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## Volume 8 Issue 3, Fall 1998

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Volume 8 Issue 3, Fall 1998

335

A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

# Hemisphere

Volume 8 • Number 3 • \$7

Fall 1998

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## CNN Discovers Latinos

*Jorge Ramos*

## After Mas Canosa, After the Pope

*Uva de Aragón, Manny Hidalgo*

## The Central American Diaspora

*Manuel Orozco*

## The Salvadoran Exodus

*Sarah Mahler*

Also in this issue:

### Special Report: The Santiago Summit

*William C. Smith, Hélio Jaguaribe,  
Emilio Pantojas-García, Peter McKenna*

### Human Rights in Haiti ...

*Terry Rey*

### ... and in Guatemala

*J. Patrice McSherry*

### Photo Essay: One Family's Odyssey

*Janet Jarman*



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Florida International University  
Miami, Florida



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*Cultural Unity.* Do Cubans share a common culture? Have Cubans and Cuban-Americans developed divergent cultures? This theme brings together issues of culture, nation, diaspora and transnationalism.

#### **For more information, contact:**

Cuban Research Institute  
Florida International University  
University Park, DM 363, Miami, Florida 33199  
Voice: (305) 348-1991, Fax: (305) 348-3593  
E-mail: [crinst@fiu.edu](mailto:crinst@fiu.edu)



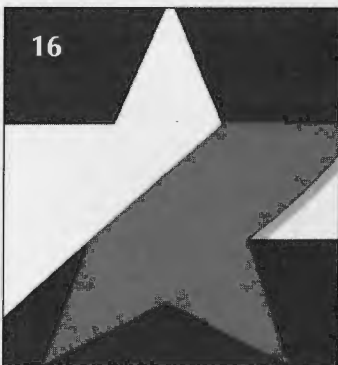
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Woman with Child and USA T-shirt. Photo: Janet Jarman.

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A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

# Hemisphere

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# FROM THE EDITOR

**I**n this issue we are pleased to provide thoughtful analysis of the role and contribution of Latin American immigrants to the United States. We begin with Jorge Ramos' commentary on the "rediscovery" of Latinos in the US. The well-known anchor of Univisión's nightly newscast concludes that "white Americans refuse to accept that the US stopped being a predominantly Anglo country a long time ago." The subsequent articles reveal the growing significance of Latinos in both economics and politics.

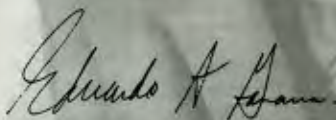
The picture that emerges of Latinos in the US is complex and diverse. Sarah Mahler's essay on Salvadorans, for example, analyzes the experiences of a recent wave of immigrants to this country. While Salvadorans may not yet be as visible as other Latino immigrant groups, Mahler points out that they may well surpass Cubans numerically in the next census. Her article is complemented by Manuel Orozco's research on Central American immigrants in general. Orozco discusses the commonalities and differences among these groups and concludes that fears that immigrants from these countries will lead inexorably to the "thirdworldization" of the United States are misplaced.

Manny Hidalgo and Uva de Aragón provide interesting glimpses of the changing nature of Cuban Miami and of Cuba itself. Both authors conclude that the younger generation of Cubans and Cuban-Americans represents new hope for dialogue and rapprochement between the two communities.

Finally, Janet Jarman's photo essay presents a magnificent portrait of the trail of a Mexican family from the border to their new life in the United States.

A special report section analyzes the Summit of the Americas process, which began in Miami in 1994 and brought together the heads of state of 34 countries of the region in Santiago, Chile this past April. We are especially pleased to publish a translation of Hélio Jaguaribe's critique of the region's general movement towards a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Jaguaribe argues that for the Mercosur countries, entry into an FTAA will constitute an act of historical suicide. Peter McKenna discusses Canada's new role in the Americas, noting that it has already become a major regional actor. Emilio Pantojas-García's "Islands Apart" reminds us that the Caribbean is also an important but neglected player in the unfolding FTAA. Bill Smith adopts a more theoretical approach that analyzes the implications of the Summit accords for combating poverty and inequality in the Americas.

We were delighted to read the many messages and letters sent to *Hemisphere* regarding our issues on sustainable development (volume 8 number 1) and neoliberalism (volume 8 number 2). The editors are pleased by both the congratulatory and the critical responses received, as they indicate to us that *Hemisphere* is being read in many places and by a wide variety of audiences. Generating debate on the issues that affect the Americas is our central objective. We hope that this issue is in keeping with this goal.



Eduardo A. Gamarra

# The Rediscovery of Latinos

*Jorge Ramos Avalos*

**C**NN has discovered us at last. The network recently reported the extraordinary growth of the Spanish-language media in the US, a phenomenon that is not new but which CNN—along with millions of North Americans—has only just noticed. The tone of the report was one of amazement: CNN as a modern-day Columbus.

This is but one example of the ongoing cycle of alternating interest and neglect which shapes attitudes towards Latinos in this country. But there are more and more Latinos in the US, and wherever you look, their presence is making itself felt. For a number of reasons—political and economic power, as well as sheer numbers—they are not so easy to overlook anymore.

## THE LARGEST MINORITY

According to official census figures, there are more than 30 million Latinos in the US, representing more than 10% of the total population. However, the true figure is almost certainly higher, since official surveys do not include illegal immigrants. Moreover, the Latino population is growing at faster rate than other ethnic groups; on average, Latinos have more children than US whites or African-Americans. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that in 1995, Latinos accounted for 18% of all births in the US.

In addition, the 1997 joint US-Mexican Binational Study of

Migration concluded that approximately 105,000 undocumented Mexicans enter the US every year. These immigrants lack permission to work legally in this country, but work they do—and lots of it. The flow cannot be halted with laws or 10-foot high walls along the border. Illegal immigration is a problem of supply and demand; as long as there are excess workers in Latin America and available jobs in the US, people will find a way to cross the frontier.

By the year 2010, Latinos are expected to be the country's biggest minority group. There is strength in numbers, and this demographic importance is behind the still limited political power of Latinos in the US.

## MIAMI AS PROTOTYPE

If all Latinos voted as faithfully as do Cuban-Americans in South Florida, the history of Latinos in this country would be quite different. Cuban-Americans represent more than half of the population of Miami-Dade County, and at election time they turn out in force. That's why South Florida's top political posts are held by Latinos, and Latino concerns are a high priority for all candidates, regardless of their race or ethnic origin. The political might of Cuban-Americans is felt as far away as Washington, D.C., and plays an important role in shaping US policy toward Cuba.

Miami is the best example of what could and should happen in other cities where Latinos are poised to become a majority. Almost 40% of the population of Los Angeles, for example, is Latino. For the city government to be truly representative, four out of every 10 municipal officials should be Latino; for that mat-

ter, so should the mayor. But for a variety of reasons, both historical and immigration-related, the Mexican-American community has yet to reach the level of political mobilization achieved by Cuban-Americans. Part of the problem is that Mexican-Americans have traditionally resisted the idea of becoming US citizens. This is beginning to change, thanks to a new Mexican law allowing dual citizenship. The fear that the US will deny certain benefits and social services to legal residents has also contributed to produce record numbers of applications for American citizenship.

For the time being, however, the Latino residents of San Antonio, Chicago, New York, San Francisco and other cities still have a long way to go before they attain the political power of Miami's Cuban-Americans. Why be more like Miami? For one thing, it is the only city in this country that treats Latinos like first-class citizens. In schools, restaurants, government offices and movie theaters, Latinos receive equal treatment. (Please note that residents of other cities are urged not to emulate Miami's corruption scandals and electoral frauds).

The success that Latinos have achieved in Miami has yet to be repeated at the national level. If Latinos make up 10% of the US population, then they should occupy a proportional number of Senate seats. At present, however, there is not a single senator with the last name Pérez, Suárez or Rodríguez.

## MONEY TALKS

Latino demographic growth has had a more direct impact when it comes to the economy. Like an ad

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*Jorge Ramos Avalos is a journalist and co-anchor of Univisión's nightly newscast.*



*America's fastest-growing minority still comes as a surprise*

for a used-car dealership or mattress emporium, the US has made it very clear that "what counts here is *cash!*"

The most listened-to radio stations in Los Angeles broadcast in Spanish, much to the chagrin of their English-language competitors. And for the evening news, most Angelinos tune in to one of several choices in Spanish. It goes without saying that the Spanish-language media dominate the market in Miami. So why is English-language ad space still more expensive?

Unfortunately, big audiences don't necessarily mean big income. Many US companies are still reluctant to invest in Spanish-language advertising, although there has been significant progress in this area. According to the *New York Times*, in 1997 AT&T invested \$1.4 billion in ads that targeted Latinos, a 14% increase over the company's spending the year before. Other companies are following suit.

Latinos don't just determine what gets shown on television in many major cities in this country; they also have a strong influence over the type of merchandise that is sold in stores. Already more tortillas are sold in the US than bagels, and more salsa than ketchup. Big stores like Sears have found it necessary to adapt to Latino tastes and styles, which means more black brassieres and fewer pairs of checkered pants.

All of this can be attributed not only to a Latino cultural invasion, but to growing consumer buying power on the part of Latino shoppers. A recent University of Southern California study found that the average annual income of Latino males increased from \$14,900 to \$18,900 in the last 10 years. The same study concluded that immigrants in California are learning English and escaping poverty at an unprecedented rate.

Latin American immigrants make an enormous contribution to the US

economy. In the most extensive study to date, the National Academy of Sciences estimated that immigrants to this country—mostly Latinos—contribute \$10 billion a year to the nation's economy. In other words, immigrants are big business. Entire sectors of the economy, such as the textile, agricultural and service industries—including restaurants, hotels and cleaning services—depend on Latino workers, especially illegal ones. In addition, thousands of US families leave their children in the hands of immigrant nannies and day-care workers. All of this adds up to a level of Latino influence that would have seemed incredible only a few years ago.

**IDENTITY CRISIS**

The discovery and rediscovery of Latinos will continue indefinitely in this country, especially in those areas without a strong Latino presence. But as Latinos continue to grow in numbers and political clout, it won't be necessary for CNN to let the world know that we're here and we count.

To reach this level of acceptance will be an uphill battle, full of roadblocks and obstacles. The anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment in this country—manifest in all its racial bigotry in California's Propositions 187 and 209—is still running strong. The US is in the midst of an identity crisis; it doesn't dare look in the mirror to see its own multi-racial and multicultural reflection. Many white Americans refuse to accept that the US stopped being a predominantly Anglo country a long time ago. That's why Latinos are constantly being rediscovered, and why the rest of the country is always so surprised to see us. ■



*Mexican-American participants in a Cinco de Mayo parade in Santa Barbara, California flaunt their dual identity.*

# Winds of Change

Uva de Aragón

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the late 1980s, Cuban-Americans began to speak enthusiastically about a post-Castro era. Many in the community expected that the Cuban regime would soon succumb to the same pressures that had defeated communism in most of Europe. Few imagined that a different series of events would play a potentially more decisive role in shaping the island's future.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba last January spawned a major polemic in Miami, the US city with the highest concentration of Cuban-Americans. On the one hand, those opposed to the visit argued that the pope's presence would legitimate the Castro regime, thereby prolonging the suffering of the Cuban people. These critics vehemently objected to plans by some Cuban exiles to travel to the island; ultimately, the pressure they generated was so strong that Miami Archbishop Clemente Favarola was forced to cancel a cruise he had reserved for hundreds of the faithful. For supporters, on the other hand, the pope's visit marked a crucial turning point. People who otherwise would never have thought of returning to Cuba under the current regime felt a desire to join the pope in prayer in the country of their birth. If the pope is willing and humble enough to hold a dialogue with Castro, they reasoned, if he is capable of separat-

ing the government from the people, shouldn't we do the same? Many who made the trip describe it as an experience that changed their lives.

The visit also had a powerful impact on those who stayed at home, their eyes glued to the television screen. The spectacle of thousands of Cubans attending Mass across the island, singing religious songs and applauding the pope's homilies—so different from the official government slogans—and, above all, the shouts of "*Libertad! Libertad! Libertad!*" made Cubans on this side of the Gulf feel they were witnessing a miracle. Many of those who didn't make the trip regretted their decision. In a surprising turnaround, several leading critics of the cruise publicly apologized for their mistake.

The pope's visit was magical in yet another way: It brought different generations together. Grandmothers who had taught their children to pray to the *Virgen de la Caridad*, parents who never let go of their nostalgia for the old country, teenagers trying to come to terms with their own identity—all joined in a tearful embrace. The miracles of faith and technology allowed them to share a transcendent moment with their countrymen in Cuba.

The months have passed, and on the surface things haven't changed much either in Cuba or in the exile community. The pope's visit and the magic it generated have begun to seem parenthetical. If we look deeper into Cuban and Cuban-American society, however, certain changes are apparent.

Any analysis of these changes must take into account the unfortunate tendency, both in this country and elsewhere, to view the Cuban-

American community as a homogeneous bloc. The common stereotype is of a group of rabidly anti-communist, conservative Republicans who support violent methods and harsh legislation such as the Helms-Burton Act to overthrow the Cuban government. This description fits a vocal portion of the community, the so-called "hard-liners." And yet, a substantial percentage of Cuban-Americans disagrees with these goals, favoring instead a peaceful transition characterized by gradual change, reconciliation, cultural and academic exchange, and bridges between the island and exile communities. In both communities—for the exile community is, in reality, a reflection of Cuba—the official discourse often contrasts with deeper popular undercurrents. Proof of this statement lies in the fact that the first to violate if not the letter, then the spirit of the US embargo against Cuba are those Cuban-Americans who visit or send hard currency to their families back home. Both family visits and remittances are relatively recent phenomena, but the ideological differences they reveal have long characterized the exile community.

The post-papal era is part of an ongoing process of change, whose origins can be traced as far back as 1978. That was the year that the Castro government convoked a "representative" group of exiles for a dialogue that resulted in the release of a number of political prisoners, some of whom had been in jail for the past 20 years. The regime also agreed to allow the return of the *gusanos*—or "worms," a pejorative way of referring to Cuban exiles—now metamorphosed into "butterflies," who were invited to visit bearing gifts and photos of their

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Uva de Aragón is assistant director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University.

## Cuban-Americans in the post-papal era



houses, cars and other fruits of the American Dream. These concessions poked the first holes in the carefully constructed wall designed to separate Cubans from their diaspora. Since then, an invisible web has linked Cubans on both sides of the Straits of Florida, enabling dialogue at the humanitarian level.

The more than 100,000 *marielitos* who arrived on US shores in 1980 made an additional impact on Cuban-American relations. The Mariel boatlift forced the old guard of Cuban exiles to confront the reality of an island that many had last seen over two decades earlier, while the new immigrants' efforts to maintain their ties to relatives and friends increased the level of contact between Havana and Miami. The same trend occurred in 1994 following the mass arrival of *balseros*, refugees who made the crossing in makeshift boats and rafts.

In contrast to the entrenched exile community, most of the new arrivals had never know any other Cuba than that of Fidel Castro. They may have had political grievances against the

regime, but they had grown up eating treats at Coppelía—a famous Havana ice-cream parlor—and listening to the revolutionary songs of Silvio Rodríguez. It was impossible for them to reject everything connected to post-revolutionary Cuba without denying their own pasts.

These changes in the composition of the Cuban-American population have been accompanied by significant transformations on the island itself. Many Cubans feared—and others hoped—that the fall of communism would mean the end of the Castro regime as well. While the official rhetoric remained as strident as ever, underneath the surface the popular discourse began to soften, and relations with family members abroad to become less tense.

The range of contradictory events reported by the Miami press reflects the complex reality of Cuba and the Cuban-American community today. In the same week you can read about performers from the island drawing crowds of Miami fans more interested in music than in politics, and a surreal invasion attempt by three aging

exiles—one of them 73 years old—taking a boat to Cuba in a symbolic gesture of defiance towards the Castro regime.

The clearest fact to emerge from this confusion is that a greater variety of voices is being heard in Miami today. Cuban intellectuals participate in seminars and colloquia, and artists from the island perform without sparking violent protests. Only certain venues—most notably, the radio—have been slower to reflect changing attitudes. Furthermore, the death last November of Jorge Mas Canosa, the leader of the Cuban-American National Foundation, prompted widespread speculation concerning the decline of the more orthodox camp of the exile community. A broader perspective on such events, however, suggests that they owe more to an ongoing, complex process of change than to the death of a single man, much less one who was a master at changing tack according to the prevailing winds.

Today, those winds are blowing tidings of peace. Cubans everywhere are fed up with empty rhetoric and senseless violence; they are setting aside their guns for a chance to enter into a meaningful dialogue. The fall of communism has left an ideological void in Cuba, while in the United States, the economic success achieved by many Cuban-Americans has done little to compensate for the lack of a country they can call their own. This anxiety has been aggravated recently by the anti-immigration sentiment sweeping across much of the US. The pope chose the right time to preach love and reconciliation; in Cuba and the US, his message did not fall on deaf ears. ■

# Stones in the Water

Terry Rey

**T**he military regime that ousted democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power in a September 1991 coup ruled Haiti until a US military intervention returned the priest-turned-president to Port-au-Prince in October of 1994. During the army's three-year reign, the popular sector of Haitian civil society, decidedly pro-Aristide and anti-junta, was subjected to a brutal campaign of organized violence and human rights abuses. Estimates indicate 5,000 summary executions or disappearances; hundreds, if not thousands, of victims of politically motivated rape; at least 250,000 internally displaced refugees, with tens of thousands more transformed by the terror into "boat people"; widespread torture and atrocities; and thousands of families left to fend for themselves after breadwinners were forced into hiding.

While it may be that "by mid-1996, human rights violations...had declined so propitiously" that we may now speak of Haiti's "relative freedom from human rights abuse," as seasoned Haiti observer Robert Maguire puts it, three grave problems face Haiti's fragile democracy and seriously threaten its improved human rights climate: 1) the lack of extensive psychological rehabilitation of both direct and indirect victims of

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*Terry Rey is assistant professor of African and Caribbean religions at Florida International University and a former professor of sociology of religion at L'Université d'Etat d'Haiti in Port-au-Prince, where he worked for five years as a human rights activist.*

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*Haiti as a nation bears the scars of debilitating psychological trauma. These scars represent a formidable obstacle to social reconciliation and a stable democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.*

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human rights abuse and their families; 2) troublesome trends in the use of unnecessary force and the abuse of power by members of the current Haitian National Police (Police Nationale Haitienne, or PNH); and 3) the spectacular failure of the Haitian judicial system to prosecute human rights violators from both the coup and post-coup periods and to guarantee the rights of the citizenry. Unless these problems are resolved, Haiti seems likely to regress into yet another human rights nightmare.

#### RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR REHABILITATION

Abuses committed by the Haitian Armed Forces (Forces Armées d'Haiti, or FAdH) and their paramilitary supporters against members of Haiti's teeming web of grassroots organizations and their families were so widespread from September 1991 to September 1994 that a recent study found that fully 80% of the Haitian population was either directly or indirectly victimized. This figure might be greeted with skepticism by all but the victims and their families themselves, their communities, and the network of Haitian and international NGOs that, greatly overwhelmed, struggled to provide them with care and support. Commenting on the enormous size of the coup-period victim pool, Drs. Cecile Marotte and Hervé

Razafimbahiny, who headed the UN/OAS Human Rights Civil Observer Mission's Medical Unit during the height of junta violence, correctly draw attention to the sobering fact that when assessing "the affected community...that constituted the target of the repression, it is civil society itself that is in question." In effect, Haiti as a nation today bears the scars of debilitating psychological trauma. These scars represent a formidable obstacle on the path to social reconciliation and a stable democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. At this juncture in Haitian history, assert Marotte and Razafimbahiny, to the traditional list of fundamental human rights must be added the right of victims to rehabilitation. The first step, they argue, "is the recognition of this rehabilitation as a right and a priority."

Thanks to the efforts of Marotte, Razafimbahiny and the USAID-financed Human Rights Fund, important groundwork has already been laid for the establishment of a national Haitian center for the rehabilitation of victims of organized violence. A conference on rehabilitation held by the Fund in Port-au-Prince in March 1997 attracted representatives of the Haitian government, the Haitian National Truth and Justice Commission, the UN, the OAS, the European Union, the

*The ongoing struggle for human rights in Haiti*

*Children at a relief center, Gonaïves, Haiti. The army's three-year reign from September 1991 to October 1994 produced at least 250,000 internally displaced refugees.*

American and other embassies or consulates, the Harvard School of Social Medicine, and leading Haitian activists, attorneys and health professionals. Though overall the event was tempered by a pessimistic tone, several important steps were taken toward the center's realization. The participants almost unanimously affirmed the need for such a program and established important national and international collaborative links to

further this goal. More significant, however, was the unprecedented willingness to work with US-supported organizations demonstrated by some of the most important Haitian human rights NGOs. These groups traditionally mistrust any initiatives linked to American influence.

#### THE POLICE FORCES

Since the restoration of democratic order in October 1994, Haitian

human rights NGOs have focused their efforts primarily on issues of redress for violations committed by the former junta. Unfortunately, abuses did not end with President Aristide's dissolution of the FADH soon after his return. While cases of systematic, state-sponsored, politically motivated human rights violations have been relatively few in the interim, an increasing number of grievous abuses implicating members of



*The future of the human rights struggle in Haiti will depend on homegrown forces for change and genuine national will.*

the US-trained PNH is cause for serious concern. A January 1997 Human Rights Watch/Americas report noted that trends developing in the PNH's abuse of power were "alarming." Recent calamitous police operations to quell social unrest in Mirebalais and Milot (in February and March 1998, respectively) hardly allay such concerns; through July 1997, the Human Rights Fund documented over 200 cases of alleged violations committed by PNH agents, ranging from summary executions and torture to extortion and intimidation. Tellingly, the Fund's legal assistance program for victims of police brutality was paralyzed by the almost categorical unwillingness of Haitian attorneys to take on cases against accused officers out of fear of retribution. It thus appears that intimidation techniques mastered by the FAdH have been adopted by elements of the PNH, which only stands to reason, since the PNH itself absorbed over 700 ex-FAdH members into its force, and many PNH leadership positions have been filled by former soldiers. Another reason for "alarming" trends in human rights abuse committed by PNH officers is the haste with which the initial PNH contingents were trained and fielded. Instead of the customary 12 months of training, the first rookie cadets were deployed after only four months. "We were stupid," says a US official of that approach.

Human rights violations implicating members of the young police force are attributable at least in part to the remunerative advantages of collaborating with drug cartels and smugglers. Poor administrative and material support to officers in the field and frustration with an ineffective judiciary are also important factors. Many officers, especially in rural posts, complain that urban PNH administrators ignore their requests for supplies and to be paid on time. Weak or corrupt supervi-

sion has resulted in no fewer than seven entire contingents deserting their posts, while other PNH units have been bought out by traditional power-wielders, including land barons and drug dealers. PNH abuses tend to be geographically concentrated in epicenters of black market smuggling, such as Petit-Goave (whose first PNH chief was arrested for complicity in such activities), and the cocaine ports of Jacmel and Bainet. In June 1994, several Bainet fishermen and their families were arrested and interrogated by PNH officers as to the whereabouts of cocaine that had evidently been tossed overboard when a drug deal either went bad or came under surveillance at sea. Four of the victims, one of them five months pregnant, were allegedly tied to a tree in the back yard of the local police station and beaten for three days, while a 10-year-old boy had a pistol fired beside his ear in an attempt to make him divulge information. He suffered permanent hearing loss and the pregnant woman lost her baby.

While such cases implicate obviously corrupt and immoral officers, even the best-intentioned recruits work under arduous conditions and sometimes snap under pressure. Such cases often result in excessive use of force or disregard for citizens' rights. For example, in Port-au-Piment, a southern coastal town of 5,000 inhabitants where there is no electricity, the PNH contingent has neither a single flashlight nor a functioning vehicle with which to cover the vast zone under its jurisdiction. In August 1996 officers there justified shooting an unarmed man who was demanding payment for having fixed the police motorcycle tires. As their sergeant explained, "We had not been paid in four months at that point in time, so he could not be tolerated for his impatience!" Officers who follow legal arrest proceedings often see their prisoners go free due to the inability of the justice system

to prosecute criminals successfully. This situation understandably breeds frustrations within the PNH. As weak administrative, material and judicial support structures erode PNH morale even further, we can expect to see an increase in human rights abuses by the police forces.

#### ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE US

Successful judicial reform is perhaps the key to creating a sociopolitical climate in which respect for human rights in Haiti can move from the episodic, where it seems now to stand, to the foundational. The title of Amnesty International's January 1997 report, "Haiti: A Question of Justice," reflects the centrality of this issue. US Mission rhetoric also indicates that reforming and strengthening the judicial system is high on its list of priorities for Haiti. Washington's commitment to justice and human rights in Haiti, however, is questionable at best, given US complicity in training and supporting some of the most flagrant human rights abusers. Perhaps more dreaded than the FAdH were their paramilitary supporters, many of whom were members of the Revolutionary Front for the Progress and Advancement of Haiti (Front Révolutionnaire Pour l'Avancement et le Progres d'Haiti, or FRAPH). The leader of this group, Emmanuel Constant, has revealed that he was on the CIA's payroll during his organization's reign of terror. Rather than assist the Haitian judicial system in bringing Constant to justice for perhaps thousands of cases of human rights abuse, the US State Department allowed him to slip out of Haiti in December 1994 and settle in Queens, New York on a tourist visa. US authorities have since denied Haitian government requests for Constant's extradition, instead granting him a work permit. FRAPH documents seized during the US military intervention, moreover, were

not turned over to Haitian authorities until Washington had ample time to delete sensitive material, and the bulk of these materials reportedly remain in US custody. Those engaged in the struggle for justice and human rights in Haiti thus convincingly argue that in spite of having ousted the oppressive putschist regime from power, the US has, in the larger context, ultimately failed the Haitian people.

In the long run, the human rights struggle in Haiti must be won by Haitians with sincere international support. For the time being, Haiti relies on foreign donors to fund such vital programs as training of new PNH recruits and officers already in the field, material support for the national civilian police force, victim rehabilitation and aggressive judicial reform. There is no foreign substitute, however, for the other critical requirement for progress: genuine national will. This force for change must be homegrown and generated through a "dedichotomization" of Haitian society. Responsibility for this task, as Maguire rightly notes, belongs to both the powerful and the dispossessed, and involves "the need for those Haitians long accustomed to regarding the majority of their fellow citizens as draft animals for the use in the creation and continuation of their own well-being to recognize the legitimate aspirations of those people to improve their lives." At the same time, Haiti's marginalized peoples must "demonstrate openly and with increasing determination their intentions to engage in change constructively, not destructively." At present, Haitian social reality can be summed up in the words of an old Creole proverb: *Roch nan dlo pa kon doulé roch nan soley* (the stone in the water knows not the pain of the stone in the sun). Until this situation can be reversed, true respect for human rights in Haiti will surely remain elusive. ■

# Guatemala's Critical Juncture

J. Patrice McSherry

Guatemala's transition from military rule has been slow and difficult, at times traumatic. Today the country stands at a critical juncture, when the danger of reversals is palpable. In December 1996, the mood was optimistic as the government of conservative president Alvaro Arzú and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), the umbrella insurgent organization, signed final peace accords. This historic agreement represented the hopes of a large majority of Guatemalans for social justice, the rule of law and political democracy after 36 years of internal war. Thousands of people marched and rallied in the central plaza of the gritty capital city the night of the official signing. An unaccustomed sense of liberation and hope permeated the air.

Since then, conditions have deteriorated rapidly, putting at risk the peace process and the slow transition from authoritarianism to democracy. The heavy hand of fear has descended again, due to the assassination of several public figures and renewed threats by shadowy groups, as well as a plague of criminality that makes daily tasks a treacherous undertaking for most

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J. Patrice McSherry, assistant professor of political science at Long Island University/Brooklyn, is the author of *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina* (St. Martin's Press, 1997), and a number of articles on the role of the military. She thanks Raúl Molina Mejía for his comments on this article.



Guatemalans. Implementation of the peace accords has been delayed by the right wing in Congress, which is blocking required constitutional reforms. (The accords specify fundamental changes to the 1985 constitution, a holdover from the military state that institutionalized the military's counterinsurgency mission and ideology). Civilian institutions are weak, the military and intelligence forces remain powerful, and the Arzú administration has shown authoritarian tendencies. Life has not improved for the majority, and desperate *campesinos*, led by a former Catholic priest, have resumed their invasions of elite-

owned plantations. Combined police and army forces patrol the streets, especially at night. The army thus continues to exercise an internal security role, and the new civil police force incorporates retired soldiers, undermining the accord on the military's role in democratic society. Disillusionment with democracy and the peace process is spreading among the population.

The case of Guatemala demands a rethinking of concepts of democracy that make free elections and civilian institutions their central defining features. These are necessary but insufficient components of meaningful democracy. This article



## Rethinking concepts of democracy



*Since the Guatemalan peace accords were signed in December 1996, conditions have deteriorated rapidly, putting at risk the peace process and the slow transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Life has not improved for the majority; civilian institutions are weak, and the military and intelligence forces remain powerful.*

report documented in graphic detail the repression in Guatemala and the destruction of whole communities and tens of thousands of lives by the armed forces and associated police, intelligence and paramilitary organizations during the 1980s. The report was based on testimonies gathered by church volunteers during the previous three years in remote regions of the country, often in local Mayan languages. REMHI worked independently of the government and the military, and its efforts were separate from those of the Truth Commission established with the help of the United Nations as part of the peace accords.

The REMHI report made clear the utter depravity of military counterinsurgency strategy in the countryside: the scorched earth tactics; the targeting of indigenous children and pregnant women (often killed with machetes); the calculated dehumanization of victims, who were made to dance, perform sexual acts, or cook for soldiers in the midst of massacres; the use of indescribable tortures to create terror in the community. In a penetrating analysis, the report showed how “in the first years of the 1980s the policy of counterinsurgency was converted into terrorism of the State, bringing with it a process of massive destruction.” In its essence, the report was a stunning indictment of the national security state and the armed and security forces.

Two days after the report was presented, Bishop Gerardi was bludgeoned to death in his garage. The murderer or murderers used a concrete block to smash his face and skull. Nothing was stolen.

Almost immediately the police arrested a local indigent, Carlos Enrique Vielman, even though he has a crippled right arm—making it virtually impossible for him to have committed the crime.

Developments over the next months caused the Office of Human Rights of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHA) and other human rights leaders to voice suspicions that military intelligence officials were attempting to derail the investigation.

Government officials implied from the outset that the murder of Bishop Gerardi was a common street crime. In contrast, ODHA argued that the crime was not an isolated event, but indicated “the persistence of sinister, clandestine, violent groups disposed to collect the highest social cost in human lives in order to recuperate the power that has been ebbing, not only economic and political power but also, especially, the power to decide with impunity the life and death of Guatemalans.” Not until June did authorities announce that they were considering the possibility of political motivation. Members of the presidential guard on duty the night of the crime were called in for questioning on June 2. The guard

argues that a modicum of social justice and the rule of law are also essential requisites of democracy. Despite the formal transition from military to civilian rule in 1986 and the renewal of regular elections, democracy remains thin, and precarious, in Guatemala.

### THE GERARDI ASSASSINATION: EVOKING THE LEGACY OF FEAR

In April 1998, Guatemalan Auxiliary Bishop Monsignor Juan Gerardi presided over a public presentation of the report of the Catholic Church’s Project to Recover Historical Memory (REMHI) in Guatemala City. The



*During Guatemala's civil war, the military counterinsurgency strategy in the countryside involved scorched-earth tactics, the targeting of indigenous children and pregnant women, and the calculated dehumanization of victims.*

is commanded by the Presidential General Staff, a military unit with a history of human rights violations. Vielman's defense attorney insisted that the murder was a "crime of passion" and hinted that it might have resulted from a homosexual tryst. The church rejected his accusations, as did some government officials. Edgar Gutiérrez, director of the REMHI project, said publicly that Vielman's lawyer was spreading military disinformation and implied that military intelligence was employing a "psyops" (psychological operations) strategy to cover up the crime.

Also in June, six houses linked to ODHA activists or employees were broken into and searched, and computer files on the Gerardi case and video cassettes of exhumations relat-

ing to other investigations were stolen. These incidents lent credence to accusations by opposition Congressman Amilcar Méndez that key figures in the Public Ministry—which is leading the Gerardi investigation—are linked to military intelligence, and were in the past involved in organizations that carried out disappearances and murders.

In a stunning announcement in July, ODHA said that two military officers—one a high-ranking, active duty officer in the Presidential General Staff—were involved in the assassination and were known to the government. Several days later, in a spectacularly large operation, police arrested the other priest living in the bishop's residence and detained his cook and his dog. Many

Guatemalans suspected that an officially sanctioned coverup was in progress.

Terror and impunity have long been potent weapons for social and political control in Guatemala. Today, many Guatemalans believe that powerful organizations within the country's political, military and economic elites continue to employ a strategy of selective political violence to impede democratization, block socioeconomic and political change, and bolster their own power. The military's tendency to regard legal political activity as subversive also perpetuates an atmosphere of fear in Guatemala. According to an intelligence document leaked to the newspaper *El Periódico* in 1997, the armed forces continue to conduct surveillance

against student organizations, unions and the URNG (now forming a legal political party) despite the peace accords.

The bishop's murder was one of several recent assassinations that seemed calculated to resuscitate fear. In May, the victims included the mayor of Santa Cruz del Quiché, who was associated with the center-left Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala (FDNG), and the district prosecutor of Retalhuleu (whose docket included the case of Efraín Bámaca, the guerrilla who was married to US lawyer Jennifer Harbury). Death threats were sent to FDNG candidates immediately before the June municipal elections, made in the name of Jaguar Justiciero, a death squad linked in the past to sectors of the military. Also in May, Father Pedro Nota of REMHI left the country after receiving death threats. Late in the month a bomb destroyed the house of an FDNG mayoral candidate in Dolores, Petén. Threats were sent to a number of prosecutors in the Public Ministry, many of whom said they would resign without government protection. In June, human rights and Mayan leaders were subjected to death threats and surveillance by armed men, and in July, another priest was wounded by armed gunmen.

#### THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS: AN EXERCISE IN ABSTENTIONISM

Elections in 30 municipalities took place on June 7 in the midst of threats against opposition candidates and charges that the governing party, the Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN), was engaged in fraud, intimidation and vote-buying. PAN won 22 of the towns. In Chinautla, five opposition parties challenged the election results and demanded that they be annulled. The degree of abstentionism—only some 35% of the electorate voted—indicated that citizens doubted the

credibility of the electoral process. The poor turnout also reflected the reawakening of fear and disillusionment with the governing party's use of old methods of electoral manipulation. As the 1999 presidential elections approach, FDNG leaders are proposing an electoral alliance of center-left forces—including leftist parties, popular organizations and the URNG—to oppose PAN and the extreme right Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG), the party of former military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt.

Meanwhile, common crime and delinquency are epidemic. Armed individuals and gangs enter buses and assault and rob passengers, people are robbed in the streets and kidnapped in their cars. Former military personnel are widely suspected (and sometimes documented) to be involved in criminal gangs engaged in drug trafficking, car theft rings, extortion-kidnappings and other crimes. The absence of basic public security has political effects, as a frustrated public begins to associate democracy with lawlessness. There are indications that some Guatemalans might accept a return to *la mano dura*, or hard-line rule (for example, by voting for Ríos Montt's party), a situation that would benefit the most reactionary elements of the elite.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary scholarly concepts of democracy generally emphasize procedural requirements, such as free elections and constitutional institutions. According to this view, democracy is the framework of institutions and practices that permits people to choose their rulers freely, quite separate from issues of socioeconomic equality.

The case of Guatemala, among others, suggests that this definition is too narrow. If politics is about how scarce resources in society are allocated (who gets what, how and

why), and if social resources include political and economic goods, then surely democracy means a more egalitarian distribution of both. This, in turn, implies a broader concept of democracy. Certainly for people who have struggled and died in order to achieve it, democracy means much more than an electoral system: it symbolizes less inequality, less exploitation, more fairness, more freedom and more justice. In other words, a procedural framework is necessary, but content and substance are also required. The act of voting is instrumental; people do not vote simply for the joy of casting ballots, but in the hope of improving their lives. Without meaningful socioeconomic and political change, elections become pro-forma and the system loses legitimacy.

The rule of law is another fundamental component of democracy. The rule of law signifies equality before the law—one standard for rich and poor, rulers and ruled—as well as enforcement of citizenship rights and limits to the arbitrary exercise of state power. In Latin America, however, democratic procedures have often coexisted with double standards and impunity for the powerful. In Guatemala, the rule of law remains tenuous. Rights are violated and public insecurity prevails; impunity shields those who commit atrocious acts. The REMHI report speaks of the deep and unrequited need for justice in Guatemala. Without justice and the rule of law, without basic rights, democracy is hollow.

