



ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA • WINTER 2008

Violence

A Daily Threat

EDITOR'S LETTER

Suddenly, I was seeing violence everywhere. Just after I started thinking about this *ReVista*, I saw a sweet documentary film about Cuban photographer Alberto Korda, who captured the iconic image of Che Guevara. He transformed himself from glamorous fashion cameraman to a socially conscious documenter of the revolution. What changed him were the sad eyes of a little peasant girl cradling a piece of wood because her parents could not afford a doll. That's what we call structural violence.

I listened to speakers at the DRCLAS weekly Tuesday seminar as people talked about moral outrage, wars past and present, the wielding and witnessing of violence. In my first book, *Disappeared, A Journalist Silenced*, I retraced the life of a journalist disappeared by violence and then recounted the aftermath of suffering and impunity. In my recent book, *Una gringa en Bogotá*, I tried to understand how violence invisibly penetrates daily life in that city. But I'd never before thought of either of those books directly in the context of violence.

Even though I had chosen the topic of violence and violence prevention, suddenly it seemed too big. "What kind of violence are you going to talk about?" curious colleagues asked. "Gangs? security issues? civil wars? domestic violence? structural violence?"

I then realized that many previous articles in *ReVista* had focused on the theme (see the listing on p. 63). Despite the wealth of work on the subject in Colombia—those social scientists even have a name, *violentologists*—I decided that this would not be another issue on Colombia nor another issue on human rights. Rather, I chose to focus on how violence affects contemporary daily life in Latin America. Even so, from Guatemala to Paraguay, a recurrent and unanticipated theme hammered at the dangers of daily violence encouraging a yearning for past authoritarianism.

This *ReVista* is not only about fear and turmoil; it is also about hope. Rodrigo Guerrero frames violence as a public health problem with public health solutions, while Maria Ospina describes letters of persistence; Donna Hicks recounts face-to-face encounters between victims and perpetrators; Victor Vich describes how Peruvian artists have responded to the memory of violence. It is no coincidence that many of the articles here and in previous issues of *ReVista* have focused on violence prevention by building society through arts and culture. As Harvard professor Doris Sommer recently pointed out in the issue on dance, cultural agency is one way of fighting violence (for more on the Cultural Agency Program, see www.culturalagents.org).

We have also tried to convey this sense of hope through the amazing images provided by Donna DeCesare and two young photographers she has mentored: Sandra Sebastian and Meredith Kohut. A journalist and photographer, as well as a brilliant teacher, Donna, who was a Fulbright Scholar with me in Bogotá in 2005, sensitively conveys in her work the stories of gang members, displaced people and other victims and perpetrators of violence in Central America and Colombia. She, perhaps more than other photojournalist, understands the nature of violence. And she has taught her students well. The cover photo by Sandra Sebastian depicts violence, hope and a quiet dignity that reflects Donna DeCesare's philosophy. "Hope begins with safely being able to speak truth," Donna writes in her photo essay.

We hope that here in these pages, readers will find through words and images some hope and understanding that will allow them to confront Latin America's daily reality, the threat of violence.



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Problems of security and violence are a major issue in Latin America. Here are some different perspectives on understanding and treating the violence epidemic.

Challenges of Violence and Insecurity

Beyond the Democracy-Development Mantra

BY DIANE E. DAVIS

IT DOES NOT SEEM THAT LONG AGO THAT OPTIMISM FLOWED about prospects for democracy and sustained economic development in Latin America. But hopes for the future have dimmed over the last several years, as problems of violence, crime and insecurity have emerged with a vengeance in many parts of the global south. And although Mexico, Argentina and Brazil—Latin America's large industrializing countries—take the lead, smaller countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic are also feeling the impact of violence.

Former child soldier, Colombia.

Forget big ideas about democracy; forget the aspirations for a globally competitive development strategy. Growing numbers of citizens are turning to demands for basic needs and human rights, as reflected in the accelerating desire for security and a life without violent conflict.

The magnitude of these contemporary problems of violence, daily conflict and insecurity is much broader and perhaps more insidious than the scattered but debilitating wars within and between ethnic regions, religions, and/or militias unleashed by the weakening of the nation-state in recent years. Nor are we ignoring the problems directly related to post-Cold War politics, such as the break-up of competing empires and a subsequent recalibration of

enemies that sustains a new form of “civilizational” warfare. These political problems have generated insecurity and conflict around the world, disproportionately affecting the global south—think Afghanistan, Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, Kosovo, for example.

However, another source and pattern of conflict and insecurity are growing in scale and are equally dangerous for democracy and development aims, especially in Latin America. This is the more “garden variety” type of insecurity and conflict that is best seen in rising homicides, accelerating crime rates (despite a decline in reportage by victims), and unprecedented levels of police corruption and impunity. Such conditions in turn push citizens (and criminals) to take matters into their own hands, either through vigilante acts or, more commonly, through the standard route of hiring private security guards, thereby fueling the environment of fear, exclusion and insecurity.

In many Latin American countries, mafias involved in all form of illegal activities, many fueled by the globalization of consumption (of items ranging from drugs and guns to knock-off designer products and CDs), are taking on the functionally equivalent role of mini-states. They monopolize the means of violence and provide protection and territorial governance in exchange for allegiance. They are difficult forces to be reckoned with, and most governments, democratic or not, have failed to keep these dangerous elements at bay.

Development scholars have been slow to examine these changes, let alone theorize their origins and effects. This is especially surprising given the fact that violence and insecurity are intricately linked to democracy and developmental conditions. On one hand, these changes are traceable to the path-dependent consequences of past decisions about economic development, governance, state formation and industrialization that characterized many Latin American countries. At the same time, their intensification in recent years owes in no small part to the rupture with a protectionist or authoritarian past and the current embrace of liberalization, however paradoxical this may appear at the outset.

In prior decades, many governments were able to pursue industrialization projects because they counted on strong and/or

regimes still faced the political and economic future with the same old coercive networks intact, especially in the rank-and-file in the police and military. For years, the state operated without effective institutional constraints as part of the bargain with the elite to guarantee state power and economic progress by policing the nation’s political and economic “enemies”—be they laborers, socialists and communists, street vendors or agrarian rebels. Thus, the coercive arms of the late developmental state became well ensconced in a networked world of impunity, corruption and crime. This is the institutional legacy of many countries of the global south, and democracy has done little to reverse it.

This not to say that all late developers are saddled with the same legacies of violence and impunity, or that they all would face identical problems of insecurity such as we see throughout Latin America. Nor is this to suggest that police and military are the only source of violence and contemporary disorder. Many countries did effectively purge their old authoritarian police and replaced them with new forces during the democratic transition (with South Africa the most dramatic success story). Other late developers, like India, have been democratic for much longer, and do not face the legacies of police and military coercion. Still others, such as the East Asian tigers, have hosted authoritarian regimes but have eluded much of the violence and insecurity of most of their late developmental counterparts.

Thus it is important to recognize that the economic legacies of late development are also important in accounting for patterns and location of problems of insecurity in so many countries of the global south, and why they are concentrated in Latin America more specifically. Two factors linked to prior economic development models are key: the extent of informality in the national economy, and the extent of income and social polarization. Both characterize the large industrializing countries of Latin America, and both trace their roots to past patterns of political and economic development.

In prior decades, Latin America’s late industrializers traveled a very rocky economic road in which formal employment in industry lagged behind informal employment in small-scale commerce and other petty services, with government employment generally

taking up the slack. These sectoral imbalances were all too often ignored in much of the sociological work on late development, which focused primarily on the key actors of production (capital, labor and the state) and the big-ticket industrial strategies of growth, while ignoring the diversity of class identities and the composition of economic activities that sustained late development. Yet these sectoral patterns have always

been problematic. With the neo-liberal turn bringing a downsized state, and with expectations of greater global competitiveness driving many countries to reduce traditional sources of manufacturing and agriculture, these sectoral imbalances—and the burgeoning growth of services and the informal economy—have become more extreme.

Part of the problem is that the two main sources of economic growth in today’s world—export-led industrialization and the development of the high-end financial services linked to real estate development and the information economy—worsen social and income

Forget big ideas about democracy; forget the aspirations for a globally competitive development strategy. Growing numbers of citizens are turning to demands for basic needs and human rights, as reflected in the accelerating desire for security and a life without violent conflict.

authoritarian states that developed strong policing and military apparatuses to control both industrial and agricultural labor and consolidate state power on behalf of an emergent industrial class in competition with landed oligarchs. Thus, the state’s coercive means were strengthened, undermining the judicial system and facilitating corruption and impunity within the ranks of the police and the military (if not the state itself). To be sure, such abuses of power led to demands for democratization over time. But regime democratization does not eliminate all prior institutions and practices. Even after democratic transition, many postauthoritarian



Urban violence at the point of a gun.

polarity. In both social and spatial terms, the polarization is extreme, and these inequalities lie at the root of the current problems of violence and insecurity.

The issue, again, is not merely income inequality. It also has to do with what sectors of employment remain open as the largest source of work opportunities. With fewer available job prospects in manufacturing and many new employment opportunities beyond the educational reach of those laid off from factories in the drive to develop a more globally competitive information technology service sector, ever more citizens are thrown into the informal sector than before. Such employment, which barely meets subsistence needs for many stuck within it, is becoming ever more “illegal” as protectionist barriers drop, as fewer domestic goods for sale are produced, and as the globalization of illicit goods trade picks up the slack. As a result, much informal employment is situated in certain sectors of the economy functioning within an illicit world of violence and impunity. In addition to the sheer illegality of many of the goods traded, big-money trade in guns, drugs and other contraband products generally necessitates its own “armed forces” for protection. The result is often the development of clandestine connections between local police, mafias and the informal sector, as well as the isolation of certain territorial areas as locations for these activities.

This illicit network of reciprocities and the territorial concentration of dangerous illegal activities in locations that function as “no man’s land” outside state control, further drive the problems of impunity, insecurity and violence. These dangerous areas proliferate in large cities and often sit nestled against old central business districts where local chambers of commerce face a declining manufacturing base and are especially desperate to attract high-end corporate investors and financial services. This leads to a clash of forces and

development models—and growing problems of insecurity—that can thwart the developmental aims of aspiring global cities along with a national investor class desperate for a new way of generating global capital and visibility.

In thinking about the problems facing Latin America today, it is worth noting that among the few late developers that seem to have avoided the descent into violent chaos and the clash of development models, notably the East Asian tigers, burgeoning informality is not as serious a problem. Massive employment in export-led industrialization came early on in these countries (thereby allowing them to avoid the disruptive plant closings and attendant unemployment that came in the abrupt shift from import-substitution industrialization (ISI) to export-led industrialization (EOI) in most of the rest of the global south). Just as important, these are the same late developers that remained rural for much longer and experienced high rates of urbanization relatively late. Finally, even as they pursued export-led industrialization, these countries also fostered small-scale commercial and industrial production and prioritized employment over capital intensity in commercial and industrial production, be it domestic or export-led. Thus, their economies remain a vibrant source of both employment and growth. This combination of “historical advantages” set a clear cap on the growth of the informal sector, both in the past and in the present.

Without the same well-entrenched social and political networks and traditions of informality that now grease the wheels of the global drug, guns, and contraband trade in Latin America, the East Asian tigers have avoided the contemporary constraints of insecurity and violence, and they remain primed to succeed in the next global stage of capitalist development, increasing their advantages in relationship to much of the rest of the global south. In fact, these very same historical advantages have given certain countries, like South Korea, a leading role as suppliers in the global network of (manufactured) contraband consumer goods, many of which are found on the streets of cities like Rio and Mexico City being sold by informal sector vendors. As a result, we see a small but significant group of late developers reaping the benefits of export-led industrialization once again, but doing so at the cost of rising illegality and violence among its less fortunate counterparts, whose problems stem from being on the wrong end of the same global supply chain. The result: a split among late industrializers, where the division is not so much the degree of formal democracy or the extent of global integration in trade, but rather the extent of violence, insecurity, illegality, and lack of rule of law. These are the constraints that will drive many parts of the global south deeper into distress. Unfortunately, the current political and economic models or solutions that scholars are envisaging will do very little to reverse this trend.

Diane E. Davis is Professor and Head of the International Development Group at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the editor of Political Power and Social Theory. She is co-director of MIT’s Jerusalem 2050 project.

A version of this article will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Contexts*. Look for it in the latest table of contents at www.Contexts-Magazine.org.

Violence Is a Public Health Issue

Dealing with Risk Factors

BY RODRIGO GUERRERO

WHEN YOU THINK OF VIOLENCE AND HOW TO CONTROL it, often the first thing that comes to mind is security. However, violence control is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of the police and the criminal justice system. Violence has become a public health issue, and social, political and behavioral scientists, as well as mental and public health specialists, are participating in a lively and transnational discussion.

Violence began to be seen as a public health issue in the modern world only recently. In 1992, U.S. Surgeon General Everett Koop declared violence a public health emergency. In 1993, health ministers throughout the Americas adopted a joint resolution declaring violence prevention a public health priority.

Both in the United States and Latin America, violence was beginning to be understood as an outcome of experience, rather than predominantly genetic factors. Perhaps the most important general insight of recent years has been the recognition that life experience can shape brain chemistry in significant ways, and that experience and neurophysiology (nurture and nature) form a seamless web. Children exposed to family violence have a higher risk of violent behavior during adolescent life.

When doctors think of preventing cardiovascular disease, they apply a "risk factors control strategy." That means, they tell patients to smoke less, exercise more often and to avoid eating fatty foods.

The Colombian experience indicates that the public health approach, in association with more traditional methods such as police control and law enforcement, is a valuable contribution to the prevention of violence.

Public health campaigns around these issues have impressively decreased cardiovascular disease. Likewise, public health, with its emphasis on reliable data and risk factors control, can be a practical and simple approach to violence prevention.

Some risk factors in Latin America and elsewhere include a pattern of family violence, extensive alcohol or drug use, access to firearms; exposure to constant violence in the media; absence of cultural patterns to regulate urban behavior; inefficient and corrupt judicial and police systems and the presence of organized crime.

The Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank currently consider violence and insecurity to be the major obstacles to development. In the year 2000, the Americas suffered the loss or transference of 14.2% of gross national product (GNP)—US\$ 168 billion—because of violence. Moreover, 1.9% of GNP is lost in human capital, an amount equivalent to the region's total expenditures on primary education.

In health terms, intentional violence is the first cause of death in many countries of the region and it is estimated that there are 120,000 homicides a year, and three days per person per year are lost to violence. Additionally, 30 to 60% of all emergency visits to hospitals are due to violence. About 60% of all violent acts, whether murders, child abuse, family abuse, assaults, or felonies, are associated with the consumption of alcohol.

When I was elected mayor of Cali in 1992, I found that communicable diseases and diarrhea were no longer the main health issues. Homicides and motor vehicle deaths had become the first cause of death in the general population. Homicide rates had escalated from 23 to 90 homicides per 100,000, in the 10-year period between 1983 and 1993. This significant rise in the rate of crime was accompanied by the public perception of violence and insecurity as the most serious problems in the city. Interestingly, even the poorest people mentioned violence as having priority over other traditionally important issues like unemployment (9% in 1993) and cost of food. As a physician, I began to think of the possibilities of treating urban violence as a public health problem.

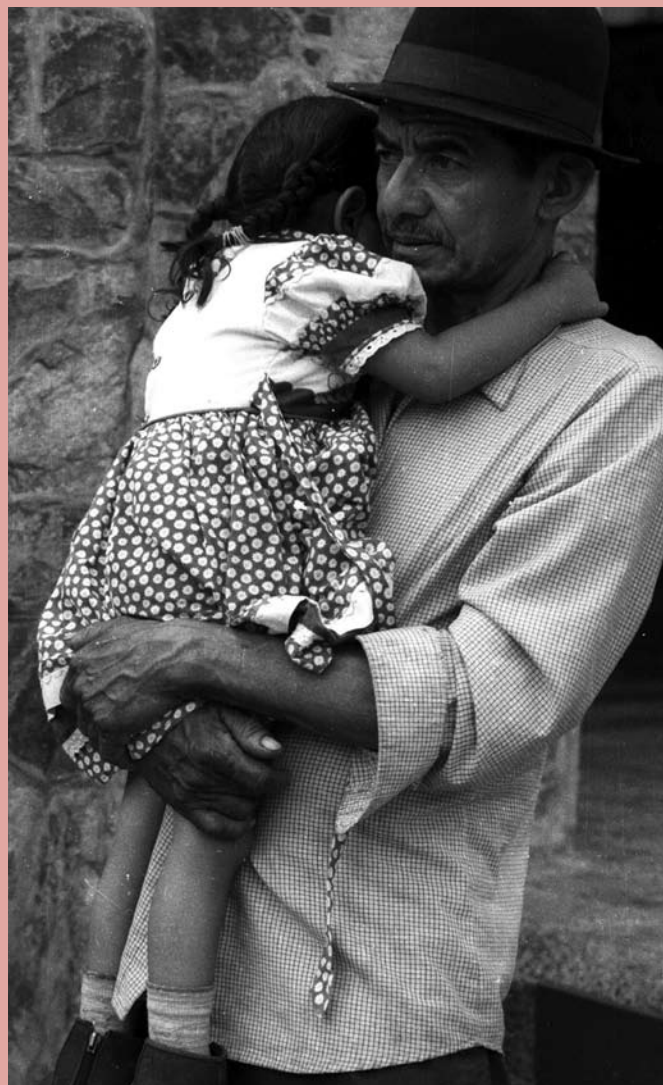
In Colombia, the public health approach was first initiated in Cali in 1992 and continued later in Bogotá. Although there were some differences in emphasis, the cities of Bogotá and Cali followed the same basic public health approach.

Both cities adopted the WHO definition of violence: *The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself or another person that has a high probability of resulting in injury or death.* Both cities developed violence information systems that provided periodic, opportune and reliable information to their mayors and other city officials. Among other policies, similar control measures were applied in both cities when alcohol consumption and carrying hand guns

were identified as homicide risk factors. An evaluation of the restriction of hours for the selling of alcohol showed significant reduction of homicides in Bogotá. Moreover, the banning of permits to carry firearms led to a 14% reduction of homicides in Cali and Bogotá.

In Cali, a committee, under the direction of an epidemiologist and with representatives from the police, judiciary, forensic medicine, health and human rights groups, met weekly.

Cali also engaged in an interesting project involving children in the context of its DESEPAZ program. Given the fact that more than 80% of murders were committed with firearms as well as the need to restrict permission to carry firearms, the municipal government launched "Children Friends of Peace." The program invited children to give up their war toys in exchange for one-year free use of Cali recreational facilities and training workshops on civic education and peace, culminating with a huge party in Cali's largest and best equipped park, with clowns, puppets and raffles.



Top Left: A bullet pierces a Medellín window. Top Right: Violence affects all ages. Bottom Left: Women Affected by Violence: Medellín Window.

A committee was created under the direction of an epidemiologist. This group held weekly meetings in order to analyze crimes committed in the previous week and to prepare a report for the Municipal Security Council that met every Thursday.

However, many of the measures adopted in Cali have not been continued, and the city has experienced inconsistent results in violence prevention.

In contrast, Bogotá has applied consistent policies over 12 years. The emphasis on risk factor control, coupled with the recuperation of public space, public transportation and the creation of bicycle paths, has led to a sense of citizenship. Citizens must participate in efforts to reduce violence. It was necessary to change the traditional way of thinking.

In Colombia, where violence control is traditionally left to the authorities, empowering the community becomes a key strategy to

improve public safety in Colombia. Violence and crime were considered to be too important to be left in the hands of the police and military alone.

The Colombian experience indicates that the public health approach, in association with more traditional methods such as police control and law enforcement, is a valuable contribution to the prevention of violence. Just as early education, ad campaigns and the banning of smoking in public places have made cigarette use frowned upon in the United States and other parts of the world, a public health approach to violence can help citizens control an epidemic that is threatening not only their health, but their economies and pleasure.

Rodrigo Guerrero, a physician, is the founder and director of DESEPAZ in Cali, Colombia. He was mayor of the city from 1993-1996. Guerrero, former regional director advisor on health and violence for the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Inter-American Development Bank, received his doctorate from the Harvard School of Public Health.

RESTORING HUMANITY

BY DONNA HICKS

There was an eerie darkness that flooded the room except for the spotlights that the BBC engineer aimed directly at our faces. We were in a makeshift studio in a private home 40 miles outside of Belfast—the setting for *Facing the Truth*—a three-part BBC television series that brought victims and perpetrators of the conflict in Northern Ireland together for face-to-face encounters.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who presided over countless such encounters in his homeland of South Africa, led the facilitation team along with me and Lesley Bilinda, whose husband was killed in the Rwandan genocide. His presence created a sense of possibility that healing could be started in this war-ravaged

country. The BBC knew that although many of the political issues that had divided the country had been settled, the human suffering brought on by the conflict had never been addressed. They knew that if the two Belfast communities were to envision a future together, the human consequences of the conflict had to be acknowledged. Peace agreements are not designed to attend to the unspeakable loss and trauma people endure during protracted conflict, whether the victims are from Ireland or El Salvador, South Africa or Colombia.

I think of the war-ravaged countries of Latin America, where I have also worked, where stories of loss and suffering could fill volumes. And war is not the only source of violence—the pain caused by domestic abuse, class struggles and other violations of dignity are just as damaging as being caught in political crossfire.

Facing the Truth was telling the story of North Ireland and one reconciliation process. Thus, over a twelve-day period, we brought together six pairs of victims and perpetrators. The process enabled everyone to tell their stories of what happened during the fateful encounters that changed their lives forever. We all agreed that in order for the stories to unfold, we needed to create a process that was dignified, in which everyone involved felt listened to, heard, understood and responded to. They needed to be given the benefit of the doubt—that their intentions for participating were good—and to receive acknowledgment for what they have been through. The perpetrators also needed to be given a chance to be understood and if they felt so moved, to express grief and remorse for what they had done. At the end of their sessions, most of the pairs of victims and perpetrators experienced reconciliation. One pair even went out to dinner together following the encounter. Given the right process, anything is possible.

What did we learn from these experiences? As the Archbishop said, “people seem to need a public ritual when they’ve been roughed up.” Human pain and suffering do not go away on their own. The longer we wait before recognizing and acknowledging what people have been through, the longer the past contaminates the present. Even if a peace agreement is signed, without an opportunity for a public healing ritual where people can tell their stories in a safe and nurturing environment, resentment and distrust are likely to dominate the way people interact with one another. The pain that fills our inner world needs as much attention as a gunshot wound, but what is being done about it?

Perhaps the process we developed in North Ireland could be useful in Latin America for alleviating the historical and present traumas that are buried in the souls of the living. There can be no more urgent human need than to heal the wounds of the past so we are free again to hope, dream, and to be together in a way that enables the full extension of our humanity. As Archbishop Tutu says, “we can only be human together.”

Donna Hicks, Ph.D. is an Associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.



Top: Cultural Agency: Preventing Violence through Art.
Bottom: Hope for Healing the Wounds of the Past.

Preventing Violence

Long-Run Crime Prevention Policies

BY NORMAN V. LOAYZA

SOME COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA ARE AMONG THE MOST violent and crime-ridden in the world. The crime problem is of such magnitude that fighting it is among the top policy priorities of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, to name just a few countries. In most cases, the policy prescription involves a stronger participation of the police and judicial system, seeking deterrence and incapacitation of potential criminals. Indeed, repressive measures are arguably appropriate to combat the immediate dangers of crime and its consequences in the short run. However, they are not enduring solutions: crime waves keep reappearing until their underlying causes are addressed through long-run prevention policies. This essay discusses three policy actions that may hold the key of sustainable prevention of the type of crime that people most care about—the one that puts their personal and property safety at risk.

1. Legalize (and regulate) drug trafficking. Prohibition has not deterred the illicit drug trade, and the demand and consumption of drugs remain strong. Even worse, prohibition has led to the waste of scarce police resources and has created a market for organized crime.

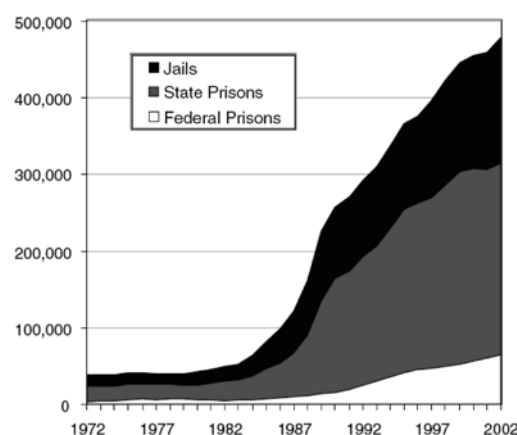
Prohibition has been costly and ineffective even in the United States. The United States spent \$35 billion annually on fighting drugs by the end of the 1990s, up from \$10 billion in the mid 1980s (Reuter 2001). The number of people incarcerated for drug law violations grew exponentially in the last two decades, to the point where 1 in every 4 prisoners is in prison for drug-related offenses (Caulkins and Chandler 2006; see Figure 1).

Despite all this effort, drug prices have been stable (marijuana) or declining (cocaine and heroin) since at least the early 1980s (see Figure 2a), and there is no evidence that this is due to decreasing supply. In fact, consumption appears to have intensified, as the rising rates of drug-related hospitalizations seem to indicate (see Figure 2b).

It is important to understand the unfortunate state of the “war on drugs” in the United States. It shows that prohibition has failed not because of lack of governance but because the economic incentives behind the drug trade exceed all possible control. If the “war on drugs” has failed here, it is not difficult to imagine the disaster it has been in developing countries, particularly in those where production and international trade occur. In fact, in these countries, organized crime has been the only clear winner of the prohibition policy. Given the large potential gains to be derived from illegal drug trafficking, prohibition creates an environment to which the most violent and ruthless competitors are attracted. Inadvertently, prohibition has played to criminals’ comparative advantage because in this illegal yet fiercely competitive market, only those who thrive in the use of violence and corruption can be successful.

The organized crime associated with drug trafficking has put in serious risk the governance and institutional viability of many a developing country. To promote its trade, organized crime corrupts government officials, compromising their public interest, altering their priorities, and finally diverting their efforts and resources.

Figure 1. Number of Adults Incarcerated in the United States for Drug Law Violations



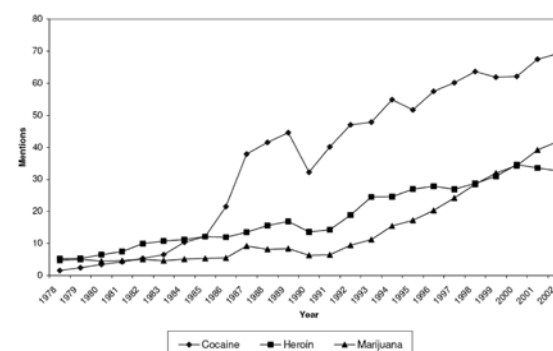
Source: Caulkins and Chandler (2006).

