emerged.

The need to defend community rights and borders is one factor that led to a sense of besiegement among the P'urhépecha. Legal wrangles with the mestizo communities that benefitted from the agrarian reform (*ejidos*) led to bad

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blood, as did allegations that neighboring communities encroached on lands that did not belong to them. These conflicts contributed to episodes of agricultural sabotage, the illegal sale of communal lands, unregulated and illegal logging of communal forests, and the illegal exploitation of water resources.

An interplay between the ambitions of local leaders and the designs of paternalistic officials from the municipal, state, and federal government exacerbated divisions in the communities. Some indigenous leaders would ally themselves with a political party, usually the PRI or the PRD, in order to control local government and local patronage. They could then determine who had access to natural resources, such as timber and agricultural land, and make deals for their personal benefit. Government officials, for their part, pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy in dealing with indigenous communities and were happy to favor local groups that served their political agenda. The federal government also created institutions such as the Supreme Council of Indigenous Peoples and the National Peasants' Confederation, which served to counterbalance "destabilizing forces" in the local communities. Taken together, these practices caused dissatis-faction with the state and fueled a desire to re-shape the relationship between indigenous communities and the Mexican government.

The arrival of organized crime in the region was the final blow that caused long-standing indigenous discontent to harden into support for the community guards. Although drug cultivation is not new to the area — according to the anthropologist Salvador Maldonado, marijuana has been cultivated on the southern edge of the Meseta P'urhépecha since 1970 — it was only in the last decade that organized crime cells gained control of indigenous communities, displacing local authorities and buying off or intimidating community members. Local people have allegedly been the victims of extortion,

A funeral for victims of the violence in Cherán.

Photo by Juan José Estrada Serafín.

kidnapping, rape, and murder. Criminal groups have also exploited the community's natural resources, especially in forested areas. State authorities estimate that more than 80 percent of the Sierra P'urhépecha's exploitable forest resources have been illegally logged in the past 10 years. In effect, P'urhépecha communities were being held hostage by criminal cartels, first by the Familia Michoacana and then by the Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar).

When crime bosses attempted to subjugate the region, the indigenous people rose up in arms. The groups they formed, known as *rondas* or *guardias comunitarias* (community guards), are not new. They emerged in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution as a means of community protection. According to Orlando Aragón, who serves as a lawyer for the highland town of Cherán, these groups historically patrolled communities and would respond to the presence of suspicious groups or individuals, often with violent confrontations or ambushes. The federal government eventually intervened with a military campaign to pacify the region, and the original community guards disbanded in the 1970s.

The P'urhépecha flag.

The rondas re-emerged in Cherán on April 15, 2011. There, organized crime groups had attempted to seize the community's principal water source. Cherán's women and children responded by openly protesting against this extortion attempt. Soon, the entire community joined them. The residents set up barricades at all the entry points into the community and decided to revive the past tradition of the armed rondas. Then, armed indigenous people expelled local authorities, police, and political parties and demanded that federal and state government authorities guarantee their community's security, justifying their actions under Article 2 of the Mexican Constitution, which grants self-governance and self-defense rights to indigenous communities.

These developments were accompanied by community revitalization campaigns that made heavy use of cultural symbols and appeals to ancestral values. The community guards have come to rely on *fogatas* (bonfires), communal labor, the use of the P'urhépecha flag, and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. These tactics set them apart from the mestizo self-defense groups of the Tierra Caliente region.

The bonfires lit by community members serve as points where residents can gather to plan and make decisions. The bonfires have allowed Cherán's residents to recoup a measure of ethnic solidarity, since the labor of building and maintaining them is divided along traditional gender roles: men gather the necessary lumber from the surrounding hillsides, while women maintain the fire and ensure that it does not go out. Because logging has long been a central facet of P'urhépecha identity, the bonfires and the labor related to them have acquired strong symbolic power.

Through mutual aid societies and ideas of traditional reciprocity, Cherán's residents have commissioned local works with the aim of aiding the community guards. Each member of the community — including those who have migrated to the United States (an estimated 40 percent of the population) — contributes money, labor, or time to these works.

The P'urhépecha flag, which the community guards have adopted, first appeared in 1980 during a conflict between the indigenous community of Santa Fe de la Laguna and the mestizo city of Quiroga. It was conceived as a means of promoting P'urhépecha ethnic identity and solidarity. The flag's four colors represent the four sub-regions of the P'urhépecha's territory (green for the Sierra, blue for the Pátzcuaro basin, purple for Zacapu, and yellow for the Cañada). The center of the flag features a fist above a pointed piece of white obsidian; the fist represents the unity of the P'urhépecha communities, while the obsidian represents the pre-Colombian deity Curicaveri. Below this image are the words *Juchari Uinápikua*, which mean "Our Strength" in the P'urhépecha language.

In addition to the P'urhépecha flag, the community guards of Cherán and other indigenous communities have adopted the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. This is surprising given that the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe has not historically been strong in P'urhépecha communities compared to the cults of the Virgin of Candelaria, Nativity, and Immaculate Conception, or The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Indigenous resistance to the drug cartels has led to an unexpected strengthening of community ties and new

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Photo by Juan José Estrada Serafín.

A community guard member in front of a mural of Zapata.

demands on the federal and state governments. In 2012, Cherán became the first municipality to hold elections according to its "ways and customs," and its Consejo Mayor (Great Council) has been legally recognized. Other indigenous communities are following Cherán's example. These steps show that the community guards have moved beyond armed defense and are refashioning the relationship between indigenous communities and the apparatus of the Mexican state.

Community Guards vs. Self-Defense Groups

Although the Mexican Constitution grants self-governance and self-defense rights only to indigenous communities, many mestizo cities and villages have also taken up arms to expel organized criminals.

The most notable of these new self-defense groups are in Michoacán's Tierra Caliente region, which lies to the south of the P'urhépecha heartland. The groups exist throughout the state, however, and there is evidence that they have spread to other parts of the country. To legitimize their efforts, the self-defense groups have sought to link themselves rhetorically with the indigenous community guards, even though the two types of groups have different members, goals, and methods.

While the community guards are made up almost entirely of indigenous rural workers, the self-defense groups have a more diverse membership. Mestizo peasants, ranchers, small-scale merchants, and urban employees all fill their ranks, and some have been accused of being former members of the Knights Templar cartel.

The self-defense groups are also much better armed. The community guards depend on weapons ranging from machetes to hunting rifles, but the self-defense groups are seen toting high-powered firearms that are legally restricted to members of the Mexican Armed Forces. While the self-defense groups claim that the guns were confiscated from the Knights Templar, the presence of high-caliber weapons among their ranks does raise questions.

Similarly, when it comes to financing, the P'urhépecha movement operates on a much smaller scale. It is financed by community members, including those who live abroad, and by national and international supporters. The self-defense groups, on the other hand, can count on donations from farmers, cattle ranchers, and businessmen who have been affected by organized crime; protection fees of an estimated $2 to $3 million per month that used to go to the Knights Templar; and support from towns and cities. There are also rumors that some of the groups are funded by criminal rivals of the Knights Templar.

The community guards and the self-defense groups also have very different relationships to the Mexican government. The indigenous groups are seeking self-governance and have cut ties to established political parties. In contrast, the self-defense groups have had an up-and-down relationship with the state. An accord was reached early on that essentially exempted the self-defense groups from certain regulations, such as the ban on heavy weapons. As the movement developed, however, the government became uneasy about the alliance and began making moves to disarm the self-defense groups and to formally accuse some leaders of having criminal ties or of having committed crimes themselves. In turn, the groups announced on March 10, 2014, that they had been "betrayed" by the federal government. Today, the self-defense movement's relationship to the state remains uneasy. While some of the self-defense groups have signed an agreement with the government to become "Fuerzas Rurales" (Rural Police), other groups remain suspicious and will not align with the state.

Despite their uncertain future, both the community guards and the self-defense groups have achieved significant milestones. They have prompted authorities to attempt to reestablish law and order in areas of the country where criminal groups had operated with impunity. And, while distinct, both are notable examples of how local societies can successfully organize themselves to restore some degree of stability to communities threatened by criminal organizations and official neglect.

Lorena Ojeda is a professor of History at the Universidad Michoacana in Mexico. She is a visiting scholar in the Department of History at UC Berkeley supported by the Fulbright García-Robles and CONACYT grants. She spoke for CLAS on March 19, 2014.

A girl stands before an assembly of Cherán's community guard.

Photo by Juan José Estrada Serafín.

Photo by Rodrigo Abd/Associated Press.

A three-year-old Guatemalan girl is measured as part of a nationwide campaign against malnutrition known as "Zero Hunger."

HEALTH

Starving, Stunted… Obese?

by Robert Stahl

Latin America is in the midst of a "nutrition transition." People across the region are moving from diets high in cereal and fiber to diets high in sugar, fat, and animal protein. Where undernutrition was once the primary concern, overnutrition is now also a problem. Paradoxically, both under- and overnutrition can coexist in the same family and even in the same individual. Lia Haskin Fernald, a professor at UC Berkeley's School of Public Health, calls the combination the "nutritional paradox," and it currently affects pockets of poor, often indigenous populations throughout Latin America.

The mention of malnutrition is likely to illicit an image of a protruding belly on an otherwise emaciated child. However, as Fernald pointed out during her talk for the Center for Latin American Studies, nutritional deficiencies often manifest in less recognizable ways. Stunting, or abnormally low height for a given age, is one physical marker for undernutrition.

A child afflicted with serious stunting may appear otherwise normal, happy, and ready to learn and play. However, stunting leads to a host of ill-effects for health and well-being, including reduced cognitive development, lower school achievement, lower capacity to manage stress, reduced labor-force participation, lower wages, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Generally, Latin America has a relatively low prevalence of stunting (12-13 percent for children under five) when compared to the global average of more than 40 percent in developing countries. However, certain places within Latin America, particularly remote areas with high concentrations of indigenous people, experience a high prevalence of stunting compared to the rest of the region. Stunting afflicts half of all children under five in Guatemala and nearly 30 percent of children of similar age in the Mexican state of Chiapas; by comparison, in the United States, only about 2 percent of young children are stunted.

This phenomenon is playing out amidst what Fernald calls the nutritional risk transition, in which health risks are shifting away from inadequate nutrition and unsafe water and sanitation and towards the modern risks of overweight and obesity associated with Western diets. In 2005, more than 60 percent of Mexican adults were overweight as were a similar percentage of Colombians. The trend towards overnutrition is not unique to the region; it is increasing in both low- and middle-income countries across the globe and has resulted in the growing incidence of diseases, like coronary heart disease and Type-2 diabetes, once associated primarily with wealthy nations.

Together, overweight and undernutrition account for nearly half of the 19 leading risk factors responsible for years of life lost. In Latin America, the populations that are most socially marginalized, including the poor and indigenous people, are especially susceptible to these conditions. In fact, one in 10 indigenous children in Mexico is stunted but also obese or overweight. In neighboring Guatemala, nearly 20 percent of underweight children and roughly 45 percent of overweight mothers occupy the same household.

Unfortunately, there is no clear explanation for why or how these two conditions are occurring simultaneously or how policy-makers and leaders should manage their effects. However, to make sense of this phenomenon, Fernald turned to her own research on perceptions of bodyweight for children four

Photo by Jesus Villanueva.