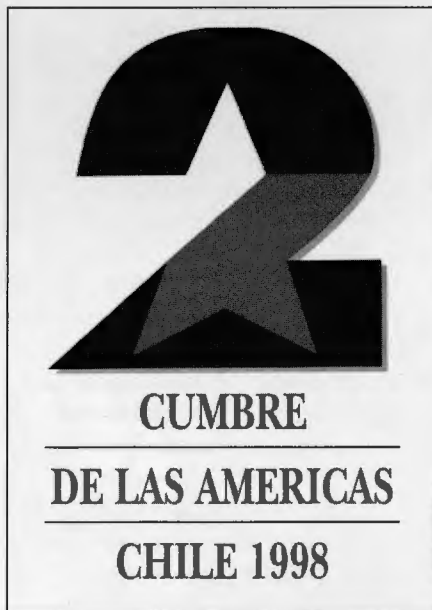
Democratic organizations and individuals in Guatemala are striving for a democracy of social justice, political inclusion and basic rights. Simultaneously, powerful forces are acting in subterranean ways to retain their hegemony and impede social change. The shadow of the past still hangs heavily over Guatemala. ■

# Beyond the Washington Consensus

William C. Smith

**C**alls for strengthening democracy and combating poverty rivaled economic integration and trade-related issues for center stage at the Santiago Summit. A foretaste of this discourse came shortly before the Summit at a meeting of the Montevideo Circle in Brasília, where International Monetary Fund director Michel Camdessus, Inter-American Development Bank president Enrique Iglesias and Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso joined the rising chorus of politicians, international technocrats and academics proposing a “new generation” of reforms for Latin America. All seemed to agree on the need to overhaul the region’s democratic political systems, which were portrayed as the primary obstacle to state reform and better living standards for the majority of the population. “In conditions of stable growth,” Iglesias said, “it could take the continent many years—between 50 and more than a century, depending on the country—to give all citizens a minimum level of well-being on current wealth distribution trends.” Citing survey data showing that only 27% of Latin Americans were satisfied with democracy, Iglesias warned that new measures were urgently needed to create jobs, improve health and education, and

*William C. Smith is professor of political science at the University of Miami’s School of International Studies, where he edits the Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Latin American political economy.*



promote wealth distribution.

Will this embryonic “Southern Consensus,” as President Cardoso dubbed the convergence of views, be any more successful in combating poverty and reducing inequality than its predecessor, the now clichéd Washington Consensus? Will the agreements signed by the hemisphere’s presidents in Santiago usher in bold new strategies to promote sustainable growth and reduce poverty and inequality?

Sadly, the answer to both these questions is probably “no.”

Pessimism regarding the outcome of the Santiago Summit is warranted given the close family resemblance of the Southern Consensus and other so-called “second-generation” reforms to the failed Washington Consensus. Since it was first codified in 1989 by economist John Williamson as the least common denominator the D.C. policy community would support, the Washington Consensus has experi-

enced a number of doctrinal shifts, highlighting the salience of several themes (e.g., the need to fight corruption and protect property rights) absent in the original version. The reforms proposed offer few improvements over the original model. Strengthening political parties and the electoral system, guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary, increasing transparency and efficiency in public spending and other priorities of the Southern Consensus are welcome, of course. And yet, at least a mild case of collective schizophrenia is evident in the calls for new, innovative strategies to combat poverty, reduce inequality and strengthen civil society, while simultaneously reiterating the neoclassical core of the Washingtonian formula for economic reform. Any significant accomplishments in the areas of inequality, poverty and democracy will require transformations in the state systems and political economies of the region far more sweeping than the limited reforms agreed upon in Santiago. No quick fix—conceptually or in the policy realm—will be sufficient.

#### REVISITING OLD DEBATES: NEW THEORIES OF GROWTH WITH EQUITY

With the focus on hemispheric integration and globalization, we frequently lose sight of the enduring debate over the supposed trade-off between growth and equity. Following the 1950s thinking espoused by Simon Kuznets and Nicholas Kaldor, mainstream economists and social scientists long believed that poor countries undergoing rapid growth had to accept a widening gap between the haves and have-nots. Within this context,

## *Dissenting thoughts on democracy, equity and market economics*

inequality was not usually seen as a problem. A market-friendly economic regime based on "getting the prices right" was presented as the sine qua non for achieving internal and external macroeconomic equilibrium, attracting domestic and foreign investment, opening the economy to international trade, and so on. Only after growth takes off, according to this perspective, is it possible to address the ills of poverty; in the meantime, modest "compensatory" social policies targeted at the most vulnerable groups may be necessary for political reasons, but expenditures must be strictly controlled in the interest of fiscal austerity.

In the 1990s, new empirical research and theorizing on growth and the importance of "social capital," plus the lessons of East Asian development trajectories (which relied on the redistribution of assets, massive investments in human capital, and strategic state policies to correct market failures and create competitive advantages), have seriously eroded the conventional wisdom of Kuznets' "inverted-U" hypothesis and its neoclassical premises. Many social scientists now perceive that greater income equality is not only compatible with but perhaps even a prerequisite for faster growth. According to this major shift in economic thinking, the right policies—heavy emphasis on universal education and social policies with substantial grassroots involvement—make it possible to achieve both higher growth and lower inequality. A direct cause-and-effect relationship may even exist between policies that reduce inequality and faster growth; in

other words, greater equity may actually stimulate economic growth, not retard it.

Although economists have not explored this angle, political scientists note that the new growth theories differ significantly from their neoclassical predecessors concerning the potentially more expansive role they implicitly ascribe to the state, public policies, and the conscious choices of social and political actors. Conventional approaches advocate rather passive state policies, holding that economic growth is a result of the accumulation of physical capital and an expansion of the labor force, combined with an "exogenous" factor—technological progress—that makes capital and labor more productive. In contrast, the new growth theories attribute increases in productivity not to exogenous factors, but to "endogenous" ones related to the behavior of public and private actors responsible for the accumulation of productive factors and knowledge. These behaviors are not immutable; they can be changed by deliberate shifts in strategy and policy.

Even if the old consensus on growth, poverty and inequality becomes obsolete, forcing greater equality by any means available is not a viable strategy for sustainable development. The policies implemented to reduce inequality matter greatly. A democratic reform agenda respects macroeconomic equilibrium while pursuing strategies and policies that both empower the poor and invest in projects that promise relatively quick and visible payoffs in terms of improved equity and equality. Poor people invest proportionally more of their income than mem-

bers of the middle or upper class in the formation of social and human capital, such as literacy and health. The poor also "save" by devoting more family resources to children, feeding them better, taking them to health clinics and sending them to school. Therefore, less inequality together with greater investments in social and human capital may be just as important as investment in factories and machinery in raising productivity and spurring more dynamic economic growth.

Contrary to the neo-utilitarian, antistate bias of the Washington Consensus and most of the rhetoric of the Santiago Summit, one of the implications of the new growth theories downplayed by the World Bank is that the "magic of the market" or the "invisible hand" unfettered by government simply won't do. Reconsidering the role of the state as part of a broader, more ambitious strategy of human development also means rethinking the kinds of democracy capable of formulating and implementing a new growth strategy that puts combating poverty and reducing inequality at the center of the political agenda. In short, although the range of options may be highly constrained, there are important choices to be made. Making choices necessarily means that politics—not some allegedly inexorable market logic—must assume command in devising development strategies for growth with greater equity.

### **DEMOCRATIC SCENARIOS AND THE "HIGH ROAD" TO GLOBALIZATION**

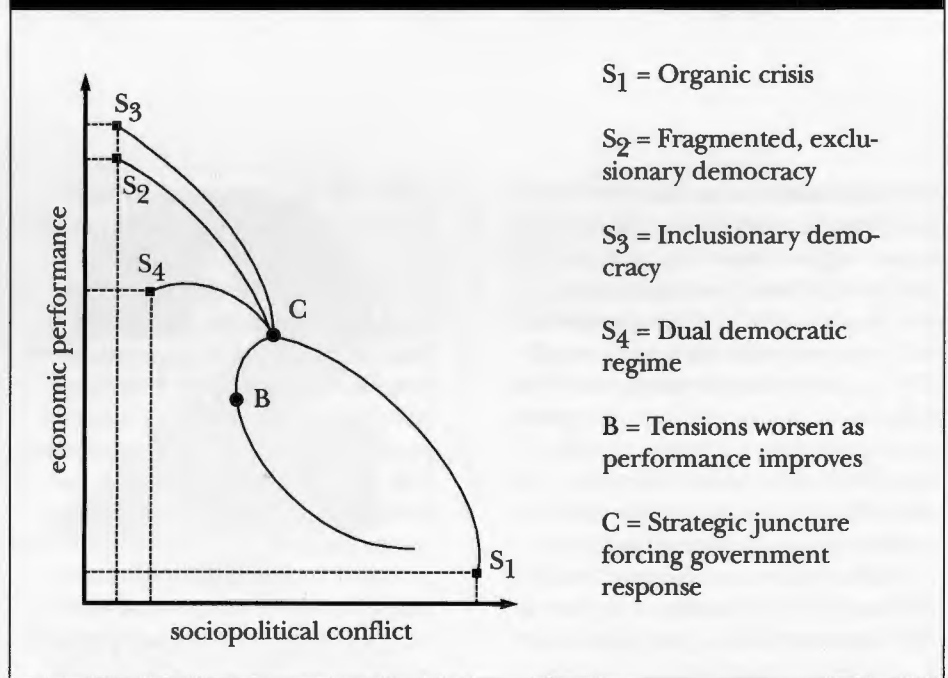
Democratic politics are compatible with a wide variety of capitalist models. Each of the contemporary

variants—ranging from the Anglo-American model and the social democratic capitalism of Western Europe to Asian models of state-led, but market-friendly capitalism—are groping toward an accommodation with the forces of globalization. Although it may be true that globalization inevitably entails a certain degree of convergence, there will continue to be considerable national and regional variation in terms of policies, institutional forms, and patterns of income and wealth distribution. Cutting through a complex set of debates, the basic choice is between “low road” versus “high road” strategies of incorporation into the globalization process. Several years ago, Argentine political scientist Carlos Acuña and I speculated about three broad democratic scenarios for the specific case of Latin America (see Figure 1). The first of these scenarios can be said to involve a “low road,” the second a “middle road,” and the third a “high road” strategy.

In the context of market-oriented restructuring and accelerated globalization, the most probable scenario for Latin American societies will be a “low-low” road strategy leading to dualistic democracies ( $S_4$ ), in which political elites pursue Hobbesian strategies. This involves establishing alliances with strategic minorities for the purpose of excluding the majority of the remaining social actors by disarticulating and neutralizing their capacity for collective action. A dual logic of state power and unequal distribution of resources facilitates political and economic stability in this scenario. According to this elitist logic, dualistic democratic regimes place the transition costs of structural adjustment as well as the long-term costs of opening the economy on the poor and unorganized sectors of society.

An intermediate, middle road scenario combines a full-blown variant

FIGURE 1: LATIN AMERICAN POLITICO-ECONOMIC SCENARIOS



of market reform with stable, relatively consolidated, but fragmented and exclusionary democracy ( $S_2$ ). Considering its success in combining dynamic growth with lower unemployment and declining poverty rates, Chile can be considered an example of this middle road strategy. But Chile’s route to neoliberal restructuring with democratic consolidation is not Latin America’s most probable politico-economic future. On the contrary, successful neoliberal revolution most likely will continue as an exception in the region. There is much to admire in Chilean democracy, but it must be recognized that part of its success in the 1990s is the consequence of some of the most perverse aspects of the authoritarian legacy inherited from the Pinochet regime, a legacy that in many ways has been preserved and reproduced under democratic conditions.

If the Chilean middle road is not replicable in other Latin American countries, then isn’t resignation and acceptance of modest proposals such as those contained in the

Southern Consensus the only realistic option? Perhaps, but a more utopian posture is also an alternative. Why not adopt a high road route to democracy as the superior strategy for integration with global market forces? The logical outcome of this utopian proposal is a scenario leading to an inclusionary democracy ( $S_3$ ). Although seemingly “unrealistic” in the present economic circumstances, it can be argued on normative and political grounds that this scenario offers the best chance of addressing issues of poverty, equity and sustained growth under democratic conditions. It may be useful to go into some detail concerning this reasoning.

Returning to point C in Figure 1, in this inclusionary scenario elected presidents and their economic and political teams could choose to abandon Hobbesian strategies. This would imply the reformulation of the decision-making process by strengthening political parties and fundamental social actors and incorporating them more fully into the process of policy design and imple-

mentation. This strategy represents an attempt to base democratic stability on broad social and political pacts that would assure major collective actors that their interests would not be seriously hurt by the market reforms associated with structural adjustment and economic opening. The logic underlying democratic consolidation coincides with social democratic models of capitalism. It also resonates with the general thrust of proposals calling for, in Marcelo Cavarozzi's words, "the building of a new developmental state [that] has to reside in a mix of de-regulation and re-regulation. It requires that the state walk a narrow path of letting the market operate without choking it and, at the same time, playing a coordinating and overseeing role that private firms left to themselves would not assume."

The advantage of the social democratic path is that, in common with the Chilean middle road, this high road strategy can lead to a politico-economic equilibrium with lower levels of social and political conflict and better economic performance than at point C. As in  $S_2$ , important economic reforms (control over fiscal deficits, privatization, opening of the economy, etc.) may be completed. Since the high road approach envisions more active state participation in the implementation of social policies and growth inducement than do the Washingtonian or Southern versions of economic reform, there are theoretically persuasive reasons to believe that it is capable of generating a stable macroeconomic equilibrium with dynamic growth. Such growth would be similar to that achieved in the middle road option, but with a greater emphasis on equity and more generous and expansive compensation (via safety nets, social investments, skill retraining, etc.) for the "losers" in the process of competitive integra-

tion. Historical comparisons and the expected consequences of labor union participation in the decision-making process indicate that the distributional properties of the social democratic scenario would be less regressive than either the low or middle road strategies. Equally important, strong economic performance with more equitable distribution of income and wealth, plus the abandonment of Hobbesian postures, implies a relative deepening of procedural democracy.

The problem, as noted earlier, is that in Latin America this maximalist version of social democratic class compromise is probably not feasible. Nevertheless, it is important for political and policy reasons to underscore the possibility of a minimalist version of this scenario under prevailing conditions. A more flexible, minimalist version of  $S_3$  would require the initiation of closely interrelated, long-term transformations that would point in the direction of maximalist objectives: state reform, negotiation with and strengthening of collective actors, politico-institutional reforms reinforcing parliamentary mechanisms, and the expansion of citizenship rights. In fact, if electoral dynamics in the context of "encompassing" institutional arrangements compel a gradual broadening of the reform agenda, Chile could possibly go beyond the middle road equilibrium and advance toward the high road scenario. If this were to happen, the political and symbolic significance of the Chilean model would radically change from its current status as exemplar of neoliberalism.

In short, a successful post-neoliberal reform agenda could initiate a trajectory of democratic deepening. The key reforms would rearticulate societal actors, enabling elected officials to accumulate sufficient political legitimacy and administrative capacity to sanction those

tempted to transgress social agreements. Greater embeddedness of state institutions in civil society would also endow elected officials with the capacity gradually to reduce the risks of investment and provide incentives for social actors to choose cooperative strategies over confrontation, thus helping to institutionalize distributional conflicts within the emergent democratic order. Here parts of the Southern Consensus and Santiago Summit proposals for state reform and an *aggiornamento* of democratic institutions are highly relevant. The challenge will be to ensure that these institutional reforms go beyond conventional neoclassical perspectives to probe the limits of the social and political implications of the new growth theories. Strengthening procedural and substantive democracy is the means to achieve great equity in social arrangements, and both are essential to achieving economic dynamism in the regional and global orders.

It is possible, and even probable, that the project for a minimalist high road social democratic scenario will fall short and constitute an equilibrium by itself, albeit a weak one. Still, if the goal is to avoid low road outcomes while pointing middle road experiments, such as Chile, in a more progressive direction, then even modest levels of redistribution and economic growth under more democratic conditions are not to be disdained. Deepening democracy beyond the electoral sphere and aggressively combating poverty and inequality should not be seen as "add-ons" espoused for ethical purposes or to bolster the legitimacy of schemes for market-driven reform. Strengthening democracy, attacking poverty and reversing egregious social inequalities are prerequisites for sustainable growth in a globalized hemisphere. ■

# Islands Apart

*Emilio Pantojas-García*

Since the early 1980s, neoliberal views on economic policy have acquired increasing prominence throughout the world. The notion of the superior efficiency, rationality and dynamism of the private entrepreneur and the marketplace has become the dominant *weltanschauung* among economic development experts and policy makers. This shift in the development paradigm has resulted in the adoption of regional, subregional and supraregional policies aimed at trade liberalization, the impact of which is highly debated. Most recently, the second Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile brought together hemispheric leaders to discuss the potential consequences of these policies. The following is an attempt to examine some of the implications for the future development of the insular Caribbean.

The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) was received by Caribbean political and economic leaders with a forceful request for trade parity. This request resulted in the introduction of a bill in the US Congress known as the Caribbean Trade Security Act. It and other initiatives have sought the liberalization of regional trade to pave the way for accession to Nafta or full participation in a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The creation of

the Group of Three (Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela); the reactivation of the Central American Common Market; the creation of the Association of Caribbean States; and a proposal for a Caribbean Community single market are examples of the scramble for position by Caribbean Basin leaders.

## THE CARIBBEAN PATH TO FREE TRADE

In the 1980s, Caribbean policy makers and entrepreneurs embraced a set of pseudo-neoliberal policies effecting a shift from state-directed to market-centered development strategies. The new policies were not anchored on the principles of free trade, but on preferential treatment of Caribbean commodities by developed countries. The tandem of preferential regimes that served as the framework for this creole neoliberalism started with the launching of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) in August 1983, followed by other similar programs. Despite the free trade rhetoric that surrounded them, these measures constituted a neoprotectionist package that fostered a process of economic restructuring centered around labor- and import-intensive export processing industries, known as *maquiladoras*. Maquila-type operations with limited backward production linkages to the domestic economy multiplied in newly established free trade zones (FTZs) in the Caribbean. Among the products that benefitted most from the CBI and the new offshore sourcing arrangements were light manufactures and agroindustrial products.

The apparel industry, the category of light manufacturing that grew fastest, was not even covered by the

CBI. The rapid growth in apparel assembly was fueled by another special preference program known as GAL (Guaranteed Access Level program, or "807a" for its section in the US Customs Code), which ensured unrestricted access to the US market for apparel assembled in the Caribbean Basin from fabric made and cut in the US. Under this program, exports of assembled apparel from the Caribbean to the US more than doubled in only four years, from approximately \$1.1 billion in 1987 to \$2.5 billion in 1991. By 1995, 807a exports to the US had risen to \$5.5 billion.

Yet, in spite of growth in particular industries, the early impact of these preferential regimes on export production was disappointing to US and Caribbean policy makers. Between 1984 and 1988, US Department of Commerce figures showed that overall exports from CBI countries to the US declined from \$8.9 to \$6.2 billion. Exports rose to \$8.4 billion in 1991, but this was partly due to the addition of Guyana to the list of CBI countries in 1988. In the short run, CBI-induced exports did not compensate for the decline in traditional exports. Although by 1994 Caribbean Basin exports to the US had reached \$12.2 billion, assembled apparel accounted for \$4.6 billion—more than one-third—of this amount. The value added by assembled products was, on average, a meager 25% or less, resulting in an estimated foreign exchange earning capacity less than that of traditional agricultural exports.

