



CENTER FOR Latin American Studies

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Photo courtesy of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser.

United Nations on the Brink?

By Claudine LoMonaco

In the State of the Union address this year, President George Bush said the United States would never seek permission to go to war. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, former Mexican Ambassador to the United Nations Security Council, watched in astonishment.

"This is the destruction of the United Nations," Zinser told the more than 200 people packed into UC Berkeley's Doe Library. "We might as well close it down if the founder of the UN says it challenges the basic concept for which the organization was created." During his past two years on the Security Council, Zinser has been an outspoken critic of the U.S. drive to war.

Zinser's talk addressed the threats facing the United Nations and its need for reform, but underlined that fundamentally "the UN system worked." Its inspections teams and international embargo prevented Saddam Hussein from attaining weapons of mass destruction. "If we would have let the system work, war would have been avoided," Zinser said. The day after Zinser's

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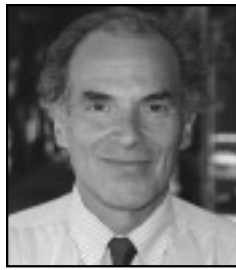
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Front cover photo: Adolfo Aguilar Zinser speaks in the UN Security Council.



Letter from the Chair

The Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) Newsletter has evolved into a wide-ranging magazine of both contemporary and historical issues related to Latin America. At its core, however, the Newsletter reflects the CLAS program: the public events, visiting professors and scholars, working groups, sponsored research and conferences. This issue is no exception. Geographically, this issue ranges widely from the Mexico–U.S. border to Patagonia and thematically, from a novelist’s view of urban life in Brazil to becoming an American in Miami.

The ongoing and vibrant nature of the U.S.–Mexico Future’s Forum — a joint effort of CLAS and ITAM in Mexico City, funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation — is very much on display in these pages. Two forum members — Representative Hilda Solis (D-CA) and Mary Kelly — have contributed articles exploring issues directly related to the ongoing research efforts of the forum. Our cover story features Ambassador Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Mexico’s permanent representative to the UN and a member of the Security Council until late 2003, commenting on the future of the UN

in light of the tumultuous events both leading up to the Iraq war and in its aftermath. Professor Sylvia Guendelman discusses her research on health and the border export plants in Mexico and Mexican economist Enrique Dussel Peters examines the first three years of the Fox administration.

Several articles reflect our Brazil program. Jorge Wilhelm, the secretary of urban planning in São Paulo and holder this semester of the Rio Branco Chair at UC Berkeley, writes about urban planning innovations in Brazil and Paulo Lins, author of the novel on which the film *City of God* was based and holder of the Mario de Andrade Chair in Brazilian Culture this semester, writes on urban life.

We are looking forward to an exciting spring program which includes a recent presentation by President Ernesto Zedillo on globalization; a reading by award-winning Chilean novelist Diamela Eltit, who is a writer in residence; and an upcoming talk by Senator Cristovam Buarque, until recently President Lula’s Minister of Education in Brazil, among many other public events and conferences.

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In Search of Justice

By Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis



Photo courtesy of AP/Wide World.

Rep. Hilda Solis walks beside crosses that mark where the bodies of eight young women were found in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

My daughter disappeared on April 16, 1998, and was found dead on April 29, 1998. She worked in a maquiladora. She worked there with her father and me. The managers changed her shift, which meant she no longer worked with us. She disappeared on her way home two months later. She was found in the sand dunes in Loma Blanca in the Juárez valley . . . I still turn around and hope to see my daughter coming down the street.

Mother of Victim

Since 1993, over 300 women have disappeared from Ciudad Juárez, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, and the surrounding areas. The mutilated bodies of the women that have been found show evidence of rape and torture. The murders have started to spread to other parts of Mexico. Women in these areas live in fear; many have disappeared on their way to or from work or school.

Ciudad Juárez is a border town south of El Paso, Texas, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

Many U.S. multinational corporations operate in Juárez, where they run in-bond assembly plants known as *maquiladoras*. The passage of NAFTA encouraged growth in the maquiladora industry, and women and young girls from all parts of Mexico, in particular rural areas, moved to Juárez in hopes of finding work, frequently leaving their families behind. Because of its close proximity to the United States and its growing population, Juárez became an illegal narcotics hub. It is in this environment that crime was able to flourish in Ciudad Juárez, and the murders of young women and girls were able to go unnoticed.

I became aware of these murders after hearing reports on the news and being contacted by women's groups. I also met with a family from East Los Angeles, a part of the district I represent, who was directly affected by the murders. Their relative, Neyra Azucena Cervantes disappeared in Ciudad Juárez. When her father and cousin went to Juárez to identify a body that was found, they were accused of the murder and incarcerated. Her

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Modernizing the International Boundary and Water Commission

By Mary E. Kelly and Alberto Székely



Photo by Raymond Skiles, Big Bend National Park.

Increasing demand for water in the border region has placed a strain on the Río Grande.

The unprecedented stability in the administration of water resources along the arid U.S.–Mexican border is starting to look shaky. Growth in the local populations and economies combined with climate change mean conflicts and tensions over transboundary water resources are increasingly likely. Without action, the repercussions could damage the binational relationship.

A modernization of the institutional structures supervising the distribution of this most fundamental resource across the border is imperative and the International Boundary and Water Commission (the “Commission”) lies at the heart of the matter. Over the last decade, the Commission has increased its technological sophistication and environmental awareness and improved public outreach. Yet

more is needed.

Overview of Border Water Issues

Established in 1889 to survey and maintain the U.S.–Mexican boundary along the Río Grande and Colorado rivers, the Commission’s structure and role has failed to keep up with the demographic and economic growth along the border and the increasingly complex nature of the binational agenda. In both the U.S. and Mexico, water issues involve competing and vocal interest groups, which sometimes stir up trouble for domestic policy and the bilateral relationship. The public furor over Mexico’s accumulated water delivery deficit in the Río Grande is the most current example. With elected officials, farmers and

environmentalists arguing fiercely and publicly in both countries, it is both inappropriate and impossible for the Commission to negotiate a “technical” resolution behind closed doors.

The Río Grande dispute has also illuminated the lack of formal involvement of the border states in the process of water distribution. Excluded from the Commission’s negotiations, state politicians on both sides of the border have sometimes used strong rhetoric to advance their demands, further complicating the two federal governments’ quest for solutions.

Growing Demand, Environmental Needs and Climate Change

The U.S. and Mexico signed a treaty in 1944 that still sets the basic allocation of water in the Colorado and Río Grande basins. From 1944 to 1992, water allocation in these areas posed few major binational problems thanks to a series of wet years and demand within available supply. In fact, the U.S. often sent more water to Mexico from the Colorado than was required, though the high salinity of this water did present some serious challenges in the early 1970s. Mexico also often sent more water from its tributaries to the Río Grande than required by treaty minimums.

But the situation is changing dramatically. Municipal water needs have grown rapidly, as the local population has increased due to the maquiladora factories,

general migration patterns within the U.S. and a relatively young border population with high birth rates. Population in both the Río Grande and Colorado basins is projected to continue growing at around 3 percent annually.

Border economic development policy has also failed to take into account the limitations of the water supply. Local, state and federal officials in both countries have often simply assumed that new water sources would be developed. Meanwhile, some areas of the border have experienced an increase in agricultural water use with new lands opened up through irrigation improvements.

Another increasingly important factor is the environment. For example, many are calling for guaranteed water to sustain the Colorado Delta. Though decades of reduced Colorado River flow have dramatically shrunk the once magnificent delta, there has been some recovery in recent years. The Delta still supports several endangered species and is an increasingly important economic asset for local communities. This and other environmental water needs will not just fade away.

Climate change is also affecting the trans-boundary basins. Currently, most of the border region receives less than 20 inches of rain per year. Some areas get barely a quarter of that. Increasingly, hotter and more arid conditions seem set to prevail. The possible consequences could hardly be more serious.

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Photo courtesy of Environmental Defense.

Recreational use of rivers along the border is an increasingly important economic asset for local communities.

Urban Planning: Innovations From Brazil

By Jorge Wilhelm



Photo by Renata Andrade.

Greater São Paulo, with its population of 18-20 million, is the fourth largest city in the world.

Planning is not a popular issue in any New World country, where society is mobile, people roam through enormous spaces and self-made persons look at legal restrictions and plans for the future as constraints on the success of individuals. However, everyone eventually agrees that cities would be better off now if someone at an earlier time had thought about how to avoid some of the nuisances and disasters that make urban life difficult.

This is the case of Brazil and the global city of São Paulo. In a country that still has a distant far-west to be conquered, where new towns are continually being founded along new roads, there have been no urban policies at the national level until very recently. Only three years ago a Federal Law, the Estatuto da Cidade was passed, after languishing in Congress for almost 20 years. The law created a list of instruments to be used for city planning

purposes. Among them were some innovative tools that had been previously employed in the city of São Paulo: environmental zoning, the right to use the surface of a lot, the right of preemption (through which a previously determined area must be first offered to the municipality for purchase), the transfer of the right to build (from one specified lot to another, which was designed to protect the environment and cultural patrimony), local neighborhood impact reports, the additional building factor and the creation of urban development areas established by law, for a consortium of public and private planned investments.

Urban instruments are just tools, like a hammer, a spoon or a fork. You don't have to use them all, and it is up to the planner to choose which are the most appropriate. Because of the complexity and dynamics of the city of São Paulo, we used almost all of these instruments, creating an innovative plan which refused the false alternative of being either

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The Wild Side of the Broken City

By Paulo Lins

Nothing in this world reeks more than a clandestine cemetery on the outskirts of Rio. The bones of the deceased stick out like a plant from the ground in the mind of someone seeing it for the first time and remain forever in someone else's memory. In general, the cemeteries are discovered because the smell rouses the need to see close up the heap of bones of the person who has disappeared. It's time to reconstruct in one's memory the flesh that belonged to this or that skull. For some time now, the earth has undergone transformations by the living beings who grow up on it and who, once dead, decompose from the force of worms who love our blood, who explore, corrupt and consume our guts, as do the elite who segregate and enslave us until abandoning us.

But there is the beach, the high tide, the roaring of colorful bodies of all sorts in the Zona Sul of the city. In the city, once broken, the cable car of evil now roars and crosses Rebouças and Santa Bárbara at 45 miles per hour. And gunshots in the middle of the night disrupt the law of silence, disturb the children's sleep, making the sad lot of dogs bark, increasing the grievousness of words spoken after the shooting has sent a bullet astray.