Figure 2. Prices and Hospitalization Rates—Cocaine, Heroin, and Marijuana

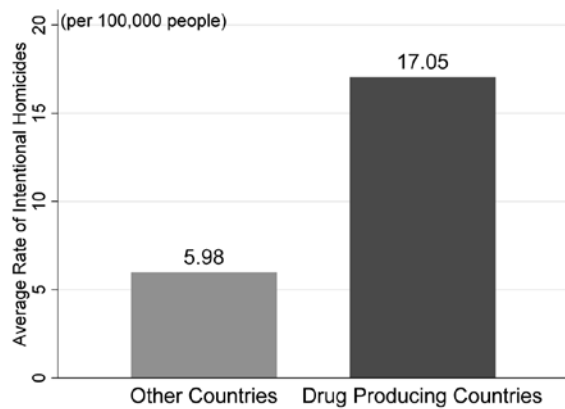
a. Real prices



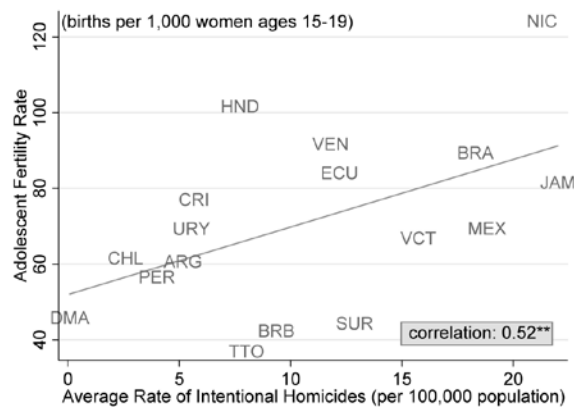
b. Rates of emergency room hospitalization



Source: Grossman (2004).

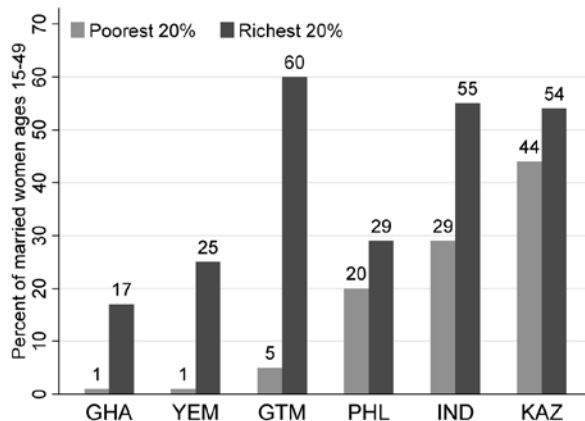
Figure 3: Drug Production and Violent Crime

Source: Author's calculation using data from UNODC.

Figure 4: Teen Pregnancy and Violent Crime

** denotes significance at the 5% level.

Source: Author's calculation using data from UNODC and WDI.

Figure 5: Contraceptive Use According to Wealth

Source: World Bank (2004).

Organized crime foments political instability and even outright insurgency through means ranging from financial support and provision of arms to selective assassinations. In Latin America, this has been dramatically exemplified by the symbiotic relationship between the cocaine drug cartels and terrorist organizations such as the Shining Path in Peru and the FARC in Colombia. Furthermore, in a perverse form of “learning by doing,” organized crime leads to other types of serious offenses, such as kidnappings, homicides and armed robberies. As a matter of fact, the intentional homicide rate in drug-producing countries is almost three times as large as that in non-drug-producing ones (see Figure 3). What to do? The prohibition policy has failed, and we need to give a chance to the legalization of drug trafficking and consumption. Now, legalization does not imply unrestricted trade. Given the delicate characteristics of drug substances, it is only natural that legalization be accompanied by, first, regulation of their production and trade, and, second, public health campaigns to limit their consumption. Legalization is bound to change the main players in the drug market. The hope is that bloody drug lords and their armies of thugs be replaced by MBAs in well-groomed suits and chemists in impeccable white uniforms.

Once we propose decriminalization as a solution, we cannot stop at just drug trafficking. We start thinking about other activities for which there is a strong demand and huge profits to be made, and that are not regarded as excessively harmful to personal safety by large segments of society. Prostitution, gambling and abortion are three clear examples of activities that engender organized crime and may be best decriminalized. From a public policy perspective, it is necessary to consider that trying to fight these “evils” may be leading to far worse evils. In this regard, the pragmatism of Machiavelli is both wise and refreshing: “One will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction; while some other thing which seems to be a vice, if pursued, will result in his safety and his well-being” (*The Prince*, Chapter XVI, p. 128).

2. Promote family planning. A substantial body of evidence—coming from sociological and psychological studies—allows us to affirm that most unwanted children are not properly raised and are likely to fall into a life of misery and crime. This conclusion not only has repercussions on family and community lives but can have consequences at a national level. In one of the most interesting findings of criminological research, the legalization of abortion in the 1970s has been found at least in part responsible for the remarkable decrease in U.S. crime rates in the 1990s (Donohue and Levitt 2001, 2006). What the researchers conclude is that potential criminals (the unwanted children) were never born due to the availability of abortion and, therefore, this cohort could not commit any offense by its criminal “prime” age (early twenties). Abortion by itself, however, is not the solution. If it is not accompanied by parental responsibility, it may lead to more pregnancies and poorer child-rearing behavior, making it counterproductive regarding crime prevention (Lott and Whitley 2007).

More than a particular form of birth control, it's responsible parenthood which holds the key for crime prevention. Both are clearly connected in Latin America, as illustrated by the significant correlation between the rates of teen pregnancy and violent crime across countries in the region (see Figure 4).

One of the most vicious circles facing developing countries is the relationship between unwanted pregnancies and intergen-

erational poverty. Higher fertility among the poor is the result of lack of family planning. This in turn reflects lack of women's power and lack of men's responsibility regarding fertility. In Latin America these traits are exacerbated by sexist cultural mores (the term "machismo" is a sad legacy of Latin America to the world), legal biases against women (in the tenancy of assets and the protection of domestic abuse, for example), and economic disparities (which reflect gender gaps in education and access to labor markets).

What to do? First, empower women regarding fertility. In worldwide surveys, more than two hundred million married women in developing countries have expressed an unmet need for family planning (Singh et al. 2004 and United Nations Population Fund 2005). Most women who do not use contraceptives come from poor households (see Figure 5). In Guatemala, for instance, only 5% of married women belonging to the poorest income quintile use contraceptives, while 60% use them in the richest quintile. Not surprisingly, then, the large majority of women in large families would have preferred fewer children (see Figure 6). For instance, about 80% of married women who have five children in Bolivia, Colombia, Haiti and Peru would have preferred fewer children. (And this is after knowing and getting to love the kids. The preference for even smaller families is arguably more pronounced in women without children).

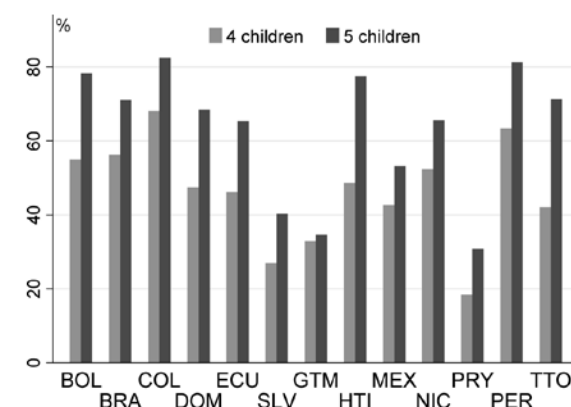
The second, necessary step for family planning is to also make men responsible for the children they conceive. In societies that regulate almost every instance of social and economic life, such as those in Latin America, there is incredibly little regulation and enforcement of responsible parenthood.

In a large fraction of families, the father is simply missing: single women act as head of the family in more than 25% of households in Central America, and in similar proportions children are not recognized by their fathers (see Figure 7). And even when fathers are present, many of them do not seem to contribute sufficiently to the material well-being of their families. In El Salvador, for example, only 40% of women receive economic support from their partners on a regular basis (see Figure 8). If they become divorced, more than 80% of women say that they never receive support from their former spouses, even if children are involved.

Clearer regulation, stronger enforcement and better information may guide fertility choices towards sensible family planning in Latin America. There is evidence that these measures have worked in countries that have implemented them seriously. Take, for instance, the case of European countries around 1930, when paternity testing was debated and, in some cases, introduced. In the countries that accepted paternity testing, the reduction in fertility was more than twice that of countries where it was rejected (see Soloveichik 2006 and Figure 9).

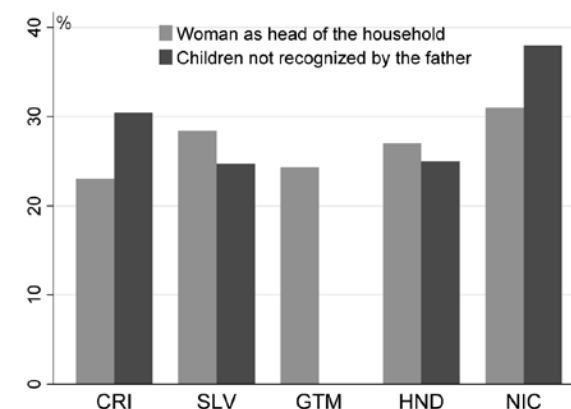
In order to break the cycle of irresponsible fatherhood, poverty and crime, Latin American families need to escape the metaphorical cast portrayed in Gabriel García Márquez' description of the perennial dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*: "It was estimated that in the course of his life, he had more than five thousand children... but no one carried his first or last name... because he considered that no one was son of anybody other than his mother's, and only hers. This certainty was valid even for him, as it was well known that he was a man without a father" (p. 48).

Figure 6: Married Women Who Would Have Preferred Fewer Children



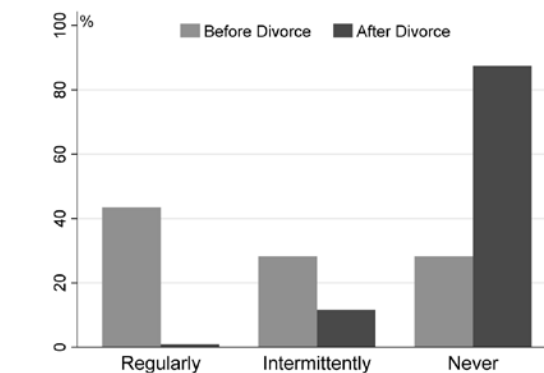
Source: Author's calculation using data from Macro International (2007).

Figure 7: Responsible Parenthood Fewer Children



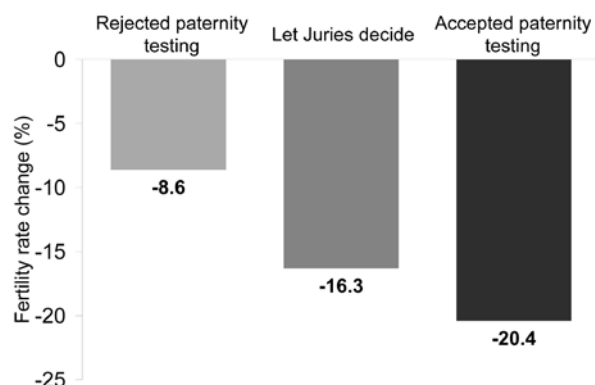
Source: Author's calculation using data from Macro International (2007).

Figure 8: El Salvador: Women Receiving Economic Support from Their Parents



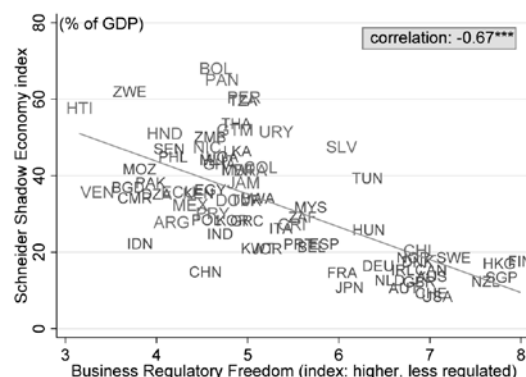
Source: Author's calculation using data from Macro International (2007).

Figure 9: Paternity Testing and Change in Fertility: Europe, circa 1930



Source: Author's calculation using data from Soloveichik (2006).

Figure 10: Informality and Regulatory Freedom



*** denotes significance at the 1% level. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are highlighted in red.

Source: Author's calculation using data from Gwartney and Lawson (2006) and Schneider (2004).

3. Deregulate to reduce informality and corruption. We have just argued that stronger regulation and enforcement of responsible paternity is essential to prevent crime. In Latin America, however, regulatory weaknesses in essentially public issues, such as responsible paternity, coexist with regulatory excesses in private sector endeavors, such as business activity. In fact, we will now argue that governments in the region impose themselves on the economic life of their citizens to the point that their involvement becomes ineffective, distorting and wasteful. And this has substantially negative consequences regarding crime and violence.

In developing countries, we find what can be described as the paradox of legalism: countries that impose more laws and regulations are often those where they are less respected. Even worse, the process of escaping the state's control results in segmented economies and captured governments. As a matter of fact, across countries there is a strong negative correlation between business regulatory freedom and, respectively, labor and production informality and bureaucratic corruption (see Figures 10 and 11). Informality and

even corruption are preferable to the stagnation that an excessive regulatory burden can produce, but they do have negative consequences, particularly on crime (see Table 1). First, excessive involvement of the state in the economy drains its resources in futile attempts to control it. Without resources, governments cannot truly devote themselves to their basic mandates, of which personal safety is among the most important.

Second, informality and corruption create an environment where crime and violence are not only tolerated but also required. In an informal economy, the enforcement of contracts and the protection of property do not rely on the police and the judicial system but on *ad hoc* mechanisms that range from social pressure to organized crime. Again, as in the case of drug trafficking, a market is created for criminal activity.

A recent example from Peru may serve to illustrate the point. Informal open markets can be found all around the country, but in Lima some of them are quite sophisticated, with permanent locations and some infrastructure. Recently, one of the largest, the

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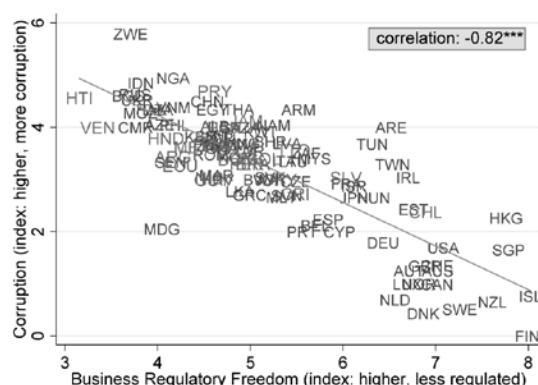
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Figure 11: Corruption and Regulatory Freedom



*** denotes significance at the 1% level. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are highlighted in red.
Source: Author's calculation using data from Gwartney and Lawson (2006) and PRS Group.

Santa Anita Market, was ordered to be evicted because it had been built on somebody else's land. The 500 market merchants decided to oppose the order and resisted, displaying a well-organized form of alternative police. It took 1,000 government police officers to finally evict them. What's wrong with an alternative police is that the line that separates their rules and methods from those of organized crime is blurry at best. There, the "enforcement of contracts" takes the form of literally arm twisting and bone breaking; the "confrontation between interest groups" often results in street fights, abuse, and even assassinations; and "legal recourse" merely amounts to corruption of officials.

Conclusion. Sustainable prevention of personal and property crimes requires a renewed perspective on the role of the state. From this essay, we can draw two basic implications. First, governments should pick wisely their (legal) battles. Social ills (from drug trafficking to job instability) don't get solved by decree, particularly when they are caused by mounting social forces and strong economic incentives. The state would do best to concentrate on selective

Table 1: Informality, Corruption, and Crime

| Variable | Informal activity (Schneider) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Corruption Index (ICRG) | 0.60*** 118 |
| Homicide Rate (UN) | 0.29*** 83 |

*** denotes significance at the 1% level. Sample sizes are presented below the corresponding coefficients.

and limited prohibitions and impositions, focusing its resources on specific interventions with the priority of family and community safety. This is what most people really care about. Second, sex may be personal, but fertility is a social issue, particularly as it impacts on the incidence of poverty and the perpetration of crime. Family planning should be an important objective of developing-country governments, involving a combination of information campaigns, economic incentives, and sensible regulation and enforcement. For this purpose, the mechanisms are clear: regarding fertility choices, empower women and make men responsible.

Norman V. Loayza holds a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard and is currently a lead economist in the research department of the World Bank. He spoke on crime prevention at the July 2007 Harvard conference on "Confronting Crime and Violence in Latin America: Crafting a Public Policy Agenda," sponsored by the Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the A. Alfred Taubman Center for State and Local Government at the Kennedy School of Government.

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ESCUELAS DE PERDÓN Y RECONCILIACIÓN: UN PROYECTO DE LA MEMORIA EN AMÉRICA

BY LEONEL NARVÁEZ GÓMEZ

La geografía del continente americano está atravesada por relatos de violencia, de dolor y de injusticia. La memoria ingrata en el recuerdo de pueblos, culturas y personas, amerita propiciar espacios de encuentro para exorcizar los fantasmas de la memoria distorsionada por el odio, el resentimiento y la urgencia de venganza generados por la colonización y el exterminio, por diferencias cosmológicas y aún por relaciones con dioses diferentes. Tanto trauma acumulado individual y colectivamente, demanda sanación como exigencia sine qua non es posible el desarrollo de personas y de pueblos.

Cuando el dolor del pasado vivido petrifica el caminar, se dificulta el porvenir. Es preciso interpretar el pasado y el presente con un claro propósito, aprender de las lecciones de la historia superando los peligros de la memoria no inventariada que invita a la retaliación y a la muerte. No puede la vida florecer enraizada en los oscuros y a veces escondidos laberintos de la rabia y del odio.

La memoria de la América hoy es fragmento de la inequidad. América Central débil y quebradiza como su geografía ha decidido por generaciones migrar hacia el norte; como aves, manadas de salvadoreños, guatemaltecos, nicaragüenses entre otros, arrastran el dolor del desalojo de sus verdes geografías para avanzar por el norte de sus territorios en una primera etapa de migración hacia el sur del México Chiapateca, primera escala de migraciones familiares que más tarde continuarán norte arriba buscando la capital o las fronteras para introducirse como gusanos por las troneras de la emigración ilegal en pos del sueño, que ya no es sueño, americano.



The T-shirt reads "Life is more important than anything else."

Los Andes, vestidos de verde esmeralda abren sus puertas a la memoria en la esquina de una Colombia que a fuerza de violencia es verde oliva en los campos sembrados de masacres. En la vecina Venezuela, la memoria del Libertador inspira día a día el espíritu de una no muy bien comprendida en sus alcances para el conjunto de América Latina "Revolución Chavista". El cóndor se hace socialista y muchos en América no comprendemos al Ecuador y la Bolivia. Como Brasil, Argentina y Chile se desprenden del conjunto del tercer mundo, concediendo los australes, lugares significativos a la mujer en la conducción de sus naciones.

Sanar la memoria es un trabajo de hoy para el futuro. Es un viaje de la responsabilidad y de la ética actual hacia el mundo del mañana. Los relatos o narrativas que los pueblos construyen acerca de su historia como los relatos de los individuos, las familias y los vecindarios determinan la orientación de sus acciones. La memoria de América recrea las gestas de la colonización e independencia. En los parques, San Martín, Washington y Bolívar sostienen las representaciones centenarias de gestas independentistas a lo largo y ancho de la "América Nuestra". Desde el pasado estos prohombres inspiran día a día las empresas sociales de los pueblos americanos.

Sanar la memoria es un trabajo del presente, si por memoria comprendemos el legado recordable que el presente hace al futuro. Somos responsables de la identidad que el pasado construido en tiempo presente legará por siglos a las generaciones venideras. Es un ejercicio de

resignificación y de esperanza. Cultivar la memoria es entonces ardua empresa de la actualidad.

La integración Americana será el reto para una "Red Latinoamericana de la Memoria Nueva" que nos permita ir más allá de de esas "Venas Abiertas" que Galeano tan dolorosamente describió. Es un propósito para la construcción de una memoria actual que proyectándose en el futuro constituya redes de comunicación e indagación, sociedades de intercambio y reconocimiento que permitan la reconciliación de los espíritus milenarios que confluendo en América trajeron el mundo a nuestras tierras.



A girl gently inserts a flower into a friend's hair in a sisterly and loving gesture.

Somos memoria global donde la Pachamama baila ritmos africanos e irlandeses. Donde el jaguar y la anaconda entrelazan sus cantos con ritmos árabes. Donde los aromas turcos e itálicos amenizan las cocinas españolas y portuguesas. Somos mundo en reconciliación y la memoria que legaremos al futuro dependerá de los trabajos que por el encuentro

la Reconciliación, son lugares de encuentro, donde la diversidad cultural, política, religiosa y económica de los pueblos, cultiva la memoria y la palabra. Allí, las versiones oficiales de los acontecimientos en las historias individuales y colectivas son reconstruidas en la perspectiva del reencuentro, de la verdad, de la justicia, de la reparación y el compromiso con la

del perdón y de la reconciliación, de la construcción de agendas de la memoria ingrata para encontrar en la memoria grata caminos de esperanza, convivencia y paz. Es lo que Desmond Tutu predica por el mundo: sin perdón y sin reconciliación no hay futuro!

Leonel Narvaez Gómez, sociólogo, sacerdote misionero de la Consolata en Colombia, M.Phil. Universidad de Cambridge y Th.M de la Universidad de Harvard, es fundador de la Fundación para la Reconciliación y ganador de la Mención de Honor PREMIO UNESCO EDUCACION PARA LA PAZ 2006. Las ESPERE se desarrollan actualmente en 8 países del Continente. Contacto: <leonel@fundacionparalareconciliacion.org>

This article discusses the role of reconstructing memory to obtain peace and reconciliation and the related ESPERE projects. The author, a Colombian Catholic priest, received his Masters in Philosophy at Cambridge University and his Masters in Theology from the Harvard Divinity School. He can be reached at leonel@fundacionparalareconciliacion.org.

Sanar la memoria es un trabajo del presente, si por memoria comprendemos el legado recordable que el presente hace al futuro.

realicemos. Somos también memoria tóxica del despojo y la indignidad, de la rabia y la injusticia.

Escribimos desde un rincón de la América llamado Colombia. Hemos trabajado en los últimos años en un proyecto de "Sanación de la Memoria" llamado Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación –ESPERE-. Creadas por la Fundación para

no repetición de los hechos violentos y las causas que los anidan.

Las ESPERE, comprenden la necesidad de avanzar en América en la constitución de pactos que hagan visibles los esfuerzos universales por dar cabida en las mentes y los corazones de pueblos y gentes en el mundo de caminos alternos al odio y a la retaliación, de profundizar las venas



WOMEN, SEXUALITY AND FAMILIES

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Este Cuerpo es Mío
No se Toca
No se Viola
NO SE MATA!

Violence does not only take place in the streets or battlefields; women, children and those perceived as different are often targets in their homes or in their ordinary routines.

The Other Side of the Ciudad Juárez Femicide Story

Activism Matters

BY KATHLEEN STAUDT AND HOWARD CAMPBELL

FOR THE LAST DOZEN YEARS, *fronteriz@s* (border people) in the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso metropolitan area have heard shocking reports about women-killing, known as femicide (or in Mexico, *feminicidio*). About one of every three of the 370 women murdered since 1993 was a young teen who died as a result of grotesque, sexualized torture, according to non-governmental organization (NGO) lists, official reports and Amnesty International's 2003 monograph, *Intolerable Killings*. The young women were raped and mutilated, and their bodies dumped in the desert periphery or on city streets. Since 1993, about thirty women have been murdered annually in the Juárez metropolitan area of more than two million people. Even higher rates of homicide exist among Juárez males: more than 200 men are murdered each year, though not tortured sexually.

There is more to this story and its tragedies than the victims, the violence and the eventual demonization of Mexico's fifth largest city. Mothers of the murdered daughters began to organize in the 1990s, and their efforts have inspired many human rights and feminist activists, as well as some ordinary citizens, to raise awareness about

violence against women and about public insecurity generally. Although the mothers have not obtained justice for their daughters, civil society activism is leading toward deeper democracy and a more genuine "rule of law" on the border.

WHY ARE WE WRITING THIS ESSAY?

Situated and grounded at the border, we have attended events, conducted research and participated in organized coalitions where the mothers of murdered daughters provided heart-wrenching testimonials, not only about the horrifying deaths, but also about police impunity. Impunity is the codeword for inept, incompetent and/or complicit law enforcement personnel and institutions at the municipal and state levels of Mexican society. The Juárez authorities devoted little time investigating the crimes; they lost or misplaced reports and even bones of some of the victims. Alas, Ciudad Juárez is not the only place in Mexico with a broken and corrupt law enforcement system. Whether people seek justice about femicide, homicide, domestic violence, theft or general public security, most crimes go unpunished in Mexico. This failure has become the most important public issue in the country today.

In the United States, anti-corruption procedures and relatively professional behavior took generations to achieve, and

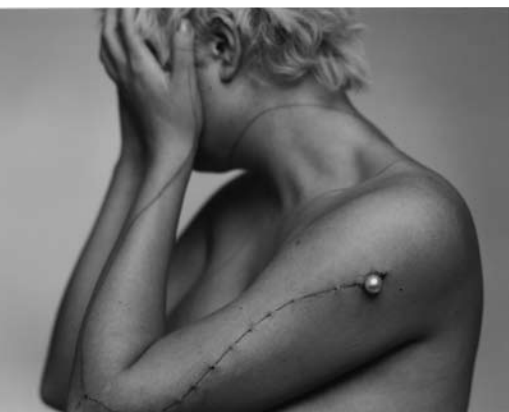
the U.S. law enforcement system remains flawed, fragmented and bureaucratic. Only in the last three decades have state laws and local police and sheriff departments begun to take seriously the common problem of domestic violence, which can lead to femicide (or as the United States classifies women-killing, homicide). According to U.S. Department of Justice figures, one in four women experienced physical assault from her partner. As scholars and activists, we hope that our work can lower such statistics in Mexico and the United States.

SOME THEORIES

Who is killing the women of Juárez? Theories abound. The answers multiply, though they are often speculative. Initially, fingers pointed to foreigners, and an Egyptian engineer and U.S.-convicted sex offender, Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif, was jailed; from his prison cell he allegedly hired gangs to continue killing women. Sharif died in prison, but it appears very unlikely he was responsible for any of the serial killings.

Extensive theorizing occurred in the media about the killers' identity and their psychopathic and material motives: snuff film makers, drug dealers engaged in sport to celebrate profits, police officers, organ harvesters, gang members, U.S.-registered sex offenders and the sons of rich families, known as "*los juniors*." People are quick to

Top: Violence against women is an issue throughout Latin America. Bottom: This is my body; don't touch it; don't rape it; don't kill it!