US manufacturers have traditionally considered Caribbean countries—with the exceptions of Haiti

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*Emilio Pantojas-García is director of the Caribbean Resource Center at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, where he specializes in political sociology and the sociology of development.*



## *The Caribbean struggles to keep pace with free trade*

*The Caribbean tourist sector is highly transnationalized and depends on imports for food, beverages and equipment. Resort-based complexes have homogenized their product to the point that it would be hard to tell the difference between a vacation in Cancún or in Barbados.*

and the Dominican Republic—to be relatively high-cost producers, due to comparatively high wages and levels of unionization. Trade preferences were designed so that Caribbean-based US and local manufacturers could establish operations able to compete in the US market with Asian- and Mexican-based manufacturers. But the CBI/GAL regime was too short-lived to allow the Caribbean islands to become important competitive export platforms for assembly manufacturing. The enactment of Nafta just 10 years after the CBI reestablished the comparative disadvantages of Caribbean countries as maquila-type export platforms vis-à-vis Mexico.

In the short run, Mexico's low wages and proximity to the US, combined with Nafta duty-free treatment, give it a nearly insurmountable competitive advantage over the Caribbean. In the textile industry, for example, freer market access under Nafta caused the value of Mexican textile and apparel exports to the US to grow exponentially, while the combined value of the four larger Caribbean exporters sagged. From 1994 to 1996, figures from the US International Trade Commission show that the value of Mexican textile and apparel exports to the US grew by 123%, while the combined exports of the Dominican



Republic, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Haiti increased by only 14%.

In light of these developments, it seems clear that for the insular Caribbean, trying to maintain a competitive advantage in low-wage, labor-intensive maquiladoras is a self-defeating strategy. The only way to remain competitive as maquila export platforms is to deepen the social and economic disadvantages of the working population. Low-wage industries will continue to grow in those countries where policy makers are willing to go along with wage-lowering policies such as continued currency devaluations, reductions in public services, and minimum or nonexistent fringe benefits. Clearly, the Caribbean must adopt alternative policies to compete in the new climate of economic restructuring.

#### THE CARIBBEAN IN THE EMERGING HEMISPHERIC ORDER

The analysis of the still-emerging global division of labor, based on liberalized trade and the freer flow of investment across national borders, cannot be conceived as a mere geographic reshuffling in the economic specialization of some regions. We are witnessing a set of technological, institutional and economic transformations that allow for greater global mobility of the factors of production (particularly capital and technology) on a larger scale than ever before. The various international agreements, treaties and institutions—such as the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the World Trade Organization—are helping to implement and reinforce policies at a level above and beyond the power of national governments. These emerging supranational regulatory frameworks increase the freedom and security of movement of transnational corporations and open up nationally controlled resources. They simultaneously facilitate the



*Despite the initial promise of export assembly manufacturing, Nafta merely accentuated the comparative disadvantages of Caribbean countries as maquila-type export platforms vis-à-vis Mexico.*

more complex transnationalization of economic space and further the vertical integration of production into vast global commodity chains.

What role will the Caribbean play in the trend toward globalization? The drive towards free trade is accompanied by the emergence of new technologies and management practices within transnational corporations which enable the adoption on a global scale of flexible production and just-in-time industrial organization. In this context, we can expect a retrenchment of traditional assembly manufacturing activities relying on location-specific FTZs and the restructuring of labor-intensive assembly manufacturing on a global scale. Once goods and capital can move under global conditions and supranational rules not easily affected by changes in national governments and their policies, then production sourcing will shift more easily and constantly from country to country or region to region, both within and even between trade areas, in search of lower costs, faster

turnaround times, greater design flexibility, higher quality and so on.

If the above arguments are correct, then the crown jewels of the new international trade agreements are the liberalization of trade and investment in knowledge-intensive industries and services. The creation of an FTAA will shift the competitive advantage to postindustrial activities; knowledge, technology, creativity and management expertise, rather than location-specific fiscal advantages, will be the key to success in the twenty-first century. In the Caribbean, this trend can be defined as peripheral postindustrialization. The emerging crop of maquiladoras will focus on knowledge-intensive industries and services whose main imported inputs are knowledge and technology and whose main exports are royalties, fees and profits.

The Caribbean already has comparative advantages in tourism and banking, and has made substantial progress in telecommunications. In the 1980s, and in some cases earlier,

many Caribbean countries developed banking facilities that served as tax havens for international companies and entrepreneurs involved in legal tax evasion schemes and outright illegal activities, such as drug trafficking or money laundering. At the same time, a successful package tour resort-based tourist industry developed in the Caribbean as an alternative to other, more expensive destinations for North American tourists. And in the area of telecommunications, domestic and international companies developed a network of processing centers for "800" and "900" lines, driven by demand from companies and individuals who peddle a gamut of services, ranging from psychic readings and party lines to illegal gambling.

Thus far, peripheral postindustrialization in the Caribbean has proceeded along the lines of traditional economic asymmetries. The Caribbean tourist sector is highly transnationalized and depends on imports for food and beverages, equipment, etc. Resort-based complexes have homogenized their product to the point that it would be hard to tell the difference between a vacation in Cancún or in Barbados, except for the phenotypes and accents of the hotel attendants. Most jobs created in the tourism sector are low-end positions with heavy seasonal variations, while telecommunications and data processing have witnessed the development of what Barbara Garson calls electronic sweatshops: low-end repetitive jobs created to provide international services to individuals and companies.

#### ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Caribbean development is not simply an abstract moral issue of social justice, but rather a crucial practical issue if economic growth is to become the basis for providing an adequate living to the working population of the region. The adoption

of a postindustrial strategy cannot be premised on low wages as the key competitive advantage for establishing low-end tourism operations, electronic sweatshops or paper companies that front for tax evasion and money laundering schemes. Instead, the Caribbean needs a policy designed to exploit niches of competitive excellence. The quality of human resources, infrastructure and services should be considered essential components of any development strategy. If the weather is a natural comparative advantage, it need not be squandered and sold cheaply in all-inclusive tourist packages with few linkages to local producers and providers of services. Policy makers and entrepreneurs should look at people as a valuable resource. Trained health care specialists, who usually migrate to developed countries, could get well-remunerated jobs in specialized retirement communities and medical facilities in the warm tropics. Cuba has already developed the concept of medical tourism, which generates foreign exchange by providing world-quality medical care to foreigners at costs that are a fraction of those in the US, Canada or Europe. And instead of gamblers, psychics and pornography dealers, more stable and profitable businesses should be promoted in the Caribbean telecommunications industry.

Caribbean policy makers, businesspeople, intellectuals and grassroots leaders should build a diversified and creative economic strategy from the ground up. Free trade should not mean economic regimes in which the key competitive advantage rests on the social, economic and environmental disadvantages of large sectors of the population. The goal of any development policy should be to take advantage of trade liberalization to promote commerce between and among Caribbean producers and consumers. If tariff barriers and political differences were

overcome, small- and medium-sized farmers in, for example, the Windward Islands could meet many of the needs of tourist resorts in Barbados, Curaçao, Antigua, Martinique, Puerto Rico or even Cuba. Freer trade could facilitate Cuban imports of Venezuelan oil and capital to produce fabricated metals using surplus industrial capacity. Or, a business alliance could be established between Puerto Rican scientists and Cuban laboratories to take advantages of the existing pharmaceutical infrastructure on both islands. In the area of services, a Caribbean broadcasting company could promote the expansion of the Caribbean entertainment industry by encouraging programs and newscasts from various islands. Joint program production could be established among French-, English- and Spanish-speaking groups throughout the hemisphere.

The future is full of opportunities, but if we reproduce the asymmetrical schemes of the past we will only be changing production styles while maintaining the skewed socioeconomic order of nearly five decades of development economics. We need to think of ways in which the private, public and social sectors can interact to produce viable economic enterprises that serve not just economic niches but wider social and economic needs. Innovative thinking and daring actions could result in the creation of an economic space for small- and medium-sized producers now relying primarily on the informal sector for their livelihood. To succeed, any effort in this direction should be anchored in the accumulated knowledge and experience of nongovernmental organizations and grassroots enterprises. There are no easy solutions, but the overwhelming concern of policy makers must be to create a development strategy that benefits the majority of the Caribbean population. ■

# Mercosur in the New Global Order

Hélio Jaguaribe

Within the next 10 to 20 years, the post-Cold War world will face a choice between two main alternatives for structuring the international system. The first is a type of *Pax Americana*, which implies the expansion and consolidation of the United States' existing global hegemony. The second is the formation of a multipolar system under the direction of a world council composed of several great powers, operating through the United Nations.

Whichever scenario prevails, it will almost certainly include elements of the other. US hegemony must take into account the interests of the European Union, Russia, China and the UN. Likewise, any multipolar system that emerges will reserve a key role for the US.

## PAX AMERICANA

The prospect of US hegemony seems plausible if we consider that such a state of affairs is already well on its way to realization. And yet, the consolidation of this system depends on domestic conditions and a favorable international environment, both of which seem to be working against it.

The US does not display the domestic sociopolitical conditions favorable to the formation of an imperial project. Unlike all other successful empires to date, the US is a democracy. Since the Vietnam War, the American people have

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*Hélio Jaguaribe is dean of the Institute of Political and Social Studies in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*

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*As long as North American companies remain more competitive than their South American counterparts, an FTAA is incompatible with Mercosur interests.*

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opposed international involvements that imply high financial costs, tax increases and loss of American lives. At the same time, politico-military conditions favor US hegemony and have allowed the US to formulate, and partially implement, such a project. This fact can be explained by the nature of the "center of power" in the United States, consisting of the technocratic elite—which controls the media and crucial access to information—and the elected officials under its sway. This center of power understands that as long as American companies are able to compete with Japan, the process of globalization will automatically favor US economic hegemony. The Gulf War helped convince this group that times have changed since the Vietnam War: The US now has the ability to liquidate the vital centers of any of its enemies—especially in the Third World—at a very low cost, almost without loss of life or international risk.

Even if domestic conditions were conducive to a sustained US imperial project, the idea has not been greeted favorably by the rest of the world. Some of the reasons for this rejection can be found by looking at the Roman Empire, the greatest imperial project in world history. The main difference between the Pax Romana and a possible Pax Americana is the fact that Rome represented an extremely attractive opportunity to provincial elites. To

be sure, Rome first had to conquer its empire, including Gaul, Hispania, Egypt, Dacia, Britain and the Asian lands along the Mediterranean. Once the military phase of conquest was completed, however, local elites welcomed the Pax Romana. It provided them with protection against barbarian invaders, equitable judicial and legal systems, personal safety, expanded commerce, local development, and access to culture and education. Those who accepted Greco-Roman culture gained new social mobility, without regard for racial discrimination. The empire collapsed due to the internal decadence that set in during the third century, when the Pax Romana deteriorated into an oppressive regime. In other words, Rome fell when it was no longer attractive to the provinces.

Unlike the Roman Empire, the US imperial project has no appeal for provincial elites. The US does not view its dominion as an empire to be administered equitably and rationally, but rather as a venture designed to benefit US companies. The underlying philosophy seems to be, may the best man win. If the provinces lose, it is because they are not competitive enough to keep up with changing global conditions and therefore deserve their destiny.

## A MULTIPOLAR SYSTEM

Multipolarity represents a possible alternative to US hegemony. The

## Why South America should reject the FTAA

economic strength of the European Union appears to favor a multipolar system, as does the emergence of two great powers: Russia, assuming it recovers from the chaotic transition from totalitarian communism to democratic capitalism, and China, if it continues the extraordinary development begun under Deng Xiaoping. Other potential players on the world stage include India, the Mercosur trading bloc, and the Islamic countries—especially if they form a union among themselves.

International rejection of US hegemony is an important factor favoring multipolarity. Any external policy the European Union adopts is bound to be more attractive to the rest of the world; even the US might view such a policy as an acceptable alternative to its own dominance. And yet, the Europeans have been unable to agree on such a policy. This is because external relations, more so than economic interests, are to a large extent determined by socio-cultural affinities. Viewed in this way, Europe is firmly divided between the Continent and the island nations of the United Kingdom. In sociocultural terms, England is much closer to the US than to the rest of Europe. The Continent itself is split along numerous lines; some countries favor the single euro currency, while others reject it. If the euro supporters predominate, the probability of formulating a common external policy will increase.

It is in this context that Mercosur, although still only a modest player on the world scene, could play an ultimately decisive role.

### MERCOSUR'S POSITION

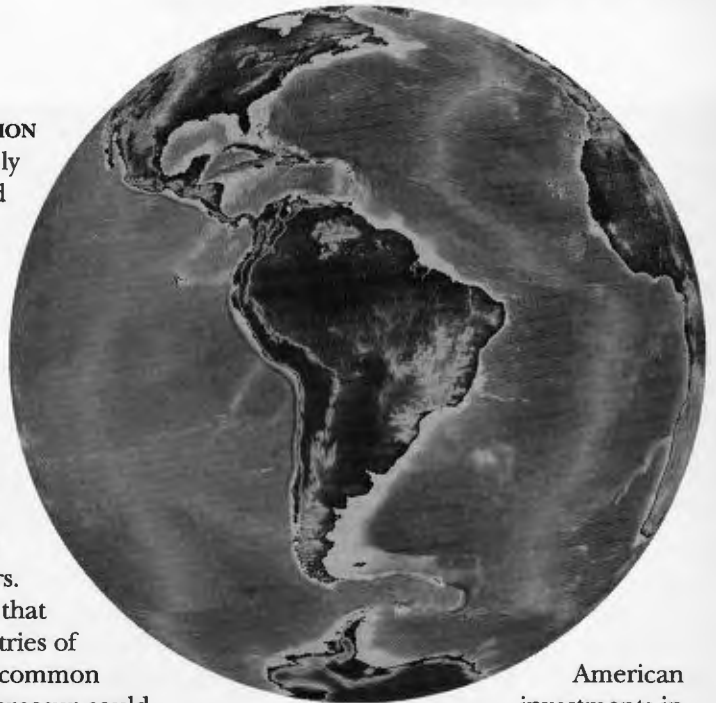
More than merely a means to expand exports and economic development within its borders, Mercosur gives member countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) the opportunity to play an influential role in world affairs.

In the likely event that the pro-euro countries of Europe develop a common external policy, Mercosur could offer important economic, political and cultural advantages to consolidate this position.

Clearly, among the two competing scenarios for the emerging global order, the countries of Mercosur prefer a multipolar system, with the new avenues of influence it offers. To be in a position to advocate such a system, Mercosur must consolidate and expand the area under its control, with the inclusion of Chile, Bolivia and, ultimately, all of South America. It must also prepare for a flat-out rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) proposed by the Summit of the Americas process.

As long as North American companies remain more competitive than their South American counterparts, an FTAA is incompatible with Mercosur interests. In an attempt at diplomacy, Mercosur's members have avoided a direct statement of this position, instead attempting to delay the FTAA negotiations.

FTAA supporters argue that the accord would increase North



American investments in Latin America. But the mere fact of a common market does not attract investors, except in such cases as the US and Mexico, where a common border exists. Increased foreign investment is a viable prospect only within large, protected markets, open only to those foreigners willing to engage in production within their borders. Without tariff barriers, North American competitors would inundate South American markets with goods and services at the cost of domestic producers. An FTAA would reduce Mercosur's industrial capacity, resulting in increased unemployment.

If Mercosur were to enter the FTAA, the prospects of a multipolar world system would be drastically reduced. South American countries hoping to reap the benefits of multipolarity and exert a minimum of international influence must firmly reject entry into such an agreement, concentrating instead on the expansion and consolidation of Mercosur. ■

# Canada's Southern Exposure

Peter McKenna

In January 1998, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien of Canada, with a coterie of provincial premiers, businesspeople and university presidents, led the largest-ever Canadian trade mission to Latin America. The "Team Canada" mission, which involved high-profile visits to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile over a 13-day period, resulted in some \$1.1 billion in signed business contracts and letters of intent. The Canadian government also received firm assurances that meaningful negotiations would soon begin on a trade and investment agreement between Ottawa and the member governments of Mercosur, an important customs union and trade grouping of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. The trip gave Canada a chance—in light of President Clinton's failure to secure "fast track" negotiating authority from the US Congress—to indicate its implacable support for a proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by the year 2005. More important, it represented the growing salience of Latin America in the conduct of Canadian foreign policy. This salience was clearly manifested in Canada's active role at the April 1998 Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile.

## COLD WAR SPARKS INTEREST

It is worth remembering that up until the mid-1980s, Latin America was of little interest to Canadian gov-

ernments, and a posting to be deftly avoided by career foreign service officers. With endemic poverty, brutal military governments and devastating civil wars in Central America, the region presented more problems than promises. Interestingly enough, the intensification of Canada's relationship with the Americas can be traced back to the Cold War, and especially Canada's initial involvement in the debilitating conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Serious concerns about regional security, human rights and migration flows brought Central America directly into contact with Canadian interests. The search for stability, economic recovery and an end to violent conflict manifested itself in Canada's participation in the 1987 Esquipulas II peace process. This, in turn, had the bureaucratic derivative of creating, for the first time, a cadre of Canadian foreign policy officials with an intimate knowledge of, and responsibility for, inter-American affairs.

Of course, the end of the Cold War—and the East-West prism through which much of Latin America was viewed—set the stage for Canada's growing role in hemispheric issues. Not only did this dramatic structural change diminish the perceived national security pretext for US involvement in the region and thereby open up some diplomatic space for Canada, it also moved the focus away from sterile political/ideological considerations to more critical economic questions. Moreover, as military governments gave way to civilian and more democratic regimes, Canada gained an opportunity to help foster and consolidate the process of democratiza-

tion. Finally, the crushing debt crisis of the 1980s, which spawned a series of painful neoliberal adjustment programs throughout the region, precipitated a number of trade and investment reforms which were favorably received by officialdom in Ottawa. In short, this confluence of factors has enabled the wider Canadian-Latin American relationship to virtually "take off" in the post-Cold War period, culminating in a push to strengthen and deepen a variety of diplomatic, economic and political linkages.

In part, Canada's decision to join the Organization of American States (OAS) in January 1990, after more than 40 years of steadfast aloofness from this body, was a response to the growing *apertura* in Latin America. After taking its vacant chair at the OAS Council table, the Canadian government demonstrated its commitment to both the Organization and the region by playing a high-profile role in restoring deposed Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. In addition, there was a dramatic increase in the number of official visits by senior Canadian government officials to the region, with particular emphasis on Mexico. In fact, by the beginning of 1994, Canada, Mexico and the US had concluded the most significant trade accord in the world—the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta)—with a combined GDP of over \$1 trillion.

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In an age of globalized markets and declining trade prospects in Europe, Canada's economic relationship with Latin America has taken

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*Peter McKenna is assistant professor of political and Canadian studies at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.*

## *Latin America's northernmost neighbor takes an interest in hemispheric affairs*



*Parliament House, Ottawa. There is a real sense in Ottawa political circles that Canada can make a difference in the region, carving out a niche role for itself while benefiting enormously from expanding a variety of contacts with the countries of the Americas.*

on greater importance. Canadian businesspeople have finally “discovered” Latin America’s numerous trade and investment opportunities, and have aggressively sought to capitalize on Canada’s positive image and reputation in the region. Since the introduction of Nafta, two-way trade between Canada and Mexico has increased dramatically, growing by some 30% to reach approximately \$4.7 billion in 1996. Canadian investment in Latin America, while still far from reaching its full potential, surpassed \$845 million in 1996, a substantial increase from previous years. In addition, Canada ranks at or near the top in terms of trade or

foreign investment in Chile (with which Canada signed a free trade agreement in late 1996), Brazil and Argentina. Two-way trade with the region as a whole has shown steady progress since 1994, growing from \$8 billion to almost \$11.1 billion in 1997, with Canadian exports increasing from \$1.7 billion to more than \$3.3 billion last year.