A Coca-Cola Christmas display in a Mexican superstore.

to six years old by mothers of Mexican-origin in the United States vs. mothers in Mexico, as well as her evaluation of a conditional cash-transfer program in Mexico.

In her study on perceptions of actual and ideal bodyweight preference, qualitative interviews revealed a strong preference for heavier, larger-sized young children among Mexican-resident mothers who had been exposed to undernutrition. They tended to believe that heaviness was an indication of health and reflected that their children had sufficient food to eat. Such associations may put Mexican children on an early trajectory toward poor long-term health outcomes. Mexican mothers residing in California who had an overweight child were instead much more likely to report dissatisfaction with the weight of their child (82 percent versus 29 percent).

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Fernald also shared her experience with Mexico's effort to address poverty-related health concerns through Oportunidades (initially known as Progresa), a conditional cash-transfer program started in 1997. Through Oportunidades, eligible residents are able to receive up to a 30-percent increase in real income to be spent on anything — a refrigerator, food, shoes, cigarettes — and are only constrained by what they have to do to get that money. The cash transfer is conditioned on fulfilling a sequence of child-development-related requirements, including prenatal health care, growth monitoring, immunizations, and management of diarrhea and acute respiratory infections. The transfer amount includes a basic stipend for nutrition (a unit amount per household) and an educational stipend designed to keep girls in school, which varies depending on the age, sex, and grade of the child.

While the Oportunidades program saw vast improvements in nearly every indicator of health and well-being for children involved in the program, the cash supplement was associated with poorer health outcomes for parents, with problematic increases in Body Mass Index (BMI) and both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

The realization that outcomes differ for children and parents in the same household may have helped clarify some of the issues that nations face in dealing with nutrition-related health concerns, but it also raises many new questions and policy challenges that must be confronted. Questions concerning how public-health practitioners and concerned governments can weigh child versus adult health outcomes, as in the case with Oportunidades, are difficult to answer. That question, is what Fernald calls, "the paradox for policymakers."

Lia C. Haskin Fernald is an associate professor of Community Health and Human Development in the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley. She spoke for CLAS on April 7, 2014.

Robert Stahl is a recent graduate of the Master's in Public Health program at UC Berkeley.

A billboard warns about childhood obesity in Veracruz, Mexico.

Photo by Carlos Francisco Campos.

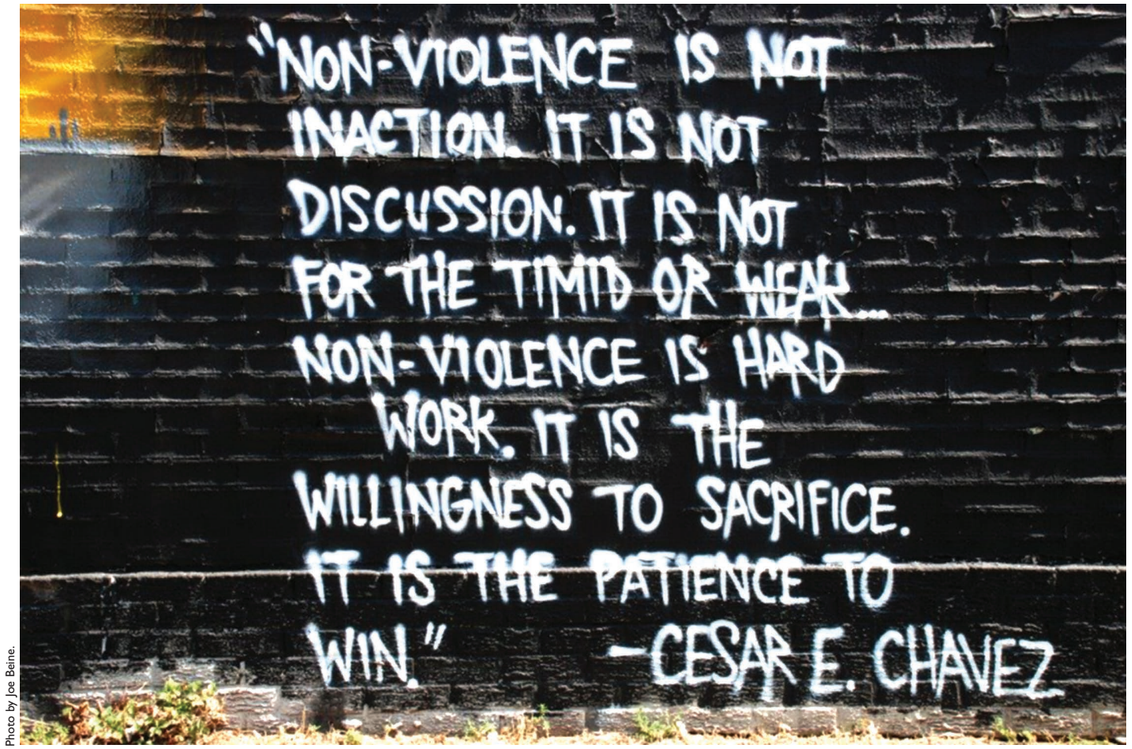

Photo by Joe Beine.

A mural in Denver.

CINE

Cesar's Footsteps

by Erica Hellerstein

When I first heard that Diego Luna had directed a movie about the life of farm worker leader Cesar Chavez, I wasn't quite sure what to think. To be clear, I, like many other starry-eyed fans, love Diego Luna: his mischievous half-grin, nonchalant scruff, and shaggy flop of hair. And I enjoy his films, too: "Y Tu Mamá También," "Miss Bala," "Rudo y Cursi," to name just a few. But my doubts didn't have anything to do with his body of work. I just wasn't sure he'd be able to pull off a movie about such a triumphant moment — and movement — in our recent past. However, after watching an advanced screening of the film sponsored by UC Berkeley's Center for Latin American Studies, I admit, happily, that I was wrong.

Luna's modestly funded film, which took years of fundraising to complete, chronicles the life of Cesar Chavez, the Arizona-born co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) who famously boycotted the grape industry and led a 300-mile march from Delano to Sacramento, California. Rather than tell the entire story of the California activist's life, the movie focuses on a moment in history: Chavez's efforts to unionize underpaid, overworked Latino farm workers in the Central Valley in the 1960s. Chavez, a farm worker himself, who worked in the fields until the late '50s, galvanized Latino grape pickers to protest for higher wages and fair working conditions after witnessing the Delano grape strike called by Filipino-American farmworkers on September 8, 1965.

Their demand for livable salaries pushed Chavez and other key activists, like UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta, into action. On March 17, 1966, in an attempt to raise public awareness about the farmworker's plight, Cesar Chavez and fellow strikers undertook a 300-mile pilgrimage from Delano to the state's capital in Sacramento. They also encouraged all Americans to boycott grapes, striking a blow to profitable growers.

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Cesar Chavez breaks his 1968 fast by sharing bread with Robert Kennedy.

Chavez and other strikers pushed forward for five years until the farmers finally agreed, in the spring of 1970, to sit down at the bargaining table. Growers hard-hit by the boycott signed contracts with the union, and since their grapes were union-approved, they sold for premium prices across the country. This increased pressure on other growers and eventually led the large growers to sign contracts with the union, giving workers higher wages, union representation, health insurance, and safety limits on the use of pesticides in the fields.

But the struggle to earn better working conditions and wages did not come without its sacrifices. The film depicts the brutal, 25-day hunger strike that Chavez undertook in 1968 in order to rededicate the movement to nonviolence as well as the alienation of his brooding teenaged son, who is often roughed up and hassled at school due to the activism of his father. These tensions helped dramatize the movie's storyline, which was about the personal as much as the political. Some of the more critical reviews of the film have said that Luna's Chavez was painted as a sanitized saint, cast in a glowingly reverential light. But I didn't find him to be saturated with well-meaning sanctity. In fact, as the film reveals, the father of the movement was not always the family man he could have been, prioritizing his work over his family. And the rest of the characters in the cast weren't perfect, either. Yes, they were certainly movers and shakers, but they weren't, thank God, martyrs — how boring it is to watch perfect characters glide through life's miserable obstacles — and how much more relatable to watch people, not heroes, do remarkable things.

Chavez's family members had complicated relationships and gnawing self-doubts; some men in the movement were afflicted with machista swagger, occasionally throwing punches that undermined their leader's trademark nonviolent philosophy. Sure, Luna could have imbued the film's protagonists with a more radical, tortured bent, but I think the point of the movie was much simpler — to shed light on an overlooked chapter of our history — rather than explore the fracturing of a movement and the inner demons of its leader.

The preview audience seemed to agree. After credits rolled, the film received a standing ovation at Berkeley's

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Michael Peña as Cesar Chavez.

"Cesar Chavez"

Directed by Diego Luna, 2014

Photo courtesy of Canana Films.

Diego Luna on location during the filming of "Cesar Chavez."

A Conversation With Diego Luna

On why he made the film:

When I was 15 years old, I remember seeing images of the funeral of Cesar Chavez… that amazing image of thousands of farm workers walking with the wood box that held Cesar's body. Even in his funeral he was sending the right message. He was sending the message that he was just another person in the movement.

I come from a place where politicians have showed us that change will never come from their angle. We were at Harvard recently, where our politicians go to give lessons to young kids about stuff they didn't do. I wanted the film to send the message that if we fight indifference, things can happen. It's by telling personal stories, as this movement showed us, that we can engage with people.

I did the film because I thought there was an amazing message behind the boycott. Instead of using violence and attacking the machine that is oppressing us straight on, if you go around and talk to consumers… mothers talking to mothers, parents talking to parents — people don't want to do wrong. They don't want to hurt you, but it's indifference, it's ignorance that stops them from doing the right thing. I love the idea of mothers saying, "Well, just remind yourself when you buy a grape, you are supporting child labor." And that's when I connected with the story because that's what we do as filmmakers. We tell personal stories that hopefully will confront you with a bigger thing, a bigger issue, and make you react and do something.

On using farm workers as extras:

We were shooting in Sonora… Makeup cannot do that, you know? Those faces have been under the sun for hours and hours in rough conditions, and their hands are real hands. We thought it was easier to explain to a farm worker how we do film than to explain to extras what it is to be a farm worker. And it was fun because the first day there were thousands of them: all Sonora came to be part of the film. By the third day, they realized that film was not glamorous. It was boring, and they had to wait long periods of time. So we had to go to other towns to find people. But also, every time we were shooting, you would turn right and people were picking grapes. So we were reminded of the story.

All our actors went to work in the fields. I remember being in the fields and saying to the guys, "Please treat them as you treat every worker here." And they came back with the feeling of knowing something they didn't know before. It was the feeling of being in a place that visually looks gorgeous, but you are in the middle of that field, just a little dot in the middle of a huge landscape, where there is no shade, no bathrooms, no nothing… Being left alone in the middle of the fields, they had that memory… and they could portray what they did.

These selections from the question-and-answer session have been edited and condensed.

Photo courtesy of Canana Films.

Michael Peña as Cesar Chavez working in the fields.

Farm workers and supporters march from Delano to Sacramento, 1968.
(Photo: Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Union Affairs, Wayne State University.)