But, in the suburbs, things are worse. There is no sea, nor any mountains. The natural beauty of this space was devastated at the turn of the

last century by the disorganized creation of neighborhoods and by the growth of *favelas* (shantytowns). At that time, the rich built their houses between the Centro and Botafogo neighborhoods. They also lived in parts of Tijuca and Alto da Boa Vista. Copacabana, Leblon and Ipanema were not yet dwelling places.

Blacks and the poor occupied the hills of Providência — later a favela — and Santo Antônio. At the end of the 19th century, Saúde, Gamboa and Livramento were invaded because two events increased the population in that region: the end of the War of Canudos and the fall of the coffee culture in the State of Rio de Janeiro and in the Zona da Mata, in Minas Gerais. The coffee people, like the soldiers who had fought in the backlands, came to the city and brought with them their *cabrochas* [mulatto women] from a mountain called Favela, in the town of Monte Santo in Bahia — hence the

name favela.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of the city was estimated at 700,000 inhabitants. The poor, in addition to living in the Central Station region, lived in the Centro and nearby neighborhoods, in slum tenement-houses, in houses built for the rich, who eventually sold them to greedy landlords due to the growing poverty in the neighborhood. In 1823, Mayor

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Photo by Viviane Meos.

A street nomad in Rio de Janeiro points a gun at the camera.

The Wild Side of the Broken City

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Photo courtesy of AP-Wide World.

A Brazilian military policeman searches for drug-traffickers in the streets of a favela in Rio de Janeiro.

Barata Ribeiro demolished a good part of the boardinghouses and allowed the inhabitants to take the wood from the old buildings, thereby guaranteeing they could build shacks in the hills and more remote regions. At the beginning of the 20th century, Mayor Pereira Passos staged an urban revolution that leveled various blocks in the Centro, and the poor headed for the hills and for the Zona Norte. The neighborhoods of São Carlos, Mangueira, Salgueiro, etc. sprang up.

According to Lima Barreto, in his *Clara dos Anjos*, written at the beginning of the century, “the suburb itself is a long strip of land that stretches from Rocha or São Francisco Xavier to Sapopemba, with the Central Station railroad as one of its axes (...); there are houses, little houses, rustic houses, big shacks, huts in any place where they are able to plant four wooden stakes and join them with flimsy walls. Any material will do for these constructions: unrolled cans of matches, roofing tiles, sheets of zinc...”

Today, on the outskirts, life takes place on the edge of the ditches carved by the feet of

children, servants, bank security guards, pastors, bakers — in short, the workers and unemployed of the city, where, for obvious reasons, violence is a constant that multiplies secrets, constructs betrayals and deaths for no good reason. It’s the part of the city where one doesn’t see the Atlantic rain forest. It’s the site of factories, garages; there is the unhappiness of the train, the sadness of the enormous trash heaps, badly marked and pothole-filled roads, giant rats in poorly lit streets. The large villas of the remotest suburbs are now tense with fear, neglect, degradation, overpopulation. The air, heavy with pollution, invades the alleys in the Baixada, beats against the quarries in the Zona Norte and Zona Oeste and spreads into the Leopoldina train cars that sing, “there-are-hungry-people.” It’s not a pretty sight. And sometimes the smell from the clandestine cemeteries invades the rooms at lunchtime.

Paulo Lins is the author of the book *Cidade de Deus*.

Translated by Clélia F. Donovan

Urban Planning: Innovations From Brazil

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strategic or long-term. We consider strategic actions as necessary to start those transformations that are aimed at creating long-term benefits.

São Paulo, like most cities, was and still is built by private and public efforts and investments, for better and for worse... In the collective work of creating an urban environment, the role of the public sector is to determine the space and environmental requirements needed in order to build up a convenient city, a beautiful townscape, an inclusive social life and a sustainable environment. And, last but not least, it is the public sector's responsibility to defend the public interest, which, as J.J. Rousseau said, "is not the same as the interest of everybody." Most often the building itself is done by the market, by private investors, by individual efforts; thus the municipality, beyond creating the rules, has to induce, to negotiate, to spur, to control. And this is especially true when the investment capacity of the city government has been reduced by previous public debt. São Paulo, a city where 13 percent of monthly revenues goes to the Federal Government to pay off debt, is a case in point.

In São Paulo, with its dynamic construction market, the most important planning tools are zoning and negotiating how many square meters investors can build on a specific lot. With this in mind, we introduced a strong instrument, aimed at gradual urban transformation: the additional building factor. This tool gives the city the authority to sell permits to developers which allow them to construct larger buildings. The basic, free and rather drastic permit is for a building that is one times the area of the lot. Using the additional building factor, investors are able to buy permits for structures that are 2, 2.5 or 4 times the area of the lot, making vertical growth possible. A building's maximum size is always determined by the type of urban environment and the zone in which it is located; the highest factor possible is around subway stations and other mass-transport lines as well as in specifically designed urban areas. The permit fees go to a municipal fund aimed exclusively at purchasing and creating public spaces, solving public housing problems, protecting the environment

and providing adequate transportation and infrastructure.

The zoning rules that ensued are also based on innovative ideas. Instead of the usual rigid functional zoning (that rarely worked), the mixing of activities is permitted and stimulated, in order to produce livable housing and to reduce the necessity for long commutes. The goal is to create neighborhoods where all the necessities of daily life are nearby, including: schools, grocery stores, banks, newsstands, gyms, bakeries and work places.

The characteristics of the new Strategic Master Plan complement other ground-breaking efforts by the Workers Party administration, led by Mayor Marta Suplicy. These include a restructuring of the bus system, the recycling of 13,000 tons of garbage a day through the creation of cooperatives of street collectors, the implementation of participatory budgeting, the integration of schools in the poor periphery (education plus culture plus sports), the family-doctor program, the digital inclusion of excluded youth and the social financing programs that reduced local unemployment and violence in three years. For all of these programs to succeed, more was needed than just progressive concepts, sound ideas and appropriate technology. Political will and social mobilization was also necessary to overcome resistance and inertia.

Jorge Wilhelm is the Secretary of Urban Planning for the city of São Paulo. He also holds the Rio Branco Chair in Brazilian Studies at UC Berkeley.

The Anhangabau Valley in the center of downtown São Paulo was designed by Jorge Wilhelm.



Photo courtesy of Jorge Wilhelm.



Photo by Michel Huneault.

In the early 1980s, this church became a regional military base and torture center. In 2003, villagers and forensic anthropologists exhumed mass graves in the churchyard.

If the Dead Could Vote

By Michel Huneault

One afternoon in the Quiche Guatemalan Highlands, an unusual crowd gathers at the local church. Male villagers are digging a second square hole in the courtyard; they are looking for missing bodies. Women and elders stand to the side, mute and still, sometimes disturbed by the laughter of children running and playing innocently around the site.

A quick transition occurs in the hole, now six feet deep. The sweaty shovelers jump out to be replaced by two forensic anthropologists. They examine what looks to be the uncovered tip of a femur. It is.

An hour later, the scene is almost the same, but the skinless remains of a body are now fully exposed in the bottom of the grave. The man was buried with his hands tied behind his back. We can see the impact of a bullet in his right shoulder. Another bullet has penetrated the back of his skull, exploding the left cheek on its

way out.

The anthropologists stop and look up at the community overshadowing the grave. They ask loudly, in over-articulated Spanish, if someone recognizes the victim, either by the almost fully intact clothes or the gold crowns of the teeth. After a short silence, some people start debating in K'iche, the regional indigenous language. Then silence again.

One of the young villagers, standing in white running shoes and a Nike shirt, summarizes and translates back the discussion to the anthropologists. He says that Doña Mariana does not recognize her missing husband, as she last saw him 20 years ago when he left for the capital city to buy essential goods. Don Jorge thinks he might be able to identify the rubber boots and the shirt, but he is confused. It is difficult to remember which one of his four missing sons it could be.

Don Jorge is overwhelmed by the events, he

confesses later. “The images of my four sons fuse together in my memory,” he tells me. And looking down at the battered victim in the grave and then at the church remind him of the torture he personally suffered on that same day, when he was brought here with his sons. Unlike them, he was released four days later.

It was July 1982. General Rios Montt was the new dictator ruling the country. That month, soldiers closed down the church and it became, for half a decade, the home of the regional military detachment. Consequently, it was used as a center of interrogation for suspected communist guerrillas, insurgents and sympathizers. Don Jorge keeps looking at the grave, his chin shivering. His eyes wander around the vast yard waiting to be dug.

I am in the grave, taking close-up photographs of the forensic work. When I look up again, my eyes focus on a political propaganda poster in the background. Behind the crowd of onlookers is a portrait of a smiling and watching Rios Montt, signed with his favorite electoral motto: *Yo soy Guatemala* (I am Guatemala). While national and international efforts are

being made to bring Rios Montt to justice for the crimes against humanity committed during his dictatorship, he is running for the presidency in next week’s elections. And according to the polls, he has strong support in the areas of the country most affected by the violence of the last decades, including this Quiche village.

V-day

Ten days later, I trade the dusty digging shirt for an official and more recognizable beige sleeveless vest. For the last eight months, armies of international observers have invaded Guatemala to parade in the four corners of the country wearing similar-looking vests. The 2003 elections in Guatemala will be among the most observed elections in the history of the Americas, following what became Guatemala’s most violent electoral campaign since the end of the military dictatorship in 1986.

The violence climaxed on July 24th, now known as Black Thursday. On that day, thousands of supporters of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), Montt’s ruling party, rioted in the streets of Guatemala City in

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In spite of the high levels of fear and intimidation that still exist in Guatemala, these widows staged a memorial march several days before the 2003 elections.



Photo by Michel Huneault.

The “K Era”: President Nestor Kirchner Takes Charge

By Gabriela Delamata



Argentina's President
Nestor Kirchner
greets supporters
outside the
Presidential Palace in
Buenos Aires.

Argentina has entered the “K Era.” That is the buzzword used by journalists to describe the new epoch ushered in by President Néstor Kirchner with a series of bold political moves and a fresh leadership style.