Suzy Okamoto depicts the suffering and violence that women experience throughout the continent.

blame *machismo*, an oversimplified term that Latinizes the gender power relations all over the world. Although we can discount wild theories involving snuff films and organ trafficking, the fact is that world experts on serial killing have been unable to identify the culprits through the botched evidence provided by the municipal and state police.

Although we cannot identify the killers at this time, we can contribute explanations for the political, economic, and institutional conditions responsible for public insecurity, shockingly extreme violence against women and judicial impunity. Our explanations are less dramatic but paint a more comprehensive picture. In so doing, we do not demonize Ciudad Juárez as the unique, women-killing stain on the international map. In fact, international NGOs like Amnesty International have more recently begun to generate awareness about even greater rates of femicide elsewhere in Mexico and other parts of the Americas, particularly Guatemala.

Ciudad Juárez sits at the frontlines of globalization that started well before the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In the mid-1960s, Mexico established the Border Industrialization Program to encourage foreign investment and job creation in what began as feminized assembly-line production. From modest beginnings, the *maquiladora* labor force has grown to nearly a quarter-million workers in 300 plants in the city, most of them U.S.-owned. Many workers migrated from Mexico's interior; in fact, Ciudad Juárez is sometimes called a "city of migrants."

At the outset, women represented about 80% of the assembly-line workers. By the early 21st century, the percentage of women

in the *maquiladora* workforce diminished, but it is still more than half. In the 40 years of industrial production on the border, gender anxieties, threats and some male backlash have emerged in response to women's greater earning power, however modest, in the formal workforce. The local media have sometimes expressed hostility toward the *maquiladora* women, most notably in the 1980s and early 1990s. Popular folklore often portrays these women as over-sexed libertines who stay out late and dress provocatively, leading some politicians to blame the victims. However, by the late 1990s, the border media reflected massive outrage and soul-searching within the city.

What, then, is there about this industrial city that might aggravate violence along with high rates of femicide and homicide?

A FLUID BORDER CONTEXT

First, in a trans-national border with two sovereign governments, officials do not cross jurisdictional lines unless invited or given adequate resources. Civil society activists face challenges in exercising oversight of law enforcement bureaucracies and pressing for reforms, including binational solutions.

In addition to the hundreds of Mexican women who have been murdered, several other victims were from Central America and the United States, and one from the Netherlands. Binational and transnational problems require binational or transnational solutions. Occasionally, the United States and Mexico agreed to cooperate with one another on the issue of murdered women, though far less cooperation occurs than over such issues as stolen vehicles, drugs and insect control. No matter how many international, regional, or national human rights reports (such as Mexico's National Commis-

sion for Human Rights) condemn violence, the agencies lack authority or the "teeth" to compel changes in law enforcement practices. Thus, impunity reigns, and working-class women are the most vulnerable sector of the border population—migratory, border-crossing, and often anonymous—ripe for suffering many types of crime.

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, VIOLENT DRUG TRADE AND A WEAK JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Obscene levels of inequality exist within Ciudad Juárez and between the cities of Juárez and El Paso. The border city is a gritty, industrial place as well as home to the huge Juárez drug trafficking cartel, supplying the largest drug-consuming country in the world, the United States.

Drug killings occur on a regular basis in Juárez, weapons abound, and the violence of the drug trade spills over into mainstream society. Any explanation for the femicides must take into account the violent impact of the drug trade on border society, the proliferation of cheap narcotics corroding the social fabric, and the corrupting effects of drug trafficking/drug abuse on the political system and everyday life.

Assembly-line production, with its cheap wages (ranging from the legal minimum of US\$4–5 to US\$10 daily) and high turnover rates, creates an atmosphere of disposable labor. Industrial owners and foreign managers operate with accountability to headquarters and bottom-line profit considerations rather than to border residents.

Some conferences and media reports create the impression that only *maquiladora* workers are murdered. There is no doubt that egregious instances of corporate irresponsibility have occurred. For example, when a jet manufacturing worker arrived

minutes late for her job, she was refused entry into the factory. She met her death walking home. Factories subcontract with bus companies and drivers, some sexual predators among them. One teen-aged worker was raped and left for dead, but was able to identify the driver. Women from many walks of life and occupations have been murdered, but not only *maquiladora* workers.

Finally, Mexico has yet to establish the rule of law, with effective law enforcement and judicial institutions. Few incentives exist for serious time investments in investigation and prosecution in a highly fragmented law enforcement and police system. Laws and law enforcement practices on domestic violence are relatively recent.

In a 2004–5 survey of women ages 15–39 in Ciudad Juárez, 27% reported physical violence and 11%, sexual assault, but fewer than one in five would consider reporting that violence to the authorities. Some of today's survivors of domestic violence will be tomorrow's femicide cases. A huge 2003 national survey sponsored by Mexico's Institute of Women (INMUJER) and Census Bureau (INEGI) found half of the respondents reported psychological and physical domestic violence. Esther Chávez Cano, who operates the anti-violence counseling center known as Casa Amiga, was only able to raise enough money to open the doors of the first and only battered women's shelter in Ciudad Juárez in 2005.

In the United States, domestic violence rates are also very high, but victims are more likely to call 911 for emergency police response and protection. In 2006, the El Paso Police Department reported 31,000 domestic violence calls, figures that are probably not unlike those in other large cities of its size. And as in many U.S. cities, scores of homeless shelters exist, including several that “specialize” in family violence.

ACTIVISM GROWS

At the border, beginning in the late 1990s, anti-violence activists worked with non-governmental organizations to network and organize. They began locally, spread across the border, and influenced the public in their own countries and globally, through international NGOs. Activists have raised awareness, first about femicide and later about the general problem of violence against women. In Ciudad Juárez, one sees the iconic pink and black crosses in many



Women from many walks of life and occupations have been murdered.

public places, on telephone poles and building facades along major thoroughfares. The ominous crosses symbolize femicide.

Solidarity marches commemorate the victims on special occasions: International Women's Day March 8; Día de los Muertos in early November; and V-Day in mid-February. Eve Ensler's play, *Vagina Monologues*, is performed annually. Ensler added a monologue on the femicide in 2003, putting it on a par with misogyny in other parts of the world. In 2004, the largest-ever solidarity march across the border in El Paso-Ciudad Juárez occurred, drawing 5,000 to 8,000 people from around the world. In organizing terms, events like these are “tough acts to follow,” but many border anti-violence activists remain committed to seeking justice, spreading awareness in order to eradicate interpersonal violence, and exercising oversight over public institutions.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

There are at least two, if not more, stories about femicide in Ciudad Juárez. One is about the victims: the tragic deaths of hundreds of women. The other story is about

civil society activism, an energy that is vital to deepening democracy and creating accountable governments. Beginning with the mothers of the victims and spreading to human rights and feminist NGOs, activists made valiant attempts to generate awareness, sometimes at risk of their own safety. They began locally and spread globally. While activists have succeeded in putting violence against women on the political agenda, or reasserting this issue on public agendas, the mothers of Juárez still await justice for their murdered daughters.

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FEMINICIDE IN GUATEMALA

BY VICTORIA SANFORD

The last time Claudina communicated with her parents was around 11:45 p.m. on August 12, 2005. Around 2 a.m. on August 13, Zully Moreno, the mother of Claudina's boyfriend Pedro Samayoa Moreno, went to Claudina's Guatemala City home to inform the parents that Claudina was in grave danger. Moreno claimed that Claudina called her to tell her she was walking home and that this call was cut short by Claudina's screams for help. Claudina's parents immediately went out to look for their daughter.

When their search turned up no results or leads, the desperate parents attempted to make a report at the local police station at about 3 a.m. on August 13. The police, however, refused to take a report or even listen to the worried parents. They suggested that Claudina had run off with her boyfriend and that, in any case, they would not receive any reports until Claudina had been officially missing for 24

hours. It was not until 8:30 in the morning that the police formally received Claudina's parents and made an official report that classified Claudina Isabel Velásquez Paiz as missing. This was three and one-half hours after her lifeless body was found on the street in Colonia Roosevelt in Zona 11—a neighborhood not more than two miles from the party where she was last seen by friends. Still, she was not identified until much later that day.

In fact, Claudina's case was dismissed from the moment her body was found because, as one official acknowledged, "the crime scene was not developed as it should have been because of prejudices about the social origin and status of the victim. She was classified as a person whose death did not merit investigation." The first police officers on the scene determined that Claudina's

murder was "not worthy" of investigation because she had a belly button ring and was wearing sandals. To the Guatemalan police this indicated she was a gang member or a prostitute.

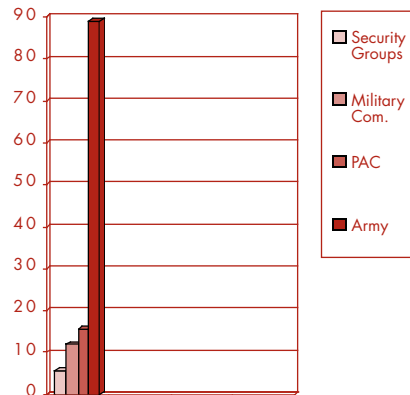
In fact, Claudina Isabel Velásquez Paiz was a 19-year-old law student, gregarious and well liked by her peers. More than 1,000 people attended her memorial service. Her father, Jorge Velásquez, did not understand what was happening when several armed police officers in uniform arrived at the memorial service and demanded access to his daughter's cadaver. When Velásquez refused, the police threatened to arrest him and his wife. The coffin was removed from the memorial service and placed in a private room where police officers unceremoniously took finger prints and nail clippings from the body in the coffin. When they

Each year it is more dangerous to be a woman in Guatemala.

State Agents as Material Authors of Sexual Violence Against Women

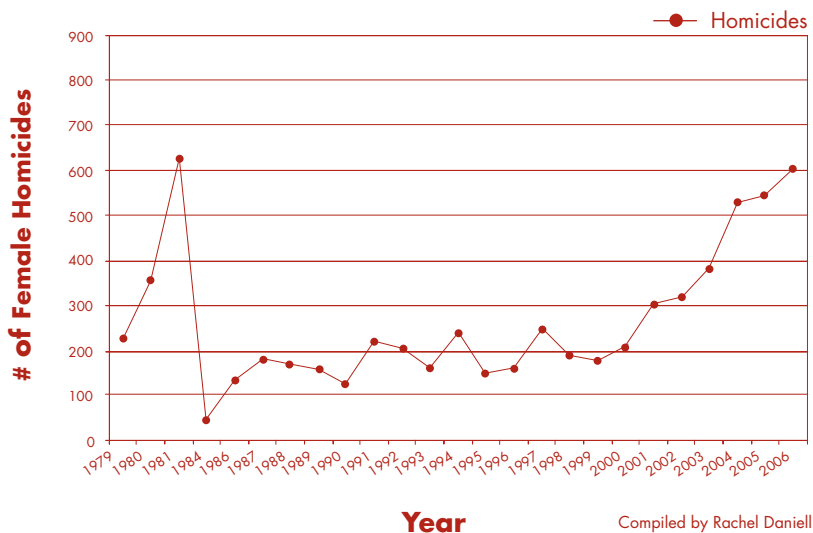
■ According to the CEH, the material authors of sexual violence against women were:

- 89%—Army
- 15.5%—PAC
- 11.9%—Military Commissioners
- 5.7%—Other Security Forces



Source: Consorcio Actoras de Cambio: La Lucha de las Mujeres por la Justicia y el Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala, 2006:32

Female Homicides in Guatemala—WHO and PNC Data



were finished collecting this material for forensic analysis, they handed Mr. Velásquez a paper bag. In response to his dismay, the officer explained that the bag contained the clothing Claudina had been wearing at the time she murdered. "Most families bury the clothing in the coffin," the police explained.

Claudina was one of 518 women murdered in 2005. Each year it is more dangerous to be a woman in Guatemala. Between 2001 and 2006, while the female population increased by 8 percent the female homicide rate increased by more than 117, according to a 2007 study by UN Rapporteur Philip Alston. Nearly 40% of these murders happened

in or near Guatemala City. Most of the women who are killed are between 16 and 30 years old. Indeed, the mortality rate of women in peacetime Guatemala today is reaching the very high levels of female mortality in the early 1980s at the height of the genocidal war that took 200,000 lives.

Alston points out, "the death toll is only the beginning of the cost, for a society that lives in fear of killing is unable to get on with its life and business in the ways that it wants."

FEMINICIDE AND IMPUNITY

What is femicide and how does it help to explain the phenomenon? The concept

of femicide builds on the term femicide which refers to the murder of women in criminology literature and also to hate crimes against women in the emerging feminist literature addressing the murder of women. (See Russell, Diana and Roberta Harmes, Eds. 2001. *Femicide in Global Perspective*. New York: Teachers College Columbia University Press.)

Femicide is a political term. Conceptually, it encompasses more than femicide because it holds responsible not only the male perpetrators, but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny. Femicide connotes not only the murder of women by men because they are women, but also indicates state responsibility for these murders whether through the commission of the actual killing, toleration of the perpetrators' acts of violence, or failure to ensure the safety of its female citizens. In Guatemala, femicide exists because of the absence of state guarantees to protect the rights of women. Impunity, silence and indifference each play a role in femicide.

In the 1980s, thousands of women were subjected to sexual violence and torture prior to being assassinated by state agents. The Commission for Historical Clarification confirmed that the state trained its soldiers and other armed agents to rape and terrorize women. During the war, army soldiers and other security officers were responsible for 99 percent of acts of sexual violence carried out against women.

These state-trained killers and rapists are free to this day. If the state continues to protect these killers and rapists, then why would we expect them to search out the murderers of Claudina Isabel Velásquez Paiz or any of the other women who have been killed?

Victoria Sanford (*Bunting Peace Fellow 1999–2000*) is the author of *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala and Violencia y Genocidio en Guatemala*. Her latest book *La Masacre de Panzós—Etnicidad, tierra y violencia en Guatemala* will be published this winter in Guatemala. She is currently writing *The Land of Pale Hands—Femicide and Impunity in Guatemala*. She is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Lehman College, City University of New York.



Beyond Victims and Aggressors

Thinking about Violence in Poor Families in Brazil and Mexico

BY MARIA GABRIELA HITA AND JOHN GLEDHILL

CECILIA WAS STILL IN HER TEENS WHEN she accompanied her husband Roberto to California and had a baby. Like millions of other Mexicans, Cecilia and Roberto lacked immigration papers, but hoped the baby's U.S. citizenship would be part of a better life. A few years later, Cecilia and the baby were back in Mexico. Roberto's growing addiction to alcohol and drugs had led to wife-beatings. Yet when Roberto wasn't under the influence, Cecilia still found her husband attractive. Besides, he had a knack of seeming genuinely repentant when they made love after a fight. Roberto wrote to Cecilia in Mexico saying he missed her and wanted to be a good father to his son. So she went back. Three weeks later she was found strangled in a motel room. The police apparently had better things to do with their time than look for Roberto, and Cecilia's brothers decided not to throw their lives away by taking the law into their own hands to avenge a sister who had ignored repeated warnings.

Was Cecilia's failure to get out of this relationship unusual? The evidence from both Brazil and Mexico suggests that while

"change" Roberto and bring out his better side. In doing so she took risks, taunting him for being weak and irresponsible towards his family when he returned to drugs. Although Cecilia never brought a complaint against her husband to any government agency, many of the women who do often withdraw them, preferring to return to high risk efforts to solve the problem themselves. This reflects these women's acceptance of responsibility to restore order to their conjugal relationships. Sometimes these women even accept a share of the blame for the problems, reinforced often by pressures from kin and friends. Although Cecilia's family did eventually see a break-up as the best option, some of her own kin and friends initially urged her to "deal with it" in order to prove herself the mature woman she had claimed to be by marrying so young.

Violence is usually seen as negative. Yet many societies see conflict as the "normal" state of affairs in human life and focus on trying to prevent it from getting out of hand. Even the definition of violence as a threat to the maintenance of good social

nobodies. Women are often drawn into gang culture either as girlfriends of male gang members or through their own group rituals of identity building. Violence is a means by which socially stigmatized people make statements about themselves in a search for respect and is not restricted to gangs. Fights between neighbors in slums often express the efforts of some groups to assert claims to social respectability while blaming others for their community's "criminal" image, such as those who arrived as a result of more recent land invasions.

Understanding the meanings of violence in particular social settings helps us understand how some manifestations of violence can come to be considered "natural" qualities of people and their relationships, while others come to be considered "abnormal." In the mestizo rural community where Cecilia and Roberto were born, a marriage is not simply a relationship between two individuals. It is also about social ties with kin and neighbors, and about respectability and honor. Quite often, when women talk among themselves, they express the inevitability of a certain degree of suffering at the hands of men whose weaknesses, such as lack of ability to control their sexual urges, are seen as natural attributes of their sex. Yet Roberto was a poor masculine role model in his town because his addictions made him an inadequate home provider. His weaknesses were seen as different from those of "normal" men by the community.

Many other migrant men who were excellent providers expected their wives to respect their patriarchal authority. Caring but domineering, they obliged their wives to be subtle in their tactics if they wanted to get their husbands to give them some leeway to have lives beyond the home and the children. Like many of the women that Matthew Gutmann describes in his book on a working class district of Mexico City, *The Meanings of Macho*, women want to be married to men who are strongly masculine rather than hen-pecked (*mandilones*). Yet, most women are active in "negotiating" their relationships with their husbands,

Understanding the meanings of violence in particular social settings helps us understand how some manifestations of violence can come to be considered "natural" qualities of people and their relationships, while others come to be considered "abnormal."

women do end abusive relationships more frequently than they did in the past, it is still common for them not to do so. This opens up important questions about how we should understand domestic and sexual violence. An anecdotal description of a single case too easily reduces the problem to the moral weakness of a male aggressor versus a passive female victim. Yet Cecilia wasn't passive: she worked hard to try to

relations varies from society to society. In Mexico and Brazil, some violence within a marriage may be seen as a normal part of building a relationship. Violence can even be seen as strongly positive when used by parents to teach morals to children.

Among the poor, violence often acts as a kind of "language" in the construction of identities. The violence found in youth gangs builds masculine identities through rituals of "challenge and response," enabling individuals and groups to get others to recognize that they are somebodies rather than

A woman remembers her daughter, a victim of violence.

VIOLENCE

without provoking chronic abuse.

The *macho* model of masculinity is often invoked to “explain” domestic violence in Latin America. Yet the idea of *macho* is not wholly negative when put into historical perspective. It can refer to a man who stands up for his rights, protects his family and defends poor people against abusive landlords. Gutmann describes the word’s etymology in Mexico, explaining how the term became associated with new icons of national identity, such as the cowboy singer and screen idol, Jorge Negrete. Brazil’s popular national icons are more ambiguous: most live outside the rules of normal society but embody qualities Brazilian society admires in men. The rogue (*malandro*), is much celebrated in *samba* lyrics, and the bandit from the interior (*cangaceiro*) is a popular film subject. The most famous *cangaceiro* is Lampião, whose partner Maria Bonita leaves her original husband to join his robber band. Folk models transmit more complex messages about the role of women than the stereotype of female domination by the aggressive male *machista*. Nevertheless, the idea that patriarchal ideologies are a social problem has taken root in popular consciousness today to such an extent that some Mexican men find it necessary to deny that they are “*machistas*” because the term has become associated with excessive violence as well as a double standard of marital fidelity. Women receive the dubious compensation of being cast in the Marian role, spiritually superior, but best confined to the home.

Yet even where strongly patriarchal values seemed to prevail, women’s responses could alleviate their effects to some extent. In the indigenous community of Tlayacapan, described by John Ingham in his book *Mary, Michael and Lucifer*, women became psychologically ill due to the contradiction of living in a society that demanded they behave like the Virgin while their men folk both demanded their marital rights and had sex outside of marriage. Afflicted by attacks of “nerves” that were diagnosed as possession by malignant spirits, the women were cured by a sensual massage administered by male healers. This ritual solution to the contradictions of these women’s lives made it even less likely that their husbands would change their behavior. However, at least the wives did get a chance to fulfill some of



Structural violence in poor communities must be understood on the poor’s own terms.

the erotic desires that the local model of male domination, backed by the Catholic Church, sought to repress.

In both Mexico and Brazil, the social situation of poor citizens is shaped not only by extreme economic inequalities between classes, but by legacies of a colonial rule that connects class with ideas about race. European dominance was expressed through sexual access to indigenous or black women and some kind of “feminization” of indigenous and black men. A male sense of humiliation may also affect the domestic relations of poor families today, but only as yet another aspect of a more complicated story, as we will now demonstrate with further evidence from Brazil.

As a result of the way class and race relate, people living in Brazilian slums are “blackened” by their poverty in the eyes of outsiders, regardless of their actual physical appearances. We might expect some men who feel humiliated by double stigmatization and routinely suffer violence at the hands of the police to seek solace in playing hyper-masculine roles in the family domain, the one place where it seems possible to dominate others. Though it is not only poor men who act as violent *machos* in Brazil, the problems of poor men are aggravated by their growing inability to find steady jobs. Enforcing male desire to dominate is the fact that women now have better prospects of finding work in the



The wall graffiti reads, "Beware of fascism in the home!"

retailing and service sectors. In contrast to working-class women, male livelihoods and status are precarious, and fights between partners frequent. The long-term stability of the family itself is often built more on the relationships between mothers and children than those between husbands and wives, and women themselves sometimes use physical violence in the negotiation of conjugal relationships.

If one defines violence as negative, as governments and NGOs do, one of the greatest preoccupations becomes violence towards children. The tendency is to conflate issues of sexual abuse, physical punishment and child labor, subjects about which poor people themselves have radically different ideas.

According to United Nations statistics, more than 100,000 children and adolescents may be subject to sexual abuse in Brazil. Data from the Brazilian Association for the Protection of Infancy and Adolescence suggest that girls are sexually abused far more than boys, and that the abusers are generally family members or neighbors known to the child, including stepfathers and fathers who strive to keep their daughters for themselves.

Research conducted by Maria Gabriela Hita and Miriam Rabelo on members of religious groups in poor neighborhoods of Salvador, Bahia, reveals some of the ambiguities surrounding attitudes to rape and sex with children. Evangelicals saw sexual relations with children as a sickness that could have a diabolic origin. For followers of Candomblé, such abusers were born with a "weak head," the head being the center of intelligence and personal equilibrium. In both cases, ritual intervention might help

the abuser to avoid repeating the crime, but these explanations also reduce the individual man's level of culpability. The idea that male desire comes from "natural" animal passions, coupled with the idea that a man should initiate sexual action, or insist on sex as necessary to prove himself and assert supremacy, excuses the man's actions and explains his uncontrollable sexual need.

The violence found in youth gangs builds masculine identities through rituals of "challenge and response," enabling individuals and groups to get others to recognize that they are somebodies rather than nobodies.

Rape is often rationalized by explaining that men violate other women because their wives fail to satisfy them. There is even an idea of male rights to use women who have already been "used" by other men by gang raping them. A line is normally drawn that makes sex between men and female relatives "abnormal" because it is incestuous. Yet given the idea that men should initiate sex, men have difficulties believing that a "no" will not turn into a "yes." When incest or sexual relations with minors do occur, the mothers frequently share in the blame for failing to protect their daughters from the natural tendency of male sex drives to transgress the boundaries of social rules. Even an abused child may be seen as partly responsible, for displaying precocious signs of interest in sex.

Parents are concerned about the impact of drug trafficking and the media's promotion of sexuality to their children. This concern strengthens the belief that good

parenting should involve physical punishment, since nothing seems effective in countering daily temptations of drugs and sex. The idea that beating is successful leads parents to reject the demands of social workers that they should encourage children to report abuse. Older women in particular worry that teaching young children about sex will only accelerate an increasingly precocious interest, arguing that children need to be kept out of harm's way, off the street and away from more salacious television programs. They believe that children form better characters if given the chance to dedicate themselves to an honest trade from the earliest possible age.

These working class ideas run counter to the principle that childhood should have the same meaning for rich and poor, challenging middle-class efforts to end child labor and physical punishment of children. Violence is seen in a different context, one that must be understood and worked with. In advancing these values, poor parents offer a class critique of the hypocrisy of

those responsible for the economic and social changes that make it ever more difficult for them to educate their children to survive. If children are to be protected from rape, work exploitation and beatings, and if spouses are to leave abuse behind, the structural violence in the poor communities of Latin America must be understood on the poor's own terms.

Maria Gabriela Hita is professor in the department of sociology of the Federal University of Bahia, where she also participates in the programs for the Interdisciplinary Study of Women and Social Sciences, Environment and Health. She is also a consultant for the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning, CEBRAP. John Gledhill is Max Gluckman Professor of Social Anthropology and co-director of the Center for Latin American Cultural Studies at the University of Manchester, England.

Magaly's Legacy: The San Ramón Network against Domestic Violence

Building effective community response

BY MAXINE LOWY

ON THE COOL MORNING OF NOVEMBER 25, 2004, Magaly Jara, 34, walked along the dusty lanes of Población La Bandera, a working-class neighborhood in the municipality of San Ramón 20 minutes south of downtown Santiago. After leaving her four children at school, Jara returned home for a moment before joining her parents for breakfast, as planned. Upon entering the house, she came face to face with her former husband, who had jumped the fence and entered the house illegally, despite a court restraining order. During 15 years of marriage, she had endured much abuse and on many occasions since their separation, he had threatened to kill her. Jara screamed, running out of the house, in an attempt to escape, but, in full view of neighbors, the man dragged her back inside. By the time police arrived, he had beaten and finally strangled her to death.

Five blocks away, outside the municipal government offices, the San Ramón Network against Domestic Violence was commemorating the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women. People had gathered around a stage decorated with profiles of women bearing the message, "Don't abuse me. Respect me. Don't beat me." News of Jara's murder sent shockwaves and cries of dismay through the crowd.

Four times in the past year, Jara had gone to court seeking protection from the constant threats and violent aggression from her former husband. But the court never transmitted the restraining order to San Ramón police.

The court may have been lax in processing the restraining order because Chilean law at the time considered domestic violence a misdemeanor. In October 2005 the new Intra-Family Violence Law elevated domestic violence to a criminal offense and created Family Courts. However, the vast range of issues assigned to the new court system, a lack of specialized training for judges and a paltry budget have rendered the Family Courts inoperable, with preliminary hear-



Top Left: Protesting domestic violence in the streets of Santiago; Bottom Left: women from the San Ramón Network against Domestic Violence; Right: an educational poster.

ings scheduled an average of seven months after formal complaints are lodged.

Magaly Jara's death starkly confirmed the results of a 2001 study by EPES (Popular Health Education), a non-governmental organization with 25 years of fostering grassroots participation in health education and in shaping local public health policy. More than 54% of women between 19 and 60 years of age in San Ramón had endured some form of violence physical, psychological, sexual or economic from their spouse or male partner (in the Santiago Metropolitan Region the figure is 50%, according to a government report). At the time of the sur-



vey, 23% were experiencing sexual violence. Four out of five of these women were married and were mothers.

