

Comment

Climate change and alternative energy are two themes that are featured in this issue and that ran through our spring 2008 program.

The Center was very honored to host Stanford R. Ovshinsky, a defining figure in the science and technology of alternative energy. His contributions pioneered a new area of physics and encompass what he calls the hydrogen economy. His technological innovations include a machine the length of a football field that churns out thin-film solar arrays by the mile and the nickel metal hydride battery that powers virtually all hybrid vehicles on the road today. While Ovshinsky emphasized the dangers and irreversibility of global warming, he pointed to alternative energy technologies as key to both development and the environment in Latin America. For him, harnessing the energy of the sun is the route to a better world, and his ground-breaking work has taken us an impressive way down that path. Three articles in this Review cover his talk, scientific contribution and remarkable career.

Alternative energy was also a central theme at the fifth U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum, held in Mexico City at the end of March. Forum participants discussed the challenges facing Mexico’s troubled oil industry and the possibilities for innovative uses of alternative energy on both sides of the border. “Policy is going to be the place where we win or lose the global warming battle,” maintained Daniel Kammen, the Class of 1935 Distinguished Professor of Energy at UC Berkeley and a presenter at the energy session. “The dividend for going green is real,” he added. “You get



Photo by Matty Nemacollahi.

Harley Shaiken and Stan Ovshinsky chat on the Berkeley campus.

more jobs when you invest in energy efficiency and renewables.”

Forum participants also explored new directions for immigration reform, reflecting on the meltdown in the U.S. Congress in 2007 and the best approaches for addressing this contentious but critical issue in the future. The challenge of drugs and violence for both Mexico and the United States was the focus of a third session that ranged from the destructive effects of drug violence on Mexican communities in general, and on journalists in particular, to the policy choices both countries face. Several articles reflecting the themes raised by the Forum comprise a special section in this issue of the Review.

Juan Gabriel Valdés, Chile’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2000–03) and now the country’s Director of Public Diplomacy, was in residence for a week and engaged the topic “Where Is

Latin America Heading?” in a public talk. He raised the paradox of an outpouring of popular participation throughout the region—strengthening democracy—combined with a crisis of representation.

Jacquelynn Baas, the Director Emeritus of the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, tells the story of the great Mexican muralist, José Clemente Orozco and “The Epic of American Civilization,” his extraordinary series of murals at Dartmouth College, in an article and photo spread at the center of this issue.

And, finally, we conclude with an excerpt from “State of the Planet,” a poem by UC Berkeley English Professor Robert Hass that was part of his most recent collection *Time and Materials*, which won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

— Harley Shaiken