Politically speaking, Canada’s relationship with Latin America has expanded substantially in terms of high-level visits, ministerial exchanges and official contacts. Clearly, Canada’s motivations for enhancing personal and political ties with the region stem from a belief

that strong government-to-government relations hold the key to unlocking the door to trade and investment opportunities. In addition, closer official linkages bolster Canadian foreign policy by identifying like-minded countries willing to collaborate in multilateral fora such as the United Nations and the OAS. These relationships serve as an important counterweight to Canada’s closest ally, the United States, sending a pointed message to Washington not to take Canadian interests and support for granted. Symbolically, then, it is important for Canada’s political leadership to strengthen contacts with Latin

America as a means of reaffirming Canadian independence and reducing the country's perceived dependence on its superpower neighbor.

Canada's membership in the OAS has also helped to revitalize this body. Canada is the OAS's second largest contributor, and its active, constructive and vocal participation—albeit tinged with a certain amount of caution—is evident with regard to a host of issues, from OAS reform to security-related matters. Canadian participation has been most animated with regard to the integral question of democratic development. As the driving force behind the establishment of the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, Canada is a firm believer in stabilizing the region, thereby creating the conditions for peace and economic development.

#### CUBA POLICY

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Canada's broadening relations with Latin America is its approach toward Castro's Cuba. Not only did Canada refuse, in the face of intense US pressure, to sever diplomatic relations with revolutionary Cuba in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, but it has maintained cordial and friendly relations with Havana ever since. In fact, in January 1997 Canada's foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, took a well-publicized trip to the island to meet with senior Cuban authorities (including Castro himself). He came away with a 14-point joint declaration which included a pledge by both parties for increased cooperation on the issue of human rights. Moreover, officialdom in Ottawa, much to the chagrin of Washington, has steadfastly opposed the US economic embargo against Cuba and the island's continued isolation in the hemisphere. For this reason, Canada has become Cuba's largest trading partner and greatest source of foreign investment. Canadians

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*Canada's opposition to the Helms-Burton law has helped solidify the country's positive and constructive reputation in Latin America, in stark contrast to the often "bullying" approach ascribed to the US.*

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also rank first in terms of hard-currency carrying tourists to the country. The Canadian government, in anticipation of an inevitable end to the US embargo, clearly hopes to take advantage of its existing presence on the island to increase the market share Canadian businesspeople have already carved for themselves.

Canada's Cuba policy of "constructive engagement," or "principled pragmatism," was significantly complicated by the March 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act, commonly known as the Helms-Burton law. From the outset, Canada criticized the anti-Cuba law, and took its case to the highest levels of the US government. Ottawa has not been satisfied with the Clinton administration's willingness to waive some of the law's more objectionable provisions, and continues to seek ways to rescind or amend it, including the possibility of a NAFTA challenge. Canada's opposition to Helms-Burton is based on the "extraterritorial" reach of the law, its contravention of OECD trade and investment rules, its negative implications for Canadian investors in Cuba, and its domestic political significance. Interestingly enough, this opposition has helped solidify Canada's positive and constructive reputation in Latin America, in stark contrast to the often "bullying" approach ascribed to the US.

The sharp differences between the US and Canadian approaches to the "Cuban problem" were highlighted by Prime Minister Chrétien's two-day official visit to Cuba in late April of this year. In addition to discussing

an investment protection agreement, international terrorism and drug smuggling, Chrétien raised the issue of human rights. He presented Castro with a short-list of political prisoners whose release is being sought by Canada and met with Cuba's Catholic Cardinal, Jaime Ortega. Canadian officials also met with Cuban dissidents, and Chrétien himself lectured the Cuban leader on the kinds of liberalization needed before other governments will roll out the hemispheric red carpet. In the end, the prime minister came away with no major breakthroughs, despite a vague promise from Castro to consider signing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Critics and supporters will certainly disagree over the success or failure of the visit, but there is no doubt that both countries derived certain tangible benefits, in addition to strengthening a longstanding diplomatic, political and economic relationship. The meeting further cemented Canada's trade and investment stake in Cuba, sharply contrasted Canada's policy of "constructive engagement" with the confrontational and isolationist approach adopted by the US, and resonated positively amongst the Canadian public. In turn, Castro enhanced a close political, commercial and technological relationship with a member of the G-8, acquired a certain amount of international legitimacy and respectability, and gained another platform from which to condemn the US economic embargo. In short, the visit allowed Canada to reaffirm its economic relationship





*Open-pit nickel mine near Moa, Cuba. In recent years, Canadian firms have invested heavily in Cuba's mining sector.*

with Cuba before the US embargo is rescinded, while Cuba underscored the antiquated and absurd nature of US policy towards the island.

Arguably, the most unexpected (and unstated) linkage between Canada and Latin America has been in the military-security domain. With Canadian security interests inextricably linked to events in the Americas, Ottawa is now actively seeking to intensify military ties with these countries through various joint naval exercises, peacekeeping activities and military officer exchange

programs. However, while ensuring stability and respect for democratic principles in the region is an important consideration for these enhanced military contacts, Canada's overarching objective is to increase the likelihood of securing additional trade and investment opportunities in Latin America.

#### THE SUMMIT AGENDA

This goal was made clear at the Santiago Summit of the Americas, where Canada fulfilled a number of its stated policy objectives. First, it

came way with an agreement to launch serious talks in September to negotiate an FTAA by the year 2005. Canada was selected to chair the first 18 months of the discussions, and thus will be in a strong position to influence the shape and direction of the talks. Second, Canadian officials were successful in their efforts to expand the Summit agenda beyond trade matters to include a social action plan to address the issues of poverty, human rights and indigenous peoples, democracy, education and health care. Despite opposition from a number of Latin American countries concerned about interference in their internal affairs, Ottawa and Washington secured agreement on including formal links with environmental, labor, business and academic groups in future trade talks. Finally, Canada will chair a meeting of hemispheric trade ministers in 1999 and, more important, will host the next Summit of the Americas in 2001.

In closing, it is clear that Latin America in the 1990s has become increasingly more salient to Canada's foreign economic policy. This trend is likely to continue well into the next millennium, as the possibility of a hemispheric free trade arrangement keeps Canada's attention firmly focused on this part of the world. There is a real sense in Ottawa political circles that Canada can make a difference in the region, carving out a niche role for itself while benefiting enormously from expanding a variety of contacts with the countries of the Americas. Canada must continue to broaden and deepen these linkages if it hopes to reap the trade and investment rewards in the short and long term. Ultimately, however, Canada's future role as a legitimate inter-American partner will be a function of Ottawa's level of interest and political commitment. If this political will is not forthcoming, Canada's most recent "discovery" of the Americas could be for naught. ■

# Distant Brothers

*Manuel Orozco*

**H**undreds of thousands of Guatemalans, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans fled their countries in the 1980s, mostly for the United States. Most were escaping various forms of political instability and repression, as well as economic crises and social injustice related to the civil wars in the region. Two-thirds of the Central Americans in the US in 1990 had immigrated to this country in the 1980s, helping to explain the fact that the vast majority of Central Americans in this country are foreign born (see Figure 1).

This article addresses a range of issues that have influenced the development of three groups of Central Americans—Guatemalans, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans—as a political diaspora in the US. The discussion points to five major conclusions. First, the international interests or priorities of Central Americans are country-specific, rather than regional. Second, although Central Americans in the US share mainstream foreign policy objectives, their efforts have not been incorporated into the US foreign policy establishment. Third, efforts to advance these foreign policy interests are relatively recent, organizationally weak and lack broad consensus. Fourth, for most Central

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*Manuel Orozco is a researcher at the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) in Austin, Texas and a political consultant on Latin American issues. Research for this article was drawn from a larger TRPI project and from independent research on Nicaraguans in the US.*



*Florida state representatives Lincoln Díaz Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen join Nicaraguan immigrant organizations in a rally on Capitol Hill. Miami's*

*The Central American diaspora*



*Nicaraguan population has used its electoral support as a bargaining chip in efforts to change immigration policy for Nicaraguans.  
Photo courtesy of Fraternidad Nicaragüense.*

Americans in this country, international mobilization is secondary to US domestic concerns. Finally, the implications of Central American ethnic mobilization for the US national interest, especially in cities with large Central American populations—such as Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C.—are compatible with the liberal American ethos, tending toward increased incorporation and democratization.

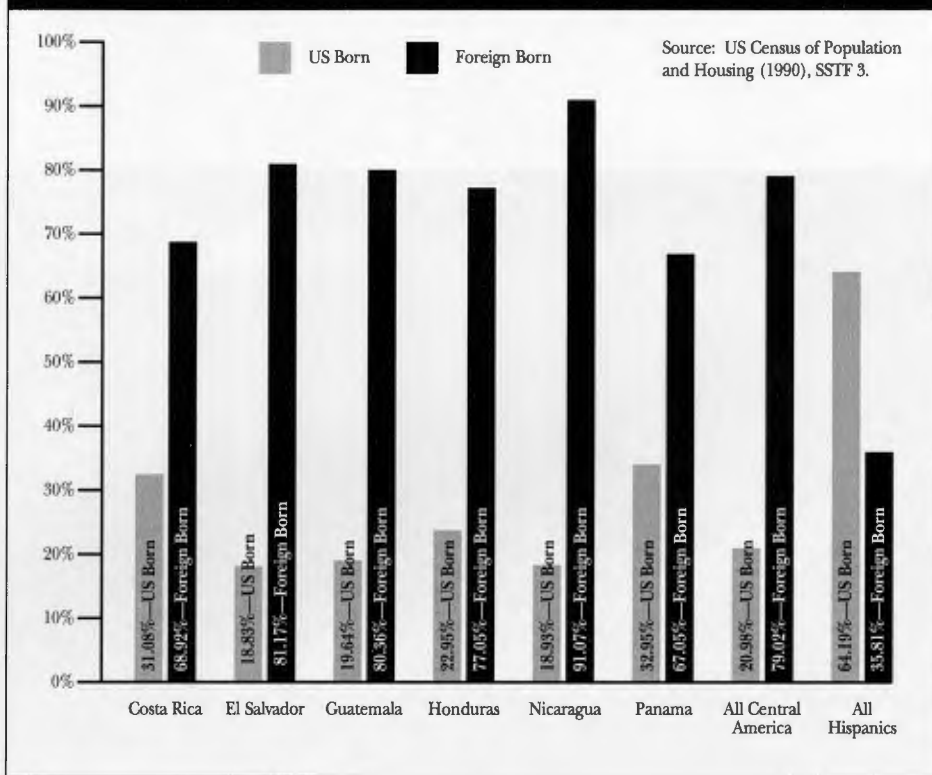
The sources used to reach these conclusions include the available literature on the “Latino diaspora”; demographic and economic data from the US Census, World Bank and International Monetary Fund; and interviews in 1997 with Central American diplomatic officials, US State Department officials, US congressional representatives, the leaders of more than 30 US-based Central American organizations, US embassy officials in Central America and representatives of Latin American NGOs.

**INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN DIASPORA**

A clear indicator of the importance Central Americans attach to maintaining links to their home countries is their financial commitment to relatives living in Central America. As Figure 2 shows, the amount of money migrants send to their families in the form of remittances often exceeds total US foreign aid.

The factors motivating Central Americans to preserve their ties to their homelands include such key issues as immigration, development and trade. Immigration policy especially has been a key rallying point for Central Americans in the US. Development, another main concern, is normally viewed in a humanitarian light, with emphasis on education and health care. Chambers of commerce serve as liaisons to promote trade between Central America and the US.

**FIGURE 1: PERSONS OF HISPANIC ORIGIN IN THE US, 1990**



Central Americans in the US are also interested in political stability. Their experiences in war-ravaged countries make Central Americans sensitive to current events in the region. Central Americans in the US show particular concern for peace and democracy in their home countries, in the belief that stability in the region is the key to ensuring its progress toward democracy.

Most Central American organizations in the US were formed to protect the interests of the emigrant population in this country. These groups include immigrant services organizations such as the Central American Resource Center (Carecen) and the *Fraternidad Nicaragüense*. However, growing numbers of community organizations are attempting to involve themselves more directly in Central America. US Salvadoran communities in particular have produced a recent surge of associations that promote community development in El

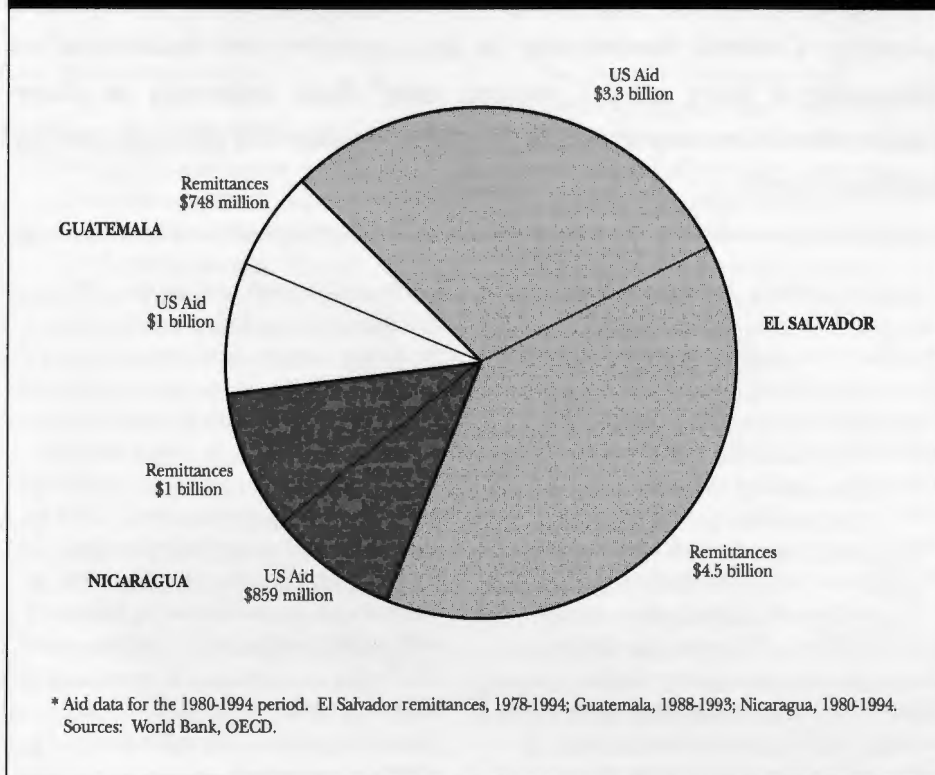
Salvador, mostly in the areas of education and health care. And as already mentioned, the various Central American chambers of commerce play a key role in forging business ties between the US and Central America, helping to connect small US-based Central American businesses with businesses in their home countries.

**COUNTRY-SPECIFIC POSITIONS**

On the whole, Central Americans in the US express their international interests in the context of specific countries. There are few examples of groups advocating a regional foreign policy or international position, even with regard to economic integration with the US. Nicaraguans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans have concentrated their efforts on maintaining connections to their individual homelands, without integrating their interests regionally.

A few factors help explain this country-specific pattern. First, the

FIGURE 2: REMITTANCES AND US FOREIGN AID, 1978-1994\*



nations of Central America reflect very different social and political experiences. In general, Nicaraguans identify themselves as exiles from communism, Salvadorans as refugees from civil war, and Guatemalans as victims of ethnic persecution. These differences come into play when different nationalities consider working together.

Central Americans in the US also tend to be concentrated in different geographical areas. The majority of Nicaraguans reside in Miami, while over half the Salvadorans and Guatemalans in this country have settled in California. The rest are scattered among other major cities, including Washington, D.C., which has an especially large Salvadoran population. There have been few opportunities for regional interests to develop, given that these groups do not interact regularly.

An important exception to country-specific concerns is reaction to US immigration policy. Guatemalans

and Salvadorans have occasionally joined forces to influence legalization and asylum policy, particularly during the battles over the Immigration Act of 1990, and Central Americans in general have sometimes formed alliances with other immigrant groups to present a united front against the anti-immigration backlash. More recently, after gaining passage of the 1997 Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, Nicaraguans supported similar legislation for Hondurans.

Other cases of regional or semi-regional cooperation have emerged in recent years. One involves the relationship between the Salvadoran American Health Foundation (SAHA) and the American Nicaraguan Foundation (ANF). SAHA influenced and participated in the creation of the ANF in 1992, and together the two groups helped create a similar health assistance organization in Guatemala. Cooperation

also exists among the country-specific chambers of commerce. The Salvadoran, Guatemalan and Honduran chambers teamed up to create a regional Central American Chamber of Commerce, which is credited with various investment projects.

#### INTERNATIONAL LINKS AND THE US FOREIGN POLICY ESTABLISHMENT

Recent research and interviews with State Department officials point to four major issues dominating US foreign policy agenda toward Central America: immigration, democracy, trade and development. These concerns are the same ones expressed by Central Americans in the US; however, most foreign policy lobbying is carried out by international organizations or by Central American-based groups, and not by Central Americans in this country.

Interviews with US foreign policy officials involved with Central American affairs confirm this point. One official commented that the "civil society and NGO groups that approach the USDOS or an embassy on behalf of those countries tend to be European or US-driven." This source added that "you will see the more educated Central American migrants taking up those causes. But for the time being, it's been US people through an organization like Amnesty International or the Washington Office on Latin America—you know, big umbrella organizations—who have done the lobbying."

The absence of systematic ethnic lobbying of the foreign policy establishment does not, however, imply that Central Americans in the US do not influence official channels. Nicaraguans in particular have informally lobbied foreign policy officials over property rights, politics and human rights conditions in Nicaragua. They influenced the drafting of the Helms Report in 1992, which warned the Chamorro

government that US aid to Nicaragua would depend on improved political conditions and the return of property confiscated by the Sandinistas.

Local organizations have also successfully lobbied mayors and governors in areas with large Central American populations. In Chicago, for example, the Association of Salvadorans in Illinois (ASI) lobbied Senator Luis Gutiérrez over Salvadoran migrant issues. After visiting El Salvador and learning about poor conditions in that country, Gutiérrez supported the extension of temporary protected status for Salvadorans.

Nicaraguans have had similar success in lobbying Florida state representatives and the mayor of Miami, using their electoral support as a bargaining chip in their efforts to change immigration policy for Nicaraguans.