The study also revealed a pattern of violence that crosses generations: both victims and aggressors, 62% and 79%, respectively, had been raised in a violent family setting.

For a community the size of San Ramón 100,000 inhabitants in a territory spanning only 12 square miles such figures are appallingly high.

The prevalence of domestic violence and a lack of services to assist victims spawned the San Ramón Network against Domestic Violence (Red Comunal contra la Violencia).

cia Intrafamiliar). Eighteen organizations, including kindergartens, churches, neighborhood clinics, community organizations, a drug prevention program, municipal social services, a child protection service, local police, as well as EPES, came together in a multifaceted effort to break, or at least to mitigate, the cycle of violence locally. Although services exist outside the perimeter of San Ramón, low-income women lack the means to go to another municipality; in addition, the aggressors frequently control a household's limited resources as well as a woman's every move.

In 2003, the Canadian Embassy in Chile funded the Network's first grant proposal, to create the Women's Assistance Program, along with a Municipal Domestic Violence Referral and Assistance System.

Community awareness and training to respond adequately comprise the Network's dual focus. Murals, street theater, the distribution of flyers, including the EPES survey results, began to give high visibility to a once-taboo issue in San Ramón. EPES contributed the methodology to train Network entities in domestic violence intervention and gender sensitivity. Teachers, 30 public health employees and all police who receive initial complaints in the local police station have participated in training sessions.

In a modest office she painted herself, psychologist Valeria García, 49, spends her mornings running the Women's Assistance Program (Programa de Atención a Mujeres), conducting individual and group therapy. So far this year she has provided service to 115 women, ranging from 17 to 50 years old. Afternoons, she crosses the hall to the Center for Integral Assistance to Victims of Violence, a Network initiative begun in 2006, to assist women and children; she also talks to men who have committed their first act of violence. García also conducts many San Ramón Network training sessions.

García has participated as community health educator and human rights activist in the La Bandera sector of San Ramón since

she was 19, and brings a political perspective to her vocation. The dictatorship legitimized violence; families reproduced those authoritarian ways. Violence is viewed as a normal way of living and solving problems, García notes. Network members share the task of empowering women to understand that no one has the right to treat another person as if they were worthless.

Network organizations, mainly police and teachers, refer most of the people

More than 54% of women between 19 and 60 years of age in San Ramón had endured some form of violence physical, psychological, sexual or economic from their spouse or male partner.

García assists. The Domestic Violence Referral and Assistance System established a uniform intervention method for women and children victimized by violence. It also set up detailed guidelines for adequate referrals within San Ramón. In the past, victims might be referred to ten different offices, none equipped to do much more than listen. The Referral System assures victims will be attended by the service most appropriate for the characteristics of their case. Moreover, the trust the Network cultivates among its members translates to expedited referrals and professional assistance.

Anabel Del Valle, director of Jardín La Hormiguita kindergarten, also heads a network of 12 public kindergartens attended by 4000 children of San Ramón. La Hormiguita weaves the theme of violence prevention integrally into its curriculum, working with children and their parents or guardians. "We want to engender values such as respect, cooperation, trust, and human rights. The kindergarten teacher is a child's first contact outside the family circle. A window is open for imbuing that little girl and boy with values that will mature when he or she becomes an adult," says Del Valle.

Social worker Maria Eugenia Calvin, who represents EPES in the Network, observes, "Little by little, consciousness is building. Today people are daring to speak out. As women begin talking about violence that affects them, they find protection in their community and they begin to change their outlook. Commonly, women blame themselves for the situation they experience. Talking to others, they learn that they are not the cause of what happens to them."

Magaly Jara, who was unknown to the Network before her murder, has shaped the way people in San Ramón view domestic violence, and galvanized support for the Network. With 25 percent of the population below the poverty line, domestic violence had never been a high municipal priority. After Jara's murder, the San Ramón municipal government reaffirmed its commitment to Network programs, and officials participated in the protest rally in front of the house where the young woman died.

Magaly's death was a savage blow. "But many people who viewed us as madwomen came to understand the legitimacy of our concern only after she was killed," declares Calvin. Magaly represents the failure of a system. And she signals the urgency to continue working together until no one in San Ramón thinks violence is a normal way of life.

Maxine Lowy, a free-lance journalist with a focus on human rights and social issues, worked many years in Hispanic American communities before moving to Chile in 1990. Trained as human rights educator, she is also editor of the Memoria y Justicia web site (www.memoriayjusticia.cl).



Fictions and Facts of Identity and Gender-Based Aggression

A Filmmaker's Response to Violence

BY CARMEN OQUENDO-VILLAR

I NEVER IMAGINED THAT MY SHORT FILMS about transsexual and transgender life in Boston would lead to human rights work in Latin America. But the truth is that film is a powerful medium through which we can come to better understand ourselves and through which we can begin to visualize a world without violence. The completely random first step toward this realization occurred when the president of Puerto Rico's Amnesty International, Margarita Sánchez, asked to screen my movie "Boquita," about an eponymous transsexual Dominican performer, at the Supreme Court building in San Juan during a protest for transgender rights.

To my great surprise, the screening led to an invitation by Diana Navarro, spokesperson for trans-prostitutes in Bogotá and candidate for the Polo Rosa coalition in that city, to use my films to stimulate dialogue with her peers about ways to prevent police misconduct against this often-targeted population.

At first, I was tempted to refuse this offer. I considered myself a filmmaker, not an activist. I had never worked with and never aspired to work with the police. In fact, I felt a slight aversion towards this uniformed sector of society. In addition,

decades of U.S. media indoctrination about "Colombian violence" had left me with preconceived notions about Colombia in general and the Colombian police in particular. However, there was no way I could refuse the opportunity to address trans-phobic violence. Despite my reservations and even though I hardly qualified as an expert, I owed it to the people who had, in that time and place, entrusted me with their lives.

The 2006 *Ciclo Rosa* in Bogotá was dedicated in its entirety to the transgender experience. It explored this experience from many vantages, including the legal, medical, artistic and social spheres. I was invited to participate as a speaker, filmmaker and workshop facilitator.

For a filmmaker, it is powerful to see real world applications for film and to experience art being used to help people deal with some of their most difficult problems. Bogotá and Medellín, Colombia, were the headquarters for this innovative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) initiative sponsored by the Instituto Pensar at Javeriana University, both City Halls, the Cinemateca Distrital de Bogotá, and the binational Centro Colombo Americano de Medellín.

The radical nature of this event was not simply in its novelty within the Latin American context. Its very special and highly innovative purpose was mainly to address an audience of law enforcement, military and government officials, a group historically known to turn a deaf ear towards the problems of minority groups.

I sought the expertise of Somos Latin@s LGBT of New England, an organization on whose board I serve, for designing the workshop on police misconduct. The Harvard University Police was very gracious, accepting our invitation to participate in designing the workshop. Thus, prior to my trip to Colombia, I had the good fortune to rehearse with "real life" officers (even if still within the Ivory Tower).

On the request of my Colombian hosts, I arranged a teleconference from Harvard, facilitated by Harvard's Cultural Agents Initiative, the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Program and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. The Cambridge-Bogotá teleconference opened the workshop.

In Bogotá, the room was crowded with members of the Bogotá Community Police and other government officials. The Cambridge panel consisted of Javier Pagán, a Boston Police officer who serves as the Police Department's LGBT liaison; Wilfred Labiosa, a Puerto Rican psychologist work-

Left to Right: Diana Navarro, spokesperson for trans-prostitutes; police training in Bogotá; trans-prostitute Marcela Agrado; a still from Oquendo-Villar's documentary "Boquita."

ing with Latino/a transgender people in Boston; Diego Sánchez, a Mexican transgender man from the Aids Action Committee; and Lisa Pic-Harrison, executive director of the National Police Accountability Project, herself of Colombian origin.

The most powerful presentation for the police officers in Bogotá came from Javier Pagán, a gay police officer who spoke to them proudly in Spanish. This “officer to officer” talk, as Pagán called it, helped set the tone for the rest of the workshop in Bogotá, where the audience quickly became engaged with the topic.

After the teleconference, we role-played a clash between trans-prostitutes and police officers. We incorporated this experiential component in order to enhance the participants’ sense of agency and engagement with the topic of trans-phobic violence. In collaboration with Marina Talero of Trans Ser Colombia (www.trans-ser.org), Diana Navarro of Bogotá as well as other trans-people and assistants, the workshop was designed to stem violent behavior during police/trans clashes, using techniques from Brazilian director and political activist Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed.

The situations I encountered were much more complex than my preconceived, and sometimes misguided, ideas about the Colombian police and even the transgender community itself. One of the pillars of the method used by the Theater of the Oppressed is to frame dramatizations from the victim’s point of view. Thus, the prostitutes themselves created their own dramatization, defining the ideas for the skit and making important suggestions. The police officers, however, reacted to the dramatization with discomfort. They refuted the character of the police officer, saying that he was nothing more than a stereotypical caricature. In the police officers’ worldview, that aggressive officer was old-fashioned. They refused to identify with the character as portrayed, as they imagined themselves differently. At the same time, there was an opportunity for the trans-prostitutes themselves to counteract their response within the dialogue, and to speak about their own experiences.

Once the officers actually began to participate in the workshop and the prostitutes were able to face their real and perceived aggressors within a safe space, tough conversations began to take place, many of

which need to continue over time in the space of the real world. The police officers even requested that the workshops also be extended to the trans-community. The officers feel they need to be met half way and asked the prostitutes to learn more about the armed forces, institutions currently in the process of reinventing themselves after the country’s traumatic experiences of civil strife.

The most powerful presentation for the police officers in Bogotá came from Javier Pagán, a gay police officer who spoke to them proudly in Spanish. This “officer to officer” talk, as Pagán called it, helped set the tone for the rest of the workshop in Bogotá, where the audience quickly became engaged with the topic.

Even though Bogotá has now created an LGBT liaison within the city’s police force, much work remains to be done to achieve a mutual sense of respect between the LGBT communities and security forces. The voice of a young Colombian police officer who asked the Boston police officer how to respectfully approach an LGBT individual still resounds. This question about institutional measures and personal commitment is crucial. The solution, we all agreed, must ultimately be individual.

Further workshops on human rights issues have been scheduled not only within the police force, but also within the military. I began jotting some initial notes for this article while attending an international conference titled “Human Rights, State Terrorism and Universal Jurisdiction.” There I conversed with another participant, former Colombian judge Luz Estella Nagle. Nagle had served as judge in Medellín until assassination attempts and continued death threats compelled her to relocate. Once forced to flee Colombia because of her work on international criminal enterprises, terrorism, counter-insurgency, and national security laws, Nagle has since began working with the military on human rights issues. Given her vested interest in creating a balance between fighting terrorism and preserving human rights, she explained the sense of urgency with which the Colombian Armed Forces needs to address issues of violence within its ranks. As Nagle and

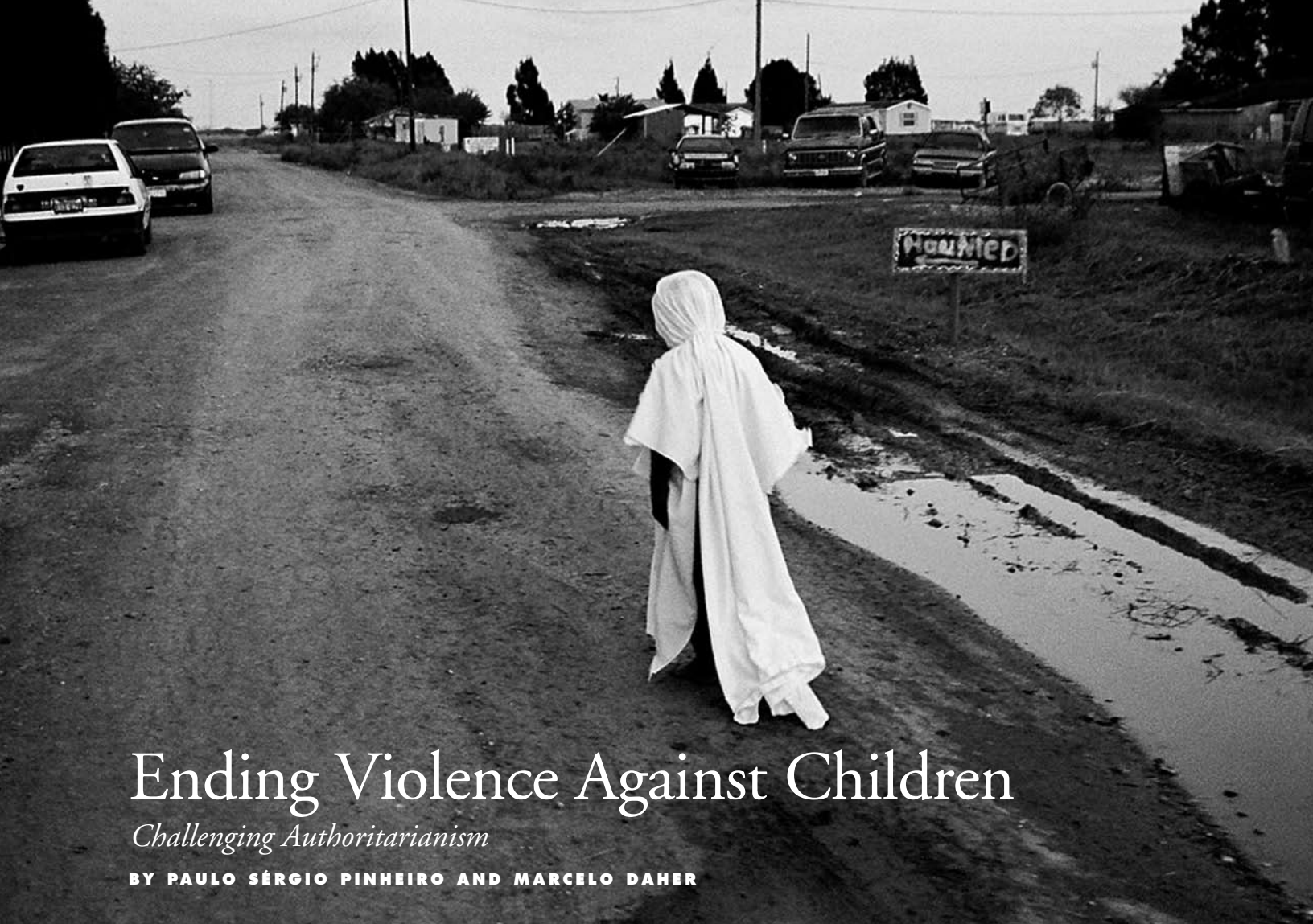
I compared training notes, I expressed my feeling that working with the prostitutes to train the police—in fact, facilitating their dialogue—represented the most challenging and rewarding experience I have ever had.

More reflection is needed on this topic; nonetheless, the possibility of imagining nonviolent behavior during the workshop had a significant impact. Theater provided a means of momentarily allowing ourselves

to transcend our own experiences and put ourselves in the shoes of others to confront and untangle the perplexities, doubts and uncertainties that naturally arise.

The exercise was surprisingly powerful. All parties recognized how this type of play-acting can help us build a future thoughtfully and intentionally, rather than just stumbling into it. Hopefully, training such as this can help police and transgender people to understand one another better so that conflicts can be avoided where it really counts: not in workshops, but in the real word, during our face to face interactions with the other, and with one another.

Carmen Oquendo-Villar, a Boston-based interdisciplinary artist and writer, received her doctorate in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard in 2007. She has published extensively on diverse cultural fields including narrative and performance studies, visual cultures, media and politics, authoritarianism and technology, and gender and sexuality. As a visual artist, she has completed a series of portraits about members of the Boston Latin@ transgender community and is currently working on a multimedia installation featuring Jacques Cabaret. Integrating video, photographs and possibly animation, the piece is to be a portrait of this legendary drag cabaret, the oldest in Boston, around which a multi-ethnic trans community gathers. Her website is www.oquendovillar.com.



Ending Violence Against Children

Challenging Authoritarianism

BY PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO AND MARCELO DAHER

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IS NOT A new subject for the international community. Since the enactment of the first human rights treaties, concerns for the protection of children from violence were part of the international debate. As human beings, children are entitled to enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the various international human rights treaties that have developed from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the last decade, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its massive ratification permitted the development of a more articulated and detailed body of knowledge and jurisprudence on this topic. The jurisprudence generated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child through the analysis of country reports and general comments will call for a number of changes in laws and policies to ensure the protection of children from all forms of physical and psychological violence. Traditional harmful practices such as child labor, commercial sexual exploitation and

corporal punishment are among various violations addressed by the Committee.

In 1996, Graça Machel drew global attention to the impact of armed conflict on children while presenting a global study to the UN. The report revealed the extent of children's involvement in the 30 or so armed conflicts raging around the world and the impact of violence inflicted against them in these situations. Its publication was followed by various initiatives by the international community to stop the involvement of children in conflict situations and strengthen surveillance on the situation of children in these contexts. Simultaneously, *two* global gatherings to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children were promoted in Stockholm (1996) and Yokohama (2001), calling the world's attention to the plight of children in the world sex trade and devising methods to protect children from sexual exploitation. Eventually, both topics were also the reason for the enactment of two optional protocols to the Convention, strengthening the movement

Violence haunts the lives of many children.

toward the protection of children from these forms of violence.

In 2001, on the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly requested the preparation of an in-depth study on the question of violence against children, containing member states' recommendations for appropriate action. Three years later, in October 2006, the study report was presented to the General Assembly, resulting in the publication of the *World Report on Violence against Children* (see www.violencestudy.org; United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children, 2007).

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING A GLOBAL STUDY

Framed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the study report had to cover an enormous field: the causes and impact

of all forms of violence against children of all ages. This means addressing radically different contexts and actors: from violence against babies at home to bullying in schools and police violence against street adolescents. Additionally, as a global report done by the UN, it had to address the situation of all countries, independently of their different socioeconomic status. Given the scope of the study, the challenge was combining the existing knowledge and experience to determine a basic framework for action that could orient the international community while addressing all forms of violence against children.

Another central aspect was its multidisciplinary approach. The 2002 World Health Organization report was one of the inspirations for the *World Report on Violence against Children*. The study departs from a solid child rights frame but makes a strong effort to incorporate the approaches of people working in public health, child protection and social welfare, education and criminal justice, among other areas.

Beyond painting a picture on the problem of violence, the final report needed to provide recommendations for action. As in other UN reports, the impact and causes of violence needed to be described simultaneously, an effort that was seriously hampered by extremely limited knowledge and data in most of the countries; moreover, the study had to provide guidelines for member states despite limited knowledge and data.

The participatory process helped overcome these various challenges in the short period of three years and to prepare an action-oriented report. The promotion of regional and national consultations in all regions, a number of expert meetings, the preparation of a questionnaire to governments and the collection of submissions by non-governmental organizations and research institutions, were all very relevant. The global presence of UN system organizations, in particular UNICEF, was vital in this sense. The networks of child rights organizations were also important in mobilizing civil society and academics.

The meaningful inclusion of child and adolescent participants at all stages helped maintain lively debates and ensure that concrete concerns were not neglected because of the constant need to find common ground and understanding. Various civil society

organizations developed methodology to ensure child participation.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN LATIN AMERICA

The Latin American region was actively involved throughout the study process. Concerns about violence are very present in the regional agenda because of the impact of criminal groups and urban violence there. The World Health Organization's 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health* revealed that while the world average

Since the enactment of the first human rights treaties, concerns for the protection of children from violence were part of the international debate.

level of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (1995-99) was 8.8, in Latin America this average was 25, with youngsters by far the most common victims. At the same time, civil society has a strong presence there and accumulated some important experiences in the last decade by expanding its responsibilities both in terms of monitoring and implementing strategies to stop violence.

The study thus confirms that Latin American children suffer various forms of violence in their homes, schools, institutions of care, communities or even in places of work. Following global trends, infants and young children are very vulnerable to violence in the home. Teenagers and youngsters, particularly boys, are the most frequent victims of homicides. Sexual violence marks the lives of many girls. Children living behind bars are submitted to dreadful treatment far from the eyes of the public.

Throughout our consultations in the region, attention was more frequently directed to youth violence activities and the repressive responses offered by many governments. The "tough-hand" rhetoric encountered eloquent political sponsors in Latin America and had a strong impact on the discussions on child rights and public policies in related areas. Advocates for these strategies blame youngsters for the explosion of violence and reject the adoption of international standards in the treatment of children in conflict with the law because their subsequent sense of impunity would fuel violent behavior.

The study's findings not only put in serious doubt the identification of children as the common protagonists of violent crimes, but also indicate negative consequences of some repressive policies adopted. The consultants recommended establishing a broader set of initiatives to curb crime, including prioritizing preventive efforts, promoting accountability and strengthening research.

Concerns about other forms of violence were not neglected in the regional discussions. The prevalence of violence in the

homes and the disseminated use of corporal punishment were topics for important discussions as this issue is still very infrequently addressed by human rights organizations, which tend to focus more on violent treatment perpetrated by state actors. The deteriorated situation of schools in communities affected by violence and the challenges in making schools safe spaces for children were also frequently mentioned. The vulnerability of child workers, in particular child domestic workers was another frequent topic in the regional debate. The study has also called attention to other extremely vulnerable groups such as mentally disabled children and indigenous children.

THE OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The study report to the General Assembly provides a set of 12 overarching recommendations with specific recommendations for tackling violence taking place in five settings: home, school, juvenile and justice system institutions, workplace and the overall community. Perhaps the main contribution of these recommendations is that they provide a structured frame to orient efforts by different sectors while preventing and responding to violence in all regions.

Violence cannot be legal. The Committee on the Rights of the Child repeatedly stated that no form of physical chastisement is acceptable under the international law. If we want to protect children we must have clear and objective laws prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in all situations, including inside the home. Traditional prac-



The pain and suffering of child victims must be alleviated.

tics that are harmful to the child, such as genital mutilation or early and forced marriages must be declared equally illegal. Legal instruments in many countries are unclear and insufficient, hence the study urged countries to revise and improve their legislation prohibiting all forms of violence. Of course,

laws are not magic instruments to change the reality, but they are pedagogical tools that provide the best frame for action.

Violence can and must be prevented. Years of research and collaboration between professionals of public health, security and justice indicate that if governments address

root causes and risk factors that may give rise to violence, reality can be changed. Easy access to small arms, the lack of safe public spaces, and the lack of child-parent attachment are all recognized as risk factors. The study calls for a shift from reaction to prevention. Governments and other international institutions must concentrate their efforts and resources in long-term measures that change once and for all the contexts where violence thrives.

When violence occurs, the response must be quick and sensitive to children's needs. An efficient system to assist victims and stop perpetrators is central to changing the state of fear and isolation of many victims. Early detection mechanisms are very important to reduce the devastating damage violence can cause a child. Children also need safe and accessible channels to report violence. The justice system and the police must work very carefully not to exacerbate the pain and suffering of child victims. These institutions must be trusted to have a positive impact: distant and feared police or justice systems—as it is so frequently the case in Latin America—can do little to break cycles of violence. Equally, perpetrators must be held accountable for the violations they commit.

Violence cannot be stopped unless we improve our understanding of this problem. The study calls for urgent improvements in terms of data collection and research worldwide. It is unacceptable that after so much research advancement in the entire world not even half of the world population is covered by adequate death registration and cause-of-death classification. The lack of data on children living in state-controlled institutions is also inexcusable. To shape efficient policies governments must be much better informed. To promote accountability state institutions must be systematically open to public scrutiny.

AFTER THE STUDY

The process of the study's preparation was by itself an important instrument to raise global awareness on the impact of violence against children in all regions and to promote initiatives, strengthening and generating related networks of organizations. The involvement of stakeholders in government and civil society in these activities helped to give them visibility and legitimacy, permitting different entities to move ahead in the

implementation of policies and programs in their respective countries.

At the national level, the main contribution of the study's release is probably the provision of a frame to address violence by different sectors of government and society. If the study succeeds in spreading the basic notions that actions to stop violence must equally consider prevention and response and that efficiency can only be attained with accurate data and accountability, it will certainly lead to significant progress in an area still marked by limited data, inefficient repressive measures and fragmentation.

The study's broad scope and generic recommendations pose the risk that member states and the international community will simply contend that policies are already in place to address most of the proposed recommendations. Thus, the challenges ahead are to discuss how what's already in place must be changed or enhanced in accordance with the study's framework. This evaluation must occur at local and regional level, of course. But at a global level, there is also a critical need to reassess the quality and quantity of initiatives taken to confront all forms of violence and the priorities picked by donors.

The report on the first year after the study identified a number of efforts and studies dealing with issues such as trafficking of human beings, commercial sexual exploitation and some forms of child labor. Little evidence was provided with regard to progress in addressing violence in the home and family, in care and justice institutions, and regarding violence perpetrated by state agents and gangs, despite the recognized prevalence of these violations. Attention to some of these usually neglected areas must be increased, without affecting the limited initiative already in place.

Moving the UN machinery and international community beyond usual areas of concern will require advocacy at all levels, especially at high levels. Despite the need for a multi-sectoral approach to violence and the urgent need for more and better research, it is essential not to lose sight that the protection of children is grounded and should be always framed by the protection and promotion of human rights. The protection from violence is associated with the protection and promotion of all rights, including social and economic rights. Human rights bodies and instruments can play a very

useful role catalyzing debate and pushing states to strengthen measures to fulfill their obligations to protect the rights of their citizens. The study thus didn't propose any new international treaty as the protection of children from all violence was already clearly recognized by the existing treaties.

In Latin America, the presence of a regional human rights protection system can be a useful tool for follow up. The system can be utilized to raise awareness on systematic violations and to mobilize state responses. Regional leadership must realize that public security cannot be promoted when there is continuous violation of human rights. Information on the prevalence of different forms of violence present in the region, in particular violence perpetrated by state actors, is very important to enhance the public debate so frequently dominated by an emotional rhetoric.

The almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, currently completing its 18th anniversary, indicates how much member states are keen to state their commitment to protect children. The persistence of various forms of violence against children, many even condoned by national law, indicates how much more needs to be done to translate into reality the obligations assumed by governments.

Recognizing that violence against children can be perpetrated by authority figures in the private sphere (parents) and public sphere (state actors) poses particular challenges avoided by many leaders even in more consolidated democracies. Countries both in the North and South must be stimulated and supported to seriously address these issues. And such a process involves not only adapting legal frameworks and policies but also promoting attitude change. Even if the impact and forms of violence vary among regions, the difficulties in challenging these authority figures persist in all societies.

Hannah Arendt once said that if the workers were emancipated in the 19th century and women achieved liberation in the 20th century, children were still waiting for their emancipation. The Convention should represent the turning point in the recognition of children's full citizenship. Properly protecting children from violence must include fully hearing children and respecting their rights as full citizens and not as beloved properties of parents, schools or institutions.



Guatemalan girls in traditional dress.