Cesar's Footsteps

continued from page 28

California Theater. One woman cupped her hands around her mouth and screeched, "*Si se puede!*" while a thunderstorm of claps rumbled throughout the room. Dolores Huerta was sitting two seats away from me — small-boned, with a shiny black bob and a presence much larger than her petite frame. Nearby, other original members of the UFW, who had marched to Sacramento with Chavez, were also seated, as was the current president of the organization, Arturo Rodriguez.

Viewers jeered and groaned when old footage of Reagan and Nixon popped onscreen and hooted gleefully during the film's triumphant moments. I must admit that a few scenes in the movie did give me chills: it was thrilling to be watching that movie surrounded by the folks who birthed the movement in the first place. No matter what the cynics and jaded naysayers declare — the ones who shrug off activism because the system is damn corrupt anyway — watching the film in that theater was a profoundly moving experience. It was raining bitterly outside, and there I was, for the first time in months, inspired. The film is truly a must-see for anyone seeking to be reminded of one of history's simpler lessons: if you want to change the future, it helps to study the past.

CLAS showed an advanced screening of "Cesar Chavez" on March 5, 2014. After the film, Diego Luna, the director; Arturo Rodriguez, president of the United Farm Workers, and Maria Echaveste of Berkeley Law responded to questions from the audience.

Erica Hellerstein is a student in the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley.

The discussion panel after the film (from left): Harley Shaiken, chair, Center for Latin American Studies; Diego Luna, director, "Cesar Chavez"; Arturo Rodriguez, president, United Farm Workers; Maria Echaveste, Berkeley Law School.

Photo by Jim Block.

Dolores Huerta surrounded by young Latinas at the screening of "Cesar Chavez."
(Photo by Jim Block.)

The Stock Exchange, Mexico City.
(Photo by Marco Guzmán, Jr.)

TRADE

The Nafta Paradox

by Harley Shaiken

The North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) "ignited an explosion in cross-border economic activity," wrote former U.S. Trade Representative Carla A. Hills in the January 2014 issue of Foreign Affairs magazine, reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the agreement. Nafta was truly historic. It was the first regional trade agreement to link economies at such sharply different levels of development as Mexico on the one hand and the United States and Canada on the other. The agreement provoked a highly contentious public debate in the United States — the sharpest trade debate since World War II — centered around globalization in general and the economic relationship between the United States and Mexico in particular. The debate went far beyond trade experts and high-powered lobbyists in Washington and spilled over onto Main Street in union halls, environmental groups, community meetings, and small business associations.

As the agreement headed to a vote in the U.S. Congress in November 1993, proponents sought to define the choice as a vote for free trade or protectionism. They argued that lowering trade barriers and guaranteeing investment would supercharge trade and, as a result, economic growth, new jobs, environmental protection, and other benefits would automatically follow in its wake. Critics argued that the choice was not between free trade and protectionism but rather between trade whose benefits would largely flow to the top versus trade whose gains would be shared more widely. They accepted the notion that growing trade could bring strong benefits but warned that effective labor and environmental provisions were essential to translate expanded trade into a broadly shared, sustainable prosperity. The key to integrating three very disparate economies was defining the rules of the game. Trade among complex economies is inherently managed trade — the final Nafta agreement approaches 1,200 pages of highly technical language — so the real question became: what was being managed and with what goals in mind?

What then has happened after 20 years under Nafta? The agreement encompasses many areas, from agriculture to banking, from safeguarding intellectual property rights to resolving investment disputes. The most profound changes took place in manufacturing trade between Mexico and the United States — Canada and the U.S. had already adopted a free trade agreement in 1987 — so the economic integration of these two neighbors will be the focus of this article. I plan to explore three broad areas: first, the character of the trade underlying Nafta's widely hailed, supercharged growth; second, the troubling paradox at the heart of the agreement: rising productivity and falling wages; and, finally, what the agreement looks like on the ground as seen through the transformation of automobile production, a flagship industry throughout North America.

A Spectacular Rise in Trade

Carla Hills was certainly right about the explosion in cross-border economic activity. Total merchandise trade between the United States and Mexico increased almost sixfold after the passage of Nafta, from $80 billion in 1993 to $459 billion in 2013, a far steeper and faster rise than either proponents or critics predicted when the treaty was being debated.

While expanded trade can provide considerable benefits, a closer look at these numbers reveals a more complex, troubling picture. "Viewed exclusively as a trade deal, Nafta has been an undeniable success story for Mexico, ushering in a dramatic surge in exports," wrote Jorge Castañeda in the same January 2014 issue of Foreign Affairs as Carla Hills. Castañeda, a critic of Nafta during the trade debate and Mexico's Foreign Minister from 2000 to 2003, then added "But if the purpose of the agreement was to spur economic growth, create jobs, boost productivity, lift wages, and discourage emigration, then the results have been less clear-cut."

The key issue isn't simply the growth in trade — important as it is for all three countries involved — but more importantly the character of that trade. Consider the unbalanced trading relationship. At the time of the debate, President Bill Clinton projected an "export boom to Mexico" that would generate 200,000 jobs as early as 1995 and one million jobs in five years. A study by Gary Hufbauer and Jeffrey Schott, two noted proponents of the agreement at the Institute for International Economics, predicted a "U.S. trade surplus with Mexico of about

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$7 billion to $9 billion annually by 1995, rising to $9 billion to $12 billion between the years 2000 and 2010."

The actual results have been very different. U.S. trade with Mexico went from a slight surplus in 1994 to an almost $100 billion deficit in 2013. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that 700,000 U.S. workers were displaced as a result of U.S.-Mexico trade under Nafta. To put this number in context, this displacement approaches total current domestic employment in the U.S. auto industry.

While Mexico has a large trade surplus with the United States, it has a growing trade deficit with China. Mexico's trade with China went from barely registering — Mexico didn't even publish the data separately in 1990 — to taking off in the new millennium. In fact, China emerged as the second-largest trading partner of both the United States and Mexico by 2009. China's exports to Mexico totaled $56.9 billion in 2012, while its imports from Mexico were $5.7 billion, leaving Mexico with a $51.2 billion trade deficit with China, or more than half Mexico's trade surplus with the United States.

Trade under Nafta is not simply Mexican consumers buying U.S goods or the other way around. Rather, Mexican plants import parts, assemble them, and export them for sale, largely to the United States. One might call these imports, whether from the United States or China, "industrial tourists" since they stay in Mexico only long enough to become cars, televisions, and other goods that are then bought by U.S. consumers. Mexicans may handle these imports on assembly lines, but they don't purchase them in stores. Products made from these temporary imports accounted for an average of 72 percent of Mexico's manufacturing exports between 1993 and 2010, a high concentration by global standards.

Nonetheless, sharply expanded trade has brought benefits to Mexico, although it has hardly been the "undeniable success story" that some herald. Mexico has gained much-needed jobs, access to advanced production technology, and new ways of organizing work. However, only 3 percent of border plant exports are sourced domestically, and a mere 0.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is invested in research and development. Moreover, low wages diminish purchasing power, limit the domestic market, and slow Mexico's potential growth. Carol Wise points out that Mexico's per capita income remains mired at "about one-third that of the wealthier countries in the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development]."

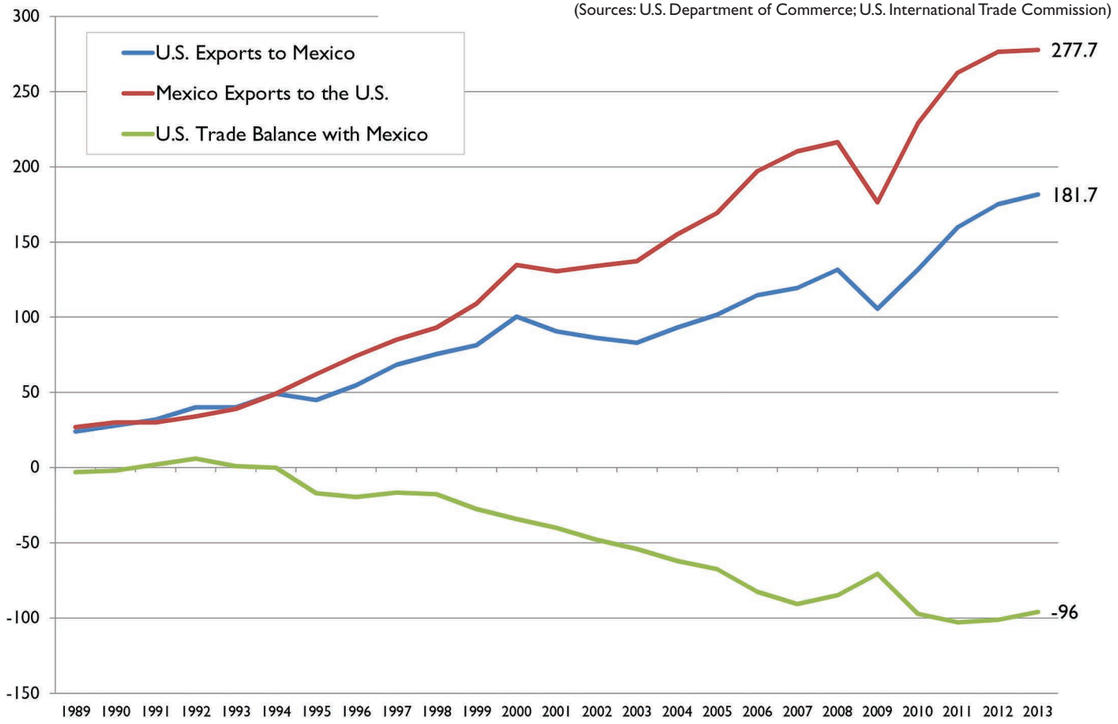
President Clinton signs legislation implementing the North American Free Trade Agreement on December 8, 1993.

Photo by Doug Mills/Associated Press.

U.S.-Mexico Merchandise Trade Balance, 1989-2013

Figures in billions of U.S. dollars

(Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce; U.S. International Trade Commission)



The United Nations Development Program concluded in a 2007 report that, "Nafta has produced disappointing results in terms of growth and development." Economists Gerardo Fujii Gambero and Rosario Cervantes Martínez writing in the April 2013 issue of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Review found that "the gap between exports and GDP [in Mexico] has been widening, which indicates that the export sector is underperforming as a driver of economic growth." They argued that "the ability of exports to galvanize the economy will be heightened if export activity leads to an expansion of the domestic market."

Rising Productivity and Declining Wages

While very different economies, the United States and Mexico share similar problems: sharp income inequality, slow growth, high unemployment, and persistent underemployment. These problems are exacerbated by a troubling paradox: rising productivity combined with falling real wages. As a result, much of the economic gain has flowed to the top as workers and communities have faced downward pressure on wages and working conditions. While this productivity/wage disconnect emerged as a key issue during the Nafta debate, it now feeds into a growing concern in many countries throughout the world, including the United States, about the corrosive effects of economic inequality, which President Obama has called the defining issue of our time.

Consider the dimensions of this disconnect in Mexico. Mexican manufacturing productivity rose by almost 80 percent under Nafta between 1994 and 2010, while real hourly compensation — wages and benefits — slid by nearly 20 percent. In fact, this data understates the productivity/wage disconnect. Wages in 1994, the base year, were already 30 percent below their 1980 level despite significant increases in productivity during this period. Although they are producing more, millions of Mexican workers are earning less than they did three decades ago.