The foreign policy interests of Central American immigrants often coincide with mainstream definitions of US national interests, at times indirectly advancing US interests in Central America. How then can one explain the absence of effective foreign policy lobbying? One reason is that Central Americans in the US have not prioritized international mobilization to the extent that they have promoted their domestic interests. There also appears to be a link between historical perceptions of the US government and ethnic lobbying; for example, Nicaraguans tend to have a more positive attitude towards the US government than Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Finally, ethnic lobbying may be absent because the organizations that protect Central American interests are still new on the political scene.

#### THE RECENT ORIGINS AND LIMITED CONSENSUS OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

The groups and associations that link Central Americans with their home countries are recent innovations. Most came into being after 1990, and tend to be small and short-

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*Immigrants do not represent a threat to national unity and identity; Central Americans in this country are interested in becoming a part of US society, and their interests in their home countries are similar to those of the US foreign policy establishment.*

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lived (the average life span is less than three years). They do not mobilize in a unified manner, and in most cases devote more time and resources to domestic activities than international issues. However, the increasing number of these organizations suggests that in the future at least one group—Salvadorans—may strengthen its institutional basis.

Four types of organizations mobilize the efforts of diaspora populations to reach out to their home countries: community-based organizations, NGOs, business organizations and professional associations. Of these four, community-based organizations are the most numerous, yet they have the smallest membership. Hometown associations often depend on the personal drive of their president or founder. In other cases, the organization may exist in name, but in practice its membership is reduced to a handful of people who rarely carry out significant activity.

Yossi Shain's categorization is useful for describing the varying degrees of collective participation by Central Americans in these organizations. Shain describes diaspora communities as being comprised of three groups: core members, rearguard members and silent members. Core members are those "organizing elites who are intensively active in diasporic affairs" and who are in a position to appeal for mobilization of the larger diaspora. Rearguard members are those who are available to be mobilized when the active leadership calls upon them. Silent members are a larger pool of people who are gen-

erally uninvolved in diaspora affairs, but who may mobilize under crisis. As Shain asserts, they "are mostly part of an 'imagined community,' to use Benedict Anderson's expression, often existing only in the mind of diasporic political activists, as well as home or host governments." And yet, this imagined community is often surprisingly effective; for example, a Salvadoran organization in Miami with only three active members routinely draws close to 100 people to its events, thanks to the pull of rearguard members who volunteer on a short-term basis.

Central American diaspora organizations are largely comprised of four kinds of core individuals: community leaders, intellectuals and artists, leading exiles and wealthy immigrants. Generally, these core individuals represent an array of interests and attitudes towards their home countries, making cooperation difficult. Salvadorans have been most successful at developing intra-organizational cooperation. Former Ambassador Ana Cristina Sol was able to bring together (and create) a large group of Salvadoran organizations with the purpose of developing a unified strategy towards El Salvador. Core members agreed that Salvadorans in the US were an important factor in efforts to rebuild El Salvador after that country's civil war. They also agreed on the need for a unified nation, an ideal which involved reuniting *hermanos ausentes* ('distant brothers') with their relatives at home. Salvadorans are now the only group of Central Americans with a national organization to represent

their interests in the US. To date, efforts to develop a larger appeal among Central American groups have been unsuccessful.

#### DOMESTIC CONCERNS PREDOMINATE

While most Central Americans claim that home-country issues are important to them, their priority remains the host society. As one Nicaraguan leader in Miami put it, "Nicaraguans look first at the stock market in Wall Street rather than at the inflation rate in their home country." Among their priorities, US Nicaraguans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans list legal residency in the US, decent employment, the education and welfare of their children, and improving their position in US society.

The attitude of Central American nations and governments towards emigrants is another factor in the diaspora community's relationship with the homeland. This attitude varies from country to country. In Nicaragua, where emigrants represent more than 20% of the total population, the Nicaraguan diaspora passes relatively unnoticed at the official level. Popular opinion of emigrants is mixed; some are critical of those who fought with Somoza and helped create the *contra* forces, while others are indifferent (despite the fact that Nicaraguans abroad send millions of dollars home in remittances). Residents of Managua refer to returning émigrés as "Miami boys," thus setting them apart from the native population. In contrast, the Salvadoran government regards Salvadorans living in the US positively, with the understanding that citizens who left during the civil war are helping to rebuild their country with remittances and other material support. Finally, Guatemalans generally display an attitude of ignorance and indifference towards their countrymen abroad. This phenomenon is partly explained by the disregard of nonindigenous groups for the

indigenous population (which accounts for the majority of Guatemalan emigrants).

The cases of Nicaragua and Guatemala suggest that the level of political polarization in the home country may help explain interest in external mobilization among emigrants. In El Salvador, which has experienced the least polarization after its civil war, peaceful conditions have provided an important incentive for returning émigrés. Nicaragua, on the other hand, remains polarized along the lines of *sandinismo* versus *somocismo*. In Guatemala, political splits have gradually diminished as the country recovers from conflict. Guatemalan organizations have shown an interest in returning home, and long-term exiles have visited the country to show support for the peace process and newly emerging civil society.

Perceptions of emigrants are also affected by government outreach efforts, or the lack thereof. Only El Salvador has made an effort to link Salvadorans living abroad to their home country, through consular campaigns designed to reach out to *hermanos ausentes*. In neither Nicaragua or Guatemala do such efforts exist, although the local foreign affairs offices of these countries have attempted to introduce similar programs.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE US: CREATING SPACES FOR SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION

The previous sections have identified five major points of discussion. First, Central Americans are country-specific when expressing their international interests. Second, although Central American organizations with links abroad address concerns similar to those expressed by the US foreign policy establishment, their activities are not integrated into official US policy. Third, Central American diaspora organizations are new, and are only beginning to make their impact felt. Fourth, Central Americans are

more concerned with US domestic affairs than with their home countries. And fifth, factors such as continuing polarization of the home country and attitudes towards emigrants contribute to the lack of international mobilization.

What implications do Central American diaspora politics have for the US? This question is particularly relevant given the rising political and economic power of Hispanics in the US. By 2050, the Census Bureau predicts that the United States will be 52.8% white and 24.5% Hispanic. The largest expansion of Hispanics will take place in California, Florida, Texas, New York and Illinois (all swing states in US presidential elections). State forecasts for the year 2040 estimate that California's population will be almost 50% Hispanic and 30% white. These demographic changes have led scholars such as Samuel Huntington and politicians like Pat Buchanan to warn of a "thirdworldization" of American democracy that will undermine Western liberal values.

The previous discussion of Central Americans in the US reaches at least two conclusions that contradict these warnings. First, despite their international interests, Central Americans in this country seem most interested in becoming part of US society. Second, Central Americans' interests in their home countries are similar to those of the US foreign policy establishment, suggesting that immigrants have the potential indirectly to further the US agenda abroad. Immigrants do not represent a threat to national unity and identity; instead, given the growing number of diaspora organizations, the US should develop outreach programs to facilitate their organized participation in domestic as well as international issues. Incentives to trust the US government, as well as a policy of partnership towards Central America, are essential to this endeavor. ■

# Lives at a Crossroads

Sarah Mahler

The United States' ethnic mosaic has a new and important ingredient: Salvadorans. The 1990 US census counted 565,000 Salvadorans in this country, although some scholars say the number is closer to one million, equivalent to one-sixth of the total population of El Salvador. Even if we accept the lower figure, Salvadorans are the fourth largest Latino population in the US; if the higher estimate is true, Salvadorans may well surpass Cubans numerically in the next census.

## WARTIME EXODUS

Most Americans are not aware of the growing presence of Salvadorans in this country. The reasons are simple: Salvadorans are among the most recent newcomers to the US, are highly concentrated in a few metropolitan areas, and tend to have little economic and political clout. According to the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), fewer than 30,000 Salvadorans immigrated to the US prior to 1970. This small group included diplomats and students, as well as some workers recruited to work as domestics and in factories. During the 1970s, however, political and economic unrest in El Salvador and severe government repression led thousands to flee their homeland. Most migrants headed for the US; by 1980, the number of Salvadorans in this country had swollen to at least 100,000. The greatest exodus occurred dur-



Hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans fled to the US in the 1980s, escaping the civil war in their country. After a peace agreement marked the end of the conflict in

ing the years of the Salvadoran civil war (1979-92), when over a half-million refugees streamed into the US. Several hundred thousand more have arrived so far in the 1990s, both legally and illegally.

Salvadorans are residentially concentrated. Nearly 50% live in greater Los Angeles, 11% in New York, 9% in Washington, D.C., 8% in San Francisco and 7% in Houston. These concentrations are distinctive: Washington is famous for its ties to a region on El Salvador's east coast, while the Long Island community is made up mostly of peasants from the eastern mountains. Los Angeles attracts a larger cross-section of the entire country. Ethnic neighborhoods—the Pico Union district of downtown Los Angeles,

Washington's Columbia Road and Hempstead, Long Island—are marked by Salvadoran storefronts and *pupuserías* (restaurants).

No large-scale national studies of Salvadorans in the US exist to date; in the meantime, census records provide the best available data. According to census figures, four out of every five Salvadorans in the US are foreign born. They are equally divided between males and females, and their median age in 1990 was 26, seven years younger than the overall US population. Two-thirds of adult Salvadorans have not completed high school, and only 5% are college graduates. Not surprisingly, they work disproportionately in manufacturing and service jobs, with only 6% in managerial or

Sarah Mahler is associate professor of sociology/anthropology at Florida International University.



## Salvadorans in the US



1992, many protested new immigration laws requiring their deportation to a homeland their children had never seen. Photo courtesy of Carecen-San Francisco.

professional occupations. Twenty-two percent of Salvadoran families live below the poverty line, with a per capita income of \$7,200 (compared to a national average of \$14,420 in 1990). In short, Salvadorans are a working poor population.

### LEGAL QUAGMIRE

The Salvadoran civil war was notorious for the brutalities committed against civilians. An estimated 75,000 people died, most at the hands of the Salvadoran military. Regardless, the US supported the government with billions of dollars in military and economic aid as part of its Cold War containment strategy. Because of this support, Salvadoran refugees who made it to the US were

systematically denied political asylum throughout the 1980s.

Owing to their undocumented status, Salvadorans were precluded from many jobs and access to government services, pushing them deeper into poverty. In the early 1990s, after a decade of court cases filed against the INS by immigrant advocacy organizations, Salvadorans were offered temporary legal status and work authorization for the duration of the war. Upon termination of the temporary program (TPS), they could apply for political asylum under a revised asylum process. Nationwide, some 187,000 Salvadorans applied for TPS; after the program and several extensions finally ended on September 30, 1995, many filed new asylum claims.

Unfortunately for Salvadorans, the mid-1990s were a bad time to seek favors from the INS. The US passed new, highly restrictive immigration legislation in 1996 that severely altered the political asylum process. Consequently, most new asylum cases that came before the courts were denied on the grounds that Salvadorans had no compelling reason to stay in the US, given that the civil war in their country ended in 1992. Migrant organizations countered that a whole generation of Salvadorans had grown up in the US and should not be deported to a "homeland" they barely knew. Even the Salvadoran government rallied to the cause, arguing that the country was in such a state of ruin from the war that it could never absorb hundreds of thousands of return migrants.

Three successive Salvadoran presidents and their diplomatic corps lobbied the US Congress to win permanent status for the migrants and, perhaps more important, to safeguard the estimated \$1.2 billion in remittances sent back to El Salvador each year. This figure dwarfs other sources of foreign currency and represents 11% of El Salvador's GNP. In June 1997, President Armando Calderón Sol retained a US law firm and lobbied key congressional figures, while the Salvadoran Embassy embarked on a public relations campaign to improve the image of Salvadorans in the US and to make Salvadoran migrants themselves feel more warmly toward their national heritage.

The collective contributions of grassroots and government lobbying paid off, albeit modestly. In November 1997, Congress passed the Nicaraguan and Central American

## Features: Salvadorans

Relief Act, which offered full legal status to some 50,000 Nicaraguans and relaxed "suspension of deportation" standards for another 250,000 Salvadorans and Guatemalans. In effect, the law allows Salvadorans who meet certain eligibility requirements to apply for legal status if they have lived in the US a minimum of seven years, display good "moral conduct," and can show that deportation would cause them severe hardship. When the new procedures take effect in late 1998, an estimated 150,000 Salvadorans and 200,000 of their relatives may ultimately benefit. Salvadorans who arrived in the US illegally after 1990, however, are unlikely to find relief in this legislation.

### THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Even as they overcome significant legal barriers, Salvadorans face an array of challenges, not the least of which is generating enough income to support themselves and their families—both in this country and El Salvador. A study by the California-based Tomás Rivera Policy Institute found that Salvadorans spend about 10% of their income on remittances to relatives, one of the highest proportions of the different migrant groups studied. The impact of these payments is so great that some 17% of households in El Salvador depend upon remittances for survival, although this figure varies widely by region. In one community studied by the author, one-third of schoolchildren reported that their fathers lived in the US; one-tenth said that their mothers were in this country. Virtually all the students depended on remittances to finance their studies.

Along with remittances have come other, less welcome imports. Thousands of Salvadoran gang members—primarily from Los Angeles and Washington—have been deported back to El Salvador in recent years, to a homeland many cannot recall. In El Salvador, graffiti from



*Many Salvadorans in this country are forced to choose between living with precarious legal status in the US or returning to a land where security and opportunity are as*

reconstituted gangs adorns walls even in small towns, and gang-related crime is prevalent in the cities.

Although gangs contribute to the postwar crime wave, decommissioned soldiers deserve more blame. After the war, many turned to thievery, targeting return migrants in particular. Present murder rates are equal to or exceed those experienced during the war. These conditions frighten many Salvadoran migrants, particularly women, and discourage them from returning. Many people are forced to choose between living with precarious legal status in the US or returning to a land where security and opportunity are as scarce as they were during the civil war.

### TRANSNATIONAL LIVES

Remittances and gangs are only a few aspects of the transnationalization of Salvadoran life. In an age of telecommunications and transportation advances, many migrant groups actively maintain a variety of links to their countries of origin. Salvadorans

are no exception; flows of people, money and information knit together El Salvador and the US on multiple levels, from kinship and diplomacy to international trade. Some observers have argued that mass migration has transformed Salvadoran society more than the civil war that provoked the migration in the first place.

Transnational relations have also opened up entrepreneurial niches, such as those occupied by international couriers—people who earn their living flying between countries carrying letters, remittances, videos and Salvadoran delicacies. Increasingly, Salvadorans are forming hometown associations that raise money in the US to fund projects in their communities of origin. Other groups, such as the Salvadoran American National Network (SANN), address the common needs of all Salvadorans resident in the US. SANN is also cultivating relations with the Salvadoran diplomatic corps as well as organizations within El Salvador, so that important issues



scarce as they were during the civil war. Return migrants are the frequent victims of escalating crime in El Salvador. Photo courtesy of Carecen-San Francisco.

affecting all Salvadorans can be addressed transnationally.

#### THE HUMAN DIMENSION

Salvadorans have traveled a rough road, and have much to celebrate during the September 15 independence day parades they hold in many US cities. They also have a long road ahead of them and many roadblocks to overcome. There is a majority working poor population; immigration status for many is still tenuous, and they face raising children in some of the most depressed areas of the US. It is a reality that can best be captured by a personal vignette.

Yolanda Pacheco (a pseudonym) came to the US in the late 1980s during the height of urban fighting in El Salvador's capital city, San Salvador. Her husband, Edgar, witnessed numerous massacres and was in constant danger of forced recruitment into the military. Yolanda never knew if Edgar would make it home from work in the evening, a fact that frayed their nerves to the breaking point.

When they fled the country Yolanda was so frightened of the trip overland—particularly through Mexico, where many Central Americans on their way north are stripped, searched and raped—that she left her young son in the care of a neighbor.

Upon arrival in the US, Yolanda became a nanny for a middle-class Long Island family, while Edgar found work as a pool maintenance laborer. It pained Yolanda to spend her days caring for another family's children when she had no idea how her own son was being treated. Her employers agreed to sponsor her for legal residency in 1990, but by 1998 her residency interview had still not been scheduled, owing to a huge backlog in these types of applications. In the interim, Yolanda and Edgar applied for TPS and obtained work permits. In 1991 they paid for their son, accompanied by Yolanda's brother, to attempt his own undocumented crossing into the US. For two anxious months they heard nothing;

finally, the pair arrived across the border, but the smugglers who called Yolanda would not let her speak to them. She borrowed huge sums of money and flew to Texas to find her family. Unfortunately, the new arrivals were too late to qualify for TPS.

In 1992 Yolanda gave birth to her second son, a US citizen. As he grew up, the family remained divided by immigration status. In 1997, Yolanda began to feel herself weakening and suffered occasional trembling in her muscles. She has no medical insurance, so she went to a local clinic and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The doctors would like to treat her with a new, aggressive drug therapy, but Yolanda cannot afford the medication. She dares not apply for government assistance or Medicaid, because it could jeopardize her application for legal residency—applicants deemed likely to become “public charges” are often rejected. So she takes a series of vitamins each day, has cut back on her work schedule, and hopes that a solution will present itself by the end of the year.

In the decade since her arrival in the US, Yolanda no longer fears the violence and repression that drove her from her homeland, but her life is nonetheless a difficult balancing act. Her future, and that of her family, is at the mercy of forces largely outside her control. Her situation is not unique; many Salvadorans in the US would identify with her predicament. Most express profound longing for the lives they lived in El Salvador prior to the war, especially the closeness of their family ties and community events that punctuated the routine of everyday life. But at the same time that they wax nostalgic, they are grateful to find a degree of safe haven from El Salvador's troubles in the US. Despite past and present hardships they have faced in this country, most find hope in the prospect that their children's futures will be brighter. ■

# Bridging the Ideological Divide

Manny Hidalgo

**O**n a recent balmy evening in Miami Beach, hundreds of people gathered for a concert by a visiting musician from Cuba.

Issac Delgado played his vibrant salsa rhythms to a packed house at the Onyx night club and in one night shattered the ice that has kept so many other Cuban musicians from performing in the city with the largest Cuban population outside of the island. Less than two years ago, Miami fans attending a similar concert by a Cuban jazz pianist were the targets of rocks and eggs thrown by angry Cuban-American protesters. Other events were routinely canceled after bomb threats were phoned in or Molotov cocktails were hurled through windows in protest.

Not a single protest occurred at Delgado's concert. The crowd of young expatriates danced as if they were dancing for the first time since leaving Cuba. After the first song, a medley of popular salsa tunes from Cuba and the US, Delgado summarized this historic breakthrough by saying, "Here or in Cuba, we are all part of the same family—we are all Cubans!"

Another landmark event occurred in Cuba itself earlier this year. Cuban dissidents and their families listened in shock and delight as Pope John Paul II, making

a historic visit to the island, criticized the denial of basic freedoms for Cuban citizens. The commander of the Cuban military, Fidel Castro's brother Raúl, sat uneasily during the mass, an unimaginable event several years earlier when Catholics could not join the Cuban Communist Party and the state was officially atheist.