Children's dependence on adults makes them more vulnerable to violence. Unquestioned authoritarianism in the relations between adults and children makes violence against children a permanent threat. It is about time to change this reality.

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Documenting Violence

A photoessay

BY DONNA DECESARE

I HAVE FILE DRAWERS FILLED WITH DRAMATIC photographs of broken bodies, rage, terror, anguish and mayhem. These images map nearly two decades covering revolution, urban crime and state repression, as well as more intimate facets of violence in the Americas. The repeated witnessing of such trauma often leaves one feeling inadequate. The ripple effects of mayhem and the attempt to draw meaning from it, to provoke outrage or to transcend the suffering are struggles that create a bond between the witness and those whose sufferings are much deeper. My work has taken new directions, as I search among survivors, for those struggling to make sense of the senseless, to find a narrative that permits hope.

Hope begins with safely being able to speak truth. But my subjects—many of whom are women and children—live with a burden of fear and stigma. Whether these women are living with HIV, surviving as prostitutes, or struggling with the physical and emotional scars of war, the fact that they have been violated does not save them from being treated as outcasts or blamed for situations over which they have little control.

As women and children in Guatemala and Colombia know, showing your face while speaking honestly can get you killed. And yet, the children especially crave recognition. As soon as they spotted my camera, they were eager for fame or immortality. “Oh, take my picture,” they said, but a moment later, their expressions turning sober, they would add, “Just please don’t show it here.”

Any illusion that photographers can control where or how our images appear dissolves in the age of the Internet. An image that exists in a public sphere can be instantly copied and distributed whether or not its publication is intended or officially sanctioned. How to depict suffering and injustice without exposing those violated to further stigma or harm has become much more difficult. The ubiquitous reach of the

Internet penetrates even remote areas of Guatemala and Colombia.

Knowing that I couldn’t control local exposure of my images, I needed to find a way of working that would protect my subject’s identities, allay their fears, and empower them to speak truthfully about their lives. Those who feel imprisoned by stigma need to have a context in which they can exercise control. When a child asked if he could pick a different name to accompany his photographs and story, it occurred to me that he was really asking to share control. This inspired me to look for ways to make the image-making process collaborative.

With adults I let the interview suggest ways to make the image. We discuss how to convey metaphorically or with artifacts central elements of their narrative. With the children the image often comes first. It is more like a brainstorming game. In this playful dance of posing and waiting for a spontaneous gesture, an expression of candor, or an image that provides context, we learn to trust each other and they are able to share their secrets.

Donna DeCesare, an award-winning photojournalist, is most widely known for her groundbreaking coverage of the spread of Los Angeles gangs in Central America. Her latest project, published in essay form here, was supported by a 2005 Fulbright fellowship in Colombia. She joined the Executive Committee of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma in 2007 and remains on the faculty at the Journalism School at the University of Texas at Austin where she has been on the Advisory Board of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas since 2003. Additional work by DeCesare can be seen at <http://www.donnadecesare.com> and at the soon to be launched site <http://www.destinyschildren.org>. She can be reached via email at ddecesare@mail.utexas.edu.



Left: When Misrael was seven, his father was murdered and his home life began to fall apart. Living in the streets, he became addicted to crack. He began living with a prostitute who gave him drugs for sex. When she died of HIV he began feeling sick. "They tell me I have that sickness that kills you. I feel weak because of all that I've been through. But I hope maybe I don't have HIV." Since moving to a shelter Misrael has been hospitalized with HIV-related illness. He is no longer in denial about his status and has been taking antiretroviral drugs. (Guatemala 2001)

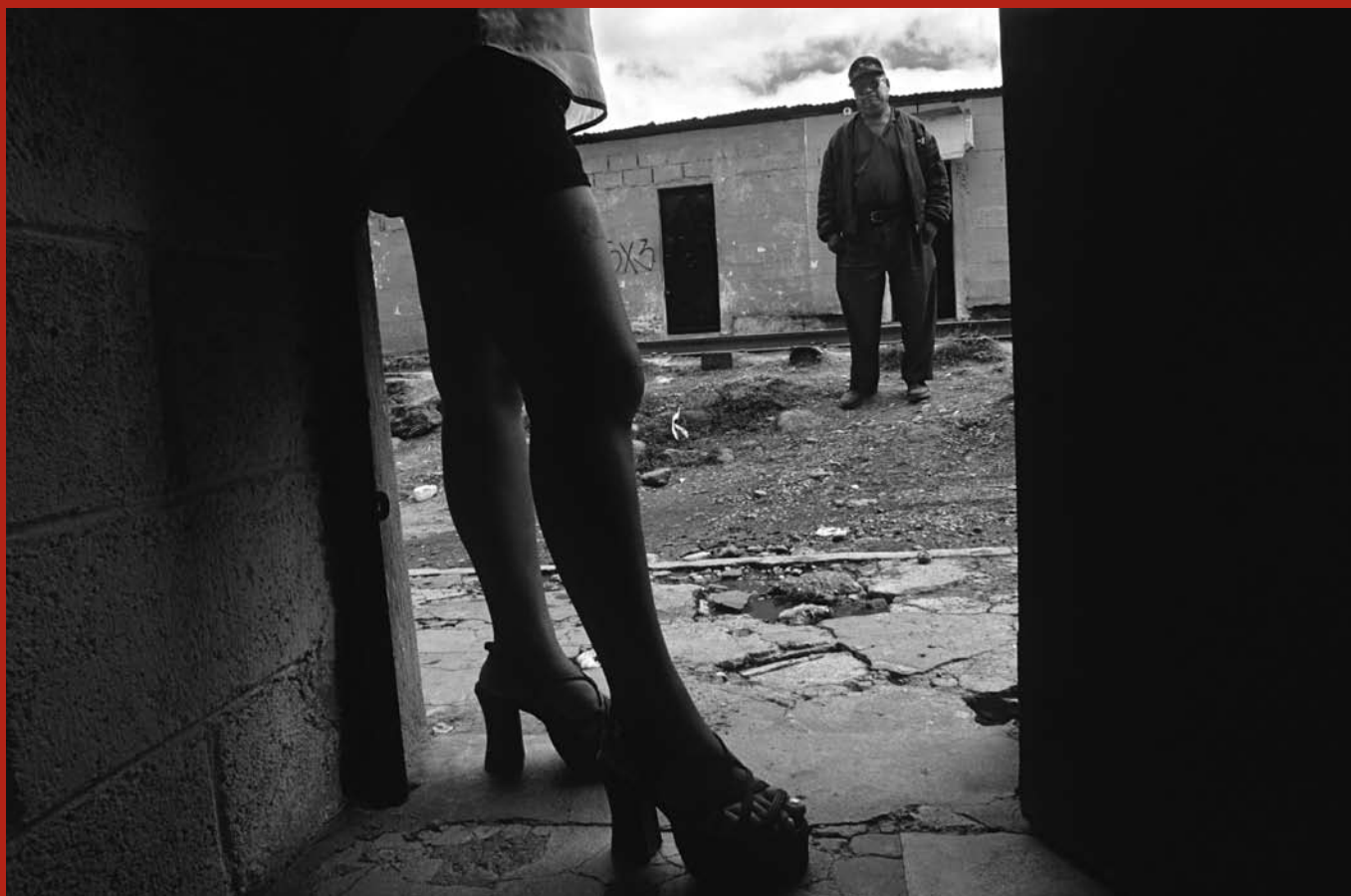
Below: In 2000, Nancy and six siblings survived one of Colombia's most brutal paramilitary massacres. Nancy, 24, now works with a support group for women affected by the war. "The desire for vengeance is one of the roots of the violence we live... At the time of the massacre I wanted the electric chair for every one of them. Now I would ask the paramilitaries who committed the massacre, "How would you feel if this had happened to you, to your family?"...I do want them to at least imagine what it would feel like to be us..." (Colombia 2005)





Left: "Tomás," 15, lives in a home for demobilized combatants sponsored by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. Running away from home at age 8 after witnessing his enraged mother set fire to his father, causing his death, he was taken in by AUC paramilitaries... "They told me they would always protect me. Later bad things happened. I saw them kill people, a lot of people. They told me they had to. I didn't like it. Sometimes I felt so angry I wanted to kill someone, but then I would feel afraid... One day the army came. They saw how small I was, and they captured me and brought me here..." (Colombia 2003)

Below: "Cindy Paula," 17, a single mother working in the red light district, left home at 14 after her stepfather abused her. A drug addict living on the streets, she survived an overdose and decided to quit drugs, but she had few work options. "Even though I know it's not the best, for me it is the only way to get ahead. As a servant I'd make 300 quetzales (\$37 monthly). In a textile factory I'd make 1200 quetzales (\$148 monthly). Here I can make twice as much. But someday I hope I can leave here." (Guatemala 2001)





Left: Mariela hopes that one day the truth about her husband's assassination will be known. Josué Giraldo Cardona, president of the Civic Human Rights Committee of Meta, was gunned down Oct. 13, 1996 as he walked home with his small daughters. "Everything about my husband's life and work was transparent. His death remains shrouded in darkness... He deserves that the circumstances of his death be investigated and acknowledged transparently." (Colombia 2006)

Right: "Carolina," 18, lives in a home for demobilized combatants sponsored by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. Carolina, then 15 and a small band of survivors from her FARC guerrilla unit, tried to get back to their base camp after combat with the Colombian army. On the way she stepped on a landmine losing her foot. "I cried and cried for three days without stopping... They kept me in the camp for a while, but they couldn't keep carrying me... I had an aunt that they trusted, and they brought me to her... My aunt got afraid because of the smell [it was gangrenous], and so this is how my family decided to turn me in to the army. Ever since then I've lived in a group home with three other girls who also used to be guerrillas... The FARC was my family for many years. But I don't believe what they believe anymore. What good is the war? My friends are dead, and look at me. Sometimes I still cry and think who will ever love me now. But I will get a prosthetic leg. When I learn to walk with it and wear pants, no one needs to know that I don't have my foot." (Colombia 2004)





DAILY VIOLENCE AND SECURITY

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The topic of crime and insecurity permeates everyday conversation throughout Latin America. Insecurity affects the general economy and the daily lives of ordinary folk.

Dangers of Insecurity in Postwar Guatemala

Gangs, Electoral Politics, and Structural Violence

BY KEDRON THOMAS AND PETER BENSON

THOUGH THE COUNTRY'S INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT ENDED over a decade ago, Guatemala is an increasingly violent place. The issue of violence permeates everyday conversation. Tabloid newspapers feature images of bullet-ridden cars and bloody corpses each day. Ordinary citizens worry about the gang violence that overwhelms Guatemala City and creeps into rural regions.

In the 2007 presidential election, security emerged as a new buzzword. Leading presidential candidates, including runner-up Otto Pérez Molina, adopted a "tough on crime" platform, portraying themselves—in stump speeches and on roadside billboards—as eager to stamp out violent crime and potentially utilize coercive power in the process.

The winner, Álvaro Colom, ran on a left-center platform that included social programs and promises to end corruption as part of a broader vision of what security means. His party now faces the difficult task of addressing the conditions of structural violence that pervade Guatemalan society, conditions that have been largely ignored in right-wing political discourse, media representations and everyday talk. Crime and gang violence are symptoms of much larger structural problems, including deepening economic inequalities, the erosion of political and social infrastructures and disparate access to healthcare and education, as well as rampant organized crime and corruption. Political and social responses that do not attend to postwar violence as a structural condition but rather as a temporary glitch in the system caused by delinquents, risk compounding rather than ameliorating forms of everyday violence and insecurity.

SYMPTOMS

The 1990s in Guatemala saw the historic signing of the Peace Accords, which ended a 36-year internal armed conflict waged between the state and left-wing rebel groups. The conflict had evolved into state-sponsored genocide directed against the country's

indigenous Maya majority in the rural highlands. The Commission for Historical Clarification reported 200,000 victims of arbitrary execution and forced disappearance, 200,000 refugees, and a million internally displaced people. The postwar era has seen the rise of pan-Maya cultural and political activism and a sharp decline in large-scale military actions. Amidst these changes there has also been famine brought about by droughts and declining coffee prices, the devastation of entire communities by Hurricane Stan in 2005, a resurgence of right-wing political activity, and a sharp increase in street crime and gang violence.

On a national level, the homicide rate nearly doubled from 2001 to 2006, making Guatemala the second most dangerous country in Latin America (after Colombia, where the murder rate is currently falling). Guatemala City, the capital, has become an icon of urban violence. On average, 250 people are murdered each month in the capital alone. The gendered dimensions of the violence are painfully apparent, leading researchers and nongovernmental organizations to label the situation "femicide" (see the article by Victoria Sanford, p. 20). The number of violent crimes has also increased in recent years, including assault, theft, armed robbery, carjacking and rape. Kidnapping for profit is rampant. Armed robbers attack vehicles, especially public buses, on main roads in broad daylight. As anthropologists working in Guatemala, we have heard countless stories from people who have been assaulted on buses and in city streets. People who regularly ride public buses, the only mode of transportation available to most of the population, tell us that they expect to be victimized whenever they travel.

Foreign embassy reports and national media coverage emphasize the prominent role of organized crime, drug trafficking, and gangs. The wide availability of arms in a postwar setting and the demobilization of the military have emboldened armed gangs that control entire neighborhoods in the capital. Yet impunity is the order of the day. According to Amnesty International, only about one percent of violent crimes is successfully prosecuted. It is widely and credibly believed that the military and law enforcement agencies are tightly connected with drug traffickers and organized crime; judges

Gang members serve their sentence in a Guatemalan prison.



and lawyers who work on human rights issues or drug trafficking cases live in constant fear. Politically motivated (and perhaps state-sanctioned) killings continue, as seen in the 1997 assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera and campaign-related killings in recent elections. There were 29 killings in the 2003 elections and at least 50 during the 2007 elections, most of the victims local candidates.

GANGS AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

In 1982, General Efraín Ríos Montt staged a coup and took power as head of state for a year and a half. This was the bloodiest period in the country's armed conflict. Although the Guatemalan Constitution bars former dictators from running for president, Ríos Montt campaigned in 2003, having served as majority leader in the Congress for a decade, on a platform of greater security. Neither legitimate nor successful, his bid nonetheless signaled a new politics of security in Guatemala.

In the latest national election, another former general, Otto Pérez Molina, garnered 47 percent of the vote. Amidst other candidates focused on security issues—one party promised “Seguridad Total” and another “Security, Welfare, Justice”—Pérez Molina's Patriotic Party stood out with its promise to bring an “iron fist” (*mano dura*). One of us (Kedron Thomas) spoke with voters leading up to the election and found the seeming paradox of support for the Patriotic Party among a number of Maya who were indeed aware of the role Pérez Molina played during the internal armed conflict. He oversaw military operations in the department of El Quiché, where some of the worst atrocities against indigenous people took

Left: The sign on the typical Guatemalan bag reads “Justice.”
Below: Police frisk suspected members of the MS-13 gang.



place. “We have no other choice,” asserted a 32-year-old Maya woman who works at a hardware store. “As someone who lives in the capital city, I support whichever candidate will clean up the streets and bring security.”

The Patriotic Party’s campaign propaganda encouraged citizens to believe that targeting gangs and delinquents is the key to bringing order. Gangs are often singled out and blamed for many of Guatemala’s problems, as they offer a quick and sensible explanation for violence. For example, in 2004 in Tecpán, a large town about an hour from Guatemala City, a protest against new taxes mandated by structural adjustment policies, in which thousands of Maya farmers participated, turned violent. The town’s mayor was run off and the municipal building burned. Local people quickly attributed the violence to gang members even though, on the ground, the fault lines of who was to blame were blurry. While gang activity is certainly real—some estimates put gang membership higher than that of the national police force—it has also become a handy scapegoat, one actively promoted by politicians.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Someone assaulted on his or her daily bus commute experiences that violent act as an episode caused by a gang member or otherwise delinquent individual. Yet, to adequately understand such episodes and develop effective social responses, Paul Farmer, a Harvard anthropologist and physician, challenges us to move away from the tendency to pin praise or blame on individual actors and focus on underlying systemic conditions that may not be immediately visible when violence occurs. His concept of “structural violence” describes social arrangements and historical processes that systematically put disadvantaged groups at risk for violence and suffering.

Contemporary violence in Guatemala cannot be adequately understood apart from a number of important historical and societal factors. Against the backdrop of decades of counterinsurgency warfare and embodied memories of trauma and terror, popular support for “iron fist” platforms looks less like categorical support for a new militarized state and more like an understandable desire to no longer live with insecurity. The current predicament of urban violence itself has historical roots. A devastating earthquake in 1976 and Ríos Montt’s scorched earth campaigns of the early 1980s dislocated rural communities and created massive unplanned squatter settlements on the outskirts of the capital. Even today, about one out of every four people in Guatemala City lives in what state authorities define as “precarious settlements.” In slums of squalor housing lacking basic services, gang membership and activity have become ordinary social arrangements.

An enormous underclass experiencing high unemployment in the formal sector has turned to thriving informal economies, often linked to organized crime. Recent neoliberal reforms, which shifted resources away from domestic markets and public programs, have intensified poverty and inequality in Guatemala. According to recent World Bank figures, nearly 60 percent of Guatemalans live below the poverty line and 20 percent live in extreme poverty. The United Nations reports that Guatemala has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world: one fifth of the population controls 60 percent of national income, while the poorest

fifth shares just 2 percent of that total. Economic inequality runs together with health and education disparities. Guatemala has the lowest life expectancy and highest infant mortality rates in Central America, while a deplorable public education system yields the hemisphere’s highest illiteracy rate after Haiti.

Political corruption remains a barrier to substantive reforms—Guatemala is the subject of a United Nations Commission against Impunity established in 2007, aimed partly at eradicating organized crime and corruption in the police force and judicial system. Amidst impunity, and in the absence of law enforcement, the employment of private security forces by firms and individuals has exploded. Less affluent segments have resorted to neighborhood watch groups, which eerily recall the armed Civil Auto-Defense Patrols of the war era, in which rural residents were forced to participate in the brutalization of their own communities. Perhaps the most disturbing facet of this impunity context is the use of lynching as a weapon of vigilante justice in highland towns. There were 400 lynching cases between 1996 and 2002, evidence of how violence is dangerously evolving as both problem and solution.

Insecurity is a multifaceted problem. The clustering of endemic poverty and poor health outcomes and the near absence of state services and law enforcement comprises a manifold structural violence felt deeply across Guatemala.

THE DANGERS OF NARROW RESPONSE

As in many other developing countries, or even in the United States for that matter, there is value—political and economic capital—in violence in Guatemala. The media capitalizes on violence by making murder and kidnapping into sensationalized graphic images, obscuring structural conditions in which violence clusters and thrives. Politicians have capitalized on violence by playing to popular fears and promoting a politics of the “iron fist” that, likewise, ignores economic inequalities, societal restructuring and political corruption. For ordinary people, too, violence has value, as when talk about gangs being responsible helps people come to grips with experiences of social instability.

No one denies that Guatemala is a dangerous place. Equally dangerous are patterns of response that have arisen in the postwar period. The “iron fist” seems like a commonsensical approach—militarize the streets and round up the bad guys. Guatemalans are scared and want to live in safe communities. But rather than address root causes of violence, including deepening inequalities linked to structural adjustment policies, the iron fist approach reorganizes violence as something that the state and private security forces can legitimately use to establish a sense of security. Given that such a situation would resemble the long internal armed conflict, Guatemalan voters have demanded a different approach, calling on their newly-elected president to develop solutions to achieve not only security, but also lasting peace.

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SEGURIDAD CIUDADANA EN LAS AMÉRICAS: PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN ACTIVA

LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM, WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS, MARCH 2007

The 2006 Latinobarómetro poll found that crime and insecurity topped the list of concerns for most Latin American citizens. Their worries are well-founded. According to most measurements, levels of crime (especially violent) in Latin America are significantly higher than in the United States, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Yet most governments in the region have historically been unable to implement innovative and effective policies to address citizen insecurity. This is due in part to institutional barriers in the security sector and a lack of resources, as well as a dearth of both creativity and understanding of the roots of crime. Given this paradox, what kind of policies should governments undertake today to reduce levels of crime and public perception of insecurity? What are the challenges to implementing current policies? In answering these questions, many experts find themselves questioning whether current crime prevention strategies are living up to expectations or if countries with a history of *mano dura* (heavy hand) policies will find themselves returning to that approach in the face of increasing urban violence?

Seguridad Ciudadana en Las Américas: Proyecto de investigación activa (Citizen Security in the Americas: An Action Research Project), a new compilation published by the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, aims to answer these questions and serve as a reference for both policy-makers and scholars. The work presents the results of five field studies by top citizen security experts, including a comparative chapter that evaluates these programs to determine best practices. The five countries studied, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, and Peru, have varying levels of crime and diverse national citizen security policies. Contributors to this volume evaluate these policies as they are carried out at the local level, providing the reader with a view of the specific needs of local communities and neighborhoods.

The majority of the studies rely heavily on interviews with a broad range of social actors, as well as on quantitative data. The chapter on Brazil (Cláudio Beato and Andréa Silveira) for example, examines national citizen security programs with three main goals:

- Improve the relationship between the community and the police
- Encourage coordination amongst police units and identify “hot spots” to prevent violent crime
- Reduce homicides in these high-risk areas through an integrated and community-based approach.

The chapter focuses on the implementation of these programs in the city of Belo Horizonte and uses extensive quantitative survey data to measure public opinion and efficacy of the programs.

In an era when most discussions of citizen security and violence in Latin America are focused on gang violence in Central America and transnational crime, *Seguridad Ciudadana en Las Américas* provides the reader with an analysis of the policies used by South American governments to confront their age-old problems of citizen insecurity at the local level. Catalina Smulovitz highlights these results in the comparative chapter and proposes a number of best practices and lessons based on the studies. The most successful programs were locally oriented and participatory, integrating

What kind of crime prevention strategies and policies should Latin American governments undertake to reduce crime and public perception of insecurity? The most successful programs are locally-oriented and participatory.

government officials, community leaders and police forces. These common factors improved citizens’ perceptions of insecurity as well as their relationships with the police force. Yet, despite these successes, an overall lack of trust remained between all actors involved—leading many participants to question the projects’ sustainability. In Brazil’s New York City-inspired program Integração e Gestão de Segurança Pública (Integration and Management of Public Security), civil and military police were hesitant to share strategic intelligence information with outsiders, be they program facilitators or community members.

In addition, the evaluations demonstrated that the long-term participation of all actors must be guaranteed in order to ensure the sustainability of such programs. High levels of participation in workshops, community meetings, and other activities, observed in the initial stages of the programs generally declined due to case-specific variables, (such as the levels of distrust in the Brazil case study). Another important caveat noted by the authors was the high level of participation by officials compared to community members. By identifying these and other deficiencies and best practices, *Seguridad Ciudadana en Las Américas* provides policy recommendations that are useful to any government or social actor attempting to implement local citizen security initiatives.

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The full text in Spanish and Portuguese can also be found online at www.wilsoncenter.org/lap.

Salvadoran Youth, Transnationalism's Other Product

Tales from San Salvador and Washington DC

BY CLAUDIA SILVA RUSCHEL AND HÉCTOR SILVA

A COMPLETELY DISTRAUGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN the Washington DC area approached her assistant principal—a highly-educated white middle-class man—one morning for urgent guidance. A fifth grade student in her class had pulled a knife from his backpack to show his classmates. Even more upsetting than the knife itself was the child's answer when asked where he had obtained the weapon. "It is from my dad," the child replied. Alarm spread through the school; the child's parents were called in immediately, the boy was threatened with suspension and the police were summoned.

The most difficult part of the situation was yet to come. When the father arrived at the school to be questioned by teachers, he readily admitted that he had given the small knife to his 10-year-old son. Later, he explained that they had arrived from El Salvador only six months earlier; in his hometown, he said, it was common for children to use small knives to sharpen their pencils in school. In El Salvador, pencil sharpeners were luxury items only found in urban schools. The father—a peasant farmer on the brink of poverty, with a fifth-grade education—came from a society in which citizens must look for creative answers to the lack of resources. He was very upset by all the commotion that had been caused by an instrument that had been used as a pencil sharpener by himself and by his parents before him.

This incident highlights the great effort that the educational system is making to keep "war" type material out of the class-

room because of violence in schools such as Virginia Tech or the case of the Maryland sniper. Citizens feel increasingly insecure in the United States in the classroom and beyond. No toy that even vaguely resembles a weapon can be used by students and even less by teachers. To resolve the case of the elementary school boy, the assistant principal had to have the capacity to understand a reality very different from his own and at the same time manage to fulfill the security standards mandated by the school.

In a multicultural society like metropolitan Washington DC, the media are increasingly associating Central American youth groups with violent activities rather than creative or cultural ones. *Maras*—or youth gangs—are also a growing cause of concern in Central America, as well as in the United States. Political, social and law enforcement institutions on both sides of the border have worried about *maras* for more than a decade now. According to the U.S. Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 17.3% of gang members arrested nationally are Salvadorans.

Many diverse opinions exist about the national immigration debate and about the phenomenon of *maras*. Independently of these stances, the fact is that several thousand youth of Salvadoran origin live in the DC area and do not feel included in the society to which they now belong. The immigration to the area—as well as other parts of the United States such as Los Angeles—began with networks that arose from the long and bloody civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s and then continued because of natural disasters and economic strife. The problem of youth gangs and difficult adaptation has become a part of daily life in Washington

Immigration official arrests suspected gang member in Washington DC.





Tattoos are often associated with gang membership.

DC; a conscious effort must be made to find positive solutions for an alienated and unassimilated youth, many of whom do not remember or even know their parents' homeland.

The *maras* phenomenon has been one way of responding to situations that are complex in both psychological and social terms. To understand these new contexts, we need to analyze them carefully from the perspective of distinct disciplines: psychology, sociology,

political science, public health, education, among others. This kind of analysis will help us understand and get closer to the different realities experienced by those such as the well-intentioned father who took his own childhood as the logical model for bringing up his children, and that of the assistant principal who must constantly face new groups of students with experiences and values very different from his own.

In El Salvador in the late 1980s, the *maras* emerged, at first as a curious phenomenon of juvenile associations, youth that had decided to live among themselves, adopting new modes of behavior. Rapidly, however, these groups began to be associated with violence and criminality. Only several years later, we discovered that there was a close connection between the rise of these groups and the massive migration of Salvadorans to the United States. This migration not only split up families, but it also transferred cultural and behavioral patterns between two very distinct societies.

For example, in 1992, María Gordillo decided to follow her life-long companion to Virginia, leaving her 10-month old daughter Teresa in El Salvador. Her partner, like the great majority of the men in the small town of Concepción de Oriente, had migrated to the United States during the war. Gordillo never made it to Virginia; she died, abandoned, in the Arizona desert.

Teresa, raised by her grandmother is 15 now; she never finished grade school and is wanted by the police on charges of possession and sales of drugs, conspiring to kidnap, and being a member of the *maras*. She still has not met her father, a construction worker in Arlington, who has sent \$350 monthly to El Salvador for the past 15 years.