Economists often maintain that if wages are low, their level simply reflects low productivity. In the Mexican case, however, low wages exist in spite of strong gains in manufacturing productivity. These low wages reflect a number of factors, from government policy to globalization, but a central issue is the lack of labor rights in the export sector. As a result, it is difficult to form independent unions that can exert pressure to restore a more robust

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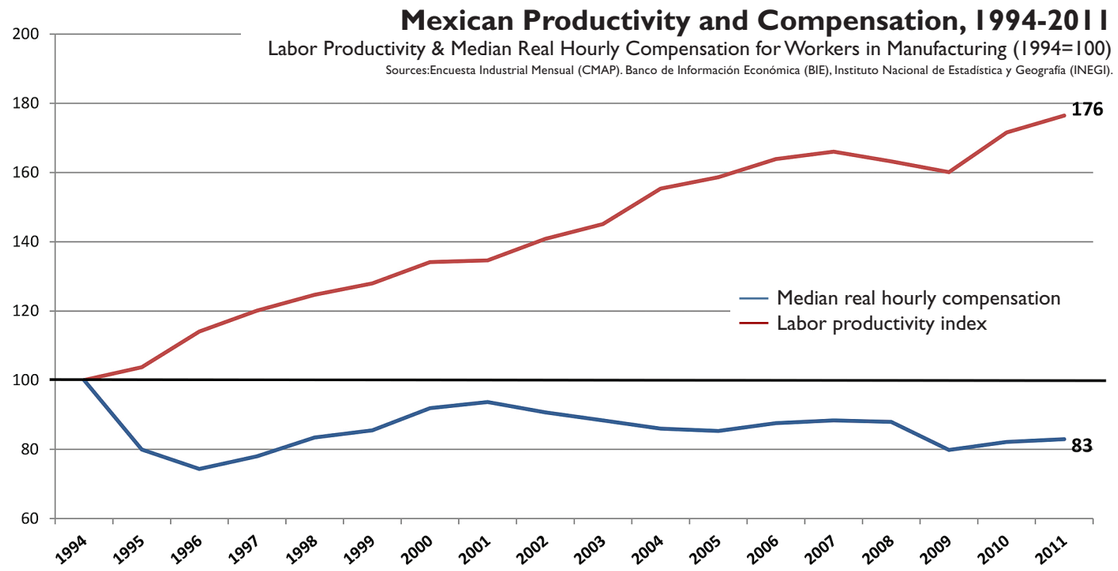

link between productivity and wages. If workers are unable to share in the gains, high-productivity poverty becomes a danger. The damage affects more than Mexican workers. The gap between productivity and wages results in low purchasing power, which depresses consumer demand and slows economic growth.

This gap in Mexico also puts downward pressure on wages in the United States, contributing to a U.S. wage/productivity gap that began opening up in the mid-1970s. Between 1947 and the early 1970s, strong unions forged a link between rising productivity and higher wages, and the entire economy benefitted. As union strength waned, the U.S. wage/productivity gap opened and wages stagnated. What does this have to do with Nafta? A key question during the Nafta debates in 1993 was whether Mexican and U.S. wages would harmonize upwards or be pulled downwards by the agreement. Proponents argued that expanding trade alone would lift all boats, while critics maintained that effective labor standards were essential to insure that everyone would benefit.

Mexico and the United States are both in a far tougher, more competitive global economy today. Mexico may be the low-wage producer in Nafta, but it is a medium-wage country globally. How can wages rise in Mexico, given powerful global competitors such as China? It is a tough challenge but not an impossible one. Consider this challenge in the context of the automobile industry.

Restructuring of the North American Auto Industry

Autos remain the flagship North American manufacturing industry. The U.S. auto industry contributed more than 3 percent of GDP, and motor vehicle and parts manufacturers accounted for 786,000 jobs, as 2012 drew to a close. Autos play a defining economic role in Mexico as well, accounting for 2.7 percent of GDP and 579,000 jobs. Mexico is now the world's eighth largest auto producer; the sector was responsible for $88 billion in exports or almost 30 percent of total manufacturing exports in 2012.

Under Nafta, the auto industry in Mexico has grown rapidly, and it is in the midst of an unprecedented expansion. Mexico assembled over three million vehicles in 2013 — more than Canada — and exported over 80 percent of them, most to the United States. Global automakers plan to invest $6.8 billion in Mexico between 2013 and 2015, The Detroit Free Press calculates. As a result, Mexico is on track to become the leading source of imported vehicles for the U.S. market by 2015, surpassing both Canada and Japan. Moreover, Mexico exported $44.8 billion in auto parts to the United States last year, more than Japan, Germany, and Korea combined.

Mexico's impressive success rests on a new reality: world-class productivity and quality in its best assembly plants which utilize the most advanced manufacturing technology available globally. These results are a tribute to firms and Mexican workers as well as good news for the economy. The lure for investment, however, remains

low wages. "The automakers are shy about saying so," the trade newspaper Automotive News writes, "but the reality is that in 2012 Mexican wages are still very low." Estimates of Mexican compensation in the auto industry — wages and benefits — ranges from about 20 percent of U.S. levels, according to the Center for Automotive Research, to 11 percent, according to the CEO of Mazda's Mexican operations.

Can Mexico be globally competitive at higher wage rates? While the challenge is far from trivial, the answer is yes. Competitiveness depends on innovation, productivity, and quality, areas in which Mexican plants have excelled. The most competitive plants are not those that pay the lowest wages but rather those that achieve the lowest unit costs, a combination of wages, productivity, and quality. In this context, higher wages in a competitive industry expand purchasing power and lay the basis for higher, sustainable domestic growth.

Consider the experience of the U.S. auto industry. GM and Chrysler drove off a cliff into bankruptcy in 2009, and Ford skidded to the edge. A partnership between Washington, the automakers, and the United Auto Workers (UAW) union has resulted in a remarkable renaissance that seemed unlikely, if not impossible, at the time. The Detroit-based industry and the UAW are now in the midst of redefining competitiveness in the United States. Labor agreements signed in 2011 have led to 28,000 new jobs while a total of 150,000 jobs will be added in the U.S. auto industry as a whole. As a result, the Ford Fusion — a critical, mid-sized vehicle for Ford — is now built in Flat Rock, Michigan, as well as in Hermosillo, Mexico. These new factories promise to be very competitive. They will build on a skilled workforce that can deliver innovation on the line as well as high productivity and quality.

The Detroit automakers are now announcing impressive profits in North America, particularly the United States, at wages considerably higher than those paid in Mexico. In 2013, Ford announced record profits in its North American operations — $8.8 billion — and 47,000 Ford hourly workers in the United States received profit-sharing checks averaging $8,800 based on U.S. profits. The ability to build vehicles profitably in the United States demonstrates that it is possible to move toward a highly competitive North America, in which wages harmonize upwards, laying the basis for a faster-growing consumer market and stronger economic growth. In other words, if U.S. automakers are competitive at high wages, automakers located in Mexico could be competitive at higher wages.

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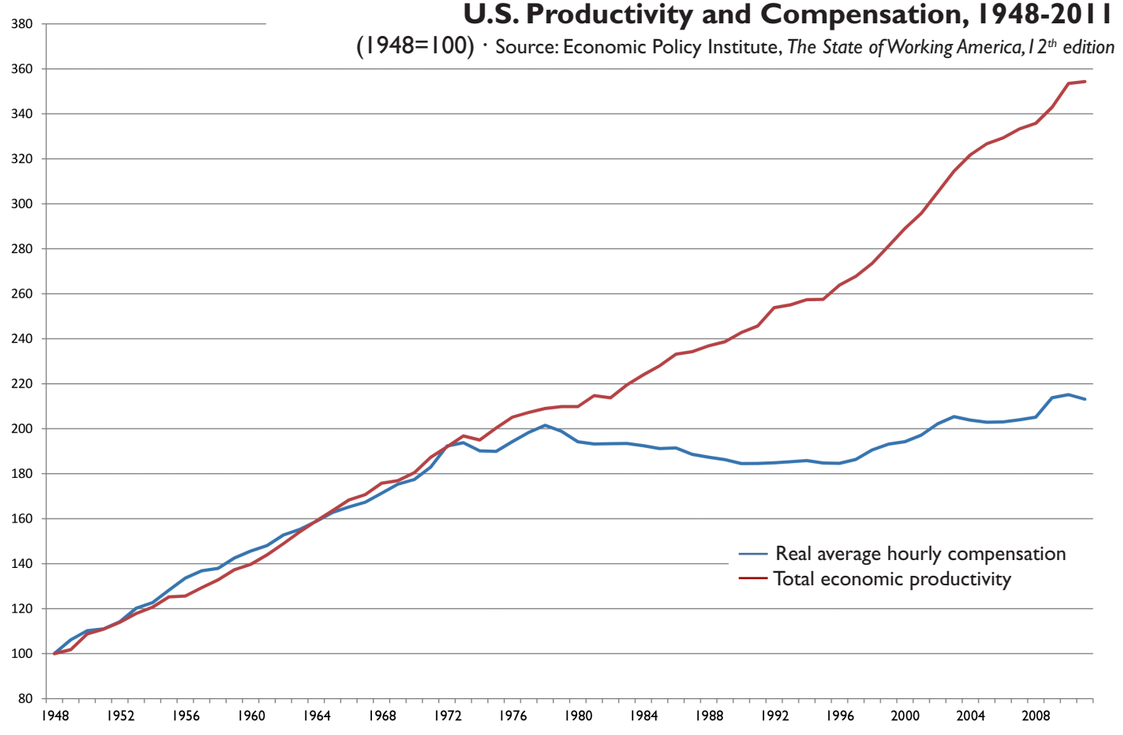

What about China? Chinese exports of auto parts to the United States have risen more than ninefold from 2000 to 2010, causing a $9 billion U.S. trade deficit in this sector. Now, labor shortages and tens of thousands of labor demonstrations in cities large and small are driving wages up. Annual wage increases of as much as 50 percent have been reported in export-oriented Guangzhou province. As The New York Times put it in mid-February 2012, "the cheap labor that has made China's factories nearly unbeatable is not so cheap anymore." Estimates indicate that Chinese manufacturing wages are already between 11 and 20 percent higher than those in Mexico, and shipping costs add an additional burden.

Insuring Broadly Shared Prosperity

The evidence over the last two decades indicates a gap between the promise of trade and the reality of Nafta. Despite some impressive gains, an opportunity has been squandered for all three countries. Expanding trade between Mexico and the United States in particular could fuel economic growth, build an environment-friendly partnership, and bring broadly shared prosperity to people and communities on both sides of the border. Nafta, however, resulted in far-reaching reforms that reduced risks for investors but locked in an unsatisfactory status quo for workers and the environment in Mexico.

Nafta is unlikely to be reopened, let alone repealed, anytime soon. As noted critic Jeff Faux put it "the toothpaste of Nafta cannot be put back into the tube." Nonetheless, a surprising consensus has emerged among some leading Nafta proponents and critics: the U.S.-Mexico economic relationship should be deepened if it is to succeed. This may be off the political radar currently, but it is worth exploring nonetheless. A more effective integration would involve cross-border cooperation on issues such as infrastructure, education, renewable energy, and development, strengthening both economies.