Among the measures taken by his administration since inauguration in May 2003 is the legislature's annulling of the “Obediencia Debida” and “Punto Final” laws, which had prevented the legal prosecution of those accused of crimes against humanity perpetrated under the 1976-83 military dictatorship. Other moves include the removal of allegedly corrupt judges from the supreme court; the demand that private creditors write off 75 percent of Argentina's external debt; a new pact with the IMF that asserts Argentina's right to set its own budgets and protect public investment and social policies; moves to renationalize some

enterprises privatized during the 1990s and regulate others more strictly; and the clean-up of welfare and educational institutions.

This bold national agenda has been set by the president and a small group of trusted advisers. It has given the impression that the “K Era” is a watershed in Argentine history, an impression strengthened by the vertiginous rise in popularity of the President himself. At the start of 2003, just 7 percent of the electorate intended to vote for Kirchner, 30 percent had a positive view of him and around 20 percent did not even know who he was. Eleven months later, in November, after six months in office, 75 percent of Argentines said they had a positive impression of the President and just 5 percent had a negative perception.

Yet Kirchner's government is operating with a depleted bureaucracy and a weakened

state capacity to implement decisions, the result of a process of economic “modernization,” initiated during the 1989-99 presidency of Carlos Saúl Menem and then consolidated by the failed government of the Alliance, from 1999 to 2002. This decade of neoliberal policies not only resulted in the reduction of private consumption, work benefits and the state’s institutional capacity to reach significant sectors of the population, it also transformed the state into a series of decentralized agencies subject to diverse operational mandates.

Equally, the Plan de Convertibilidad, the strategy of pegging the national currency to the dollar, led Argentina increasingly into debt. In the late 1990s, this mechanism resulted in successive reductions in public sector revenues that further distanced the state from society. Privatization compounded the problem, with many key national companies sold into foreign hands. Relations between the state and society broke down completely when, in 2002, the government of President Fernando de la Rúa was unable to secure further national or international loans and froze private bank accounts, leading to a crisis of state authority and de la Rúa’s ejection from power.

On top of inheriting this toothless state, Kirchner has also had to confront an extended social conflict involving unemployed members of the working class organized into social and political movements and frustrated members

of the middle class, ranging from defrauded savers to political protestors. Meanwhile, the traditionally powerful economic interests have found themselves on the defensive following the redrawing of commercial contracts after the demise of the Plan de Convertibilidad; they are now pushing for the restoration of lost assets.

Lacking the institutional capacity for bureaucratic and economic intervention, and clear social and political supports, Kirchner has therefore sought to rebuild a more active state. Two spheres of action stand out: the symbolic and the executive. On the one hand, he has re-appropriated the government’s central role in the public debate by dictating social priorities, and on the other, he has attempted to expand national sovereignty. He has also attempted to strengthen state institutions and actively intervene to tackle the problems of unemployment and poverty through the development of public works and the reform of welfare programs.

The effect of these moves has been the political repositioning of the governing Justicialist (“Peronist”) Party by aligning the caudillos and provincial political networks that have shaped Peronism since the last decade with the national policy. At the same time, the fragmented opposition has found itself stranded outside the national political debate. While the progressive ideas of some politicians from the Radical Civic Union (UCR) have been

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Members of the Socialist Workers Movement march in a protest in Buenos Aires.



Photo by Sarah Jaffe.



Photo by Sarah Jaffe.

The Perito Moreno glacier, the largest in Patagonia, towers over 60 meters above water level.

Patagonia Taxi

By Francine Masiello

Francine Masiello spent several weeks exploring Patagonia in November of 2003.

When my grandmother left Italy for New York at the turn of the last century, she took a sack of sheep's wool that was to fill the family's cushions and bedding for several generations. Surely the bundle was shorn from flocks of her native Basilicata, but it also included — as the story goes — clippings that some distant relative had carried home from Argentina. For years, I wondered if the matted wool that lay beneath my head had not inspired my Latin Americanist passions and other hybrid musings. A recent trip to Patagonia, land of wind and sheep, somehow brought me full circle to this scene, perhaps the stuff of slumber.

An austere expanse, the southern plains give a sense of mythical attraction. The early explorers wrote of southern fires that awakened fear on Magellan's ship and, centuries later, other travelers

chronicled forms of violent conquest. But these tales went largely unnoticed until the English author Bruce Chatwin brought them to popular light in the 1970s. Despite the deserved criticism launched by writers against his notebook, Chatwin whetted the appetites of recent documentarians of the south, urging Argentines in particular to tell their own versions of Patagonian strangeness. To be sure, contemporary creative writers and filmmakers — most from Buenos Aires — have found in Patagonia a way to voice the age-old tensions between civilization and barbarism. Yet, like Chatwin, they are pressed to describe a land that few of them deeply know. Foreigners to Patagonia lured by the cross of cultures and the draw of infinite horizons, they find in southern soil a grand force of redemption. Even the rise of Néstor Kirchner, a citizen of Santa Cruz province, is explained as a healthy rural promise to cleanse urban corruption.

Genocidal campaigns are also part of the

legend. The story of Robert FitzRoy is exemplary of the naïve approach to unplanned, mass destruction. Captain of the Beagle, Fitzroy abducted four Yámana children to train them in English customs and present them to Queen Victoria. The story draws upon the conflicts of language and culture that lie behind all colonial ventures to enact a claim to power. Jemmy Button, a native of Tierra del Fuego and one of the Captain's wards, was thus forced to learn English and, if the training had gone FitzRoy's way, later to serve the Christian faith as a translator for missionary settlers. But Button rebelled against Victorian society; he refused that culture and language, and he later staged an uprising against British explorers who set foot on his native soil. He became a symbol of resistance whose vivid tale continues to capture the imagination of writers.

With histories that tell of colonial force and the flow of different languages across unmarked frontiers, Patagonia is full of narrative potential and a cast of rugged figures: on the one hand, indigenous heroes dying from contact with modernization and, on the other, the Welsh and English settlers, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and the vast movement of Chilean and Argentine anarchists who were massacred by the military in the early twentieth century. These figures are the literary stock of southern horizons. Seeing the land up close confirms the intensity of their wind-blown epics.

What began with an academic invitation to

lecture on James Joyce concluded with a trek on the blue ice of the Perito Moreno glacier. Río Gallegos was my point of departure. Home to 100,000 people, the town is flat and open. While uneven architecture shows few attempts at sustained urban planning — chalets adjoin tin shacks — Río Gallegos nonetheless resists the signs of extreme poverty that mark larger cities in the north. Bracing it is an estuary of clay shores sustaining abandoned boats while the port beyond holds cargo ships of fish and unrefined oil awaiting the voyage north. The scene reminds the tourist of a town of transit: in the last thirty years, low unemployment and financial incentives have doubled the population. To explain this growth, two stories take life: one tells that Río Gallegos lacks initiative to develop a solid industrial base and thus has sold local assets to foreign corporations whose interests now sustain it. A second story claims that southern prosperity was kindled by the efforts of provincial governors leading up to Kirchner, who marshaled federal subsidies to keep unemployment at a startling low. Neither tale goes against the sense that this is a final outpost that bespeaks the loneliness of pioneers. The nearest villages are 250 kilometers away. Three hours south is Tierras Vírgenes, the last point on the South American continent and the nesting site of penguins.

Driving south through plains of low-lying brush, I crossed not a single passenger car, but I knew I was not alone. Ostriches and Patagonian hares leapt across the unpaved highway while

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The road through Patagonia passes through miles of flat, empty land before reaching the mountains.



Photo by Sarah Jaffe.

United Nations on the Brink?

continued from front page



Photo courtesy of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
meets with UN
Secretary-General Kofi
Annan.

presentation, the leader of the U.S. search for banned weapons, CIA advisor David Kay, announced that Iraq did not have stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons. UN weapons inspectors had come to the same conclusion nearly a year earlier.

The talk was Zinser's first public appearance in the United States since leaving his post in late November. President Vicente Fox fired Zinser after he gave a lecture at a Mexico City University in which he said that some political actors in the United States treated Mexico as a "backyard" and that Mexico was forced to "hold its tongue" in front of its northern neighbor. The dismissal is widely taken as a sign that President Fox buckled under U.S. pressure to remove Zinser over his opposition to the war.

During his talk Zinser examined U.S. leadership post-Sept. 11 and the role of dissenting members on the Security Council during the build up to war. "Following 9/11,

we witnessed one of the most astonishing expressions of solidarity with the United States," he said. The U.S. carefully collected evidence, engaged in genuine multilateral debate with U.N. members and readily received unanimous support from the 15 member Security Council for the war against Afghanistan. At the time, the United States was seen as the legitimate leader of the world, Zinser said.

But that support rapidly eroded. "Iraq was so capriciously, so arbitrarily situated in the center of the debate about security that questions began to be raised," Zinser said. Mexico joined France early on as a vocal opponent to military action against Iraq. While France took most of the heat for opposing the war (it was not tacos or tequila that was boycotted, Zinser noted), a total of 11 countries eventually lined up against authorizing the use of force.

Realizing that it didn't have the requisite

nine votes in the Security Council, the United States never submitted its resolution. On March 17, 2003, the U.S. declared war on Iraq with the support of Britain, Spain and Bulgaria. Once the war began, the United States gave up on multilateral discussions, Zinser said. Instead, it turned to bilateralism, pressuring countries one on one to fall in line with U.S. policy.

Zinser called bilateralism “the kryptonite of the United Nations,” and said it was much more troubling than unilateralism. “We are all unilateralist,” he said, and “establish our national interests and then, in a collective way, we make compromises.” But bilateralism takes debate out of the Security Council where collective decisions can be made and into closed doors of capitols throughout the world, he said. There, the United States can sit down and say “Let’s not talk about Iraq. It’s none of your business. Let’s talk about us. Do you want us to be friends? Do you want us to be on good terms? Well then forget about Iraq and give me your vote at the UN.” After the war began, Zinser said he received instructions from Mexico to keep quiet.

Zinser reflected back on his time as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council. “We are tourists in the Security Council,” he said, “two-year tourists. They are giving us a trip to the world in which you sit in a privileged first row, and you are even allowed to say something to the permanent members.”

During his time there, he said he realized that the United Nations’ biggest impact has been in the humanitarian realm, where its work has improved the lives of millions of people, many of whose survival depends on its daily presence.

But the primary role of the UN, its *raison d’être*, was not humanitarian, nor was it the promotion of economic development, scientific discovery, or even the protection of human rights, he said. “Those duties sprung from the moral character of the organization and the world’s need to have a body perform those functions,” he said.