For Teresa, the levels of exclusion with which she grew up in El Salvador are just as violent as gang membership. A 2003 study published in San Salvador about violence and exclusion concluded that in the lower levels of organization and gang participation, youths did not find drastic changes in the expressions of violence encountered in these groups, compared to the levels of

violence they had been previously exposed to in their communities or social environment. These young people already experienced diverse types and levels of violence in their neighborhood streets, in public institutions and within their own homes. Thus, joining a gang did not represent a significant shift in their lives; on the contrary, it represented a new element of protection and control within their own environment.

In this context the group of equals in adolescence grows in influence, providing powerful reinforcement in terms of acceptance, popularity, friendship and status in an environment in which they are not only seeking to become adults, but to find a role within their society.

In talking about adolescence, the ecology of human development helps us to understand the processes of incorporation of new youth, both Salvadorans and U.S.-born, in this new society. All types of transition are concurrently results and causes of processes of development, and migratory processes are thus examples *par excellence* of this process of mutual accommodation between human beings and their environment.

Generally, adolescents seek to create a group of friends that they can use as a mirror and with which they can identify and construct their own identity in a new environment in which they are not only seeking to become adults, but to find a role within a new society.

If we think about what happens when these young immigrant people arrive in the United States, there are some variables that stay the same. Now, identification with the country of origin has become a source of identity. Thus, a new sense of “we” is shared with other youth with Latin roots, through common experiences and memories in the face of a society in which they feel no sense of belonging.

As a facilitator of after-school activities with Latin youth in the Washington DC area, I (Claudia) have found that one of the principal values is pride in the Latino identity. Curious about this sense of patriotism, I’d sometimes ask youth about politicians, writers, artists, important historical or popular figures, and even about soccer teams or outstanding players from their home countries. Their answers were often vague and evasive. Their patriotism was limited to the flag and the national shield. Showing students a picture of Che Guevara to create polemic and start a discussion, I got only one answer from a girl who said “I saw him on a T-Shirt. Is he a singer?” It became clear to me that national identity was a basic symbol of identity, but with little knowledge or content.

Thus, the blue and white flag has become as important for young people who have little or no connection with El Salvador as it does for the youth who still live in the country’s rural communities. But just as Teresa feels like an outsider in her own country, these adolescents share a sense of marginality within a social environment that they perceive as hostile. The flag that is always hung in their houses is the best pretext for defining the limits between the “we” and “others” in a world in which these youngsters feel that neither their parents nor they belong. This is the perfect scenario for gang members to start recruiting new elements to their group.

In the United States, integration is a challenge for both those who arrive and those who already live in the host society. These processes of adaptation and acceptance are very much related to how these youths are perceived by their peers and adults within the U.S. society. It is difficult, however, to ask long-time residents to feel empathy for the recent arrivals when, for instance, 66% of those arrested on charges of juvenile violence in Maryland are of Salvadoran descent. Moreover, some *mara* youth have been arrested or even sentenced on drugtrafficking charges, as San Sal-

vador’s *La Prensa Gráfica* disclosed in November 2007.

Nowadays, U.S. residents of the Washington D.C. metropolitan area generally mistrust their Central American-origin neighbors. These perceptions are reinforced by the overall political environment and the recent debates about immigration, combined with the incidents often experienced in urban neighborhoods and nearby cities that reflect suspicion and friction among neighbors.

We are not equal. As human beings, we all are reflections of a culture in which we share moral, religious and work values, among others. We are different in ways that are tremendously enriching

According to the U.S. Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 17.3% of gang members arrested nationally are Salvadorans.

and that provide us with the possibility to teach the “others” about the worlds that make us who we are.

The challenge of living together peacefully means getting past mere co-existence through the creation of common projects. It is not a matter of creating sub-groups in favor of respecting differences, nor of forcing one group to mimic the habits of another. It is a matter of respecting differences, and using that as a basis to work on constructing commonalities with which we can forge, in ourselves and in the generations to come, distinct forms of relating to people who are different from ourselves.

To further this goal, processes of participation, rights and opportunities (civil, legal and laboral) are necessary both for the “us” and the “others.” Several Washington DC area institutions are working to incorporate immigrant groups, especially Central American youth, the predominant Latino group in the region. These groups include the Latin American Youth Center, Identity, Casa de Maryland and other nonprofit organizations, promoting community-based programs to help Latino youth to make the transition into adulthood by providing positive skills and role models.

However, these non-governmental efforts are not sufficient to overcome disadaptation; the quest to integrate Latino youth should become a priority for governmental institutions, particularly in the area of the educational system and within the communities with specific programs and outreach.

Meanwhile, young people who lack sufficient tools or means of getting ahead and adapting resort to violence as a means of expressing themselves.

Let us sum up by saying that in this struggle to find new and creative solutions to this new reality of immigrant populations, the United States is not alone. Host countries around the world are already facing the questioning of traditional modes of assimilation of their new neighbors. But, all around the world, in spite of serious efforts, there are few answers for this social phenomenon that is defining the face of this new century.

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INVASION: A ROCINHA DAY IN THE LIFE

BY GREG SCRUGGS

I woke up to the sounds of helicopters and firecrackers. Having tossed and turned throughout the morning, my first sense was that I was dreaming, but when my roommate rolled over and asked, "Did you hear that?" the unfortunate reality set in. The sounds are bad omens in *favelas*, the hillside urban squatter communities made infamous outside of Brazil by the Oscar-winning film *Cidade de Deus* (City of God). In Rio de Janeiro, the percentage of the population living in *favelas* is approximately 25-40% in a metropolitan area of 13 million. The majority of Rio's 700-plus *favelas*, ruled by one of the three criminal factions controlling the lucrative drug trade, are in constant conflict with each other and the police. Hence the helicopters and firecrackers.

The helicopters belonged to the cops, usually the *policia militar*, or military police—a holdover from the country's military dictatorship. They are soldiers as much as policemen, and it is not an understatement to characterize the conflict raging in Rio's *favelas* as warfare. That morning in early August, more than 300 men took part in a 6-hour temporary takeover that began with a simultaneous invasion of all of Rocinha's main entrances. Logistical support was provided via laptops equipped with satellite imagery, abetted by the helicopters' bird's eye view.

In response to the high-tech surveillance was a low-tech signal: firecrackers. Residents set them off as a warning to the community while the police continued their incursion into Rocinha, the largest *favela* in Rio, Brazil, and by some accounts all of Latin America, attempting to conquer it in three-dimensional space, both on the ground and from the air. The dense layer of *becos* (alleyways) was proving to be a strong defense against the "*mega-operação*" (mega-operation). At the sound of the firecrackers, anyone involved with the drug trade scatters up the hill, away from the paved avenues that allow the police easy access. The highest point in Rocinha, where the *dono do morro* (chief of the local cartel) lives, only has one way in and out, I was told. It was a dare to the police: try to reach us up here and blood will be shed. The police did not go, and no shots were fired.

But that didn't stop the police from making arrests. Five in total, I read in the newspaper the next day, including one Betinho da Cachopa (Little Robert from Cachopa). I lived in the area of Cachopa and wondered if Betinho was caught in the same house-to-house searches I witnessed. As the muffled sounds echoed from outside after I awoke, I began packing my bags—this was the day, of all coincidences, that my parents were arriving in Rio for a visit. I exited the door of my apartment, which led to an open-air staircase, and went up to the family's rooms. As I ascended, I saw a battalion of police marching down our street. I asked Dona Josirene, the matriarch of the family with whom I and another volunteer from the Two Brothers Foundation were staying, what was going on. She told me not to worry, that she and her family were good, honest people and that God would assure our safety (they were devout Pentecostals, the evangelical Protestant denomination that has become immensely popular in the poor communities of Latin America and Africa in recent decades).



Soldiers blend into a favela street scene.

I returned to my bedroom and my roommate began making breakfast, only to be interrupted by shouts of "*Abre a portão* [open the front door]!" My roommate came out and froze, unsure if he should open the gated door that separated our building from the street. Dona Josirene was nowhere to be seen, so he apologized to the police and told them, in his broken Portuguese, that he doesn't speak the language well. When she finally arrived and gave her assent, the police entered, their suspicions aroused. After a cursory search and Dona Josirene's explanation that we were American volunteers with an NGO, they calmed down. "Where are you from?" the captain asked, and a conversation in Portuguese ensued. "I'm from Washington, D.C. and my roommate is from San Francisco." He perked up. "Ahh, San Francisco! I know it well. I love California." Seizing on the positive opportunity, I asked, "I need to leave Rocinha today, is everything ok?" He brushed it off, "Of course, we have it under control." They continued on their way and I had Dona Josirene help me out of Cachopa.

The Estrada da Gávea, Rocinha's main drag, was calmer than usual, but far from deserted. Still, Dona Josirene felt it important to point out the bullet holes in the wall at the end of our alley, reminders of a previous visit from Rio's "finest." As the taxi made its way out of Rocinha, we passed a squad armed with sniper rifles and binoculars, squinting up the hill. At the entrance, we yielded to yet another flotilla of armored cars racing in. But for all the reinforcements, when I returned to Rocinha less than twelve hours later, the police gone since early afternoon, it was back to usual: members of the Amigos de Amigos (ADA) gang who rule Rocinha were walking freely through the streets, assault rifles in hand, and at the corner *boca-de-fuma* (mouth of smoke) the open air drug market continued unabated. For all the morning's bluster, it was like nothing had ever happened.

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Between Drug Gangs, the Police and Militias

An Anatomy of Violence in Rio de Janeiro

BY ROBERT GAY

ON JUNE 27, 2007, 1,350 TROOPS FROM THE CIVIL AND MILITARY police and the newly constituted National Security Force invaded a conglomeration of *favelas* known as the Complexo de Alemão in Rio de Janeiro's Zona Norte. By the time the operation ended, nineteen civilians lay dead. The invasion was swiftly and loudly condemned by human rights organizations that accused the government of killing and injuring scores of innocent victims. The government insisted that the victims were members of an organized crime faction that was waging war on public authority, a war that could not be won without bloodshed.

Organized crime factions first emerged in Rio in the early 1970s, when the military dispatched political prisoners to a penitentiary on the island of Ilha Grande. These prisoners impressed upon a group of common criminal detainees the advantages of solidarity, organization and discipline. The product of this unlikely encounter was the Comando Vermelho. Initially, the Comando Vermelho sought to impose its control over Ilha Grande and other prisons in the system. Eventually, however, the reach of the Comando Vermelho extended beyond the prison system's walls to clandestine cells that conducted bank robberies and kidnappings to finance the purchase of weapons and the escapes of their incarcerated colleagues. Then, around 1982, the decision was made to finance the Comando Vermelho's activities through the drug trade.

The Comando Vermelho's decision to become involved with the drug trade led to a period of intense warfare for control of Rio's *favelas*, where most of the distribution points for drugs are located. Many of the leaders and rank and file members of the Comando Vermelho were from the *favelas*, and so the relationship between these areas and drug trafficking naturally followed. And the illegal, haphazard and impenetrable nature of most *favela* neighborhoods provided the perfect terrain for drug gang operations.

The ability of the Comando Vermelho to operate in Rio's *favelas* depended on the relationship between each drug gang and the community within which it was embedded. Drug gangs rely on the local population to provide new recruits and to protect them from the police. It became increasingly common, therefore, for drug gangs to provide social services and to finance public works. It also became increasingly common for drug gangs to take advantage of the absence and widespread mistrust of public authorities to lay down the law and punish those who caused trouble or disobeyed orders.

Over the course of time, the Comando Vermelho split into various loosely organized factions, the most significant being the Terceiro Comando and the more recently established Amigos dos Amigos. These factions compete militarily for a share of the drug market in Rio that continues to bring in millions of dollars in profit

each week. And it is this competition, more than anything else that has transformed not just a select few neighborhoods, but also an entire city, into a war zone.

The police in Rio have responded to the emergence of drug gangs and gang factions with extreme violence, killing, on average, one thousand civilians each year for the past few years. Most police victims have no criminal record or involvement with crime whatsoever. They are killed simply because they are male, young, dark-skinned and poor. Occasionally, international outrage over police brutality in Rio forces state authorities to intervene. The effect is always temporary, however, and it is not long before the number of civilian deaths at the hands of the police begins to rise.

A number of factors make the prevention of police homicides difficult. The first is that the investigation of the crime scene is often in the hands of the police. The second is that the police always claim that they are acting in self-defense and that extrajudicial killings are the outcome of shootouts with well-armed criminals. The third has to do with the widespread use of unregistered and unauthorized guns. It has been common practice for police in Brazil to plant guns on their victims to corroborate claims of a shootout.

The police in Rio have responded to the emergence of drug gangs with extreme violence and have been killing an average of a thousand civilians yearly.

And, finally, bodies are often removed to local hospitals to create the impression that the police tried to assist their victims and to compromise investigations of the crime scene.

There have also been institutional factors that have made the investigation and prevention of police homicides difficult. Until recently, the military police in Rio have been encouraged by their superiors to eliminate criminal suspects, rather than arrest them. In the mid-to late-1990s, police officers were given pay raises and promotions for killing urban youth. Also until recently, military police tribunals were responsible for investigating crimes committed by the military police and could be counted on to determine that civilians were killed in acts of self-defense.

In 1996, the situation appeared to change somewhat with the implementation of Brazil's first Human Rights Plan, which transferred oversight and jurisdiction of police homicides to civilian authorities. Even so, it is up to the police to determine what is and isn't a homicide, and the military police retain the right to "oversee" such cases. Furthermore, civilian witnesses of police brutality are routinely threatened and discouraged from testifying, and few prosecutors have the time, resources or political will to conduct

their own investigations. And, because the judicial system in Brazil is so overburdened and inefficient, changes in the oversight and processing of police crimes have had little effect.

Furthermore, widespread support exists for extrajudicial police action among the general population. Death squads comprising of off-duty and ex-policemen are often hired by local merchants to clear the streets of “undesirables” and are responsible for killing a large number of Brazilian youths each year. This should not be seen as an endorsement of the police, however. Few Brazilians make use of the police who are perceived as untrustworthy and violent. It is more an indication of how far the situation has deteriorated. The problem is that in recent years drug-related violence has spilled out beyond the *favelas* into all areas of city life. And it is within this context of generalized violence and fear and the breakdown of public law and order that calls for the extension of human rights to police victims have fallen on deaf ears.

Finally, and most significantly, while it may appear on the face of it that the police in Rio have been waging war against the drug trade in order to shut it down, nothing could be further from the truth. The police in Rio have profited from drug trafficking from the beginning and continue to be involved at every level, from the transshipment of drugs across national borders to providing protection for drug gang faction leaders. Unfortunately, despite innumerable crackdowns on illegal police behavior and the large number of legal proceedings that have been brought against the police, it is still proving extremely difficult to purge criminal and corrupt elements.

The question is, is it simply a matter of rooting out the occasional bad element? Or are the police so intimately involved with organized crime—and dependent on violence for their livelihood—that nothing short of a completely dismantling and rebuilding the force will suffice? The other question is, what happens to the police when they are expelled? Many, it turns out, are reinstated and go on to commit more crimes. Others end up in the pay of drug gangs, often as military advisers. Alternatively, they join forces with the estimated 600 to 1,000 firemen, prison workers, active duty and retired policemen who constitute the militias that are gradually and inexorably—it would seem—taking over the *favelas* of Rio’s Zona Oeste.

These militias, otherwise known as *polícia mineira*, act much like the gangs they aim to replace in that they promote parties and cultural events and provide legal and medical services via each community’s neighborhood association. They also charge protection fees and make money from the sale of cooking gas and from taxes levied on real estate transactions and money lending. The only difference between the militias and the gangs they replace is that they kill or expel and confiscate the property of anyone suspected of being associated with drug trafficking.

Many of the residents of these areas express relief to be out from under the control of drug gangs. They are acutely aware, however, that they have traded one authoritarian and unaccountable force for another. And to be honest, they have little or no choice in the matter. As one policeman who offered such services said: “We are a necessary evil. The residents oftentimes don’t want us here, but end up agreeing because they need to free themselves of violence.”

The question is, if the uniformed and on-duty police can get away with killing around thousand civilians yearly, what possibility or mechanism is there for overseeing and controlling what is

becoming the extra-legal arm of an already deadly public security force? As in other countries of Latin America, there is the strong suspicion that militias operate with the implicit approval of public authorities. After all, the ninety or so neighborhoods that are currently under the control of militias in Rio are never subject to the type of incursion that is typical of police operations in *favelas* that are dominated by the organized gang factions, despite the similarities between them, leading some commentators to suggest that what we are seeing here is a military-inspired campaign to retake and hold, by whatever means necessary, territories that have been lost to the state.

A few days after the invasion of the Complexo de Alemão, the federal government announced plans to invest 3.8 billion Reais (U.S. \$2 billion) in the state of Rio, including 1.6 billion that was earmarked for Rio’s *favelas*. Then, a few weeks later, the federal government unveiled plans for a National Program of Public Security and Citizenship (Pronasci) that will spend 6.7 billion Reais (\$3.7 billion) over the next five years on 650,000 individual grants of between 100 and 300 Reais (\$57 to \$170). Modeled on its highly regarded social assistance program, *Bolsa Família*, these grants will be distributed to at-risk youth, low paid policemen and women, prison workers, army reservists, and women in positions of leadership in areas of high conflict. Both programs represent an explicit attempt to extend the reach and influence of the state and to compete with organized crime.

The question is to what extent will these programs be successful? This is by no means the first attempt to urbanize Rio’s *favelas*. Indeed, since the transition to democracy in the early 1980s, there has been any number of programs designed to improve the infrastructure of such areas. And, as a result, the majority of the inhabitants of the *favelas* now have access to running water, sewerage and electricity. This does not mean, however, that the *favelas* have been integrated into mainstream city life or that the distinction between the worlds of the *asfalto* and the *morro* has been abolished, far from it. People who live in a favela still have to lie about where they live and most middle- and upper-class residents of Rio wouldn’t dream of setting foot in such places. Furthermore, programs that invest resources in drug-gang dominated areas of the city do not effectively ‘compete’ with organized crime. On the contrary, they tend to be ‘captured’ by criminal elements and used to consolidate their hold over such areas.

It is also questionable whether a program of small grants will stem the flow of former military and police personnel and poor youth, in particular, into the ranks of organized crime. Until there is a public education system in place that provides real possibilities for social advancement, and formal sector jobs are made available that pay decent wages, there will be little to persuade poor teenagers in Rio to stay the course. In fact, it’s amazing that so few youths join the ranks of organized crime, given the conditions of slave labor and outright discrimination that they face on a daily basis.

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VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN RIO DE JANEIRO'S FAVELAS

BY NICK ZIMMERMANN

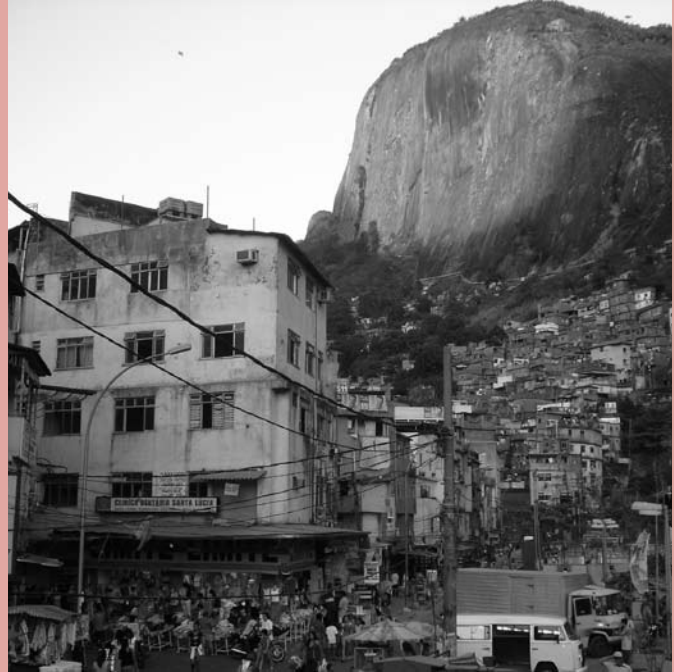
In Rio de Janeiro's Rocinha *favela* (shantytown), fireworks celebrate a victory for a beloved soccer team or warn of imminent urban-guerrilla style police operations and *tirroteios* (gunshots). Three years ago, amidst reports and rumors of a brewing drug war, I feared the fireworks I heard. Nonetheless, I had an English class to teach and my students were waiting. Moments later, I hid under a cash register with a local store owner as machine gunfire erupted in a nearby plaza. In the aftermath, I saw buildings riddled with bullet holes and 10 *traficantes* (drug dealers) carrying AK-47's and speaking frantically on two-way radios. I slipped by in the confusion and taught at the *Escola Moranguinhos* kindergarten school, where adults sat on toddler chairs and we studied the verb "to be."

In the mornings, I taught at a school in the wealthy Gávea neighborhood that charges almost twice the monthly minimum wage for its language courses. That morning, I had begun with an excerpt from Oliver Sacks, which led into a vocabulary exercise on verbs of perception. Then, we headed down to the state-of-the-art computer lab to finish some grammar exercises.

Although the theme of rampant urban violence in Brazil is common in international media, such reports rarely catch the subtleties that define the spatial, cultural, and political complexities present in Rio de Janeiro's daily routine. These two experiences reflect, however, what often seems like Rio's two parallel worlds—worlds, in my case, separated only by the Zuzu Angel Tunnel, a place where the "first" and "third" worlds collide.

Nonetheless, I became convinced that these worlds can intersect when I returned to Rio this summer on a DRCLAS-funded internship at the Center for Health Promotion (CEDAPS). By meeting with local leaders representing 120 *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro state, CEDAPS harnesses the creativity and experience of *favela* leaders to help them articulate challenges and solutions to their communities' problems. With their input, CEDAPS reaches out to federal universities, other NGOs, and businesses to cement partnerships that can begin to resolve these communities' problems. At one meeting, I learned about—and became involved in—a social responsibility initiative that would partner CEDAPS with the Johnson & Johnson Company to generate employment and income in Rio's *favelas*. Community leaders will identify local salespeople to sell Johnson & Johnson products and distribute magazines about public health issues, while Johnson & Johnson promises to reinvest a percentage of its profits in local community associations to make other projects feasible.

Throughout my summer at CEDAPS, newspaper headlines were dominated by stories of Rio's successes and failures as host of the Pan-American Games. The newspapers chronicled gruesome stories of a "mega-operation" involving 1,350 security personnel drawn from local, state, and federal government to subdue the drug trade in the Complexo do Alemão (German Complex). In the midst of the operation, however, a prominent Brazilian NGO,



Rocinha is one of Rio's two parallel worlds.

Afro-Reggae, sponsored a party to inaugurate its new headquarters. Indeed, many famous musicians and comedians performed in the celebration that took place in the Grota favela that forms part of the Complex. During the show, CEDAPS distributed condoms and held a Q&A session on how to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. CEDAPS also trained local youths from the Complex (some of whom are teenage parents themselves) to educate their peers. During this event, the Grota *favela* did not in anyway resemble the war zone that I had read about. When I left, however, the sight of heavily armed military personnel in fatigues guarding the entrance reminded me of the parallel worlds I had experienced as a teacher.

CEDAPS defines health broadly to include employment, quality health clinics and schools, affordable public transportation, safe housing conditions, and access to cultural and athletic spaces. CEDAPS recognizes these sectors as necessities that all affect health. It operates on the theory that violence can be prevented only when people have hope and a sense of self-agency. Today, in 2007, Rio de Janeiro is in a period of transition, of progress and setbacks. Civil society has never been more active, but it still requires a competent and willing government to become a true partner in the struggle against violence.

Nick Zimmerman is a second-year public policy student at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He lived in Rio de Janeiro for close to three years after college, studying Portuguese at the Federal University and serving as a coordinator for an educational NGO in the Rocinha favela.

“Entertaining” People With Violence

A Country Captured by Fear

BY BENJAMÍN FERNÁNDEZ

MORE THAN THREE MILLION PARAGUAYANS WAKE UP EACH morning to watch the latest television news. During the night, each of three television stations has trained its cameras on Asunción’s main Trauma Center to report on those seeking treatment there. Television stations are violating constitutional mandates and privacy rights, but this does not appear to be a concern.

Then again at lunchtime, more than two million Paraguayans people watch violence-laden news reports. The emphasis does not change with the evening news: more than 80% of the daily news focuses on violence. More than 4 million Paraguayans are passively exposed to this crude violence without any possibility of rejecting this news fare, a daily soap opera of violence and bloody crimes.

Paraguayan society is captured by fear. There is a sense of living in a democracy that is not able to control violence, a fact that makes some citizens yearn for dictators and dictatorships. This California-sized country lived under a dictatorship for 35 years and you can still find some bumper stickers distributed by Alfredo Stroessner’s followers that read “*From 1954 to 1989, I was happy but I didn’t realize it.*”

In the upcoming April national elections, one of Stroessner’s grandsons is running for a Senate seat, campaigning principally on the “*good and safe years of Stroessner’s regime.*” Paraguayans remember years when they slept with open windows; many did not realize that the entire country was a jail, tightly controlled by a regime that persecuted, tortured, exiled and killed thousands of people.

In many ways, the Paraguayan media have set the agenda. One possibility is to refrain from reporting on violence that is mere sensationalism. Faced with a daily dose of media violence, Paraguayans begin to see violence as a routine phenomenon that forces citizens to seek strong leadership that promises to control violence, leaving aside some human rights that are not easy to sustain in a country with such a limited experience with democracy.

A May 21, 2007, Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic study declares: “A new report stresses the need for accurate and realistic information on criminality in Paraguay, and criticized Paraguayan politicians and media sources for failing to address the underlying causes of insecurity in the country.” The report, *Security in Paraguay: Analysis and Responses in Comparative Perspective*, calls for greatly improved statistical information gathering within the National Police and Public Ministry regarding crime, and urges an end to calls for a return to harsher, more authoritarian practices and policies on crime without an analysis of trends in criminality. The report, developed under the guidance of Harvard Law School’s James Cavallaro and Soledad Villagra de Biedermann, encourages support for the full implementation of criminal justice reforms originally passed in 1997–98 that guaranteed rights to a speedy trial, public and oral hearings, and procedural efficiency.

This report is a very accurate description of violence in a country that was formerly under a violent dictatorship, but now experiences powerlessness in the face of criminality in democracy. It is important to compare the amount of violent crimes in the country with other nations in the region. Statistics show that Paraguay is actually safer than other countries, but the Paraguayan people feel a greater level of fear than do their neighbors. This situation could be blamed partially on the media’s lack of responsibility, emphasizing news that sells without taking into account that it is fomenting a sense of insecurity.