Along these lines, Mexico announced an ambitious plan in 2014 to move towards 100,000 Mexicans studying in the United States and 50,000 Americans studying in Mexico. California Governor Jerry Brown embraced the idea and signed a Memorandum of Understanding on education to move in this direction while leading a trade mission to Mexico in the summer of 2014. On the same trip, the governor proposed a cross-border photovoltaic solar facility in which each country would build complementary plants in order to supply energy to both California and Baja California. This highly innovative proposal would underscore the cost-effectiveness of solar energy and showcase the benefits of California and Mexico working together on shared issues. After all, the sun shines on both sides of the border, and Mexico and California would be taking the same road to the sun. The initial response of Mexican officials was highly positive. These projects could lay the basis for far broader cooperation. A new generation of state-of-the-art auto plants on both sides of the border could commit to generating a sizeable part of their power needs from solar energy and new highways could have solar medians. Renewable energy production and installation could create jobs on both sides of the border.

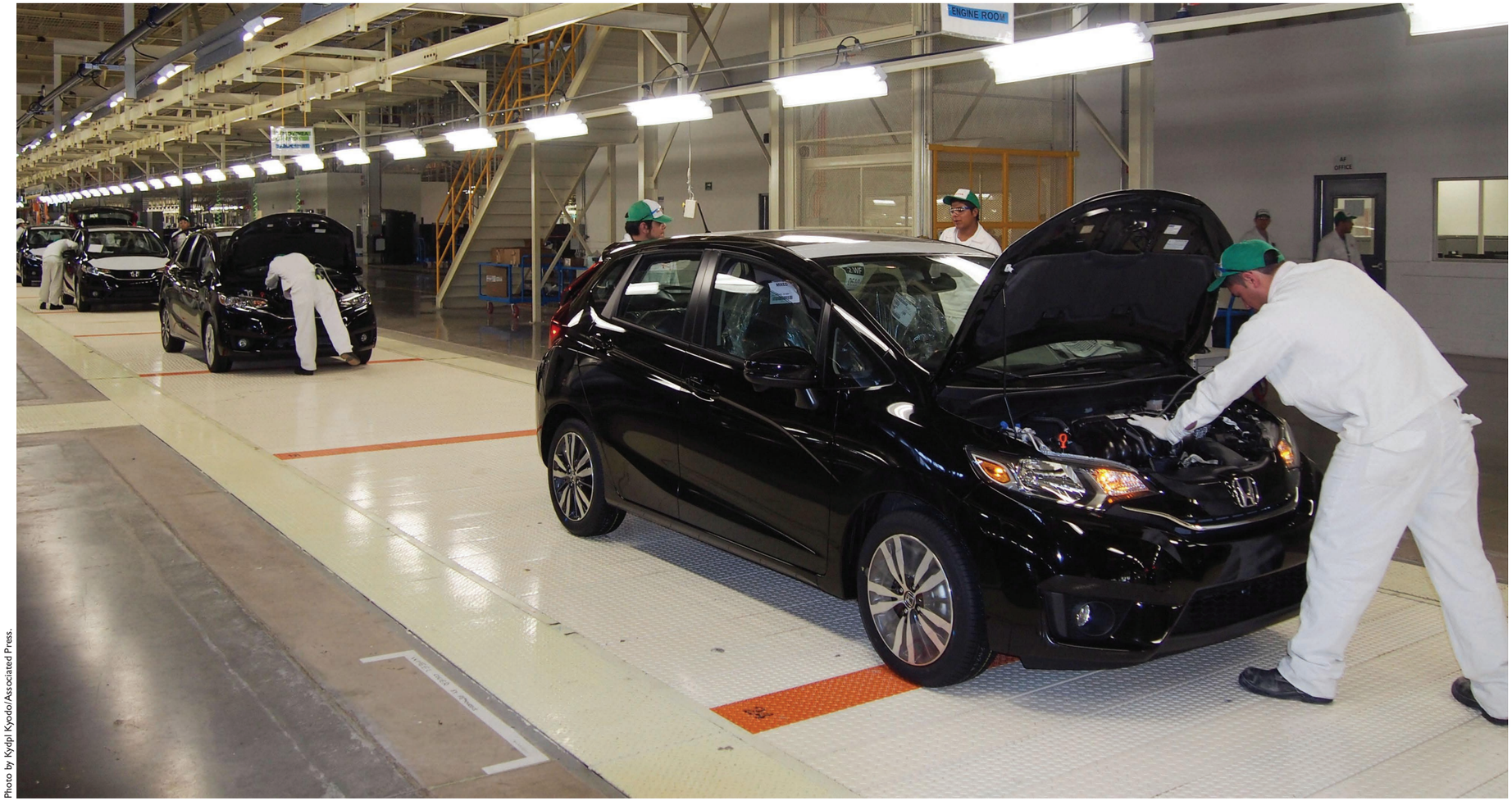

Photo by Kydpl Kyodo/Associated Press.

Workers at the new Honda plant in Celaya, Mexico.

Unions also have a critical international role to play. They have proven essential to building a highly competitive U.S. auto industry and, at the same time, have sought to insure a share of that success for their members. The result is more robust consumer demand — what the legendary UAW leader Walter Reuther called "high-velocity" purchasing power — and a more successful economy. In Blue/Green alliances in the United States, unions are embracing the urgency of working with environmental groups to address climate change and build a more sustainable future, an idea that is equally urgent across North America and the rest of the world. Ultimately, trade success requires a broad, sustainable economic context that works. This context means policies in each of the countries that promote growth, jobs, and consumer demand while respecting the environment — not an easy task but an essential one in today's global economy.

Looking at the first 20 years of Nafta is not simply a lesson in history but a guide to the issues raised by the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed 12-nation agreement with Mexico as well as other Latin American and Asian countries. These countries account for 40 percent of global output and more than 30 percent of global trade. If this far larger trade agreement doesn't incorporate the lessons of the Nafta experience, it is bound to repeat Nafta's mistakes rather than realizing the gains that trade makes possible.

Harley Shaiken is a professor in the Departments of Geography and Education and the chair of the Center for Latin American Studies at UC Berkeley.

Photo by Iván Jaré Jota.

The sun breaks through the clouds over Medellín, Colombia.

COLOMBIA

Finding Room to Pardon

by Jean Spencer

The future of the negotiations to end Colombia's decades-long civil war hung in the balance when Ambassador Luis Carlos Villegas came to Berkeley to make a case for his country and its president, Juan Manuel Santos. With less than a month to go before the first-round presidential elections, President Santos was taking a calculated risk by pressing forward with the peace process. Villegas acknowledged as much, saying that the easiest way to win reelection would be to suspend negotiations until after the balloting was over. But he dismissed such tactics as "not serious." By tying the election to the negotiations, President Santos had raised the stakes: if he won, he would have a mandate to continue the peace process; if he lost, the new occupant of the Casa de Nariño would be Óscar Iván Zuluaga, a critic of the negotiations who promised a "full-frontal assault on terrorism."

When the results of the May 25th election came in, it looked as though the president's bet had backfired: Zuluaga had won 29.3 percent of the vote to Santos' 25.7 percent. As the country headed to the second-round election, the central question seemed to be the one Villegas had raised at Berkeley: "Are we able to pardon?"

In many ways, the fact that Colombia was even facing such a question was a victory. Long a source of troubling headlines, the country has made remarkable strides in the 21st century. Since 2000, both nominal gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign trade have quadrupled. The poverty rate, national debt, and inflation are also down significantly. Colombia appears to have turned a corner, leaving behind the bad old days when the image it projected internationally was that of a country teetering on the edge of being a failed state, riven by narco-violence, political assassinations, and clashes between paramilitaries and guerrillas.

"We Colombians are not used to being a source of good news," the ambassador noted during his talk for the Center for Latin American Studies. Villegas credited the turnaround to the "very hard work" of "two generations of Colombians" who put their lives, their jobs, and their families at stake to bring stability to the country. He also had words of praise for the United States and its support of Plan Colombia, an initiative that provided aid in combatting drug cartels and left-wing guerrillas. "In 1999, when nobody wanted to know anything about Colombia," he said, the United States "raised its hand and said, 'I'm here to help.' " The ambassador attributed improvements in the country's security situation in part to that help.

Despite Colombia's progress, Villegas acknowledged that there is still much more to do. And for him, the number one priority is bringing the seemingly endless internal conflict to a close.

Without peace, he argued, other important goals like rural development and judicial reform will be even more difficult to attain.

As a former member of the government team charged with negotiating with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's largest guerrilla group, Villegas has a unique vantage point. He believes that the current round of negotiations was made possible by three changes in Colombia's political climate. First, the eradication of an estimated 85 percent of the country's illicit crops, which he called "the fuel for financing violence," tilted the balance of power in favor of the government. Second, the decline in the FARC's international reputation has cut the organization off from foreign political and financial support. Once considered "freedom fighters" by some groups in the United States and Europe, the FARC is now on many countries' lists of international terrorists. Lastly, the FARC is faced with a different Colombia than the one that spurred its founding in 1964, a Colombia where growth is up, poverty is down, and the government can successfully implement social programs. At long last, the FARC has no option but to negotiate, Villegas said.

In the three years since negotiations began, the government and the guerrillas have reached agreement

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Hundreds of coca eradicators walk to a coca field near Colombia's southwestern border.

Photo by William Fernando Martinez/Associated Press.

At the end of his talk, an audience member asked Ambassador Villegas what he would say, as a victim of the conflict himself, to those who are not willing to pardon their opponents in the conflict in order to advance the peace process. The following was the ambassador's response.

Thank you for the question. That's a subject I never touch by my own initiative… but when people ask me about that, I have a few things to say.

First, when President Santos invited me to the team, he very kindly said, "Do you think you [should be recused] because your daughter has been kidnapped by FARC in 2000?" And my answer was, "Mr. President, the easy way of getting out is to say, 'Yes, I am [recused].' And everybody will understand why Mr. Villegas is not in the team. Who could blame that?"

But then with my wife we sat and said, no, the message has to be that even if you have a scar, even if it hurts when you see your counterpart at the table, the message is that there's room for pardon. It's the only way peace is possible in Colombia. Because we all have our pains.

The pain of kidnapping is something you cannot imagine unless you have been close to it. What I can say personally is that kidnapping of a kid — of your kid — is even worse than death. Because with death you have certainties — and sadness — but with kidnapping you have sadness and uncertainty.

And that's it. I was there. I'm still there. When FARC said once, at the table, "What victims? We have no victims." I said, "Look at me? Remember me? You have one here." It's useful to remind people that there are victims, that we have in our hearts pain, but that we have in our hearts room to pardon. Not to forget — it is unforgettable — but to pardon.

So I hope our decision brings to other people the same feeling: that the well-being of our kids, of our great-[grand]-children, of the Colombians of 100 years from now… deserves a sacrifice of pardoning, of having room for pardon.