After decades of mutual hostility, the Cuban government and the Cuban exile community appear to be engaged in a genuine process of ideological and social change. Too many significant social interactions are taking place between the exile community and island residents to be dismissed as insignificant. As Damián Fernández argues, it is precisely at this level of "*lo informal*" where the "politics of passion—politics construed as a moral imperative for absolute ends—and the politics of affection—politics based on an instrumental logic justified by who you know and who you love—combine to subvert the institutions of modern nation states as they sow incivility in social and political relations." This article takes Fernández's statement a step further, arguing that the social interactions taking place between Cuba and the exile community are indicative of an evolving relationship between sub-elite sectors across the ideological divide. This interaction may help resolve the ongoing conflict between intransigent elites in Cuba and Miami whose values are no longer congruent with popular values and expectations.

## THE POLITICS OF PASSION

The most famous example of the standoff between dominant elites in

Cuba and the Cuban-American community, and one which degenerated into an almost personal feud, involved the animosity between Fidel Castro and the recently deceased founder of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Jorge Mas Canosa. In 1994, *The New Republic* published an article that described Mas Canosa, son of an officer in Fulgencio Batista's army, as the *caudillo* of Miami. The article was the subject of a successful lawsuit by Mas Canosa, who objected to the use of the word "mobster" in the title; however, it convincingly chronicled the Cuban-American leader's attempts to ruin or discredit others who opposed his strategy of forcing Cuba into economic, political and social collapse. To further this goal, Mas Canosa built a vast network of political allies in Miami, Washington, D.C. and other politically important cities. Among the politicians *The New Republic* charged with benefiting from Mas-controlled contributions were, from Florida, Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Díaz Balart, Senator Connie Mack and Governor Lawton Chiles; from New Jersey, Representative Robert Menéndez and Senator Robert Torricelli; and Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina. Mas Canosa was able to penetrate the inner circle of the Clinton administration and secured de facto control of Radio and TV Martí, as well as the right to control who in the Cuban-American community would gain access to the White House. When the president convened a meeting in Washington to discuss changes in US policy towards Cuba after the *balsero* crisis

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Manny Hidalgo is a graduate student in Latin American and Caribbean studies at Florida International University. He is a founding member of Cubans and Americans for Educational Exchange (CAFE), an organization that promotes international student exchange with Cuba.

## *Forces for reconciliation in the Cuban and Cuban-American communities*



*Monument to the Cuban rafters, Little Havana, Miami, Florida. A growing number of Cubans and Cuban-Americans are more interested in pragmatic and constructive dialogue and exchange than in the divisive politics of the last 39 years, responsible for such tragedies as the sinking of boatloads of exiles fleeing the island.*

of 1994, the gathering included only those exiles who endorsed the CANF party line. This occurred despite a poll taken by *The Economist* in July 1994, which found that four out of five Cuban-Americans in Dade County favored "negotiations with the Cuban government to facil-

itate peaceful change." When Clinton's special advisor on Cuban affairs, Richard Nuccio, convened a follow-up meeting in Miami, only CANF-approved guests were invited.

Fidel Castro responded to Mas Canosa with his own verbal attacks and by routinely excluding the

CANF from any attempts at dialogue with the Cuban government. More important than his hatred for Mas Canosa and the CANF, however, is his continued persecution of residents of Cuba who have struggled to open more space for an independent civil society, especially



*Children at the Lenin Monument, Cuba. The pope's recent visit to Cuba and his public criticism of the Castro regime was but one indication of a more open attitude towards dialogue and negotiation in Cuban society.*

since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The Castro regime has repeatedly jailed Cuban human rights dissidents, accusing intellectuals and artists of collaborating with forces in the US to weaken and/or topple the Cuban Revolution. The most famous dissident roundup occurred in the weeks preceding a February 1996 conference organized by Concilio Cubano, a new umbrella coalition of human rights groups. The coalition announced its plans to meet well in advance and asked official permission from the government to hold the conference. And yet, most of the conference leaders were arrested and sentenced to 14 months in prison for contempt of authority.

On the day the conference was supposed to convene, Cuban forces shot down three small Cessnas piloted by members of Brothers to the Rescue, a nonviolent resistance group in Miami led by Mas Canosa ally José Basulto. Three Cuban-Americans and one expatriate

Cuban were killed. The incident touched off a firestorm of protests in Miami and the passage in Washington of the Helms-Burton Act, which tightened and codified the US embargo towards Cuba. Moderates went into hibernation as emotions in both Cuba and Miami ran high.

The Cuban government responded to the passage of the Helms-Burton Act by cracking down on members of Cuba's civil society it deemed counterrevolutionary. The targets of this repression included certain NGOs, such as the Washington-based Pax World Service, and the Center for the Study of the Americas (CEA) in Havana. Many of the CEA intellectuals were dispersed to other academic organizations, and a general freeze ensued on the study of the internal Cuban economic, political and social struggle.

#### THE POLITICS OF PRAGMATISM

Such instances of repression reinforced the intransigent elite stance

in both the Cuban and Cuban-American communities to the point that it began to alienate more moderate groups and individuals. In the last few years, this alienation has led to the emergence of subelite sectors in Cuba and Miami that pose a real challenge to the 39-year-old status quo. The recent activities of these groups indicate that growing numbers of Cubans and Cuban-Americans are more interested in pragmatic and constructive dialogue and exchange than in divisive and essentially destructive politics. Such politics, critics argue, have sunk more than 11 million Cubans into economic misery and left 1.5 million Cuban-Americans disillusioned and frustrated. Cynics have even proposed the classic conspiracy theory that the ideological divide has been artificially maintained *para la gente que vive del cuento*—by those who have found a way to benefit from the continued state of polarized relations. The very fact that this type of direct criticism is growing among people in both communities supports Anthony Maingot's assertion that "there is no ignoring that today the truly dynamic society which is taking shape, contrary to the wishes of both leaderships, is the social interaction (which is what makes society) between the exile community and the island residents."

Perhaps the best example of elite transition in the Cuban exile community came immediately after the pope's visit to Cuba, when the CANF experienced a falling-out with its congressional supporters. The controversy developed when the CANF's new executive director, José "Pepe" Hernández, declared the organization's support for a bill drafted by Senator Jesse Helms to send humanitarian assistance to Cuba through the Cuban Catholic Church. The CANF was attempting to discredit the Castro regime by

offering support that Cuba would have to refuse due to its political implications.

As anticipated, Castro immediately dismissed the offer as "repugnantly cynical." In a surprise twist, former CANF congressional stalwarts Ros-Lehtinen, Díaz Balart and Menéndez also rejected the proposal and refused to endorse or sponsor it in Congress. That the CANF would advance legislation without the unconditional support of the only three Cuban-American members of Congress was unprecedented. Hernández was publicly livid and the elite guard in Miami began showing signs of internal discord.

While CANF elites battled with their erstwhile allies in Congress, another organization emerged to fill the vacuum. The Cuban Committee for Democracy (CCD) was founded in 1993 and describes itself as a nonprofit organization seeking "a peaceful, negotiated transition to democracy in Cuba." On March 31, 1998, 160 CCD-affiliated Cuban-Americans from Miami and their non-Cuban American allies flew to Washington, D.C. on a chartered plane to participate in a National Day of Advocacy and Education on Cuba. The delegation was received by Senator Christopher Dodd and Congressman Esteban Torres, who have sponsored the Senate and House versions of bills intended to lift restrictions on the sale of food and medicine to the island. This meeting marked a new milestone in the relationship between moderate sub-elite Cuban-Americans and governing elites in Washington. For the first time in Cuban exile political history, a group of moderate political sub-elites led by the CCD had emerged to represent the views of moderate Cuban-Americans in Miami. These demands were captured by a 1997 poll conducted by Florida International University's Institute for Public Opinion

Research, which revealed that 56% of Cubans in Miami favored allowing US companies to sell medicine to Cuba. Another 44% supported food sales to the island, while 52% favored "establishing a national dialogue among Cuban exiles, Cuban dissidents, and representatives of the Cuban government."

Along with various other organizations, including Cambio Cubano, Christian Democrats, Radio Transición and Radio Progreso, the CCD has attempted to establish a dialogue with Cuba to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy on the island. These efforts have met with great enthusiasm from the Vatican, the Cuban Conference of Bishops and at least 135 members of the US Congress who support the Dodd-Torres bill. These efforts coincide with the easing of restrictions on travel and cash remittances to Cuba and permission for US pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies to sell their products there.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was Fidel Castro's generally positive and conciliatory reaction to these overtures, which came in stark contrast to the views expressed by the three Cuban-American congressional representatives, the CANF and Brothers to the Rescue. Their views were best expressed by Ninoska Pérez-Castellón, a CANF director, who said in a radio interview that the administration's moves were prompted by "a collusion of characters—fakes and opportunists who want to do business with Cuba."

A poll conducted by Univisión's Miami affiliate on the evening after the US policy changes were announced revealed that out of 22,000 callers, 68% agreed with the president's actions. The gap between the Cuban-American elite in favor of the US embargo towards Cuba and the sub-elite sector in favor of normalizing relations and

pursuing a peaceful transition to democracy through dialogue was clearly widening.

#### FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

Scholars have expressed some concern about future generations of moderate elite leaders in the Cuban-American community. Second-generation Cuban-Americans have been raised in a political culture quite distinct from that of their parents, and many are "burned out" on the topic of Cuba, which is discussed ad nauseam in their households. Rubén Rumbaut predicts that a "post-exile Cuban-American generation will see itself mostly and natively as American, with or without the hyphen, and that (they) will see Cuba nostalgically as origin but not as destiny, as the past and wished-for future of their *criollo* parents—but not as their own." Yet, recent data show that the second generation is eager to pursue a dialogue with Cuba. A 1997 Cuba Poll conducted by the Institute of Public Opinion Research at Florida International University revealed that Cuban-Americans born in the US were more open to dialogue and ending the US embargo than any other group polled. They were also the group most in favor of playing contemporary music from the island on Miami radio stations and allowing Cuban musicians to perform in the US.

Taking this data into consideration, it is plausible to conclude that new generations of sub-elites in Cuba and Miami may succeed in finding the common ground that eluded the majority of their parents. It will be in this context that a new relationship between Cubans and Cuban-Americans will be built and nurtured in a spirit of peace and reconciliation. Such are the hopes and aspirations of millions of Cubans and Cuban-Americans across the ideological divide. ■

# Lengua Franca

Teresa Palomo Acosta

## Las girls van de compras para gourmet food

It's Irene who first tells me  
to check out the canned tripas  
or was it canned menudo? In the aisles of  
el supermercado.

Y de volada I call las girls—  
who are game. Once in the tiendota,  
they run ahead of me,  
duck down the "Spanish" food aisle.  
Faint olores of comino y ajo in cellophane wrappers  
arise from neatly stocked shelves.

Reaching for cans of tripas y jalapeños en sauce,  
we throw them, one after the other,  
into our supermercado shopping cart.  
De volada, as if we were in a concurso  
for premios for more cans of comida mexicana  
stacked in a shopping cart in under five minutes.

Al fin del cuento  
la cart parece un piramide anciano  
but without  
las explosiones del olor  
of home cooking the arroz y fideo.

No, these are merely botes full of chismes  
Without a reason for being,  
except for dinero para los conglomerates,  
except for time to waste  
in the post modern vida Chicana  
that las girls endure every day.

## Lipstick numero tres\*

Time to let my lips be plain and clean.  
Say they're mine to do with what I want,  
which is to leave them alone, beginning now.  
Time to let my labios rest  
in their light mud brown  
and gentle pinkish wrinkles.  
Time to end the six dollars  
and ninety-five cents bargain deals  
in which I've invested  
from my fourteenth year,  
mas o menos, until now.  
Time to eat the food I want  
and drink the water I need  
without requiring  
the holy pencil to rake itself  
for the umpteenth time  
over my lips, which are trying  
to tell truths these days.  
Yes they are.  
My Pesina, Palomo, Alderete, Acosta  
labios.  
So deliciously and plainly bold.

*\*This poem is part of a series of four related works.*

*Teresa Palomo Acosta was born and raised in McGregor, Texas. She received a B.A. in ethnic studies from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.S. in journalism from Columbia University. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in print since 1976 and have*



**Spell my name**

My name is Cristina Lopez Gonzalez.  
That's Cristina without the h  
and Gonzalez with a z.  
(Here a shrug.)

Yo me llamo Josefina Paulette Gomez  
and there's an accent mark  
on the o in Gomez  
but we don't use it.  
(Here a smile and a tilt of the head towards me.)

I'm Pedro. Last name Rodriguez—which is w-a-ay  
too largo for me. But I'll give it a try.  
(Here a concentrated frown, pencil midair.)

I'm Nico—well Nicolas;  
that's the English way of saying it  
and the Spanish way of spelling.  
(Here a broad grin.)

Question, Nico: Do you like it that way?  
Answer: well, yeah.  
My 'buela insists on the Spanish version.  
Question, Nico: What do you like?  
(Here a shrug and a "both.")

I mind my 'buela. If she says it in Spanish,  
I say it's a-ok with me.  
(Here a spontaneous "Nicolás,"  
como en Spanish.)

Here  
the mark of Tex-Mex is  
on every tongue/lengua franca.  
Y no importa que digan los jefes,  
who bend over the Spanish  
dictionary, counting every missed syllable.

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won numerous awards. She has taught Chicana studies at the University of Texas at Austin and currently serves as a literacy tutor for Spanish-dominant first- and second-graders in Austin, Texas.

# Life on the Margins

Janet Jarman

The temperature exceeded 100 degrees as the sun pierced the earth. A fierce breeze lifted dust from hundreds of unpaved roads in Matamoros, a rapidly expanding city on the US-Mexican border. These inferno-like conditions hardly deterred the several dozen families working in the municipal dump, who resisted the stench and heat. Among them were Eloisa Fernández, 39, and three of her nine children. Together, they and other families sifted through the city's waste searching for recyclable items to use and sell.

Eloisa and her children lived one kilometer from the dump. Each day they worked there, seeking food for their livestock, clothing to reuse, glass and cans to resell. Each month, Eloisa awaited a check from her husband, Vinicio, who worked as a migrant farm worker in the United States with their eldest son, Juan. One day, "I hope we all can live together and find a better life in the United States," she said.

Four months later, in December 1996, Eloisa's dream became reality. Vinicio returned to Matamoros to rest between harvest seasons. In mid-December, he received news

that one of his former field bosses had enough work for the whole family on a strawberry farm near Tampa, Florida.

Vinicio had always wanted to bring his family to the US, but the risks and costs had seemed too high. Although he had a legal US residence card and work permit, and the two youngest children, who were born on the US side of the border, qualified as US citizens, residence petitions for Eloisa and the other children were still pending. They would be at the mercy of US border officials if they tried to cross. "They can make up any reason not to let you through," Vinicio explained. "The ones you really have to watch out for are the Mexican agents hired by the US government. They're the ones who will stab you in the back," he said.

Despite these obstacles, December seemed like an opportune time to make a move, especially since the family had guaranteed work until June. Juan and his father worked quickly to prepare their 1977 van for the two-day journey to Florida.

Family members packed few personal belongings to avoid looking conspicuous at the border. Many Matamoros residents are permitted to enter the US to shop inside a 25-mile radius, but US patrols are quick to interrogate drivers of overcrowded and other suspect vehicles. The family also had to pass through a second, more difficult immigration station outside this radius. For this, they waited until 10 p.m., when they knew there would be a border patrol shift change. It is rumored that officials are less vigilant during this



**WORKING.** August 1996, Matamoros. Marisol, 9, helps her mother, Eloisa, sort through garbage deposited in the Matamoros municipal dump. Approximately 50 families work in the dump, collecting metal, cans and other recyclable and reusable items. Sharp objects, disease vectors, fires and smoke are among the hazards they face working there.

Janet Jarman is a freelance photojournalist based in London. She specializes in environmental and Latin American issues and can be reached via e-mail at [jjarman@gn.apc.org](mailto:jjarman@gn.apc.org). This photo essay is part of an ongoing project documenting the lives of migrant families in the US. The names used are pseudonyms.



***PRAYING.** August 1996, Matamoros. During a prayer service in the dump, Wisconsin residents visiting a Texas-based ministry pray for Eloisa. At the time, she suffered severe stomach pains and headaches.*



*MARISOL. August 1996, Matamoros. Portrait of Marisol at dusk as she and family members wait for another rubbish load.*

changeover; in this case, at least, the theory proved true. The family crossed the checkpoint successfully and continued driving for 36 hours to reach Florida. There, they began etching a new life for themselves in the state's agricultural heartland.

Upon first impressions, the family appeared to be much better off in its new surroundings. Many other Mexicans had settled in the area, from Matamoros and from as far away as Guadalajara and Oaxaca. Vinicio's cousin and his family lived nearby in another trailer, providing a convenient social and family support network. A nearby community church supplied

them with clothing and other household items, and the children began to attend American schools and to learn English.

At the same time, however, the small three-room trailer they rented was too cramped for a family of 11. At night, they heard rats running between the walls. Eloisa and her children felt isolated and homesick for Mexico. Financially, they could barely break even due to the higher cost of living in the US. Monthly rent came to \$500. Weekly food bills averaged \$150. During a good week, they could gross \$800 with five family members working, leaving little opportunity for savings.

Financial tension and limited work during the summer began dividing the family. At one point, Eloisa nearly returned to Mexico, threatening to take the children with her. Eventually, family members reached a compromise; they moved to a small town in Texas, where Eloisa has sisters. They have remained there for the last year. Despite numerous difficulties, mostly related to limited resources, Vinicio and Eloisa are grateful that the whole family is together, finally, in a country where they can find work. "We struggled enough in Mexico," Eloisa said, referring over and over again to "*el dolor*" (literally, "the pain," or anguish) she

experienced trying to survive in Matamoros.

Contrary to the stereotypes many Americans hold of illegal aliens who cost US taxpayers billions of dollars in social services, Vinicio and his family are proud not to tap into the various government hand-outs available to them. Vinicio cites abundant work opportunities in the US as the primary reason for moving and is certain that his family's situation can improve little by little in this country. "If we keep working together like this, one day we can have something," he once said in Florida. "We could save enough money to build a house out of *bloque* (cinderblocks or other permanent material) in Mexico."

After one year in the US, the family now rents such a house in Texas. Their next goal is to purchase the home for \$35,000. This dream may take more time. Currently, both Vinicio and Eloisa work nights earning between \$5.20 and \$5.70 an hour. Eloisa washes dishes in a local restaurant, and Vinicio works at a local chain store unloading boxes from 10 p.m. to dawn. Just recently, they discussed moving to Oklahoma or back to Florida, where they could earn higher wages. This would mean uprooting the children for a third time, threatening their progress in school and their friendships in the Texas town.

Despite the modest progress they have made rebuilding their lives in the US, the Fernández family continues to live a transient existence. For them and hundreds of other Mexican families who have crossed the border into the US, the only certainty remains uncertainty.



**COMFORT.** August 1996, Matamoros. Marisol fans her four-month-old sister on a hot summer day when the temperature in Matamoros exceeded 100 degrees.