The central purpose of the United Nations was to define the rights, duties and roles of states and to avoid the use of force in international relations. The UN still has much work to do to achieve that ideal as “countries violate the decisions right and left.”

“We must reshape the organization to make it attractive so that countries will observe its decisions,” Zinser said.

“Perhaps the area in which the United Nations has to prove its existence with more force and conviction today is Africa,” Zinser said. The United Nations must effectively take on the problems of migration, disease and the colonial legacy of violence. “There is a weapon of mass destruction in Africa — a rifle and a pistol in the hands of child soldiers,” Zinser said, holding the superpowers responsible for shifting the weapons into conflict zones.

Zinser said the United Nations should also increase women’s participation both in the Security Council and out in the field on peacekeeping missions. He cited a study that correlated participation by women in peacekeeping efforts with greater success. “If women and children are the largest victims of conflicts, they are also the most promising opportunity for peace,” he said.

Zinser said he first went to the United Nations with a host of criticisms about its bureaucracy, the lack of compliance with resolutions and work methods that can “defy all common sense.” Delegates would stay up all night, he said, arguing about how a colon or a semi-colon could drastically change the meaning of a resolution. “For whom does the meaning change drastically if no one reads the resolution?” he asked, earning laughs from the capacity crowd.

Soon after he arrived though, he fell in love with the United Nations and its ideals. He left convinced that the dialogue and compromise that takes place within the Security Council’s windowless chambers still offer humanity the best shot at peaceful co-existence. The organization must reform so that countries observe its resolutions. But “until we recognize that to live in a better world we have to make collective decisions,” he said, the United Nations will remain an ideal yet to be fulfilled.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, the former Mexican ambassador to the UN Security Council, spoke at Berkeley on January 22, 2004.

Claudine LoMonaco is a graduate student in the School of Journalism.

In Search of Justice

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Photo courtesy of the office of Hilda Solís

A cross at the U.S.–Mexico border commemorates the young women murdered in Juárez.

father was released, but David was tortured into confessing to Neyra's murder. The family members are suffering not only for the loss of Neyra, but also for the imprisonment of David, who they believe to be falsely accused.

It became clear to me from the beginning that these murders were a binational issue for many reasons. U.S. citizens have also been impacted by these crimes. For example, Cynthia Kiecker is a U.S. citizen from Minnesota who has been living in Juárez with her husband. In May 2003, both she and her husband were accused of a young woman's murder. Cynthia Kiecker claims she was tortured into confessing to this murder. As a result, many activists in Mexico and the United States have been working to free her.

The United States has helped to create an environment in which these crimes can go unnoticed. Furthermore the status of women in one part of the world has implications on the status of women everywhere. When I became Democratic Vice Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, I saw the position as a platform to make an impact on this issue. I thought Congress

needed to become more involved, so I worked to educate Members of Congress and their staff about the situation in Ciudad Juárez. The Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues held staff-level briefings and circulated articles on the murders. Upon hearing of our interest in Congress on this issue, international news media outlets began following our efforts.

On October 11, 2003, I organized a Congressional delegation trip to Ciudad Juárez with the Latin American Working Group, the Washington Office on Latin America and the Mexico Solidarity Network. This was a fact-finding mission to learn more about the murders and what can be done. I was joined by Rep. Ciro Rodríguez (D-TX), Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC); Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), who represents El Paso, Ciudad Juárez's sister city; and Rep. Luis Gutiérrez (D-IL). Other delegation participants included Eric Olson of Amnesty International USA; Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers; Daniel Solis from the Chicago City Council; and filmmakers Lourdes Portillo and Emiko Omori, makers of the award winning film *Señorita Extraviada*. Our hosts included:

Joy Olson and Laurie Freeman of the Washington Office on Latin America, Sean Garcia and Elanor Starmer of the Latin American Working Group and Macrina Cárdenas of the Mexico Solidarity Network. Officials from the U.S. Consulate in Juárez and the human rights officer from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City attended several informational meetings.

During the delegation trip, I had the opportunity to meet with family members of murder victims; human rights, women’s rights and solidarity organizations; labor organizers; maquiladora owners; Mexican legislators; and officials from the municipal, state and federal governments. I also had the opportunity to be briefed by the FBI. The trip was an eye opening experience, and I learned of the true complexity of this issue.

Families of victims expressed their concern about the way their cases have been handled by Mexican authorities. They felt they have been ignored, deceived and often times harassed by the authorities. As a result, the families of the victims have little faith in the

state authorities to conduct effective, serious and complete investigations. They also claim that the Mexican authorities have discouraged the use of DNA tests on the victims. My heart goes out to the all the families that have lost loved ones. I can only hope they felt that their voices had been heard after meeting with the Congressional delegation.

While visiting Ciudad Juárez, I also saw the deplorable living conditions endured by many of the young women who become victims. When they first arrive in Ciudad Juárez to find work, many live in shantytowns in homes without running water or electricity. The average salary of \$38 a week is barely enough for food and transportation, with none left over to improve living conditions. The lack of paved roads and street lighting makes commuting to and from work unsafe, particularly for women who work graveyard shifts.

In ten years, only one person has been convicted of one of the murders. Yet even after this man was arrested, the murders have continued. Although many other people have

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Congresswoman Hilda Solis meets with a victim’s mother.



Photo courtesy of the office of Hilda Solis

In Search of Justice

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been charged but not convicted, they claim that they remain incarcerated for murders they confessed to only after being tortured and coerced into confessing.

Other international organizations such as the Organization of American States, the United Nations and Amnesty International have also traveled to Ciudad Juárez to learn more about the murders. This recent national and international pressure has prompted the municipal, state and federal authorities in Mexico to announce a series of new crime prevention measures. They have also created a joint federal-state investigative agency and a special commission to facilitate these new programs and federal-state cooperation. Shortly after the delegation returned from Juárez, Mexican President Vicente Fox appointed María Guadalupe Morfin to lead this commission. Commissioner Morfin's role will be to focus on prevention. She will work on a report to update files on the cases and put together an action plan focused on stopping more murders. Commissioner Morfin will also act as a liaison to the victims' families and will make sure family members know the status of their cases. I commend the Mexican government for taking these actions, and I hope these new programs will soon prove beneficial to the families of the victims.

The Members of Congress on the delegation trip committed themselves to deepening their involvement in the issue. We have discussed concrete ways to follow up on our visit to Ciudad Juárez. Likewise, the nongovernmental organizations that sponsored the delegation reaffirmed their commitment to pressing for the identification of bodies, resolution of the crimes and prevention of violence against women.

Upon my return, I have continued to work on bringing attention to the issue of Juárez. In November, I sent a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell requesting that he discuss the disappearing women of Chihuahua State at the U.S.–Mexico binational summit, which was held on November 12, 2003. Sixty-six other Members of Congress signed this letter with me. While the issue was not added to the official agenda, Secretary Colin Powell and Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Derbez discussed the

issue. I believe this is the beginning of a binational dialogue that is long overdue.

I have also introduced a bipartisan resolution in Congress, H. Res. 466, offering condolences to the families of the Juárez victims and encouraging the U.S. government to get involved. It also supports efforts to create a DNA database under international auspices. This would allow families to positively identify the remains of the victims and allow for a sense of closure for those families who distrust the Mexican authorities. Equally as important, the resolution “expresses the solidarity of the people of the United States with the people of Mexico in the face of these tragic and senseless acts.” I believe that support for this resolution will continue to grow, and I hope that it will be considered by Congress.

I strongly believe the U.S. has a responsibility to be involved in trying to put an end to the murders in Juárez not only for international humanitarian reasons, but also because U.S. companies have contributed to the environment in which these murders have occurred. The murders in Ciudad Juárez have affected families on both sides of the border and must be treated as a binational issue. As a Latina, I am concerned about the status of women in all parts of the world and specifically in Latin America. As long as these murders go unsolved I feel we are giving the false impression that women's lives are expendable. This is simply unacceptable. Violence and discrimination against women around the world must be stopped.

Although the Juárez crimes will not be solved overnight, Congress' commitment and the growing media attention will help send a message to the U.S. and Mexico that these disappearances and murders are an international human rights crisis that must be addressed in our search for justice.

Representative Hilda L. Solis (D-CA) is a member of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum.

Modernizing the International Boundary and Water Commission

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Modernizing the Commission: Three Proposals

The implied requirement of the 1944 Treaty that each country's commissioner be a qualified engineer has out-lived its usefulness. Addressing current and future transboundary water issues requires a host of skills: political, diplomatic and, vitally, a vision of how to achieve sustainable water management. The pool of future candidates must be broadened beyond the engineering profession.

The U.S. Department of State and its Mexican counterpart, the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), must start elevating the importance of transboundary water issues. Currently, senior federal officials only become involved when crisis strikes. By then, it is too late. We also recommend that the Commission liaison position in the U.S. Department of State's Mexico office be shifted to a more proactive role, with a mandate to identify likely problems before they arise. In the SRE, the General Directorate for International Boundaries and Waters, dismantled during budget cuts in the 1990s, should be reinstated.

Currently, the U.S. and Mexican sections of the Commission have separate headquarters, in El Paso and Juárez respectively. Integration of the Commission offices would lead to a stronger working relationship between the two sections and earlier and more effective communication about potential problems and solutions.

More Resources, Clear Notification Procedures and Basin Councils

There are at least three other changes that could help to reduce future conflicts over transboundary water resources. The Commission needs a bigger budget and more environmental and biological expertise. Both countries need to commit the same level of resources. We suggest a binational review of the IBWC's purview, budget, technology and staff skills.

Secondly, the Commission should consider establishing a clear, formal procedure by which the two countries provide early and detailed notification of projects that could reduce the flows of tributaries or groundwater springs contributing to the shared basins.

Finally, the two governments should establish joint binational basin councils, one for the Río Grande and one for the Colorado River. These councils should be transparent and composed of representatives of the relevant federal agencies and state governments. The Commission could provide technical analysis to the basin councils to ensure that treaty considerations were included in the councils' decision-making process and avoid concerns that the Commission was usurping national or state authority.

Conclusion

Action by water users, government and the policy community is needed. While the states, on both sides of the border, need to be more involved, it is clear that the Commission is the crucial piece in the jigsaw. A debate about these issues needs to begin in earnest. Praying for rain is not good enough: drought is the "normal" condition in these two river basins. Yet the border can prosper if the basins are well-managed. Modernizing the Commission is critical to the creation of a stable future for water management in the border region.