Ambassador Villegas speaks at Berkeley, May 2014.
(Photo by Mariana González Insua.)

on two points. First, the government will devote significant funds — totaling 1 to 1.5 percent of GDP for the next 15 years according to Villegas' estimates — to a program of rural development in the form of roads, land, credit, technology, and modernizing institutions. The ambassador emphasized that this work needs to be done with or without an agreement but that it would be much easier and more successful with the cooperation of the FARC. The second point of agreement was around political participation. Villegas stressed that the government would not agree to changes to the political model during the peace process but that it was open to sitting down with the FARC to negotiate reforms once the guerrillas turned in their weapons and became an unarmed political party. The personal security of politicians is key to the success of political reforms, he said. Politicians from all sides "have been under threat for doing politics for the last century." Going forward, it is critical that "if you decide to go into politics unarmed, you are going to be alive and well."

"What's left?" Villegas asked rhetorically. "The hardest part." The next step in the negotiations is convincing the FARC to sever its connections to drug trafficking and organized crime. While acknowledging that it is unlikely that every last guerrilla will abandon illicit activities, the ambassador expressed the hope that 80 to 90 percent would return to civilian life. If that were to happen, dealing with the remainder would be "a police problem… not a problem of international law or international politics."

The other remaining sticking point in the negotiations is the issue of justice. The negotiators have to thread a fine needle between the amount of justice the Colombian public and the international community expect and the amount of justice the FARC will accept. Villegas noted that Colombia's peace process is the first to go forward since the Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court. Those in the international human rights community are thus concerned that the Colombian process not set a precedent that looks like impunity. On the other hand, the settlement cannot be so stringent that the guerrillas will not lay down their arms. "Imagine a person," Villegas said, "that has been 35 years in the jungle… with a gun on his shoulder" and the only proposal he has in front of him is, "Give me your gun, and go to jail 40 years." The audience's nervous laughter was a telling indicator of what that man's response would be. And yet, the victims must also be satisfied that justice has been done.

During the question-and-answer session, members of the audience returned to the needs of the victims. Villegas was eloquent on that score. "The treatment of the victims of the conflict is the key for peace," he said. "The treatment of the victims is correct when it hurts," when both victims and perpetrators must make concessions. Then, he said, there is room for pardon. "Are we able to pardon?" he asked. "If we can, that is a start for peace." If not, he warned, the cycle of violence will continue.

On June 15, 2014, Colombians again went to the polls. This time, President Santos came away with a solid victory and a mandate to continue the peace process, winning nearly 51 percent of the vote to Zuluaga's 45 percent.

And yet, the journey is far from over. Despite his optimism, Villegas warned that a signed agreement is not a guarantee of future peace. "We cannot commit the same mistake we committed in Central America," he said, referring to the end of the region's civil wars in the 1990s. "We thought that the day the treaties were signed, everybody could go home happy. And it has been very expensive, that picture we had 25 years ago." An agreement is only a piece of paper, he said, unless it becomes an expression of the will of the Colombian people. That transformation, "requires a lot of pardon; it requires a lot of tolerance; it requires a lot of economic policies to fight inequality; and it requires open foreign policy. That's the challenge. My guess is that this is best moment I've ever seen for my country in my lifetime."

The coming months will reveal whether Ambassador Villegas' optimism is well founded.

Luis Carlos Villegas is the Colombian Ambassador to the United States. He spoke for CLAS on May 1, 2014.

Jean Spencer is the Outreach and Publications Coordinator at the Center for Latin American Studies.

Supporters of President Santos with "peace" written on their hands celebrate his victory in the runoff election.

Photo by Santiago Cortez/Associated Press.

Photo by Kiki Arnal

Caura palms being harvested by hand.

ENVIRONMENT

People, Palm Trees, and Survival

by Ana Galvis-Martínez and León Ávila

Palm oil, which is rich in saturated fats and therefore uniquely suited for use in processed food and biodiesel production, is an increasingly important international commodity. To meet growing demand, African palm plantations have spread across Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand and are becoming common in tropical regions of South America.

According to Tarek Milleron, African palm plantations are "a serious business." The ecologist and founder of the non-profit Caura Futures, which works in Venezuela's Caura River basin to protect both indigenous knowledge and the local ecosystem, described palm production in his talk for the Center for Latin American Studies. Typically, plantations follow a conventional agribusiness model in which a monoculture of non-native palms is protected with high doses of fertilizers and pesticides. This industrial production model leads to both deforestation and the pollution of soil and water. It also creates social problems. As a case in point, Milleron noted that in Colombia, the expansion of African palm tree plantations has led to the violent displacement of rural communities.

In contrast to the industrialized production of exotic palms, the Amazon's indigenous peoples have a long history of sustainably managing wild palm trees, which they use primarily for food, oil, and roofing materials. All these uses require traditional knowledge, such as how to cook the palm fruit to extract oil and how to weave palm leaves to make a roof, noted Milleron.

Harvesting the fruit sustainably also requires traditional knowledge. Until recently, indigenous forest dwellers harvested palm fruit by scaling the trees, but this practice is disappearing among young people, mainly because it is seen as dangerous and difficult. This loss of traditional knowledge, combined with growing market demand for palm oil, threatens the sustainable use of wild palms because people are tempted to cut down the trees rather than climb them to reach the fruit.

To counter this trend, Milleron has implemented a program to promote and recover traditional knowledge and practices around palm trees. The program has two main purposes: to preserve ancient techniques of scaling palm trees and to train participants in the use of new equipment that makes climbing safer and easier. To encourage young people to develop climbing skills, Milleron helps organize competitions. Those who become proficient can then increase their income by selling the fruit.

One of the limitations to expanding the use of the climbing gear in indigenous communities is the price. It costs about $60 and cannot be made with local materials. One of the ways in which communities have worked within this limitation is that individuals who have the ability and the equipment to climb become "specialists" in harvesting the fruit.

Milleron argued that the fruit of these wild palms has significant productive potential. Bataua palm trees, which produce fruit rich in high-quality proteins and oil that is comparable to olive oil, are particularly promising. There are approximately 3.7 billion of these trees, which together are capable of producing 2 million tons of oil. The sustainable use of this resource could help provide a financial incentive to preserve the native forest and avoid the deforestation that comes with the introduction of exotic species such as the African palm. "Forest is not going to be conserved unless it is useful to the people who live there," Milleron said.

His efforts to encourage a culture of sustainable use of wild palms are particularly important given the slow maturation of some species — up to 75 years — and the increasing demand for palm oil. While Milleron acknowledged that "palm conservation is not a very active field," his work is helping focus attention on the issue at both the local and the international level.

Tarek E. Milleron is an ecologist and the founder of Caura Futures, an NGO focused on manufacturing gear that allows people to harvest palm fruit sustainably. He spoke for CLAS on April 29, 2014.

Ana C. Galvis-Martínez is a graduate student in the Latin American Studies program at UC Berkeley.

León Ávila is a professor at the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas and a visiting professor at the Laboratory of Agroecology at UC Berkeley.

Piles of harvested palm fruit.

Photo by Enriqueta Flores-Guevara & Lon Brehmer

LABOR

Global Solidarity

by Sarah McClure

United Automobile Workers President Bob King spoke at UC Berkeley on February 24, 2014, just 10 days after the UAW narrowly lost a vote to unionize employees at a Tennessee Volkswagen plant.

Despite the union's setback in Tennessee, King showed no signs of defeat during his talk, which was hosted by the Center for Latin American Studies. President of the UAW from 2010 to 2014, King has been instrumental in reversing the union's declining membership. Still one of North America's largest unions, the UAW boasts nearly 400,000 active members, 40,000 of whom were recruited during King's tenure.

King also reached out in innovative ways to unions and other social movements throughout the world. He is widely viewed as among the most internationally focused UAW leaders since the legendary Walter Reuther, a founder and early president of the union. The UAW's historic organizing effort at Volkswagen reflects the strong linkages King forged with the VW Works Council, union, and management in Germany; he also established other supporting relationships for this campaign throughout the world.

In his talk, King used the Tennessee vote to frame his argument that a strong, viable labor movement is critical to maintaining both democracy and the middle class. "No democracy, I would argue, has been established and no middle class built without strong unions," he said.

King also discussed the UAW's efforts to strengthen ties with international labor organizations and other social groups, including in Latin America.

In the last three and a half years, the UAW has built networks with unions around the world, according to King. "UAW organizers are being sent to Mexico to train Mexican workers in their drive to organize," he said, adding that conditions, like pay, are deplorable in Mexico due to the lack of a free labor movement.

King applauded Brazil for its strong and growing middle class, which he argued was built because of strong labor unions. During the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, between 20 and 30 million Brazilians moved out of poverty because unions were strong, according to King. A strong labor movement, he pointed out, also played a significant role in overthrowing Brazil's dictatorship and boosting its economy.

The UAW leader developed a strong personal relation with President Lula as well as Brazilian unions. This relationship was built on Lula's early history with the UAW. When he was a little-known labor leader, Lula was imprisoned by the military dictatorship and brought to trial for leading a strike that was declared to be illegal. When Doug Fraser, the UAW president at the time, found out about it, he immediately sent a top aide to sit in the courtroom so that the military would be aware the trial had international visibility. Upon his release, Lula's first trip was to Detroit to thank the UAW. In 2013, King brought Lula to Washington, D.C., to keynote the UAW Legislative Conference, an event that brought close to 2,000 UAW delegates and many U.S. political leaders together.

Photo by Ricardo Stuckert/Instituto Lula.

Bob King (left); Canton, Mississippi Nissan worker Morris Mock; and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of Brazil (2003-2011).

Another focus of King's talk was the importance of workers' rights to organize and to bargain collectively in reversing the trend toward inequality. King feels that strong unions and innovative collective bargaining can result in highly competitive, profitable firms. If workers share in those gains, the result is a growing, dynamic economy. "All bargaining, all social justice, is about power," he said. If we want to reverse the direction of this country, if we want to take more people out of poverty, instead of putting more people in poverty, if we want to raise the average income of workers, said King, then we need to defend worker's rights.

Echoing this sentiment was Harley Shaiken, chair of the Center for Latin American Studies, who said, "[King] views the fate of unions as intertwined with the fate of democracy itself."

King concluded his presentation by calling on support from community groups outside the labor movement, such as the environmental, gay rights, and immigrant rights movements, to build more public outcry about the attacks on workers' right to organize.

"I have a lot of hope that we can together build a progressive movement in the United States really focused on economic and social justice," he said.

Bob King was the president of the United Automobile Workers from 2010 to 2014. He spoke for CLAS on February 24, 2014.

Sarah Yolanda McClure is a student at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

Photo by Vladimir Prieto.

The mountainous landscape of Peru.

LITERATURE

Wandering Players in an Imagined Land

by Erica Hellerstein

There's a certain type of universality to Daniel Alarcón's writing. He infuses his literature with a sense of place that is deeply felt and evocative but not particularly definable — his sprawling landscapes and looming mountains could be situated in Peru or small-town Iowa or the outskirts of bustling Santiago, Chile, or a town you've never visited, one that exists somewhere on the map, tucked away — and that is precisely what makes his literature relatable.

Alarcón is a Peruvian-born, Alabama-bred author and journalist currently residing in San Francisco, whose work has appeared in publications ranging from The New Yorker to Harper's. He has curly, shaggy dark hair, which is often tied back with a headband. His fiction is generally written in English, but his stories for the podcast Radio Ambulante (often compared to This American Life) are not. Those are in Spanish, and so are some of the articles that he writes for the Lima magazine, Etiqueta Negra. For some, his is a confusing identity, this Pan-American, bilingual mash-up, the son of professional parents who went to an expensive college in New York. They want to know if he's a Peruvian or an American writer, and he wonders why he should be forced to choose.