Photo Essay: Life on the Margins



*CANDLE. August 1996, Matamoros. Nanci finishes her homework by candlelight. Although city officials installed poles in 1995, cables to carry electricity had not yet arrived a year later.*





*BATH. August 1996, Matamoros. Kristina and her sisters, Eloisa and Marisol (left to right), bathe outside the home their family built in Colonia de Cambio, close to the municipal dump. Through a hose, they access piped water near their home. The supply is erratic and of poor quality, often forcing them to buy drinking water from private vendors.*



*CHURCH.* August 1996, Matamoros. Marisol daydreams during Sunday school while the teacher warns the children that if they do not follow God, they will end up like delinquents in the US, who bring guns to school and disrespect their parents.



*EXHAUSTION.* January 1997, Florida. Eloisa appears exhausted after working in the fields all day. Although agricultural labor was “cleaner” than the dump, the work was physically much harder, she said. For the first few weeks, she suffered painful skin rashes on her face from the pesticides used on the plants. In addition to picking strawberries, Eloisa has worked assembly jobs manufacturing sports clothing and as a dishwasher in two Texas restaurants.





*STRAWBERRIES. January 1997, Florida. Vinicio, 43, picks strawberries during a rare winter freeze in Florida. Strawberries are one of the highest-value crops for farmers, but also one of the most fragile. Migrants call them “frutas del diablo” (devil’s fruit), since picking them is one of the lowest paid and most labor-intensive jobs. Workers must bend at the waist for hours and concentrate on picking berries only of a certain size, firmness, shape and color. The fruit is then arranged neatly into baskets to attract the shopper’s eye.*



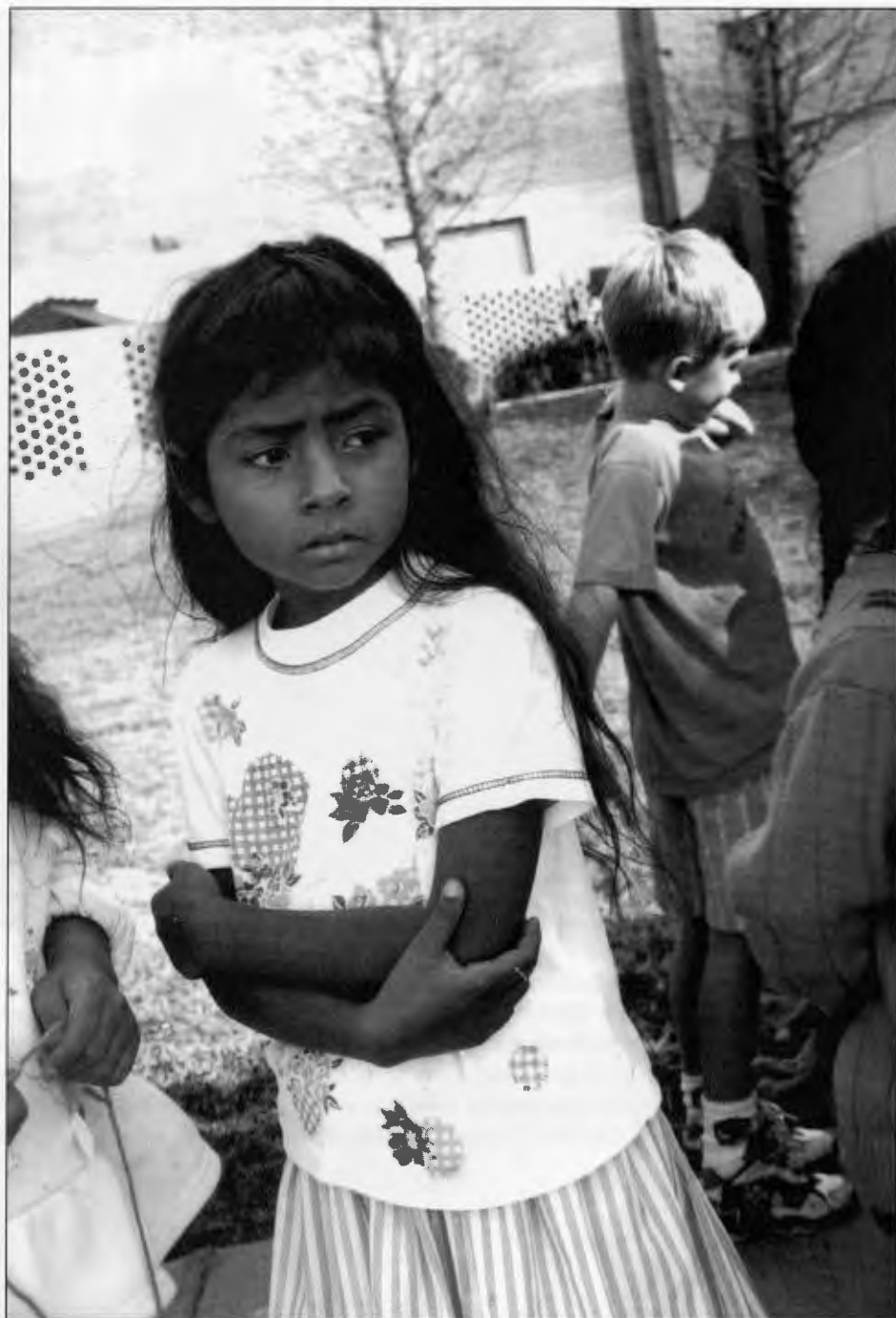
*FASHION. January 1997, Florida. Sandra, 17, seemed pleased as she and other family members tried on American clothing donated to them by a local church. Such happy moments were few, however; among her siblings, Sandra suffered most after moving. Once very religious and a promising student in Matamoros, Sandra ceased attending church and school upon arriving in the US. Almost immediately, her role shifted to primary caretaker and cook, while her parents labored in the fields and her younger siblings attended American schools. Her situation worsened after the move to Texas, leading her for a time to contemplate suicide. In an attempt to separate herself from her family completely, Sandra recently moved in with her boyfriend, Hugo. The couple expect a child in November.*



*RUN. January 1997, Florida. Kristina, Marisol and Pedro race through the yard surrounding their trailer home in Florida, where they had much more space to play than in Mexico. The ground was soft and sandy, instead of the mud and broken glass that surrounded their home near the dump in Matamoros.*

Photo Essay: Life on the Margins

*AMERICAN SCHOOL/FIRST DAY. January 1997, Florida. Marisol waits outside with other classmates on her first day of school in the United States. She and siblings Pedro and Kristina seemed nervous yet excited on this day. This particular school in Florida caters to migrant children.*





*BUS/FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. January 1997, Florida. On the way to school, children observe their new classmate.*

# STRANGERS AMONG US

HOW LATINO IMMIGRATION IS TRANSFORMING AMERICA



*BUBBLES. June 1998, Texas. In front of their house, Kristina (left) and Eloisa Fernández discover bubble blowing with soap given to them by a neighbor.*

# Identity Crisis

M. Karen Bracken

## Strangers Among Us: How Latino Immigration Is Transforming America

by Roberto Suro

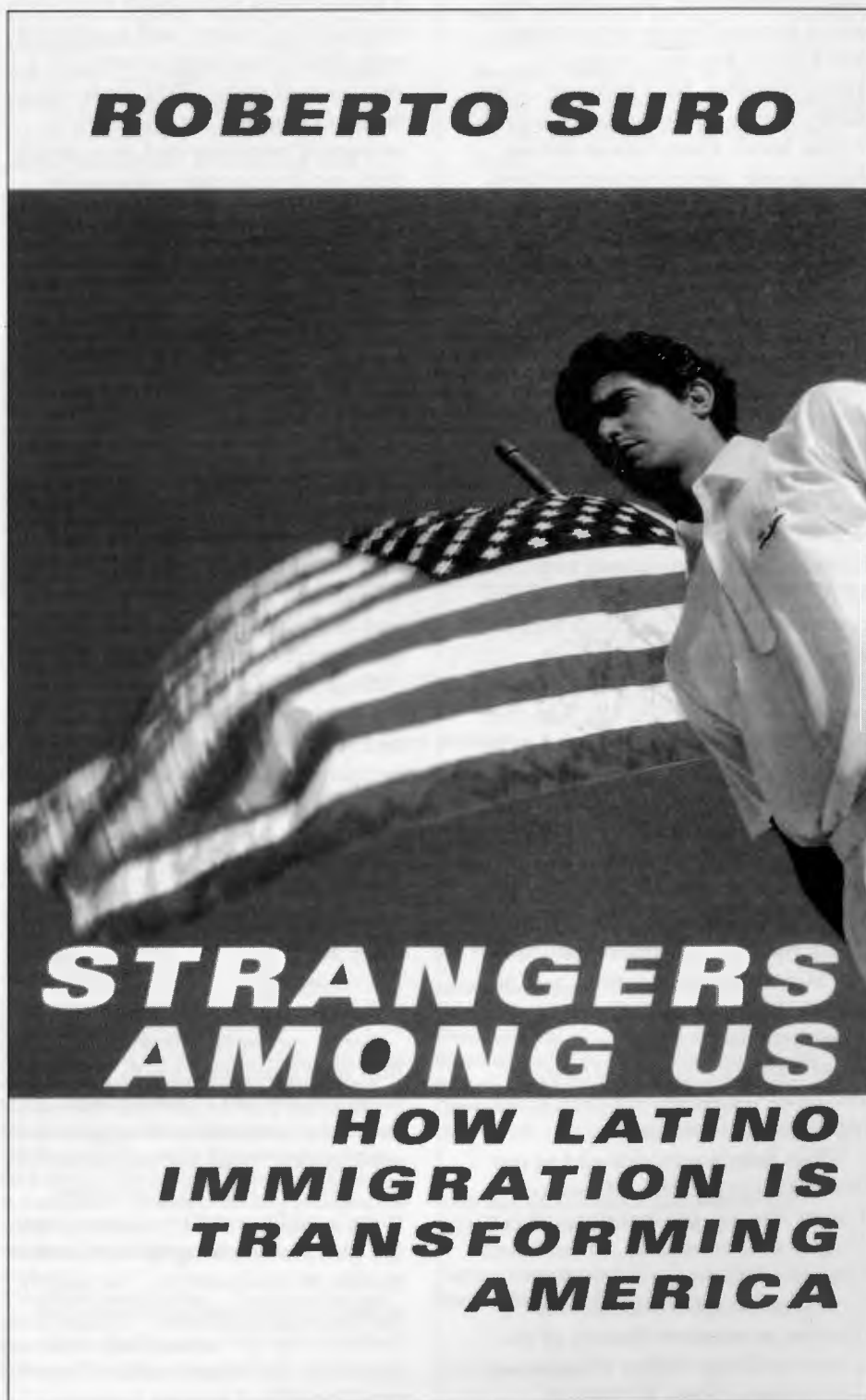
New York: Knopf, 1998. 349 pages.

\$18.87

Still reeling from the civil rights movement's efforts to end the separate and unequal structure of its race and class system, the United States is in grave danger of repeating the same mistakes with a new segment of the population: the Latino immigrants of the post-segregation era. The social, political and economic challenges arising from immigration have sparked a national identity crisis and pose a new litmus test for democracy. So argues journalist Roberto Suro, currently with *The Washington Post*. Suro sets out to demonstrate the effects of this crisis on natives and newcomers alike, and proposes some well-reasoned steps to alleviate it. To make his case he takes the reader on a tour of Latino neighborhoods across the country for a nuanced examination of the condition and context of the "strangers among us."

One of the lasting impressions of this tour is the great diversity of the Latino population, a fact well known to scholars and those who have tried to deal with or organize Latinos as

M. Karen Bracken is assistant director of the Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University. A sociologist, she teaches and researches immigration, race, ethnic relations and women's work in Latin America and the Caribbean.



though they comprised a monolithic entity bound by common culture. This diversity is less familiar to Americans who rely on shadowy stereotypes or their experience with one local piece of the vast mosaic. Taken individually, the *barrios* present a gamut of apparent successes and failures for their occupants. Taken together, Suro proposes, they present evidence for great concern.

New York's Puerto Rican barrio, for example, never recovered from the drastic loss of manufacturing jobs that went south, and remains mired in social disintegration, welfare dependency and despair. And while the city's Dominican barrio may be full of infectious energy and rhythms, it is infected by a dependence on drug trafficking and fly-by-night businesses. Los Angeles teems with eager, low-skilled "enablers" who cluster conspicuously in curbside labor markets to compete for informal jobs at minimum wage, or arrive inconspicuously at the homes, restaurants, office buildings and car washes of the wealthy. If these floaters are lucky they will land a permanent low-paying job, join the ranks of the working poor and move to a bungalow in gang-plagued East L.A. Likewise, Houston's Hispanic neighborhoods house a cheerful army of Mexicans and Central Americans who will bag your groceries and sweep your floors, and thank you for the opportunity to do so. Miami is the exception, a showcase immigrant barrio that encompasses an entire county, serves as broker for the circum-Caribbean and rivals the Anglo population for high-income households.

While Suro's accounts add to our understanding of the differences among barrios, his real purpose is to suggest a commonality. From South Central to Washington Heights, immigrant neighborhoods may become permanent fixtures of the urban landscape rather than transitional zones. Suro, the son of

Puerto Rican and Ecuadorian parents, acknowledges that many Latinos never enter the barrio. Others achieve the social mobility to leave it, like other ethnic groups before them. But the extensive Latino barrios stand apart from the surrounding society, and conditions may dictate that they become traps, not ports of entry. This situation is both self-imposed by those with a sojourner mentality and structurally imposed by economic changes in this country. For the outsider, the barrio denotes otherness, as enclaves always have, while for the insider, it may demarcate how far one can penetrate American society. Some comparisons can be drawn with the squatter settlements of most Latin American cities; no matter how crucial the goods and services they provide, no matter how entwined in interactions with other urban dwellers, residents of these areas are somehow always deemed "marginal," and must fight tooth and claw to extract resources from the powers that be.

Since the 1960s, the mechanisms for leaving the barrio have eroded and the urgency to do so has been tempered by transnationality. Suro's concern is that many Latino immigrants, for all of their dynamism and high hopes, will be unable to contribute their best to our nation or receive the best that it has to offer. They are begrudgingly allowed into the country, only to be denied full benefits once they are here.

Public sentiment about immigration waxes and wanes with precipitating events and is closely and inversely correlated with economic swings at the local and national levels. And yet, even in good times there is widespread resentment over the profound demographic transformation of this country. The targets of such resentment are most often Latinos, who are more likely to be located at the bottom of the "hourglass" profile of current immigra-

tion trends. This image suggests a polarized pattern of highly educated and skilled immigrants at the top, with minimally educated and less-skilled immigrants at the bottom. It is very difficult for those at the bottom to squeeze their way upward through the narrow waist of the hourglass.

Suro contends that the generational social mobility experienced by the last great wave of immigrants to this country—embodied in the process "peddler to plumber to professional"—is no longer a viable assumption for many new arrivals. The steppingstone blue-collar jobs barely exist, and a good education is more important than ever for achieving the American Dream. The children of Latino immigrants are falling through the cracks, as evidenced by their high dropout rate and the alienation they express. Suro's interviews reveal a generation crippled by frustration, alternately angry and distraught at the prospect of social rejection. Past and current efforts to integrate immigrants and their offspring, to bring them out of the barrio and into the national community, have been confused at best. At worst, such individuals are being prepared for second-class citizenry.

While many adult immigrants can favorably compare low-status jobs and low wages in the US with what they left behind, or choose to defer material comforts in this country to send remittances back home, their children have a different frame of reference. They are Americans, confronted with questions of class, race and identity which their elders are willing to ignore. They are not going back home; they *are* home, with all of the expectations that this magnet country produces but few of the tools to realize them. Our challenge as a nation is to prepare them for productive, fulfilling roles in this society, despite our resistance to view them as peers.



While some observers might attribute resentment of poor Latino immigrants to racism, bigotry and xenophobia, Suro considers such emotions to be effects rather than causes. Some of the US public's anxiety stems from real or perceived competition. African-Americans are especially concerned about losing newly won ground to the traditional and degrading pattern of ethnic succession. They are frightened of being eclipsed by the sheer numbers of new minorities and by the "comfort factor" that causes the mainstream to prefer dealing with new groups that lack the historical baggage of black Americans. In contrast, whites who express anti-immigrant sentiments worry that national borders have become irrelevant, that the government has lost control or devotes all its resources to special interest groups, and that the

average Joe must foot the bill for millions of illegal immigrants with few prospects, high fertility rates, urgent needs, a disregard for the law and allegiance to some distant nation. These critics argue that low levels of language acquisition and naturalization rates among Latinos are proof that they are not committed to a future in this country, and so do not deserve valuable government resources. Frustration and anger often blur the distinctions between legal and illegal, employed and unemployed, assets and liabilities, the short term and the long term. Suro concludes that we can bring these distinctions back into focus by dealing seriously and systematically with illegal immigration.

The book's concluding chapters offer a number of logical suggestions for taking back the border. Suro addresses his arguments to

groups he feels wrongly aid and abet illegal immigration. He takes the bold move of asking US Latinos to reconsider their advocacy of illegal aliens, arguing that the backlash has extended to legal immigrants as well. And while he urges US citizens to take a more democratic attitude toward immigration, he is sympathetic toward those who have begun to feel like strangers in their own land.

The only shortcoming of Suro's work is that he himself stops at the border; that is, he does not address the international dimensions of immigration. This aspect is notably absent from an otherwise comprehensive treatment of the issues. It would be intriguing to hear what Suro would say to our hemispheric neighbors if his policy suggestions with regard to illegal immigration were implemented. ■



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Photo by Louise O'Farrell.

# Latinos in the US

Marian Goslinga

**L**atinos constitute the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Separated by regional differences yet united by a common cultural heritage, they are a force to be reckoned with in US society. Their influence is felt in politics, economics, literature, education, science, art, sports and just about every other sphere of activities. Due to Latino pressure and lobbying, for instance, bilingualism has become an important educational as well as political issue which can no longer be relegated to the back-ground.

Many US metropolitan areas have a distinctly Latino flavor. Los Angeles alone is home to fully one-fifth of the nation's Latino population. Other cities with sizeable Latino communities include Miami, with its high percentage of Cubans; New York, which has attracted many Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and other Caribbean Hispanics; and Chicago, a steady magnet for Mexicans. Texas cities such as Houston, Dallas and San Antonio are also known for their large Mexican-American populations.

Although the Latino "umbrella" embraces all these peoples, for reasons of space, the ensuing bibliography will list only those materials (books and periodical articles) which deal with Latinos as a group. The titles below are a sample of the many works published recently on Latinos in all walks of life.

*Marian Goslinga is the Latin American and Caribbean librarian at Florida International University.*

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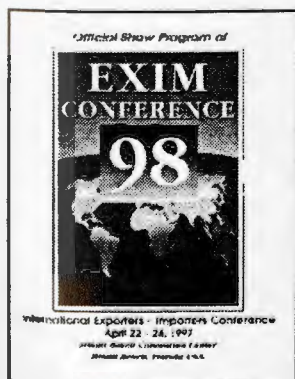
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