Mary Kelly is the Senior Attorney and Program Director for U.S.–Mexico Border Initiatives at Environmental Defense and a member of the U.S.–Mexico Futures Forum.

Alberto Székely is a Career Ambassador with the Mexican Foreign Service.

The full-length version of this article will be published by CLAS as part of the "Policy Papers" series.

The “K Era”

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Photo by Mateo Garibaldi.

The Argentine flag flies over the presidential palace.

incorporated into government policy, the efforts of the residual opposition to base its critique of Kirchner on the gulf separating the presidential discourse from “reality” is so lacking in credibility that even some members of the opposition, including the Alternative for a Republic of Equals party (ARI), have chosen to join the government.

The notion that the government says one thing but does another, or fails to fully address the depths of problems such as poverty, unemployment, the inadequate separation of powers and attempts to co-opt the opposition is vacuous because it does not acknowledge the changes in the political landscape. As tends to happen in times of qualitative political change, criticisms of government performance based on criteria of truth and deception appear excessively naive and extemporaneous in the

new socio-political reality.

If the style of government is based on presidential dynamism with little public consultation prior to decision-making, then the rationale can be found in the Peronist tradition. Ironically, the crisis of state authority that arose at the end of 2002 also provided a powerful precedent. Fundamentally, Kirchner’s accumulation of power is based on the long-term social expectations and demands which have emerged since the advent of democracy in 1983. Equality before the law, social equality, state regulation and close scrutiny of social security programs, healthcare, attentiveness to the needs of senior citizens, and education are among the concerns of those social sectors that support Kirchner.

Faced with the results of the strategy of the 1990s to depoliticize social conflicts and

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The Vicious Cycle of Inequality in Latin America

By Nutida Rasravisuth

Latin America is the most unequal region in the world. This inequality has a tremendous political, economic and social impact, yet some social scientists and policy makers have paid little attention to it. In a talk at CLAS, Terry Karl, Professor in the Department of Political Science at Stanford University and a specialist in democracy, authoritarian rule and accountability in Latin America, emphasized that inattentiveness to extreme inequality contributes to the perpetuation of poverty or, as she called it, the vicious cycle in which poverty and a high level of inequality hinder economic growth, and in which growth rates are consequently too low to solve the problems of inequity and poverty.

Karl argued that the inattention to the problem of inequality derives from the so-called “Washington Consensus,” based on neoliberal principles and embraced by most Latin American governments in the past two decades. The neoliberal paradigm supported by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the U.S. Treasury Department is supposed to promote free trade through the reduction of tariffs and import restrictions, the elimination of subsidies to domestic producers and consumers, cuts in public spending, the privatization of major state assets and the devaluation of currencies. While growth is strongly emphasized, the inequality problem is overlooked because of a belief that redistribution will lessen savings and investment. Growth alone is assumed to be sufficient to reduce poverty and inequity. The multilateral financial institutions also prioritize market efficiency and reject expanded social expenditure as inflationary and inconsistent with neoliberal policies. As John Williamson, a Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Economics who designed the key principles of the Washington Consensus, wrote: “I deliberately excluded from the list anything that was primarily redistributive, as opposed to having equitable consequences as a byproduct of seeking efficiency objectives,

because I felt the Washington of the 1980s to be a city that was essentially contemptuous of equity concerns.”

Inequality in Latin America, according to Karl, is a product of colonialism that has been reinforced, rather than alleviated, by subsequent policies. The conquerors from Spain and Portugal set up the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* land tenure systems in order to control huge plots of land and exploit indigenous labor. These colonial systems led to a very unequal distribution of revenue and land. The struggle for Independence, led by *criollos* (people of Spanish descent born in the Americas) whose main ambition was to end the monopoly of *peninsulares* (colonists born in Spain), did not bring any change to the distribution of property. Throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, patterns of economic development that emphasized the export of raw materials maintained and reinforced the concentration of land and economic power in the hands of the elite. Although the growth rate was remarkable, wealth was not widely shared. The export model also created an exclusionary political alliance

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A boy from the favela sticks his tongue out at a middle class woman.



Photo by Viviane Moos.

Inequality in Latin America

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between export elites, the state and foreign investors who promoted the existing economic structures that benefited the rich and powerful. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the exclusionary economic model persisted with an interruption between the 1930s and the 1970s when Latin American countries embraced import substitution industrialization (ISI).

Under the ISI model, states applied economic protectionism, created social-welfare policies, and were concerned about the problems of the poor. Nevertheless, ISI was terminated in the 1970s and 1980s when military regimes introduced neoliberal policies intended to solve the debt crisis, restructure Latin American economies and increase growth. Although the neoliberal model succeeded in cutting inflation, reducing budget deficits and lowering public external debt, economic growth has been unexpectedly low and the problem of inequality has intensified.

Karl argued that Latin America's pattern of high inequality, low growth and persistent poverty is reinforced by both the state and economic elites. For example, government budgets are a crucial development mechanism. Latin American governments spend a great deal on education to enhance human capital accumulation. However, education spending tends to target higher rather than primary education, which is what the poor need most to achieve upward mobility. In addition, states have been unable to come up with inequality-reducing tax systems. Taxation of private assets has never been a major part of government revenue. Even when fiscal reform occurs, it is in the form of consumption taxes rather than taxes on income or assets. Implementing these policies, the state reproduces and reinforces social exclusion and inequality. The rich reinforce inequity by preventing the implementation of policies dealing with distribution through political influence or corruption. They have also created social distance between themselves and the poor. The wealthy have their own schools, attend their own churches and segregate themselves in their own neighborhoods.

Karl concluded that high inequality erodes

both economic and political stability. Though Latin American countries have adopted the neoliberal paradigm for more than two decades, their economic performance has been unimpressive despite significant fiscal discipline and an increase in exports and private investment. In the past two decades, according to Karl, real GDP growth was just 3 percent a year. Per capita growth was just 1.5 percent. This growth rate was not much better than the 2 percent rate during the lost decade of the 1980s and was below the 5 percent growth rate achieved during the period of ISI in the 1960s and 1970s. Regressive patterns of income distribution have also been reinforced. Karl found that a quarter of national income is shared by only 5 percent of the population and the top 10 percent controls 40 percent of Latin American wealth.

Karl argued that the principal obstacle to higher growth is exceptionally high levels of inequality. Low growth rates stemming in part from extreme inequality, and the lack of social programs to alleviate poverty, have led to social turmoil — the Chiapas rebellion in Mexico, the election of coup leaders in Venezuela and Bolivia and urban riots in Argentina — that weakens democratic institutions. As democracies prove incapable of providing improving standards of living or increased security, opinion polls consistently show that Latin Americans have lost their faith in politicians, governments and even in this form of rule. These events show that democratic institutions face an uphill struggle to consolidate their positions in societies divided between the rich and the poor.

Terry Lynn Karl is Professor of Political Science at Stanford University. She gave a talk at CLAS on November 3, 2003

Nutida Rasrvisuth is a graduate student in the Latin American Studies Program.

If the Dead Could Vote

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protest against a court rejection of Montt's candidacy. According to the 1985 constitution, former golpistas and dictators are not allowed to run for elected office. People who are familiar with Guatemala know how hard it is to mobilize thousands of people in one place without major logistical forces. It quickly became obvious that the FRG itself had staged the riots, using government resources to do so. The Supreme Court decision was reversed soon after the riots. Montt would be allowed to run in the elections.

The paramount importance of logistical resources is again observable during election week. The success of political parties relies greatly on their capacity to shuttle and feed their supporters on V-day. Weeks earlier, the FRG had booked the majority of the private and public buses, trucks and lanchas available in the country for voting day. Other major

parties are also organized in a similar fashion.

The day of the elections, the die-hard supporters of the major parties are the first in line. They are brought to the sites early, sometimes arriving two days in advance to secure parties' votes. Twelve hours before the opening of the voting tables, lines commonly feature more than 200 closely-packed voters. They are all male, most between 18 and 55 years old. No women.

I am assigned to observe in a town identified as a hot spot for potential violence, Chisec. Here, the OAS, the EU and the UN are reluctant to send observers. Situated in the tropical department of Alta Verapaz, the patient crowds of Chisec are being hourly challenged by storming rainfalls.

In the early morning, the testosterone and fatigue of the voters make it slippery ground for international observers. There are two of us

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The "K Era"

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demands through technocratic and clientelistic administration and, subsequently, the Alliance's ideological preference for concentrating "responsibility in the citizen and organizations of civil society," Kirchner's government has adopted a new relationship with a society fragmented by the drawn out processes of the disintegration of the state and recurrent economic crises. Highlighting the political character of the conflicts by redefining Peronism through a return to the campaign slogans of the 1960s and 1970s, emphasizing the rule of law in opposition to criminal and corrupt practices and understanding that the economy is conditioned by "social necessity," Kirchner's government is able to reach the various sectors and actors that comprise contemporary Argentine society. This strategy

responds to a variety of needs and demands, all focused on rebuilding diverse areas and functions of the state.

In sum, the "K Era" can be understood as a project of recreating state public authority. In contrast to the previous "populist" style of Peronism, this attempt accepts rather than denies social diversity by seeking to construct a society comprised of rights-holding citizens.

Gabriela Delamata is a Professor of Sociology at the School of Politics and Government at the University of San Martín, Argentina and was a visiting scholar at CLAS.

Women in Motion: Health and Mexico's Maquiladora Workers

By Marlene Clarke

The ill health effects of working in Mexico's *maquiladora* assembly plants may be more complicated and take longer to manifest themselves than labor rights activists have long suspected. When examining issues of health among border workers, Sylvia Guendelman, Professor of Maternal and Child Health at the UC Berkeley, found that many long held notions about the negative health consequences of working in maquilas are based on a few cases and on anecdotal information. Appropriate indicators still need to be found to measure the health of young and mostly healthy workers.

Women currently make up the overwhelming majority of workers in the maquiladoras that line the U.S.–Mexico border. Inputs from large

companies abroad, mainly the U.S., are imported and assembled into finished consumer goods. These products, which include electronics, medical equipment, cars and garments, account for approximately fifty percent of Mexico's exports. According to Guendelman, women are preferred as workers over men due to the perception that they have greater manual dexterity or more "nimble fingers." Women are also seen to be less likely to participate in labor unrest and more tolerant of monotonous or routine tasks. Young women in particular are workers of choice because of their good health, eyesight and physical reflexes.