In a very real sense, though, the ease with which Alarcón navigates through languages and cultures lends his literature a sense of universal understanding and appeal. His latest novel, *At Night We Walk in Circles*, unfolds in a nameless South American country, a place whose borders might be imaginary, but whose troubles are very real.

In a presentation sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies, Alarcón discussed Nelson, a character in the book who in many ways captures the zeitgeist, the helpless, wandering frustration of our generation's youth. "This novel was about a young man named Nelson, the kind of young man who flows and drifts through his early adulthood and doesn't really make any choices and is kind of wasting his youth," he said.

Nelson is an aspiring young actor who crosses paths with Henry Nuñez, the leader of a legendary guerrilla theater troupe called Diciembre. Nelson gains access to the troupe after earning a major role in a tour of Henry's revived satirical play, "The Idiot President," the original production of which caused Henry to land in jail. Alarcón used his own experience reporting inside Peru's notorious Lurigancho prison to inform Henry's character and experiences.

Nelson, who recently broke up with his girlfriend and is slowly ambling around life, sees this as a golden opportunity: the big break that will finally begin the rest of his life, his first legitimate acting gig and the first time he steps out of his home city's limiting confines. But of course, as the tour treks further into this nameless country's surroundings, drama ebbs and flows. The troupe runs into Henry's troubled past, which they must reconcile, while the reader is forced to untangle the dramatic pileup of events spun by the novel's narrator: an unknown, omniscient "I" whose identity is not revealed until nearly two-thirds of the book is done.

Alarcón said the two parallel tracks of narrative tension — what's going to happen to Nelson, and who's telling the story — keep the story alive instead of gasping for breath. It's a sensibility that Alarcón said he brings more generally, to all of his writing. "A novel really can't

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A traveling theater group.

Photo courtesy of Elgin County Archives.

EXCERPT

At Night We Walk in Circles

by Daniel Alarcón

During the war — which Nelson's father called the anxious years — a few radical students at the Conservatory founded a theater company. They read the French surrealists, and improvised adaptations of Quechua myths; they smoked cheap tobacco, and sang protest songs with vulgar lyrics. They laughed in public as if it were a political act, baring their teeth and frightening children. Their ranks were drawn, broadly speaking, from the following overlapping circles of youth: the longhairs, the working class, the sex-crazed, the poseurs, the provincials, the alcoholics, the emotionally needy, the rabble-rousers, the opportunists, the punks, the hangers-on, and the obsessed. Nelson was just a boy then: moody, thoughtful, growing up in a suburb of the capital with his head bent over a book. He was secretly in love with a slight, brown-haired girl from school, with whom he'd exchanged actual words on only a handful of occasions. At night, Nelson imagined the dialogues they would have one day, he and this waifish, perfectly ordinary girl whom he loved. Sometimes he would act these out for his brother, Francisco. Neither had ever been to the theater.

The company, named Diciembre, coalesced around the work of a few strident, though novice, playwrights, and quickly became known for their daring trips into the conflict zone, where they lived out their slogan — Theater for the People! — at no small risk to the physical safety of the actors. Such was the tenor of the era that while sacrifices of this sort were applauded by certain sectors of the public, many others condemned them, even equated them with terrorism. In 1983, when Nelson was only five, a few of Diciembre's members were harassed by police in the town of Belén; a relatively minor affair, which nonetheless made the papers, prelude to a more serious case in Las Velas, where members of the local defense committee briefly held three actors captive, even roughed them up a bit, believing them to be Cuban agents. The trio had adapted a short story by Alejo Carpentier, quite convincingly by all accounts.

Nor were they entirely safe in the city: in early April 1986, after two performances of a piece titled The Idiot President, Diciembre's lead actor and playwright was arrested for incitement, and left to languish for the better part of a year at a prison known as Collectors. His name was Henry Nuñez, and his freedom was, for a brief time, a cause célèbre. Letters were written on his behalf in a handful of foreign countries, by mostly well-meaning people who'd never heard of him before and who had no opinion about his work. Somewhere in the archives of one or another of the national radio stations lurks the audio of a jail-house interview: this serious young man, liberally seasoning his statements with citations of Camus and Ionesco, describing a prison production of The Idiot President, with inmates in the starring roles. "Criminals and delinquents have an intuitive understanding of a play about national politics," Henry said in a firm, uncowed voice. Nelson, a month shy of his eighth birthday, chanced to hear this interview. His father, Sebastián, stood at the kitchen counter preparing coffee, with a look of concern.

"Dad," young Nelson asked, "what's a playwright?"

Sebastián thought for a moment. He'd wanted to be a writer when he was his son's age. "A storyteller. A playwright is someone who makes up stories."

The boy was intrigued but not satisfied with this definition.

That evening, he brought it up with his brother, Francisco, who responded the way he always did to almost anything Nelson said aloud: with a look of puzzlement and annoyance. As if there were a set of normal things that all younger brothers knew instinctively to do in the presence of their elders but which Nelson had never learned. Francisco fiddled with the radio. Sighed.

"Playwrights make up conversation. They call them scripts. That crap you make up about your little fake girlfriend, for example."

Francisco was twelve, an age at which all is forgiven. Eventually he would leave for the United States, but long before his departure, he was already living as if he were gone. As if this family of his — mother, father, brother — mattered hardly at all. He knew exactly how to end conversations.

No recordings of the aforementioned prison performance of The Idiot President have been found.

survive, can't hold itself up, if it doesn't have two parallel tracks, at least, of questions, of narrative momentum," he said. "Otherwise the whole structure collapses. And I know that because I wrote the first draft of this book that had no tension in it and floundered and was like a sleeping cat of a novel."

After more than five years of writing, that dozing creature of a story transformed itself into *At Night We Walk in Circles*. Beyond just this novel, though, Alarcón said that all of his writing has been colored by the time he spent in Peru a couple years after graduating from college, right before September 11, 2001. He went out at night, played soccer, and watched protests as he bussed into town on the way to work. That's when his life as a writer began. "Everything I've written since has been affected by that experience," he said.

He also talked about his decision to keep the South American country nameless. Though the book includes many nods to Peru — ceviche, the Andes, small towns reeling from violence — the location is never explicitly defined, a deft move that gave Alarcón room to play and shielded him from the ranks of scrupulous fact-checkers, eager to tell him he had gotten something wrong. Instead, with an imagined landscape, he could create, unfettered, while anchoring the reader in a universal human experience that extends far beyond Peru.

"How do you know Peru is real?" he asked. "How do you know it exists? How many of you have been to Narnia? It's literature; it's art. It doesn't matter if you can find it on a map… It doesn't matter if it's real or not. I had one gentlemen say to me, 'I've never been to Peru, but it sounds a lot like Pakistan.' The problems that I was writing about in Peru, he told me, you change the names but it's the same thing. And I think there's some sort of universality in it" — the human experience without boundaries or borders.

Daniel Alarcón is the author of *War by Candlelight*, *Lost City Radio*, and *At Night We Walk in Circles* as well as a visiting scholar at the Center for Latin American Studies. He spoke for CLAS on February 11, 2014.

Erica Hellerstein is a student at the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley.

Daniel Alarcón on the Berkeley campus.

Photo by Orit Mohamed.

Michael Cera clutches a San Pedro cactus, the object of his character's quest.
(Photo courtesy of Dirориro Production Company.)

CINE

A Magical Cactus Trip

by James Gerardo Lamb

The films opens with the lead character, Jamie, played by Michael Cera, consuming copious amounts of alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine. The central plot device is the search for and ingestion of the mescaline-producing San Pedro cactus. And yet, "Crystal Fairy & the Magical Cactus" is not really a drug movie, or even significantly about drugs, according to award-winning director Sebastián Silva. It is instead about Jamie's "spiritual epiphany" as his selfishness is pierced and he begins to discover a sense of compassion for others, namely co-star Gabby Hoffman's title character Crystal Fairy.

Silva is a Chilean director and the winner of two Sundance Film Festival awards, one for his 2009 film "La Nana" and the second for "Crystal Fairy." Silva recently spoke at a screening of the latter film sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies and the San Francisco Film Society, where he is currently an Artist in Residence.

Shot in 11 days on a privately financed budget of only $400,000, the movie was based on a 12-page script-outline written by Silva and largely improvised around the character arcs of Jamie and Crystal.

The story follows Jamie, a young American living in Chile, on his quest to consume the mind-altering cactus native to that country's Atacama Desert. On this road-trip adventure, he is accompanied by his Chilean friend Champa, as well as Champa's two younger brothers, Lel and Pilo. All three siblings are played by the director's real-life brothers. At a drug-fueled party the night before the journey, Jamie meets Crystal Fairy, a fellow American with a shared taste for illicit substances. Crystal is eccentric, hippie, and "New Age" in her aesthetic: she first attracts Jamie's attention through her peculiar solo dancing at the party. Jamie awkwardly invites Crystal on their trip, an invitation that he will quickly and repeatedly regret.

After another impulsive invitation to two transgender sex workers to eat rice at his apartment and a hilarious late-night exercise scene, Jamie unsurprisingly gets a late start the next morning, much to the frustration of

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Michael Cera as Jamie and Gabby Hoffman as Crystal Fairy.

Photo courtesy of Dirориro Production Company.

Photo courtesy of Diroriro Production Company.

The male characters take a break during their road trip.

Champa, who also expresses skepticism that their vehicle is large enough to accommodate Crystal Fairy. So, despite Crystal's repeated phone calls, they begin their journey to the north of Chile without her.

Jamie displays an almost obsessive focus on the procurement of the cactus and a seemingly complete lack of curiosity about his Chilean traveling companions or the other people he meets along the way. Jamie's refusal to eat home-made *empanadas* at a roadside stand and his skepticism towards the instant coffee on offer exemplify his closed attitude.

Jamie and the Chilean brothers ultimately do meet up with Crystal in the plaza of Copiapó, where they find her being assaulted by gypsies. Jamie is almost immediately frustrated with her presence, a feeling he attempts repeatedly to project onto his travel companions who seem to find her an amusing and endearing presence. Indeed, when Crystal emerges from the shower nude in front of the four young men, the three Chileans find the spectacle funny while Jamie is so uncomfortable and annoyed that he feels compelled to comment to Crystal about it.

After several failures to obtain the cactus, Jamie steals some from an old woman's garden while the rest of the group is inside her home attempting to charm her. The scene ends with a shot of the old woman at her window as the group drives off, an image that underscores Jamie's lack of concern for her feelings.

With their objective in hand, the group heads for a deserted and starkly beautiful beach on the edge of the desert. After setting up camp, Jamie begins the long process of cooking the cactus to extract the drug. The next morning the drug trip begins, and after an early altercation between Jamie and Crystal, the two separate for most of the day-long, hallucinatory experience.

One of the most notable aspects of the movie is Silva's decision to neither glamorize nor strongly represent the experience of the drug itself. In questions after the screening, he indicated that he was not looking for a cinematic experience akin to director Terry Gilliam's psychedelic 1998 opus "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" or other well-known drug-trip movies. His focus remains resolutely on the character development of Jamie and Crystal.