On the one hand, lack of professionalism is contributing to the ample coverage of this type of news. On the other hand, the long economic depression with a nonexistent growth rate for the past 22 years has led some journalists to heighten violence with a certain

Faced with a daily dose of media violence, Paraguayans begin to see violence as a routine phenomenon that forces citizens to seek strong leadership that promises to control it.

morbidity. If we compare the U.S. media during the Great Depression with the Paraguayan media, we can find significant similarities. When I asked a veteran Paraguayan television journalist about this tendency towards morbidity, he replied: “People tend to feel a little more secure in an insecure world watching what happened daily to other people; this way we entertained them.” This cynical description of journalists’ work is supported quietly by many other colleagues who tend to overemphasize the importance of daily news of violence on television and in newspapers. This is a clear explanation of the immature way in which Paraguayan media behave daily without taking into consideration the effect on people who are watching crude violence without any explanation or necessity.

Police radio frequency is connected to the newsroom so journalists can run immediately to cover crimes. Paraguayan police allow monitoring, tending to blame the new Penal Code and judicial system for the increasing amount of crime in the country. Police want to return to the old system that allowed them to capture suspicious criminal suspects and keep them in jail without any rights. “The failure to protect victims of crime and a general sentiment that the state is often absent, in addition to the lack of access to justice, have led to a sense of powerlessness in the face of criminality,” said Soledad Villagra de Biedermann, independent expert in human rights of the United Nations and co-editor of the report in Asunción. “To respond to this problem, policymakers have chosen hasty, sensationalist measures to combat crime. Policies aimed at protecting defendants’ rights or addressing the root causes of criminality are dismissed as ‘soft’ on crime, undermining the important benefits that criminal justice reforms have yielded

in Paraguay, including increased judicial efficiency and a reduction in pre-trial detention rates.”

As the April elections approach, security is the number one priority for the Paraguayan people. The lack of effective response to actual and perceived crime has led some voters to consider candidates with demagogue positions, such as General Lino Oviedo, who has even promised the death penalty if he is elected—in spite of the Constitution’s clear prohibition of that kind of punishment.

Paraguay’s media do not engage in substantive coverage of crime or the promises made to combat it. Rather, it is more important just to be at the crime scene and report without taking into consideration the impact on people who watch that report. Media self-criticism about how they are influencing people’s behavior is virtually nonexistent. Another area that is not being covered well is the increased suicide rate. Paraguay records one suicide almost every day, but reporting on that unusual kind of violence in a Catholic country that stigmatizes suicide is another important issue that is not taken seriously into consideration by the media.

The way in which violence is reported is an important element in analyzing social, legal and political conditions in a country. Paraguay could be a very good country case study in which to evaluate how the media play a very naïve role by stressing nostalgia for an authoritarian government without analyzing how this return

might affect the freedom of press and expression. The media most likely would be the first victim of that kind of government, and yet they lay the groundwork for the authoritarian government by sensationalizing violence.

Violence is among us; we know many of its causes. Yet I think Paraguayan society in general and the media in particular are beginning to become accustomed to a situation of violence without seeing clearly how to face it. At the same time, there is a growing perception that dictatorship is better because a president with a hard fist will know how to deal with the problem.

There are two ways to run a country: by fear or by hope. Paraguayan people live under fear, and democracy is not showing enough capacity to deal with the problem so its future is weak and dark. The media can do better than to “entertain” millions of people every day by reporting cases from the Trauma Center in Asuncion, without thinking about the effect upon the population.

Benjamin Fernández Bogado is a radio and newspaper journalist in Paraguay. A former Nieman Fellow at Harvard, he holds a doctorate in jurisprudence from the Universidad Nacional de Asunción (UNA). He is a professor of Political and Social Studies at the National University in Asuncion and a DRCLAS Visiting Scholar in Spring term 2008.

LOOKING AT VIOLENCE

It wasn’t the first time and it won’t be the last time that a group of Harvard faculty has focused on the issue of violence.

What made the November 26, 2007, seminar on “Criminal Violence, State Responses and Human Rights in Latin America” different is that it was part of a series of ongoing discussions by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies Social Policy Group.

Fernando Reimers, Professor of International Education and Director of Global Education and of International Education Policy at Harvard University, and Arachu Castro, Assistant Professor of Social Medicine in the Department of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, serve as co-chairs of the committee, which seeks to foster interdisciplinary collaboration at Harvard on evidence-based social policy reform.

The seminar focused on the multifaceted expressions of violence that affect the daily lives of people in Latin America. Much of the discussion was devoted to criminal violence, state responses and human rights.

James Cavallaro, Clinical Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and Executive Director of the Human Rights Program at the Law School, led a lively and far-ranging discussion on

violence. Cavallaro’s own violence-related projects range from “No Place to Hide” on gang violence in El Salvador, police response to the May 2006 attacks in São Paulo, and security in Paraguay.

Philip B. Heymann, James Barr Ames Professor of Law at the Harvard Law School, pointed out that better and more effective law enforcement—including fair defense—was needed to control crime. However, he stressed that a systematic problem existed because of impunity and a lack of widespread belief in law and legal institutions.

Many participants agreed on the need to look at violence as a structural problem, rather than as a series of incidents. And just as there are many types of violence, there need to be many different types of response.

“Violence is beyond crime,” observed Castro. “People react to violence by wanting to have a very big brother that protects you.”

June Carolyn Erlick is the editor-in-chief of ReVista and the author of Disappeared, A Journalist Silenced (Seal Press, 2004) and Una gringa en Bogotá (Aguilar, 2007). For more information on the DRCLAS Social Policy Group, contact Kit Barron, chbarron@fas.harvard.edu.

VIOLENT SOULS: ASSESSING POLICE BRUTALITY AGAINST THE POOR

BY JOHN SHEFFIELD

Skyrocketing poverty and public fears of rising crime have put the policing strategies of “mano dura” (the heavy hand) and “mete balas” (just shoot ‘em) back on the Argentine political agenda. The overwhelming majority of brutality victims in Buenos Aires are poor, most living in the shantytowns that ring the city. Many are undocumented immigrants from Peru and Bolivia. The problems have escalated since the late 1980s, and the usual explanations—that the poor have no resources to seek legal redress, that state institutions do not protect the extreme poor and immigrant communities, etc.—are all useful, but they lack a deeper, and in many ways more frightening, dimension of the story.

I spent the summer conducting undercover interviews with the Argentine Federal Police (PFA), generally posing as a small business consultant from the United States, to explore a subculture that promotes and justifies brutality as a legitimate response to crime. One officer, a low-ranking cabo (corporal), remarked to me that he loved philosophy—Hobbes was his favorite—because it helped him understand “how the criminal mind really works.” He continued, “Violence is in our souls,” as some primordial urge “that only disappears as society and the Catholic Church cover it up” through social integration. The poor have not been “covered up,” he explained; they aren’t real members of society, and therefore the police have no power to stop “real human nature” other than by shooting them. Other policemen (they were all men) offered me similar interpretations of human nature and crime.

A Los Angeles gang member walks on crutches.



Several other cops, all more moderate, suggested that poverty breeds desperation and desperation breeds crime—but one agente was quick to assert that the police must “show them clearly that being a little hungry is better than violating the laws. Now, they don’t understand that. We have to make them understand it.” Sixteen of the seventeen officers I interviewed agreed that the only way to “keep the poor, the criminals, in their places” is through varying degrees of force.

One sergeant, a training officer with more than twenty years of experience on the force, confided to me that the “books and political pronouncements” in police academies are useless. “The *olfato policial*” (intuition, literally ‘police sense of smell’) “tells me which ones are the criminals. I know these things, and the new kids [referring to low-level officers] will get it eventually.” Another sergeant explained that many officers’ hostility to formal training doctrines is political: the manuals and protocols come from higher-level officers who are forced, by virtue of their positions, to negotiate with the politicians and bureaucrats who have no idea how street policing is carried out and what tactics remain effective. This officer argued (and tells his subordinates regularly) that the copious literature on criminology and policing tactics “was written for the public, because the politicians have to make it look pretty. The *jefes* are all politicians now, because their job is to make our mission acceptable.”

This perception has had two distinct implications for the PFA as an institution, both of which the two sergeants openly admitted. The sergeants (and other low-ranking experienced officers) operate an informal command network outside of the formal institutional structure. Moreover, the everyday street cops—who face nearly all of the formal charges of brutality—are trained to ignore the formal doctrines of reform and human rights protection as nothing more than elaborate political maneuvering.

This in-depth look at officers’ beliefs on the nature and motivations of crime illuminates a very different side of the problem of state violence. That the police see rising poverty as a threat to social harmony is nothing new. What is new and worrying is that they connect prior beliefs about the natural violence of poor people to their everyday work. This attitude eliminates transparency and accountability to the approved protocols, training procedures and chains of command. Effective strategies to reform police institutions must address the ideologies and informal institutions that actually shape street policing. Focusing reforms on the formal chains of command and official training doctrines ignores some of the current practices most in need of change.

John Sheffield '09 is an undergraduate Social Studies concentrator focusing on state violence in Latin America. He was a research fellow at the Argentine League for the Rights of Man in summer 2007 with the DRCLAS Summer Internship Program, with additional funding from the Lester Kissel Grant in Practical Ethics.

Justice For All

Mexican Communities Take Justice Into Their Own Hands

BY ANN GURUCHARRI AND ANTHONY SAUDEK

IN JANUARY, 2007, MEXICAN PRESIDENT FELIPE CALDERÓN ordered the Federal Army to the southwestern state of Guerrero. The order was part of his plan to rein in crime and corruption across the country. Officially, the military was sent to wrest control of communities away from narco-traffickers and corrupt cops. The plan has its skeptics, though, many of whom can be found in the La Montaña region of Guerrero. Sosimo Mendoza, a schoolteacher and leader in his indigenous Tlapaneco community is wary of the army's presence, and worries about how broad its mandate will be.

It is now three days after troops arrived in busy Acapulco. Sosimo drives his old pickup truck into the quieter, dustier urban center of San Luis Acatlán, in La Montaña, to meet with the other forty-one men and one woman who serve as advisors to the region's Community Police. Over twelve years, the Community Police has grown from a network of neighborhood watches to what it is now: an extra-legal justice system with its own police force, judicial system, and network of jails. The people present at this meeting with Sosimo represent the fifty-two indigenous communities that coordinate to sustain the Community Police.

The meeting to discuss the army's arrival is held in the brushed dirt yard of the Community Police's central office on a sunny Saturday afternoon. In the shade of the yard's lone tree, plastic chairs face a worn wooden table. Propped up against the tree beside the table is a flipchart outlining the meeting's agenda. There are administrative details to take care of, but the primary topic on people's mind is Calderón's new plan. Like many others here, Sosimo is concerned that the army will use this opportunity to disarm the Community Police. For him, their presence is a provocation.

Calderón has sent the army to Guerrero because he says that crime is out of control. For the people at this meeting, he is 15 years too late. One man at this assembly, taller than Sosimo, and more dour, asks rhetorically, "where was the Army when we needed them? Why are they coming now, after we have gotten crime under control?" These are many of the same men who took part in the formation of the Community Police in 1995, when the problem of crime loomed large in their region.

The small towns of La Montaña were isolated back then. The under-staffed municipal and state police forces patrolled only the bigger towns, leaving the remote pueblos ungarded from criminals. Bandits would regularly coordinate roadblocks on the major arteries of the region, where hijackers could systematically rob lines of halted vehicles. The process often involved physical and sexual assault. Lawlessness had also crept into the indigenous villages; rape and murder were not uncommon in this now quiet corner of Guerrero.

After one particularly grotesque assault, leaders from the victim's community contacted representatives from the surrounding villages, calling for a regional assembly to address the endemic violence.

Over the course of several meetings a majority of participants grew to believe that crime in La Montaña required a systemic, sustainable response. Regional organization of this sort pushed the limits of the law. The Mexican Constitution permits individual indigenous communities to govern themselves through their own "norms and traditions," but there is no such protection for regional organization.

Regardless, the proposal for the regional Community Police emerged. Each town elected a handful of volunteer police officers to patrol the communities and major roads, arrest delinquents and turn them over to state officials. The local municipal government of San Luis Acatlán endorsed this new initiative, providing the group with 20 rifles.

An hour into the meeting, the moderator has completed the day's administrative duties: he's welcomed the crowd, taken attendance, and set the agenda. The moderator sits down, and an advisor to the Community Police stands to introduce the topic of the army's recent arrival.

A community member reports rumors that President Calderón has a list of 300 individuals who are considered threats to state authority. The leaders of the community police wonder if they are on the list. This would not be the first time they have been targeted.

Tension between state authorities and the Community Police first arose in 1998. After three years of arresting criminals and turning them over to state officials, the Community Police grew frustrated watching offenders get quickly released back into their communities. It had become apparent that the problem went beyond policing: the state's entire system of justice did not adequately meet their security needs.

In 1998, the communities established an independent judicial and penal system. They nominated a six-person committee from among the *Comisarios*, to hear cases, render judgments, and enforce sentences. But while the state was willing to accept and even encourage the communities' policing efforts, the parallel courts were viewed as a more direct threat to its authority.

Rising tensions came to a head when, in 2001, state authorities arrested several members of the Community Police for deprivation of liberty of its inmates. This action was paired with an ultimatum: disarm yourselves or the Mexican army will disarm you. Protective of their newfound security, five thousand community members marched in protest. The state was forced to back off and the two systems have co-existed ever since.

"What if the army tries to disarm us again?" one man asks. In the meandering flow of the meeting, the next speaker's comment ranges far from the matter at hand, only to find his way back minutes later, and at last respond to the question asked. "Then we'll organize another march," he suggests. The meeting continues like this, with the moderator calling on people to contribute, and each one taking the opportunity to speak at length. No one



Lawlessness had crept into indigenous villages before the Community Police was established.

is interrupted. Mirroring the general assemblies that are regularly held in the towns, everyone at this meeting will talk. Inclusion and consensus of meeting participants are cultural tenets in the region's indigenous communities.

When the next speaker picks up the thread of conversation, he says he isn't sure that a march is their best strategy: "I don't think we would get the same turn-out as we did before." There is agreement on this point—the people of La Montaña are less inclined to dedicate scarce resources to the Community Police than they were in 2001.

This is the paradox of this organization. While the security situation has deteriorated in almost every other part of Guerrero, La Montaña has become an oasis of peace. There are no good crime data for the region, but the number that is batted around is 95%, as in a 95% drop in crime in La Montaña since 1995.

Why has the Community Police been so successful? Perhaps because they constructed a system built specifically to prevent corruption and ensure accountability. Human rights advocate Abel Barrera argues, "In the state courts, power is concentrated in a single judge," meaning that one only has to bribe a single person, and detecting this corruption can be difficult.

By contrast, the judicial arm of the Community Police is made up of a six-person panel, ensuring that no one person is so powerful that his corruption would alter outcomes. Furthermore, *Comisarios* serve only one year to limit their ability to develop a moneymaking network.

If they were to get corrupted, they would most likely get punished.

Most jail-time, though, is not spent in jail. Prisoners spend their days working in the communities on public projects. Community

Police adviser Valentín Hernández explains: "We will put the detainees to work so that they can mend the harm that they did to the community and ... give them an opportunity to reevaluate their errors so that at some point they can return to their community."

A murderer may deserve to spend his life in prison, but that lifetime of work does not help the victim's wife take care of her now fatherless children, nor the murderer's children who will suffer now, too. This is why they give high priority to the wishes of the victim's family, which often include some jail time followed by release conditioned on monthly payments to the victim's family. The judges are, above all, aware of the interdependence of community members.

Certainty of punishment is another central tenet of the Community Police. As with any justice system, though, trade-offs are made between a zeal to punish the guilty and a desire to protect the innocent. It is worrying that there is no formal means of appeal; once a case has been adjudicated it is rarely revisited. In a system where the judges, family members and communities have the last word, outsiders and orphans are at a distinct disadvantage.

The sun has moved across the sky, marking four hours of uninterrupted discussion. The attendees gradually reposition their chairs to follow the limited shade and keep within earshot of one another. By the end of the meeting, five points of action are outlined on the flipchart to address the army's arrival: 1) Inform community members; 2) Work with other organizations to strengthen regional support; 3) Write a letter to the Municipal President asking him to request the withdrawal of the army; 4) Formally denounce any human rights abuses; and 5) Write a letter to the Secretary of Defense arguing that narco-trafficking cannot be used as a pretext for shutting down the Community Police.



Women suffer the brunt of violence; victims must be heard.

These five steps provide a window into the Community Police's perception of their own legitimacy. Steps one and two illustrate that, as one community argues, "the Community Police's legitimacy is from the people." Steps three, four, and five draw on another important source of legitimacy: domestic and international rights and the Mexican government's responsibility to protect those rights.

The list of international laws and covenants the Community Police uses to defend itself is extensive, and most of the leadership can refer to these treaties by name. While the organization formed in response to an immediate need with no thought to rights ratified in any United Nations charter, it has learned to employ rights language to justify its continued existence to an external audience.

The sun has chased these forty-two men and one woman at the meeting to the far end of the courtyard. Most traveled to the meeting on public transportation, which is to say that they rode in the back of a pickup, and soon the last pickups will be heading back to their communities. The front yard of the Community Police headquarters clears out two or three at a time, and by the end only the three Comisarios and two officers on duty are left. They clear the yard of its benches and walk over to the open-air kitchen where hot tortillas and beans will be served up for dinner.

A few days before the meeting, Sosimo sat in his living room holding a copy of the Community Police bylaws in one hand, the state constitution in the other. When asked how the Community Police would respond if the state were to improve its justice system and provide proper security, Sosimo says, "We would leave our arms... and would shift focus to something else."

The Community Police of La Montaña is just one example of the trend towards non-state justice systems in poor countries. Cases span the globe of marginalized communities policing themselves when the state does not adequately perform this function. It is a diverse group ranging from community watch organizations that dabble in vigilante justice to formalized, state-sanctioned conflict mediation groups that enforce traditional rather than state law.

Informal policing has clear benefits—above all that it provides protection for the poor in an otherwise insecure world. It can also be more cost-effective than state-led policing and its resolution of conflicts can be more appropriate for traditional communities. Informal policing is, at heart, a democratic endeavor: it is citizens participating in public structures for the social good.

Still, there are worries about informal policing, particularly with regard to maintaining human rights standards. If these police forces are only accountable to their own communities, where traditional power structures may be unbalanced, then marginalized individuals and groups within the community lose their ability to leverage outside support to ensure that their rights are protected.

The wide variety of informal justice systems makes it difficult to establish criteria for evaluating that individual systems that are appropriate for all cases. For many scholars, that's the rub: if you accept that at least some non-state actors can use force legitimately, then the new challenge is to define what characteristics a group must have to gain legitimacy.

Within the literature, no other example exists of a community-built system that reaches all the way from community patrol through sentencing and on to punishment through incarceration. Nor are other documented groups as determined to take on all cases within their territory.

Among the many non-state justice systems, the Community Police is a particularly good candidate for recognition as a legitimate organization. It is a force that, in the face of serious shortcomings of the state, is embraced by community members, is highly participatory, has cut crime, has formalized its structure, and recognizes international human rights standards.

San Luis's Municipal Security Chief says cryptically of the Community Police, "Our relationship is one of total respect and coordination, even though they are outside of the law." This tight-wire act is tough to sustain, but until the Mexican government finds a way to effectively address the needs of La Montaña, it will be forced to live with this gap between its words and its actions.

In the meantime, the Community Police will remain focused on the tie that binds the two systems together. "We have the same enemy," Sosimo says, "which is crime." And while the government sorts out its position, Sosimo is sure that the Community Police will continue as it has: "This is what our fathers and grandfathers taught us—to impart justice."

Epilogue: One year later, tensions remain high between the Community Police and state authorities. While the army has not attempted to disarm the group, a Comisario was recently arrested (and then released) by the municipal Judicial Police.

Ann Gurucharri and Tony Saudek traveled to the La Montaña region of Guerrero, Mexico, along with research partner Nik Steinberg, to conduct field research on the Community Police. The trip was sponsored by the Mexico Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, in collaboration with the Escuela de Graduados en Administración Pública (EGAP) of the Tecnológico de Monterrey. The authors thank their advisor, Professor Chris Stone, without whom this project would not have been possible. A full version of this article is posted at www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications.

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The Symbolic as Strategy

After the Violence

BY VÍCTOR VICH

IT IS NOW MORE THAN A DECADE SINCE Peru suffered devastating political violence, which left about 70,000 dead. Years have passed since the Report of the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (CVR in Spanish) documented the atrocities. The CVR conducted field research with testimonies from 17,000 victims led the report to categorically denounce the massive perpetration of crimes, in many cases coordinated or planned by the organizations or institutions taking part directly in the 20-year conflict between the Peruvian state and Shining Path guerrillas. Its pages describe the annihilation of communities and the devastation of certain villages by both the state and Shining Path, which each invoked “strategic reasons” for their death sentences for thousands of Peruvian citizens.

Today, political parties claim that the events described in the report never took place, reject its conclusions, and refuse to engage in significant self-criticism. For their part, popular organizations and social movements, already extremely limited in their scope, have decided to go off in different directions and engage in other struggles; civil society as a whole asserts that the “past is past,” and that it’s best not to dwell on Peru’s violent legacy.

Where are the reparations; where is the memory; where is the effort to prevent terror from repeating itself? If we look at the national scene, we’ll find that the CVR has had a profound impact on culture, much more so than on any other social sphere. The conclusions of the report are beginning to permeate the Peruvian imaginary (and hopefully its institutional practices) through art, music and theater, rather than through the political realm. Cultural texts provide a vehicle of public understanding. That is, in a generalized situation of resistance to the CVR’s conclusions and information, with an accompanying national incapacity to deal with trauma and truth, Peruvian artists have made an effort to represent the

legacies of violence and to insist that the public engage in a debate about Peru’s tormented past.

For many of these artists, the past is an “internal” dimension that is far from being finished or resolved. They do not adopt a defensive attitude; rather, their present strategy consists of symbolizing what happened in order to attempt to construct a new narrative for the country. Artists, in their different creations, try to represent a series of demands for justice and equality in the context of the dispute about how to reorganize the past and to construct a new present.

Cultural texts provide many examples and many different genres: literature (short stories, song lyrics, novels), visual art (photo and art exhibits, handicrafts), music (from traditional to rock), film and a multitude of other cultural manifestations. The Peruvian novel, in particular, drew international attention in 2006. Alonso Cueto’s *La Hora Azul* and Santiago Roncagliolo’s *Abril Rojo* won the two most prestigious literary awards in the Spanish-speaking world (Anagrama and Alfaguara). The two novels placed the theme of the legacy of political violence upon the international literary scene, structuring their plots on the CVR

report’s conclusions and trying to open spaces so that Peru’s invisible wounds can finally be seen.

My point is that Peruvian art in its various genres and forms plays a crucial role in facilitating the CVR report’s entry into the national culture. Through the mediation of art, the report begins to have some effect in the construction of new political practices. While we can indeed assert that the report was a failure in the political sphere, many of its conclusions are now “percolating” in the Peruvian society through artistic representations—in different media and with different strategies—that bring the report to the public attention and integrate its contents into the public perception.

Unfortunately, the CVR discovered all too late the enormous potential of symbolic resources. I won’t dwell on the serious errors in communications strategy, but rather on the international success of the famous photo exhibition Yunayapaq that depicts the abuses described in the report. This exhibit is a prime example that recognizes the importance of the symbolic as a central venue in political struggle.

In his book *The Plague of Fantasies*, Slovene literary critic Slavoj Žižek explains: “If real death is not accompanied by symbolic

ARTE, MÚSICA Y TEATRO

Son muchas las manifestaciones artísticas que están intentando simbolizar la violencia política en el Perú. Al decir del crítico de arte Gustavo Buntinx, Sendero Luminoso no llegó a tomar el poder pero sí la imaginación popular. La representación más conocida es la muestra fotográfica de Yuyanapaq: un registro visual de gran contundencia estética y política. También pueden mencionarse muchas canciones de Martina Portocarrero, de Manuelcha Prado y de grupos como “Del Pueblo del Barrio” o “La Sarita”. En teatro, el grupo Yuyachkani ha propuesto obras como Adios Ayacu-

cho, *Contra el viento*, *Antígona*, *Rosa Cuchillo*, *Sin título*, que han venido insistiendo en la necesidad de mostrar la voz subalterna y la crítica a un Estado nacional mal constituido. En la pintura, la constante representación de la violencia política ha terminando por redefinir el campo de la plástica nacional como en las obras de Angel Valdez, Alfredo Márquez, Eduardo Tokeshi, Jorge Miyagui, entre muchos otros.

Victor Vich tells us about the music, art and theatre that has worked to create memory of Peru’s violent past.

The gaze of the future: after the violence.



Top Left and Bottom: Natalia Iguinez depicts the motherland with words and laundry. Top Right: Jorge Miyugi: "Kimono para no olvidar."

death, that is, if there is not a true accounting, the ghosts of the dead will come back permanently as a terrible apparition until the debt has been paid" (181). I believe that the symbolic is fulfilling a fundamental role in Peruvian public life, and that the artistic space is being used as a resource capable of expanding our notions of citizenship and of

tions. Cultural productions attempt to articulate the *observed* with a new discourse about reality.

The second task stems from the idea of French philosopher Jacques Derrida: "*Communication begins when dialogue ends.*" In general, debates are "dialogues between deaf persons" because the participants insist

perspectives, other paradigms. I conclude therefore that the symbolic is a weapon for political struggle, and that we can work much more on this aspect of communicating political truths through culture. The CVR report is now a "discursive resource," and, in that sense, it has not failed; it simply has entered the country in a different manner, perhaps clandestinely. Put in another fashion, in the face of the perverse negation of history by the current government in Peru, I believe that cultural texts are becoming much more seductive mechanisms for obtaining significant social spaces and recognizing the struggles memory faces—with patience—in contemporary Peru.

Peruvian artists have made an effort to represent the legacies of violence and to insist that the public engage in a debate about Peru's tormented past. Culture—the visual arts, music and literature—have taken the lead in this political struggle.

attaining a certain symbolic resolution. In a way, the CVR report can be understood as a project that gives a "second death" to the dead of this country. It seems to me therefore that there are now two basic tasks going forth.

The first is to *show*; it is clear that the political discourse has failed to do so, while culture appears to be a much more suitable agent to intervene on the side of common sense and to begin to transform percep-

on maintaining their positions. Each side takes a firm stance and neither is willing to bend. Therefore, for Derrida, dialogue is not a place where communication occurs. The true place for communication is in the echo, in the *residue* and aftermath of the dialogue.

In this article, I wish to stress that culture is this echo, that symbols constitute this *residue*, which is destined not only to represent the reality, but also to sustain it from other

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NOVELAS

La hora azul de Alonso Cueto es la historia de Adrián Ormache, un destacado abogado limeño que, luego de la muerte de su madre, comienza a descubrir un pasado familiar ciertamente vergonzoso. La novela narra cómo el personaje se va confrontando con una verdad cada vez más atroz y, lejos de evadirla o negarla, decide afrontarla hasta las últimas consecuencias. En una primera instancia, la "verdad" que Ormache descubre tiene que ver con el hecho de que su padre, un militar destacado a la zona de violencia, fue un torturador y un violador de mujeres campesinas. En una segunda instancia, descubre que una de aquellas mujeres está viva y que probablemente tiene un medio hermano.