Mexico's first maquiladoras sprang up in 1966, partly as an effort to decrease migration through increased job opportunities. During the

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Many maquiladora workers live in makeshift homes like these in Colonia Chilpancingo, Tijuana.



Photo by CLAS.



Photo by Sara Lamson.

Maquilas in Latin America and China

By Simeon Tegel

Despite competing for jobs manufacturing goods for the developed world, workers in Mexican and Chinese in-bond assembly plants have much in common. Shared experiences include low pay, long hours, abusive management, dangerous and unhealthy work environments and state-sponsored or state-permitted repression, Juliana So and Garrett Brown told CLAS during their joint presentation on working conditions in Export Processing Zones (EPZs). In both countries, the path to better pay and conditions lies with the workers themselves; only an informed and empowered workforce exercising its fundamental human rights to

freedom of association, organization and, when necessary, industrial action can ensure modern labor standards.

The Global Context

Chinese industrialization, especially in the Asian nation's EPZs, and the recent growth and contraction of the Mexican *maquila* sector must be seen in a global context. On the one hand, the power and financial revenues of multinational corporations (MNCs) have boomed. On the other, many lesser developed countries (LDCs) have actually regressed in economic terms, despite the last decade of "aid," "trade" and

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Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, contracts with an estimated 20,000 factories around the world.

Fox: Three Years Later

By Michelle Johnson



Photo courtesy of AP Wide World.

Mexico City Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador after delivering his state of the city address. He is regarded as a frontrunner for the 2006 Mexican presidential election.

When Vicente Fox emerged from the National Action Party (PAN) as Mexico's first freely and fairly elected president in 2000, many expected a savvy and business-minded leader who would act on a number of reforms to revitalize Mexico's economy, promote political transparency and improve relations with the United States. According to Enrique Dussel Peters, Professor of Economics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, three years of economic and political paralysis has instead resulted in rising poverty, increased income disparity and a paucity of new employment opportunities for Mexican workers. As jobs continue to hemorrhage from the manufacturing sector in response to international competition, Dussel Peters asks, "Is there life after primitive forms of macroeconomy?" He posits that a "glocal" perspective, one that combines both the global and the local, can help us to understand the ways in which macroeconomic factors combine with regional microeconomic realities to shape industrial

futures.

In Dussel Peters' "glocal" model, the increased diversification and shifting of sites of production within global commodity chains marks a departure from earlier types of globalization processes. These newly configured production processes benefit from the examination of regional or "territorial" effects through space and time. For example, when a Wal-Mart order is filled through global commodity chains in ten countries, what are the local effects and linkages within these territories? He argues that the general concept of socioeconomic development and the process by which specific Mexican localities can be integrated into the world market are best understood from this "glocal" perspective. The consideration of "glocal" possibilities first requires an examination of current macroeconomic realities.

The Fox Administration's macroeconomic policies continue to be dictated by a liberalization strategy characterized by import liberalization and privatization, cheap labor power, foreign investment, controlled inflation and fiscal

deficits and a minimalist state approach. Export-oriented industrial manufacturing is at the core of this strategy. With its implementation, exports grew from 15 to 30 percent of total gross domestic product (GDP) in the 1990s. An estimated 3,500 firms managed approximately 96 percent of these “primitive exports,” temporary imports to be re-exported. Dussel Peters suggests the polarizing structure of these firms, many of which are maquiladoras, stultify innovation and development in the productive sector.

At the same time, Mexican suppliers have been unable to integrate to world markets due to insufficient financing. Dussel Peters points out that bank financing fell in real terms by 85 percent after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. And while billions of dollars sloshed through the Mexican economy during the 1990s, only 2-3 percent was captured absent the tariffs, income taxes or other payments to the public sector that might have been harnessed for socioeconomic development. What have these trends meant for workers? A net increase in formal employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector initially led to a rise in consumption. Yet as productivity increased, real wages for workers stagnated and in some years declined, largely due to the overvaluation of the peso.

Dussel Peters reported that since Fox’s inauguration, Mexico’s socioeconomic situation has worsened due to political failure to develop a strategy and address issues of investment, trade, employment and agriculture. As a result, salaries have stagnated as GDP per capita has decreased to that of the 1980s, leaving more than 2 million new households in poverty during the three year period. The yawning gap between available employment and needed jobs has stretched: from 2001 to 2003 approximately 20 percent of all manufacturing jobs, including 27 percent of jobs in the maquiladora sector, disappeared. Dussel Peters argues that export-oriented manufacturing, which hinges precariously on U.S. growth, cannot be expected to support future employment needs in an era where Mexico has suffered a dramatic loss of competitiveness against Asia and Central America. Yet Mexico’s liberalization strategy, the “dictatorship of macroeconomy,” teeters on the assumption of constancy within an export sector that represents less than 5 percent of Mexico’s employment. Liberalization strategy must be seriously rethought, says Dussel Peters, with a

“glocal” imagination about how to integrate a projected 105 million workers into world markets in the near future.

Dussel Peters argues that competitive conditions for the productive sector need to be fostered along with regional-sectoral integration to segments of value-added chains, to include financing and specialized personnel. Poverty rates should be prioritized above inflation rates and reforms must embrace taxation. Institutions, both public and private, must be strengthened. Education is a fashionable human capital discussion that needs to be defined in terms of the demand for educated individuals and the role of universities. Dussel Peters suggested that educational investments are currently focused on secondary and higher education to the detriment of primary education for the poorest members of society.

Yet the Fox Administration seems not to realize the depth of the crisis faced by Mexico’s productive sector. And within the discourse of liberalization strategy, discussions of imports or government expenditures are nothing less than heretical. Economic reforms are effectively blocked by the overall lack of strategy, the rotation of officials within the Mexican government and a lack of economic transparency.

Participants asked if hope for reform might lie on the political horizon. In Mexico, governors and local leaders are becoming increasingly powerful. Dussel Peters noted that the polls suggest that 85 percent of Mexico City’s residents support Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the mayor of Mexico City who has become well known for his focus on poverty reduction and microenterprise. While it is unlikely that he will impact Mexico’s macroeconomic policy during Fox’s presidency, his popularity suggests that Mexico’s discontent with the status quo has settled in. It is unclear what the 2006 election will bring, although López Obrador is regarded as a frontrunner. In the meantime, the market’s failure to generate employment can be expected to result in growth in the informal sector and immigration to the U.S. Therefore, immigration policy and the “glocal” challenge of integrating workers into world markets should also be of concern to the United States.

Enrique Dussel Peters is Professor at UNAM. He spoke at CLAS on November 6, 2003.

Michelle Johnson is a graduate student in the School of Social Welfare.

The Miami metropolitan area has the highest percentage of immigrants in the United States.



Photo courtesy of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Becoming American in Miami

By Jason Cato

Why do Cuban-Americans like Miami so much? Answer: Because it is so close to the United States. As is so often the case with humor, this joke highlights a deeper reality. In the wake of the 1959 Cuban revolution, exiles from the Caribbean island have transformed Miami into what many regard as the de facto capital of Latin America. These political refugees virulently oppose communism and the dictatorship of Fidel Castro. Amid the political turbulence of the Cold War, these Cuban exiles encountered a United States willing to shower unprecedented benefits upon them — which they readily seized. In a short amount of time, these Cubans achieved an overwhelming presence in the business, socio-cultural and political landscapes of the city once regarded as the quintessential location for retiring white northerners.

Yet the astounding achievements of Miami's Cubans belie a darker side to the city's racial and ethnic relations. Unlike the Cuban exiles whom the U.S. government openly welcomed during the Cold War, Haitian immigrants, also known pejoratively as "the Boat People," faced the seemingly insurmountable barrier of a harsh

racism ingrained in the history, culture and institutions of the U.S. For the Haitians migrating to the U.S., cultural difference has not been a unifying force affirming a sense of collective pride. Rejection and alienation dominate their welcome in the U.S..

Alex Stepick, Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Florida International University, sees these two profoundly differing experiences as key to reframing the debates on immigration and the dynamics of assimilation and acculturation. In rising to dominate the centers of power in Miami, Cuban-Americans have reversed the traditional cycles of assimilation and acculturation. Latinization of resident Anglos competes with Anglicization of Latinos. But the Haitian experience in Miami offers a study in contrast. Racialized as the unwelcome other, many Haitians internalize the fear and hatred driving racism in the U.S. Stepick argues that with little access to resources, Haitians in Miami's inner city integrate into the existing social structure through a process of "segmentary assimilation." Hiding their Haitian roots, these immigrants tend to adopt the appearances and styles of African-American

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1980s and 1990s, there were rapid surges in the number of maquiladoras. However, since 2001, the trend has reversed. The reasons for this downturn are multiple. They include economic depression, the relocation of plants to China due to lower labor costs and the lost tax advantages of maquiladoras.

Maquiladoras have traditionally been criticized as offering low paying jobs and a stressful work environment. Specifically, maquiladoras require employees to endure long work hours with few rest periods, to perform repetitive tasks at an extremely fast pace, to withstand severe pressure to satisfy production quotas and performance standards and, perhaps most stressfully, to cope with the low level of autonomy and control to make decisions

regarding their work. The effects of the physical environment on these workers has also been an area of concern, namely, exposure to toxic chemicals, poor ventilation and lighting, excessive noise and heat, vibrations and unsafe machinery.

Women who have worked in maquiladoras often exhibit detrimental health effects. Among them are gastric disorders, menstrual and muscular-skeletal problems and low birth weight pregnancies. Health symptoms that are more particular to garment factory workers include pulmonary and eye problems, dermatitis and hand injuries. Workers in the electronic factories often experience eye irritation, visual acuity problems and allergies. Despite the importance of these effects as a public health

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Living in shantytowns that lack basic services adds to the health risks faced by maquila workers.



Maquilas in Latin America and China

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“development.” In both Mexico and China, this has meant a desperate and vulnerable workforce, often composed of undereducated migrants from rural areas, seeking employment from increasingly powerful and mobile international capital. In both countries, the state is failing to intervene and enforce its own labor laws.