As the mescaline experience develops, Jamie's selfish shell begins to crack. He expresses guilt about his harsh words to Crystal Fairy and then apologizes to her in the first genuine act of compassion that we see from his character. The emotional peak of the movie occurs late that night around the fire, when Crystal shares a traumatic experience, and Jamie's emotional walls seem to come crashing down as he begins to cry uncontrollably. At least in that moment of vulnerability, Crystal's suffering becomes his own.

When responding to questions from the audience, Silva emphasized that his focus in the movie was on the "birth of compassion" in the "special man," Jamie, to whom he has compared himself in interviews. The director also derided as "infantile" the description of the film as a "drug movie" in some reviews.

Silva revealed the fact that the movie is loosely based on a true story about an American from San Francisco who he met in Santiago and invited on a trip to the north of Chile to consume San Pedro cactus, which the director intimated he had tried "many times." The real-life Crystal Fairy really was a New Age hippy and was excluded from Silva's road trip after second thoughts, only to be found again being attacked by gypsies in Copiapó.

Interestingly, Silva expressed surprise at the reception of Jamie's character as a prototypical "ugly American." He indicated that he had not intended Jamie to be a stereotypical American traveler, though this is an impression that has come up again and again, both in comments from this audience and in the film's reception across the United States. To him, it was Crystal Fairy who represented something authentically American with what he called her "tree-hugger" perspective.

In answer to an audience question about the lack of a sexual or romantic plot-line in the movie, Silva expounded upon the film's other major character theme, that of innocence. That is, in a movie that centrally features not only drug use but Crystal's surprising past, a powerful component of both Jamie and Crystal's personalities is their underlying innocence as human beings.

It was these twin themes of compassion and innocence in two eccentric, traveling Americans that resonated with many in the audience, even as they stood in somewhat jarring juxtaposition to the worldly and dark themes that drive the narrative arc of the film.

Sebastián Silva is the award-winning Chilean director of "La Nana" (2009) and "Crystal Fairy" (2013), among other films. He spoke for the Center for Latin American Studies on February 19, 2014.

James Gerardo Lamb is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at UC Berkeley.

Gabby Hoffman as Crystal Fairy on the beach.

Photo courtesy of Diroriro Production Company.

Photo by TejasCalifas.

A young girl waits at an airport.

LITERATURE

The Search for Belonging

by Krista Brune

Adriana Lisboa explores the lives of people in transit; her novels unfold in settings ranging from Rio de Janeiro to Japan, Colorado to the Amazon. At the same time, the Brazilian author's narratives address universal themes, such as home, family, love, and the relationship between people and their surroundings.

In many ways, her characters' peripatetic lives echo her own. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1970, Lisboa came of age during Brazil's military dictatorship and the transition to democracy. As a young woman, she studied music and made a living as a jazz singer in France. She eventually returned to Brazil to complete a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and then accepted posts as a visiting scholar in cities as disparate as Kyoto, Japan, and Austin, Texas. Along the way, Lisboa used her cultural and linguistic knowledge in her work as a translator, a job she has recently given up to dedicate herself to writing. For the past seven years, she has lived in Colorado, an experience that informed her 2010 novel *Azul-corvo*, which was published last year in English as *Crow Blue*.

Lisboa, who is this year's Distinguished Brazilian Writer in Residence at UC Berkeley, read from *Crow Blue* at a recent campus event. The novel tells the story of Vanja, a 13-year old Brazilian girl who goes to Colorado in search of her father, Fernando, after her mother's death. In a suburb of Denver, she takes up life with the father she has only known as a name on her birth certificate, a former guerrilla who fought against the military dictatorship. Narrated by Vanja, the novel interweaves her experiences in the American Southwest with memories of her mother's life and stories of Fernando's past as a member of the Araguaia Guerrilla Army. Through these interconnected lives, Lisboa explores questions of geography, language, immigration, and Brazilian history, while also crafting a moving tale of the bonds of kinship and support that develop between individuals far from the familiar comforts of their past.

After providing a brief overview of the novel, Lisboa read a paragraph in Portuguese in order to convey the rhythms and musicality of the prose. She then switched to the English translation and continued the reading. She shared a selection that opens with a description of the enormity of the Amazon, the immense and unknown land that became Fernando's home during his years as a guerrilla fighter, and continued by developing the relationships between Vanja, Fernando, and Vanja's mother Suzana. The excerpt also included a reflection on the concept of home. Vanja explains that, "After you have been away from home for too long, you become an intersection between two groups… You are something hybrid and impure. And the intersection of the groups isn't a place, it is just an intersection, where two entirely different things give people the impression that they converge."

It is this intersection that Lisboa explores in her writing through characters who travel or become immigrants or refugees. Over the course of her fiction, she has been moving towards more extreme forms of displacement. Whereas the travelers in the 2007 novel *Rakushisha* (*Hut of Fallen Persimmons*) visit Japan for a limited period of time, the immigrants of *Crow Blue*, whether legal like Fernando and Vanja or undocumented like their nine-year-old Salvadorian neighbor Carlos and his family, grapple with living in another country and existing in the intersection between "homes," nations, and languages. Immigrants and their descendents remain central figures in her most recent novel *Hanói*, published in 2013. The story takes place primarily in Chicago and focuses on the relationship between David, the son of an undocumented Brazilian father and a Mexican mother, and Alex, the granddaughter of a Vietnamese woman and an American soldier. Through the novel's Vietnamese characters, Lisboa examines a more extreme form of displacement, that of the refugee who has no place to go. Lacking a home, the refugee attempts to establish a new life in a different setting yet continues to feel haunted by memories of the past.

Lisboa's fiction has revealed an ongoing examination of the experiences of dislocation and the resulting exchanges between people, languages, and spaces that transform individuals and impact understandings of home. The novels have moved away from the specifically

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Adriana Lisboa.

Photo by Julie Harris.

Photo by Jason Leverton.

A Colorado landscape.

Brazilian and towards the hemispheric and the global. In part, this shift towards transnational characters and stories in her fiction has been influenced by personal experience. Yet, as Lisboa explained after the reading, she is not interested in the trend of fictionalized autobiography since part of the attraction of fiction is the ability to write about someone else. While drawing on her own experiences, she crafts characters with distinct qualities and histories, a process that frequently involves considerable research. For instance, her research into the Brazilian military dictatorship of the 1960s and 70s and the resistance movements against it informed the construction of Fernando and his past as a guerrilla in the Araguaia.

Whether in the Amazon or in Colorado, Fernando's perception of his surroundings suggests an awareness of the human relationship to space that interests Lisboa throughout her fiction. This fascination with the relationship between the human and the natural is particularly apparent in *Crow Blue*, a reflection of Lisboa's own experiences with the landscape of the southwestern United States. She remembers how the place struck her when she first moved to Colorado: the mass of the Rockies to the west, the expanse of plains to the east, and a vast sky above. This encounter with an expansive openness so different from her native Rio de Janeiro contributed to the depiction of geography and topography in the novel. The vivid descriptions of the Colorado landscape and Vanja's experience of it reveal how Lisboa's work explores, in her words, "the human relationship to the spaces that we occupy — both physical and emotional."

The novel examines not only the interactions of characters with their physical surroundings, but also their encounters with distinct languages. Existing in the "intersection" between Brazil and the United States, and more specifically between Rio de Janeiro and Colorado, Vanja also resides linguistically between Portuguese and English. The questions of linguistic intersections and translation are particularly relevant for Lisboa given her current residence in Colorado and her previous experience as a translator. Living in an English-speaking country has influenced her relationship to Portuguese. English is so direct in comparison to the more Baroque style common in Portuguese, she explained, that it inspired her to think in more precise terms and search for a more direct way to express her ideas in Portuguese. Indeed, precision and directness have emerged as aesthetic preoccupations in her recent novels.

Lisboa's work has gained an increasingly international profile with translations into English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Swedish, Romanian, Serbian, and Arabic, giving her the opportunity to read her novels in other countries and in translation into English. She noted that, when reading in English, "I change my gestures and expressions. I have to pay extra attention to the words. I enjoy it. It is like I am reading my voice through someone else's voice." When her translators have contacted her to seek clarification or to discuss possible solutions to translation problems, Lisboa has enjoyed the collaborative process. She has had particularly fruitful exchanges with the English translator of *Crow Blue*, whom she considers a friend even though they have never met in person. Likewise, she has benefited from the close readings and careful questions of her German translator, in spite of the fact that she does not read German.

As a translator of writers like Cormac McCarthy, Tom Perrotta, Maurice Blanchot, and Jonathon Safran Foer, Lisboa has also been on the other side of the writer-translator relationship. "Working as a translator makes you a good reader," she said. "You are forced to pay extra close attention to the syntax, to the word choice and order. It makes you conscious of the writing on a very minute level. I would describe translation as an excellent school of writing."

While Lisboa credited her years translating as contributing to her development as a reader and a writer, she also received formal graduate training in literature, an experience she characterized as colliding with, rather than influencing, her work. Lisboa no longer writes academic essays or reviews because she finds that they interfere negatively with her own fiction. She believes that "it is difficult to do both well."

Rather than follow the academic path, she has opted to pursue a career as a writer of fiction. As readers entering into her fictional worlds and exploring the spaces, both foreign and familiar, that she describes so poetically, we are the beneficiaries of this potentially risky choice. For Lisboa, however, the decision to dedicate herself solely to writing has proved a wise one, as her work continues to gain in international prominence in this globalized world that she so eloquently captures.

Adriana Lisboa is the author of 10 books, including *Symphony in White, Hut of the Fallen Persimmons*, and *Crow Blue*. She spoke for CLAS on April 16, 2014.

Krista Brune is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UC Berkeley.

The cover of *Crow Blue*.

Image courtesy of Bloomsbury Publishing.

ADRIANA LISBOA

LAVAR A ALMA

A alma precisa ser lavada à mão.
Não que seja de pano delicado,
nem que sangre tinta. Ao contrário,
a alma é bruta, e se não for lavada à mão
a tarefa não fica bem feita. Apanhe
um sabão de coco — o mais barato serve.
Esqueça alvejante, amaciante,
alma nenhuma precisa disso.

Deixe de molho por algum tempo
a fim de tirar o encardido, as manchas
de gordura, de lama.
Depois esfregue no tanque,
torça e estenda ao sol. Não requer
que se passe a ferro. Lavada assim,
a alma pode ser usada
ainda por muitos anos,
uniforme ideal a esta escola
de obstinação que é o corpo,
que é o mundo.

SOUL WASHING

The soul must be washed by hand.
Not that its material is delicate,
or bleeds dye. On the contrary,
the soul is hard-wearing and the only way
to get it clean is by hand-washing it. Take
some household soap — the cheapest will do.
Forget bleach, fabric softener,
no soul needs that.

Let it soak for a while
to remove stubborn stains,
grease, mud, ketchup spills.
Then rub it in the sink, wring it out
and hang it in the sun to dry. Ironing
is not required. Washed like this,
the soul can be worn
for many years to come,
the ideal uniform for this school
of obstinacy that is the body,
that is the world.

Photo by MollyBob.