Abril Rojo de Santiago Roncagliolo es la historia de Félix Chacaltana Saldivar, fiscal adjunto que es enviado a Ayacucho para investigar un asesinato que, durante su estadía, devendrá en varios otros más. La novela se inicia con el encuentro de un cadáver deformado por el fuego. Todas las muertes van mostrando la complicidad entre dos instituciones tutelares del país: las Fuerzas Armadas y la Iglesia. *Abril Rojo* narra cómo el fiscal Chacaltana va siguiendo los pasos del asesino pero no encuentra una sola y única verdad: muestra fundamentalmente cómo el personaje se confronta con los límites de su propio acercamiento al país.

Adiós Ayacucho de Julio Ortega es uno de los textos más impor-

tantes sobre la violencia política en el Perú. La novela comienza con la pregunta de un muerto desaparecido "¿Qué parte de mí será la que me falta?" y relata el viaje que el cadáver realiza hasta Lima para exigirle al presidente de la República que le devuelvan los huesos que le faltan (una pierna y un brazo, entre otros). No se trata sin embargo de la sola recuperación física de su cuerpo torturado sino fundamentalmente de la construcción de una narrativa capaz de explicar su muerte al interior de una reflexión histórica sobre la exclusión del mundo subalterno en el Perú.

—Victor Vich

This sidebar describes novels in Peru that deal with violence.

SOBRE ENVÍOS EPISTOLARES Y VIOLENCIAS: DE CÓMO SE CULTIVA LA PERSISTENCIA EN COLOMBIA

POR MARÍA OSPINA

"Señores: Por medio de este pequeño escrito quiero contarle que durante el tiempo que estuvimos invadidos por tanta violencia me daba mucho miedo salir a la calle, ya que imaginaba siempre lo peor debido a que estábamos rodeados de personas que querían hacer el mal, pero a la vez me llenaba de valor para seguir adelante cuando pensaba en las palabras que pronunciaban mis padres y los sacerdotes dándonos fuerzas para luchar contra tanta maldad; pero una de las frases que no olvidaré es que "después de la tormenta viene la calma" y así ha seguido nuestro pueblo unido orando para que siga reinando la Paz." Luis Santiago Hoyos (niño) a Señores, Granada, Antioquia, Abril 23 de 2007

"A un lector desconocido: (...) La violencia, entonces, como una avalancha de mil cabezas, arrastró todo, la vida, y detrás de ella la poca ilusión y la poca esperanza que me quedaba. ¿De qué podía asirme? ¿De la patria? ¿De la nacionalidad? Todo esto desapareció, pero quedó el mundo, la humanidad, la vida, los autores amados, los amigos y las amigas, mi familia, mis hijos, Roberto Carlos y Melissa Milena, Tibio, el perro de la familia, mi singularidad, mis deseos y mi voluntad de transformación y lo más importante, mi inconformidad y mi poder de resistencia." Carta de Pedro Conrado Cúdriz (adulto) a un lector desconocido, Junio 10 de 2007

A través del proyecto "Cartas de la Persistencia", liderado por la Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango del Banco de la República, la Secretaría Distrital de Cultura y Turismo de Bogotá y el Instituto Pensar de la Universidad Javeriana en el marco de la designación de la UNESCO a Bogotá como Capital Mundial del Libro 2007, aproximadamente 6,000 colombianos se convirtieron en escritores de cartas que se harán públicas de diversas formas. Poner en escena el reconocimiento del sujeto que se reconstituye frente a los efectos de disgregación de las violencias y conflictos, ha sido uno de los más importantes alcances de esta iniciativa de escritura epistolar. Este proyecto invitó a las personas a relatar a otros, a través del formato epistolar, la historia propia sobre cómo se enfrenta los obstáculos diarios en Colombia.

El resultado de esta invitación al reconocimiento fue la llegada de aproximadamente 6,000 cartas narradas por personas de todas las procedencias y

edades sobre la persistencia frente a diversos tipos de violencia, desde la intrafamiliar, hasta la del conflicto armado, sobre la persistencia frente a obstáculos económicos, sociales y cotidianos, sobre la persistencia frente a las dificultades más sutiles o más abrumadoras de la Colombia contemporánea. Un archivo histórico se construirá a partir de estos documentos alguna vez pensados como privados pero que ahora serán hechos públicos de diversas maneras a partir de 2008. El material recibido también se divulgará de diversas maneras a través de exposiciones, envíos masivos de Cartas de Persistencia, la publicación de una antología y una gran convocatoria artística, entre otras.

Cartas de la Persistencia inauguró en Colombia la puesta en escena de prácticas dialógicas que impulsan la entrada de una multiplicidad de voces al ámbito público y complican la categoría de "víctimas" y la narrativa de una Colombia apocalíptica y desastrosa. Los niños de un pueblo azotado por la violencia como Granada, Antioquia, a quien anteriormente se le llamaban en el lenguaje de la "violentología" o del análisis militar y noticioso "población civil" o "víctimas del conflicto", fueron algunos de las miles de personas que escribieron desde el reconocimiento de su persistencia cotidiana y creatividad vital



Right and Far Right: Colombian artist Doris Salcedo created an installation with 25,000 candles in memory of victims and protest against the war in Bogotá's Plaza de Bolívar.

y no ya desde su posición de seres indefensos y asustados frente a las bombas o las balas.

Así mismo, frente a las miles de cartas de miedo que circulan en Colombia buscando no animar o dar testimonio sino desanimar, bombardear el aliento, la voluntad, el pensamiento, y paralizar las fuerzas del destinatario las Cartas de Persistencia que dependen de la alocución a otros se sitúan en la costa opuesta. Las cartas anónimas, cartas-bomba o cartas-amenaza que le llegan a personas en todo el país insultándolas, anunciándoles que no denuncien, que abandonen sus tierras, que no actúen, so pena de desaparecerlos, desmoralizarlos o generarles miedo a través del insulto, contrastan con miles de Cartas de Persistencia que dan cuenta a otros de un trabajo personal de resistencia, solidaridad y pacifismo. Este no es un trabajo de reflexión y de duelo privado, sino uno más amplio, que constantemente invita al destinatario y al público en general a ser testigo de las diversas pero poco documentadas formas de seguir viviendo en Colombia.

En medio de importantes reflexiones sobre las posibilidades de rememorar y sobre cómo hacerlo, las cartas sobre la violencia del conflicto armado rompen con la lógica del desastre para localizar al sujeto en un después, distinto al pasado trágico. Éstas expresan la necesidad de la presencia de otros para enfrentar la adversidad, reforzando el hecho de que se narra para otros y con otros, de que el tercero está siempre en la mira no solo de la carta misma sino de las múltiples formas del persistir cotidiano. David Alberto Zuluaga, un joven de Granada, Antioquia, cuenta sobre el dolor que le causó la entrada de grupos armados a su región

y el asesinato de sus hermanos en la finca que su familia abandonó. Al final de su historia articula su persistencia añadiendo: "Hoy 7 años después, muchas personas me motivaron para que siguiera con el estudio y ahora estoy en el grado octavo, estudio en la mañana y diario en la tarde salgo a vender empanadas a la calle (...) Ahora estoy tratando de superar todo el daño que me ha causado la guerra, con la ayuda de mis amigos (...)". Como ésta, la historia de persistencia de muchos es una historia sobre el encuentro con otros. A través de la carta, que ya es el documento que por excelencia involucra a otros, se cuenta precisamente cómo la comunidad, la familia, los amigos, los compañeros posibilitan la escena de la persistencia.

Frente a la explosión o a la carta explosiva que no busca sino aquella respuesta difícilmente verbal del dolor, la melancolía o la disgregación, frente a la acción armada o a la carta-arma como instrumento de poder que construye, disciplina y subordina a ciertos sujetos, frente a los actos o a las cartas en las que el autor busca expresar su fuerza o hacer constar su propiedad, nos topamos con las Cartas de Persistencia. Estas sí quieren producir una respuesta y reflexionar. Documentar esta respuesta y darla a conocer es y será uno de los propósitos más importantes a medida que continúa este importante proyecto.

María Ospina es candidata a doctorado en el Department of Romance Languages and Literatures de Harvard donde está escribiendo su tesis doctoral sobre cultura colombiana de finales de siglo 20. Se ha desempeñado como coordinadora del proyecto Cartas de la Persistencia y actualmente es curadora y colaboradora de dicha iniciativa.





LIST OF VIOLENCE-RELATED ARTICLES IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

ReVista, Fall 2007, Dance, "El Colegio del Cuerpo: Colombia's Broken Body" by Álvaro Restrepo.

ReVista, Spring 2007, Brazil, "Images of Favelas" by Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha.

ReVista, Spring 2007, Brazil, "The Role of Dance in a Favela" by Jennifer N. Wynn.

ReVista, Spring 2007, Brazil, "Understanding the Sao Paulo Attacks" by James Louis Cavallaro and Raquel Ferreira Dodge.

ReVista, Spring 2007, Brazil, "Reflecting on Viva Rio" by Odeviz Soto.

ReVista, Spring 2006, Latin America's Year of Elections, "High Emotions, Little Content: Colombia's Presidential Election" by Brian Crisp and Felipe Botero.

ReVista, Spring 2005, U.S. Foreign Policy, "Guatemala: The Aftermath: Repression, Refuge, and Healing" by Jonathan Moller.

ReVista, Spring 2005, U.S. Foreign Policy, "Nicaragua and the United States: Troubled Neighbors" by Sean Adrian Reagan.

ReVista, Winter 2004, The Children, "Through the Eyes of Children: Barrio Children Help Resolve Ethical Dilemmas In Photography" by Ellen Calmus.

ReVista, Winter 2004, The Children, "Lynchings in Guatemala: A New Look" reviewed by Dina Fernandez.

ReVista, Winter 2004, The Children, "States by Force" reviewed by Mercedes Soledad Hinton.

ReVista, Spring 2004, Chile, "The Other 9/11" by Peter Winn.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Roots of Violence in Colombia" by John H. Coatsworth.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "At the Center of Things" by Herbert Braun.
ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Between Legitimacy and Violence" by Marco Palacios.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Traces of Memory" by Doris Salcedo.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Necrological Flora" by José Roca.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Shooting for Peace" by Alex Fattal (and photoessay).

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Civil Society in a Time of Rage" by Theodore Macdonald, Luis Fernando De Angulo, Rodrigo Villar, Ernesto Borda, and Alvaro Campos.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation" by Leonel Narvaez.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "The Turkish Boat" by Alfredo Molano Bravo.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "VALLENPAZ" by Rodrigo Guerrero.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Breaking the Cycle of Violence" by Enrique Chaux and Angela Bermudez.

ReVista, Spring 2003, Colombia, "Women Waging Peace" by Martha Quintero, Rocao Pineda, Rosa E. Salamanca, Martha E. Segura, Nancy Tapias, and Pilar Hernandez

ReVista, Winter 2003, Cityscapes, "Walking the Latin American City" by Julieta Lemaitre

ReVista, Fall 2003, Human Rights, "The Responsibility of Us All" by Luis Moreno Ocampo

ReVista, Fall 2003, Human Rights, "The Peruvian Commission on Truth and Reconciliation: Speech of Presentation of The Final Report" by Salomon Lerner Febres

ReVista, Fall 2003, Human Rights, "A Violence Called Democracy: The Guatemala of Rios Montt" by Jennifer Schirmer

ReVista, Fall 2003, Human Rights, "Children Seeking Asylum: Homeland Security and Child Insecurity" by Jacqueline Bhabha

DRCLAS NEWS, Winter 1999, The Internet and Latin America, "A Violence Called Democracy" by Jennifer Schirmer, reviewed by Larry Rohter

DRCLAS NEWS, Winter 1998, Women in Latin America, "Delivering the Date: Women Refugees and Human Rights" by Deborah Anker

DRCLAS NEWS, Spring 1998, On Social Justice, "Citizenship or Favelaship: Interview with Caio Ferraz" by Ben Penglase

DRCLAS NEWS, Spring 1998, On Social Justice, "A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacy of Torture" by Marguerite Feitlowitz, reviewed by Ana María Amar Sánchez

DRCLAS NEWS, Spring 1998, On Social Justice, "Violence in Latin America" by June Carolyn Erlick

DRCLAS NEWS, Fall 1998, The Environment in Latin America, "Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: A Review" by Martha Minow, reviewed by Marguerite Feitlowitz

DRCLAS NEWS, Fall 1997, Beyond the Borders, "Prosecutors' Conference: Law Across Borders" by June Carolyn Erlick

Portrait: Los Angeles homeboy's stigmata

PHOTOGRAPH BY DONNA DECESARE
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Maintaining Academic Excellence in Latin American Universities

BY ELIZABETH LANGOSY

The Iniciativa para el Desarrollo de la Innovación Académica (IDIA) is a teaching and learning initiative of LASPAU (the Harvard-based Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas). The initiative seeks to help higher education institutions in Latin America address the perennial question of how to maintain academic excellence.

The role of universities has changed with the shift from industrial to knowledge economies, which demand a more versatile labor force than was needed in the past. Along with acquiring knowledge in their fields, students must develop competencies, such as critical thinking, that are transferable to any discipline and that remain with them far beyond their university years. Both new and longstanding institutions must respond to this call for an enhanced competency-oriented learning experience in order to attract and retain students.

The majority of programs implemented by LASPAU over the past forty years have provided grants for graduate studies in the United States to faculty members of Latin American and Caribbean universities. Many of the universities that have benefited from these efforts—designed to provide professors with enhanced expertise in their disciplines—are now returning to LASPAU

to seek assistance in strengthening the pedagogical skills of their faculty and creating more effective learning environments for their students.

Through IDIA, LASPAU partners with universities to develop tailored programs that foster effective teaching and learning. These efforts take many forms, including (among others) dialogues to assess institutional needs, conferences on specific issues, faculty workshops and academic visits for university administrators, as well as online training through an innovative learning system. Successful efforts begin with an institutional commitment to change, which is why each program is designed in conjunction with the university in Latin America or the Caribbean. The program then belongs to the university and grows its roots within it.

The heart of IDIA's efforts lies in an integrated approach to institutional development. At the classroom level, a well-designed syllabus is seen as critical to ensuring that both professors and students become engaged in the goals of a course and the competencies to be developed through it. To animate the syllabus, the professor selects methodologies from a range of pedagogical techniques acquired through IDIA. At the institutional level, IDIA staff members work with

university leaders to design mechanisms to ensure that resources are shared and concerns are addressed, create opportunities for faculty to discuss teaching and learning, and develop a faculty evaluation system that provides meaningful data about learning achievements. The end goal is a sustainable culture of teaching excellence and effective learning at the university.

IDIA's work in Latin America began in 2006 with the Séneca Program for Teaching Excellence at the Universidad Tecnológica Centroamericana (UNITEC) in Honduras. Through a workshop in Cambridge and a subsequent effort that enabled workshop participants to train other UNITEC faculty, the program accomplished a wide range of institutional goals. By November 2007, a new syllabus model fostering student-centered learning was in the process of implementation, half of the 250 UNITEC faculty members had been trained in active learning techniques, and a culture of teaching excellence had been strengthened through interactive forums that ensure ongoing quality in teaching and learning.

In 2007, other initiatives have been developed through IDIA to address the special needs of partner institutions. At the Universidad de Monterrey in Mexico, a one-day

conference was held to open a dialogue on teaching and learning excellence among faculty and administrators. A four-day academic visit designed for the Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez (UAI) in Chile enabled UAI leaders to meet with experts on teaching and learning at New England's top universities, including Harvard. To strengthen the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas in Mexico, a Leadership Program for Academic and Administrative Deans was developed, with an initial workshop held in Tamaulipas in September 2007 and a second in Cambridge in December.

To foster institution-wide teaching excellence at the Universidad de las Américas (UDLA) in Chile, a private university with 2,000 faculty members and more than 25,000 students on six different campuses, LASPAU has partnered with Iris Stammerger, a cognitive scientist whose work has focused on knowledge acquisition and creation, to provide an innovative method of large-scale training. Stammerger has developed the Teaching and Learning Body of Knowledge (TALBOK), a learning system that uses the tools and techniques of cognitive engineering.

The TALBOK is a map that identifies what makes learning environments effective. It gives participants the

tools and techniques needed to create those environments and exposes them to best practices at the global level. The TALBOK is customized for each university in a way that allows it to capture, articulate, and share its own best practices. A percentage of faculty trained in the TALBOK go on to become TALBOK facilitators through additional training in leadership strategies, coaching techniques, and group dynamics. In the case of UDLA, the faculty trained as TALBOK facilitators will work in teams to train a significant number of additional professors using the structured TALBOK curriculum and a companion self-paced online learning tool. The result is cohesive and effective institutional transformation.

IDIA is providing a means for students, faculty and administrators at universities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to reflect on teaching and learning issues and to implement change in a way that best meets the specific needs of an institution. IDIA is also a vehicle through which best practices in effective teaching and learning are provided to Latin American universities with the goal of improving the academic experiences of students and their long-term professional success. In the end, the improvement in student outcomes will better position the countries of region to meet the human resource needs of knowledge economies.

Elizabeth Langosy is the associate director for communications at LASPAU (the Harvard-based Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas). For more information on *The Iniciativa para el Desarrollo de la Innovación Académica (IDIA)*, please visit www.laspau.harvard.edu/idia/

Literacy in Calca

A Congruent Pedagogical Home

BY SABINA NEUGEBAUER AND RACHEL CURRIE-RUBIN

Seated on the floor of their school house twenty attentive first-graders watch as Martha turns the pages and asks aloud about the fate of David a friendly llama.

"¿Por qué David está buscando a su madre?" (Why is David looking for his mom?)

"Porque él no sabe donde vive, quizás su madre está en la casa" (Because he doesn't know where he lives, maybe his mother is in the house), responds Yeferson.

"¿Él está buscando su casa o su hogar?" (He is looking for his house or his home?) "¿Qué es hogar?" Martha asks furrowing her brow.

"Es una casa con una familia", "es un lugar donde una familia vive"

("It is a house with a family" "it is a place where a family lives") They all shout.

A month ago these students, spent their forty-minute reading period at their desks. They were asked to choose any section from their first grade readers and read silently. With their teacher situated at the back of the classroom reading her own novel, they were distracted, unengaged and more importantly not reading.

We, two doctoral students at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, both former teachers and language and literacy specialists, spent a month implementing a literacy

program and studying the results in Calca, an indigenous village of 8500, situated near Cusco, Peru where we found children unengaged by reading lessons dominated by dictation, memorization and little student participation.

In 2004, 75% of first and second-graders in Peru fell below grade level in literacy achievement with 98% of children in rural schools (like in Calca) scoring below grade level according to the Peruvian Ministry of Education (UMC, 2004). Moreover, in Calca, Quechua—a linguistic variety of which was spoken in the Incan Empire—is often spoken at home and Spanish is mandated at school.

We focused on vocabulary, designing and implementing a classroom curriculum based on story book Read Alouds, including the use of inferential and literal questioning, vocabulary probes, techniques to promote group discussion, and seating arrangement to promote engagement (Beck & McKeon, 20001).

Students sat in a semi-circle around the teacher and the book. We watched as the classroom atmosphere shifted to one filled with authentic learning in which the teachers asked their students questions that helped them reason and to build on their background knowledge about words and personal experiences. After only a month of intensive instruction using this method, students increased their vocabulary knowledge by 30% as compared with their peers not receiving this



A drawing class.

program. Unlike the scene a month earlier, where students were distracted and lost in other thoughts, now, they are lost in an imagination that integrates books. This pedagogy locates them in a newly found literary "hogar". It wasn't just student's lives that changed. "I am inspired and motivated by this way of teaching," said Martha, a teacher.

Sabina Rak Neugebauer is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her research focuses on the diagnostic, socio-cultural and pedagogical issues that impact bilingual students. She is currently working with local stakeholders to design a children's library in Peru and is one of the editors of the book *Indigenous Knowledge and Education: Sites of Struggle Strength and Survivance* (in press). **Rachel Currie-Rubin** traveled to Peru with the support of the DRCLAS Summer Research Travel Grant. She is a doctoral student focusing on language and reading development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

A Changing Cuba

Mary G. Berg, Pamela Carmell and Anne Fountain, Eds. *Cuba on the Edge: Short Stories from the Island* [Nottingham, UK: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2007]. 238pp.

A REVIEW BY FLORA GONZÁLEZ MANDRI

If you want to read contemporary Cuban fiction and do not have access to the Spanish original, an increasing number of excellent translations will now allow you to become acquainted with the island's most outstanding writers. Poised as midwives between writer and reader, academy-based translators facilitate the journey of Cuban narratives from insularity to globalization.

You can easily find translations of the work of Nancy Morejón (Wayne State University Press) or of Jesús Díaz (Duke University Press). Smaller publishing houses such as the Critical, Cultural and Communications Press introduce the English-speaking reader to Cuban writers from various generations who reach out to a transnational audience in order to transcend the U.S. cultural embargo of Cuban culture.

In *Cuba on the Edge*, Mary G. Berg, Pamela Carmell and Anne Fountain make available the short fiction of Cuba's best writers, allowing other members of the academy to expand the literary canon.

Cuba on the Edge collects the stories of 21 Cuban writers, providing the reader with one to three narratives from each author, thus better to define each particular writer's voice. In addition to the 31 stories, the anthology includes a preface with a thematic

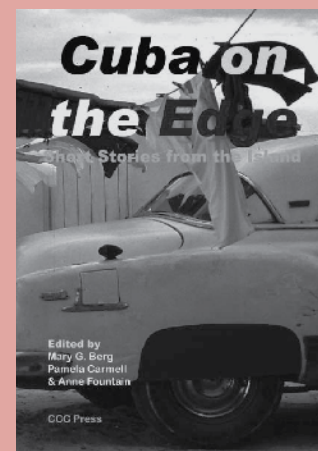
presentation of the fiction, and notes on the writers and translators included in this volume.

The editors state that the title of the collection "refers both to Cubans' awareness of living on the brink of a new future, and their edginess as they negotiate their way through current uncertainties." The title perhaps also evokes being on the edge of literary recognition. Those "uncertainties" translate into a lack of recognition based on the lack of publishing venues. In a highly ironic short story entitled "Unplugged," Eduardo del Llano tells of writers living in Havana who falsely announce that they have "left the country" and published in Paris, in order to gain recognition within. As with "Unplugged," one of the most prominent literary devices used in many of the stories in *Cuba on the Edge* is that of intertextuality, as if the gesture of allusion to a known author should facilitate moving from a place of silence to one of voice. Through intertextuality, writers such as Antonio José Ponte (via Borges' ruined cities), Raúl Aguilar (via Cortázar's "Continuity of Parks"), Leonardo Padura Fuentes (via Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*), Marilyn Bobes (via Storni's preoccupation with suicide), María Elena Llana (via García Márquez' manipulation of historical and mythical time),

Ronaldo Menéndez Plasencia (via Rulfo's depiction of the hatred between fathers and sons), and Jesús David Curbelo (via Donoso's eroticism) navigate in and out the minefield of Cuban letters by conflating present and past times, and imaginary and real spaces in their fiction. By contextualizing their stories with the writing of their great Spanish and Latin American predecessors, these Cuban writers anchor themselves firmly in the postmodern imagination.

In some stories, the perspective of a country bumpkin or a child divulges unspoken truths. Adelaida Fernández de Juan, Miguel Mejides, Ana Lydia Vega Serova and Senel Paz expose the great scarcity during the 1990s Special Period, corruption in Cuba's bureaucracy, and parental neglect, respectively. Moreover, the writers in this collection manipulate the nuances of understated irony and humor to consider how the arts hold an essential place in Cuban culture, particularly in times of extreme social need (as in Karla Suárez' "Joni Mitchell was Singing Blue" and Ena Lucía Portela's "A Nude in the Rain.")

This collection includes outstanding ironic stories that confront a variety of subjects. For instance, Nancy Alonso and Francisco García González deal with gender role; Ale-



jandro Aguilar describes extreme hunger; Alexis García Somodevilla exposes the futility of a professional education when jobs for Cuba's youth are nonexistent, and José Antonio Quintana Vega pokes fun at the empty nomenclature of idealized revolutionary roles; Mirta Yáñez and Aida Bahr look at women's roles.

Overall, the translators have rendered these complex narratives with impeccable linguistic acumen and respect for the original. Pamela Carmell renders Mirta Yáñez's popular narrator well, falling short of the mark only at the very beginning of the story, given the difficulty of translating several popular sayings.

By editing and translating these writers, Mary G. Berg, Pamela Carmell and Anne Fountain have helped the best of Cuban contemporary authors "negotiate their way through uncertainties" to deserved recognition.

Flora González Mandri teaches at Emerson College in Boston and has published *Guarding Cultural Memory: Afro-Cuban Women in Literature and the Arts* (2006).

I just received the newest magazine and I LOVED it! The articles were fabulous and I hope to use many of them with my students. We teach dance history and what has been included is just invaluable. Would you ever be able to send me 5 more copies of the magazine so I could give it to my dance faculty?

You continue to impress me with your fabulous work! All the best.

LINDA NATHAN, HEADMASTER
BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY

As appreciative readers of *ReVista* living in Bucaramanga, Colombia, my spouse and I are especially enjoying the latest issue of your publica-

tion which arrived here a few days ago. I've been devouring and enjoying the articles on dance, not least of which the article on salsa in Cali, where we lived for two years in the 90s. Although we experienced the beauty, universal dedication and skills of *Caleños* to this dance form, I had never heard how it got there, and why—fascinating!

Congratulations on your book presentation ceremony!

STEPHEN K. STROBACH
CIVIL SOCIETY AND SMALL SCALE
DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Querida June,
I want to congratulate you on the Dance issue of *ReVista*—it is GORGEOUS. I love the

use of color and the articles are really interesting. In my humble opinion, it just may be the best issue to come out ever! My parents received their copy in the mail, and both gave it rave reviews.

REBECCA CANTU
HARVARD '04



FE ERRATA

The article "How Sweet as Long as It Lasted: Contributions to a Critique of Tango" by Rafael Filippelli and Federico Monjeau was originally published in Spanish in *Punto de Vista* (número 36, noviembre 2006). The authors thank the journal for allowing them to reprint a version this article.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Book reviews are one area that we give priority to Harvard authors, including professors, alumni, students, past and present Visiting Scholars and other affiliates. Please have your publisher send a copy of your book to June Carolyn Erlick, DRCLAS, 1730 Cambridge St., MA 02138. Galleys are acceptable, but must be accompanied by a 300 dpi digital tif image of the book cover sent to <jerlick@fas.harvard.edu>.

VIOLENCE



EDITOR'S LETTER

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