According to Brown, 51 of the world’s top 100 economies are not nation states but multinational corporations. The 500 largest MNCs now control approximately 70 percent of all world trade, including one third of manufacturing exports and three quarters of commodity trade. Multinational companies now account for some two thirds of industrial investment in LDCs, giving those corporations high degrees of political leverage and influence with national governments.

Meanwhile, companies such as Nike, Disney, Wal-Mart and Mattel have increasingly lengthy and elaborate supply chains that extend around the globe. Nike, for example, is supplied by 750 factories employing a total of 600,000 workers in 50 countries. Disney and Wal-Mart each have around 20,000 factories working for them. However, the companies tend to keep the actual factories at arm’s length, using a chain of contractors, subcontractors, brokers and agents. “Nike doesn’t own a single one of these plants,” Brown said. “In fact, Nike doesn’t make shoes. They hire other people to make shoes for them, and it is these other people who run the 750 factories.” The effect of this separation of flagship brand-names and the ownership of the sweatshops where the branded products are actually made is a legal, political and commercial shielding of the MNCs from the consequences of exploitative employment practices.

At the same time, a growing number of workers in the developing world endure appalling working conditions and have no meaningful legal protection. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there are now some 27 million workers in EPZs around the world. Many of those EPZs are formally exempt from national labor laws. In those where labor laws are supposed to apply, enforce-

ment is often lax to nonexistent. Meanwhile, a total of 246 million children, aged from five to 14, are in part-time or full-time employment. The number of migrant workers now stands at around 150 million, of which an estimated 70 million are in China and another 50 million in Africa. The number of informal workers, without such basic protections as health care or pensions, is also thought to be growing worldwide.

Mexican Poverty, Maquilas and NAFTA

Ten years after the implementation of NAFTA, 19 million more Mexicans live in poverty than before the trade treaty. According to the Mexican government’s own statistics, 75 percent of economically active Mexicans do not even have sufficient income to fund the basic necessities of life. Since the implementation of NAFTA, Mexico’s minimum wage has decreased 23 percent in real terms while the average manufacturing wage has dropped 12 percent. Over the same timeframe, the productivity of Mexican workers has actually risen 45 percent.

The main Mexican nexus of an increasingly desperate workforce and the increasingly powerful MNCs is the maquila sector. Under NAFTA, this has meant a flow of unionized, regulated jobs from the U.S. to Mexico, where workers are unorganized and the state fails to protect them. Pay and conditions are appalling. The maquilas actually first appeared in Mexico in 1965 as part of that nation’s Border Industrialization Program, which allowed assembly plants up to 100 kilometers, about 62 miles, from the U.S. border to import parts and assemble them into a finished product for export without paying tariffs. From 1965 to 1994, the maquila sector grew steadily before exploding with the advent of NAFTA. In 2000, there were between 3,700 and 3,900 maquilas in Mexico, employing around 1.3 million people. Approximately 57 percent of the maquila workforce is comprised of young women, mostly unskilled and undereducated, with many having migrated from impoverished rural areas elsewhere in Mexico.

In the factories, there is frequently no training for the handling of or protection from toxic

chemicals. The principles of ergonomics are often disregarded. There are few heat or noise controls or protections, and minimal to no machine-guarding. There is also a lack of trained health and safety managers. Those MNCs that do carry out inspections tend to send industrial hygienists down from the U.S. The dates of these visits are usually known to the maquila management in advance, said Brown, and workers are sometimes even coached, as well as intimidated, regarding what they tell the inspectors, who usually do not speak Spanish.

At the same time, there is no meaningful regulation by the Mexican state. This is due to a number of factors, including a lack of trained personnel and resources. However, Brown argued, there is also no political will in the Mexican government. Mexico is heavily indebted to the World Bank, the IMF and many U.S. financial institutions. The government is therefore desperate not to jeopardize the foreign income the maquilas bring.

Maquila companies are also effectively subsidized by municipal and state authorities. The maquilas are often placed in industrial parks constructed at the taxpayer's expense. Their presence, like an oasis in the desert, has attracted substantial migration from other parts of Mexico, causing a demographic explosion. Shantytowns have built up in the maquila sector. Already short of resources, local municipalities have been utterly unable to cope by providing urban planning or even basic infrastructure. Many maquila workers therefore live in neighborhoods without electricity, running water or sewage services. Facilities to provide education, healthcare and childcare are also in short supply. Although the maquilas do pay some federal taxes, they pay only minimal state and municipal levies.

Mexican, Chinese and Central American EPZs: Increasing Competition

During 2002, Chinese exports to the U.S. grew by 20 percent. In July 2003, China overtook Mexico as the second largest source of U.S. imports. That year, China accounted for 13 percent of manufactured exports to the U.S. compared to Mexico's 10.8 percent. China is also



Photo by Dionicia Ramos.

now entering various high technology manufacturing sectors, such as semiconductors.

The result of this competition has been negative for Mexico. Since 2001, at least 500 Mexican maquilas have shut down with the loss of 225,000 jobs. Although some of these closures are due to the general economic slowdown in the North American and world economies, the role of China is also likely a factor. Meanwhile, maquilas in Central American countries such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are also expanding. Chinese wages are 75 percent lower than those in Mexico while Central American wages are 22 percent less than in their northern neighbor. In addition, the 30 cents that Chinese workers receive per hour tend to be without benefits, further saving operating costs for MNCs.

“It looks like China is on the rise and Mexico on the decline but the reality is that for both countries, and working people in both countries, their destinies are completely intertwined,” argued Brown. “Workers in Mexico and China have much more in common than they have differences.”

Garrett Brown, Coordinator, Maquila Health & Safety Support Network, and Juliana So, Project Coordinator for the Chinese Working Women network, gave their presentation on maquilas on November 21, 2003.

Simeon Tegel, is a graduate student in the Latin American Studies Program.

Niketown in San Francisco.

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issue, however, there have been few epidemiologic studies done on the health consequences of working in maquiladoras. Rather, the studies that have been done are more ethnographic in nature. And, according to Guendelman, trying to do an epidemiologic study on these young working women is difficult and costly. The majority of the women are healthy while they are working in the factories because they are young, but many occupational problems take years to manifest in an individual. Add to this the high turnover rate — 85 to 100 percent a year — and the fact that it is very difficult to gain access to the inside of the factories in order to conduct studies, and it becomes clear how difficult it is to track the long-term health of these women.

Guendelman and her colleagues conducted a community-based study in Tijuana in order to examine the self-perceived health effects of the maquiladora environment on employees. They compared the health conditions of female workers in four distinct groups: electronics maquiladora workers, garment maquiladora workers, service workers and nonwage earners. The women were between 16 and 28 years of age and were interviewed at home by local community health promoters who lived in the same shantytowns. Using subjective measures of health, where the women themselves reported their illnesses, allowed for more flexibility than previous studies. The researchers found that when compared with service workers, maquiladora workers were on average less educated, made less money, worked longer hours and had less autonomy on the job.

From a health standpoint, however, maquiladora workers had fewer functional impairments, less nervousness and tension and similar levels of depression and sense of control over their lives. These effects persisted even after controlling for various factors such as work characteristics, lifestyles and family traits. In addition, maquila women had significantly better benefits, such as more access to health insurance and profit-sharing plans. Health outcomes were found to be similar between maquiladora workers and nonwage earners. The researchers concluded that the adverse effects of

maquiladora work may be weaker than customarily assumed, or that the effects may not readily be discernable. Overall, not having enough money to make ends meet was a better predictor of health outcomes than occupation per se.

A second study done by Guendelman and colleagues investigated the health effects of women who quit electronic maquiladora work. They collected data from two different factories by reviewing the medical and administrative records of 725 female workers from date-of-hire up until the time the women left the factories. They found that over half of the women quit within two years. Factors that contributed to quitting included personal problems such as chronic illness, caring for a sick relative and conflicts between work and family. Thus, personal health and family problems had the biggest impact on the women quitting and not actual working conditions. In addition, women who could negotiate their work hours and took time off had improved health effects. These findings show that work often poses a conflict for women who hold many other roles in their lives.

Although one of Mexico's goals is to improve the competitiveness of its economy through advanced technology, another goal is to promote the health and occupational safety for its workers. According to Guendelman, the factors involved in making this goal a reality are guaranteeing a living wage, providing basic services to shantytowns and improving reproductive health services. This can be achieved through community partnerships and various other collaborations. Thus, creating incentives for working women by improving their quality of life will aid Mexico's economy as well.

Sylvia Guendelman is Professor of Maternal and Child Health at UC Berkeley. She presented "The Health Consequences of Maquiladora Work: Female Workers on the U.S.–Mexico Border" at CLAS on November 10, 2003.

Marlene Clarke is a graduate student in the School of Public Health.

Becoming American in Miami

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inner city youth, revealing the power local context has in shaping the path assimilation takes.

The contrasting experiences of Cubans and Haitians embodied in the multicultural landscape of Miami presents a case whose implications have important consequences for how the U.S. negotiates larger questions about the meaning and unity of “the nation.”

Miami-Dade county has the highest percentage of immigrants of any metropolitan area in the U.S., surpassing Los Angeles, New York and Chicago. More than 50 percent of the county’s population is foreign born. And according to the 2000 census, over 60 percent were Latino, making Latinos the largest minority statewide. Perhaps more significant than their demographic dominance are the collective achievements of Latinos, specifically of Cuban-Americans, in politics, business and in the socio-cultural landscape, said Stepick. Miami is the only place in the U.S. where immigrants have established a successful, self-sustaining ethnic enclave in which co-ethnics have a high likelihood of interacting with each other in the formal and informal routines of everyday life.

Given their deep penetration into the social, economic and political landscape of the city, Miami Cubans have reversed the normal flow of assimilation for immigrants settling in the U.S. According to Stepick, understanding the place of local power is crucial to making sense of the Cuban-American case. Rather than being forced to assimilate, shed Spanish for English and adopt “American” cultural practices, Miami Cubans have occasioned what Stepick calls “reverse acculturation.” Established resident Anglos are forced to adapt in the face of cultural transformations, political dominance and economic influence initiated by the influx of Cubans following the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

What accounts for the specific course of assimilation and acculturation, as well as the unique achievements, experienced by Miami’s Cubans? Stepick points to three types of capital: economic, social and political. Economic capital came both from the fact that the first wave of Cuban immigrants were largely professionals or those from the privileged sectors of Cuban society as well as from unprecedented federal benefits, including 50 percent of all small business loans between 1960 and 1980 and employment opportunities through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), based at the University of Miami. This economic capital created the conditions

that incorporated and eased the resettlement for later-arriving Cuban refugees from less privileged backgrounds, said Stepick.

Social capital figures into the success of Miami’s Cubans primarily in terms of the creation of a social or moral community of enormous solidarity, as Cubans turn to other Cubans for access to resources. In turn, this provides opportunities in the workplace and the broader social landscape that requires little acculturation. As such, Spanish has not faded away but remains the dominant language in the personal and communal lives as well as in the professional contexts of Miami Cubans.

Lastly, according to Stepick, political capital was largely secured by virtue of the Cuban exiles’ legal classification as political refugees, entitling them to rights and access to resources inaccessible to other immigrants.

Stepick argues that Miami offers numerous lessons likely to foretell the changes and challenges underway throughout much of the U.S.. What does it mean to be an “American”? What does it mean to be a Cuban or Haitian in the U.S.? These questions, in light of the ambivalence characterizing the paths of assimilation and acculturation in Miami, reveal the emergent nature of identity. Formed through social interaction and embedded in structural contexts of power, the divergent experiences of Cubans and Haitians in Miami bring out two central dynamics shaping the multicultural United States. The hegemony of white supremacy in local contexts indelibly affects how immigrants are incorporated into the body of the nation. However, assimilation is never a one-way street. As the Cuban-American experience in Miami demonstrates, interaction between diverse groups transforms not only newcomer immigrants but established residents as well. Becoming “American,” then, means that both immigrants and established U.S. citizens are in the process of creating and negotiating the meaning of identity in and for the nation.

Alex Stepick is Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Florida International University. He presented “Immigrants, Race and Power in Miami: Reconfiguring Relations” on November 20, 2003.

Jason Cato is a graduate student in the Department of Ethnic Studies.

Patagonia Taxi

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Photo by Sarah Jaffe.

Desolate river valleys
carry yearly runoff
from the mountains.

countless sheep, recently shorn, watched with some suspicion. Here in this vast expanse, one loses a sense of size and scale. To narrow the distances, one begins to visualize movement where in fact there is none. On several occasions, we gladly mistook small boulders for livestock and began to see motion instead of stillness. This is the stuff of desert hallucinations, I thought, and wondered if, over time, it also inspired madness. Here, the whiteness of the empty page that perturbed so many writers seems minor by comparison to the huge sheet of unmarked land plainly begging for our inscription. We want to name it in a familiar language, to dot its surface with living forms. Write on it to assure ourselves that we still have a voice in the desert and to prove, beyond any doubt, that we are not alone. Perhaps this is another version of the nineteenth century dictum, “to govern is to populate;” one wants to fill vacant space to overcome a void. To imagine, then, is to populate the landscape with form and movement. Traveling through Patagonia, one is driven by this feeling; one single, isolated ewe or hare taps the mind to invent others.

The first leg of this journey took me

through the Estancia Cóndor, a property that is now in the hands of the Benetton Corporation. With 265,000 square kilometers, this estate is the largest in Argentina; the main compound has a chapel and school and a graveyard for its workers. Most Patagonians will tell you that Benetton holds petroleum fields along with precious wildlife habitats; in this way, they echo narratives of colonial control that we have learned from years of reading. Yet all of this comes to a sudden halt as we take in a wide-angle scene of breathless extension; theory takes a backseat to the visual power of landscape. We only come to our senses when we see, at the tip of this property, a sign announcing a smaller estancia, Monte Dinero. Clearly, the owners wish all passersby to recognize their economic fortunes as they welcome us to the end of the continent and on to the penguin reserves.

Wind and rain press us on to the penguins, which travel from Antarctica to set their eggs under the low brush of Tierras Vírgenes. The guard was asleep at the entrance so we lifted the flimsy gate and drove in. More attentive than the ranger, hundreds of penguins greeted us, unalarmed by our intrusion. As we battled

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If the Dead Could Vote

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to cover the whole town with 18,000 voters expected. People show signs of impatience. They break the windows and doors of the school hosting the polling site. As we approach this first site, featuring 16 voting booths, we are clearly not welcome.

Throughout the day, we frequently return to this site. As the hours go by, the scene changes. By late afternoon, the crowd is composed of families, with women and kids. They are non-affiliated families who traveled by their own means to the voting locations. The atmosphere is lighter but closing time is approaching. Our presence is now more than welcome, and many share with us their worries that they will not be able to vote in time.

The intimidation of the morning have mutated into more subtle forms of electoral fraud. In a combination of logistical problems and party pressures, the names of nonaffiliated

voters are often missing from voting lists. They are repeatedly disoriented by the improvised and rare literate electoral advisors who send them deliberately to the wrong lines. After a full day of waiting and running around, and an extension of the voting hours, about one tenth of the voters have not succeeded in voting. They will return home, impotent, with the taste of a bitter democracy in their mouths.

I think to myself, as I watch the persistence of these voters, that if I had to go through only one quarter of the obstacles they had to face today, I would never even think of showing up to vote.

As midnight strikes, observers are still observing. People are still waiting on the porches of the worn out and violated school, now watching quietly through the illuminated broken windows of the voting rooms. The night scene looks like a shipwreck with its

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More than 200,000 people, most of them civilians, died in Guatemala's civil war.



Photo by Michel Huneault.

Patagonia Taxi

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aggressive winds (for a moment, I thought I would fly) and walked over broken eggshells, the penguins seemed to wave us on, more wary of the birds overhead than of two human observers on foot. Yet the big prize for city folk was not the sight of these miniature waiters, but the vision that unfolds at the end of the path with the Strait of Magellan. Against the cozy domesticity that the penguin families had installed on land, the strait is monumental. The end of the continent, and at its feet, the chalky green sea. Here, mountains of ferocious water bring to mind a maritime challenge of centuries. The scene is framed on either side by ancient lighthouse stations, bearing the Argentine flag to the east and Chilean banner to the west; it reminds us that the passion for sea adventure is often cast as a dispute among nations. Yet the grandeur of standing at the bottom of the world is, in the language of the romantics, nothing short of sublime.

Many signs along the way claim *finis terrae*. Each village or reserve offers a postcard shot sighting the end of the earth. Bemused, I compare these different claims to the words of postmodern skeptics who put in doubt the mapmaker's faith in north/south markers. More simply, the freezing rain shouted out that it was time to reverse direction. Turning from the southern waters, we faced a stretch that announced the start of an infinite north. Before us lay an unpaved road that might lead to Banff or Hudson Bay or America's cosmopolitan cities. It also put to test those global links that are said to join us through unbroken terrain.

Observers of Patagonia speak of empty land and flatness. Chance and monotony are its constants. It is no surprise that this is also outlaw country, as if through theft and violence one might interrupt its stillness. In the early pages of Facundo, Sarmiento insisted on the role of the pathfinder to signal those features that gave shape to the land, supplying details that eluded men from the city, naming forms where others only saw blankness. After days of traveling on barren roads, and no longer with fear of delusions, I too could spot some changes. Catamarans yielded to condors and flatness yielded to Patagonian steppes. At last, the Argentine glaciers appeared, drawing substance from Chilean snow.

From thousands of years of accumulation, ice cathedrals rise sixty meters high. In their

crevices, a blue glow casts an aura. Yet when sections of the glacier shatter and fall into water below, their groaning color roars. All the landscape bellows in an unknown tongue. This is a noisy scene of contrasts, interrupting sameness; when the breaking ice rebels from its still plateau, a commotion stirs. We all rush to see it. Amateur photographers hope to catch the voice of ice on film. Others simply listen. From a safe position on the glacier's heights, I also surrender to these orphic pursuits, stretching to see where nature's thunder splits open prehistoric layers of time.

Withdrawing from this spectacle that joins movement and stillness, I traveled to the Estancia Anita, abutting the path of the glacier. This was the site of a 1921 worker action in which anarchists staged an uprising against foreign bosses; the Argentine army, controlled by President Irigoyen, marched in to squash the rebellion. The massacre, which left 200 dead, reminds us of the other side of tranquility on southern expanses. And while some of the riders in my car led a lively discussion of the gangster genre in Hollywood movies — a conversation in which Pacino and De Niro were recalled darting bullets in the New York streets — I could only think of Pepe Soriano, the actor who played the role of anarchist leader in the film *La Patagonia Rebelde*. Hat in hand, he faced the firing squad not without first swearing faith in social revolution.

As the drive through Estancia Anita came to a close, I pocketed a tuft of lamb's wool. The idea was to add this to a pillow that awaited me at home.

Francine Masiello is the Ancker Professor in the Humanities at UC Berkeley.

If the Dead Could Vote

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Photo by Michel Huneault.

A father tries to identify the teeth of his disappeared son.

exhausted crew drifting away on a sea of mud. Behind the locked doors, the quick count is taking place. The first results are coming in.

Exit Montt

The former general has fortunately been voted out in this first round of the elections, ending up third in the polls despite the dark maneuvers of the last months. Both national and international observers acclaim the validity of the results and the electoral zeal of Guatemalans, even though signs of serious fraud were recorded in numerous areas.

With this defeat, Montt's congressional immunity is finally disintegrating; it will end officially on January 14th 2004. As the self-proclaimed Savior was clearly rejected by a disgusted population, it remains to be seen if fewer obstacles will now impede the prosecutions and investigations. Parallel and clandestine groups are still running an important and influential underground show in Guatemala. The two presidential finalists are seen as being far from revolutionary. Moreover, even if the new president has the desire to implement

changes, he must deal with an FRG that is still very strong in congress and tightly organized all over the country. Montt, as a recent week long disappearance can lead us to conclude, might be thinking about an alternative plan to escape justice.

Driving back to the capital city where I must catch my return flight, I catch glimpses of a cemetery in the outskirts of the city that brings back memories of last week's exhumations in Quiche. The department remains a stronghold of the FRG, a place where they won a large majority of seats. I cannot stop thinking about the 200,000 victims of the civil war and the genocide: local leaders, children, women. Almost half of the 669 documented massacres sites in Guatemala are in Quiche. I think about what the missing people could have brought to the Guatemalan political, economic and social landscape, and how they are still absent cases in official national history.

Definitively, I think: What if the dead could vote?

Michel Huneault is a graduate student in the Latin American Studies Program.

Fitz Roy Peak in Patagonia, Argentina.



Photo by Sarah Jaffe.

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