Scholarship and Justice: Thoughts of a Latin Americanist
By Nelson Valdes

Latin America has been in the news lately, Guerrillas in El Salvador, counter-revolutionaries in Honduras, revolution in Nicaragua, Caribbean Basin Initiative, the growing debt, Sendero Luminoso, frustrated coup in Bolivia, mass mobilization in Cuba, return to democracy in Argentina, Contadora, FMLN, repression in Chile, death squads, Catholic priests defying the Pope, and so on.

The growing interest in Latin America by the U.S. public seems to follow the policy interests of the American government. It would be a welcome concern, if the signs behind the development did not spell out the worst possible scenarios. We as Latin Americanists are better equipped to deal with these growing concerns. We need to reassess our views and see where we stand.

By profession I am a Latin Americanist; that is, a person who earns a living by following, studying, analyzing and teaching what has happened or is happening in Latin America. I am an educator, and consequently my remarks revolve around the theme of the role of a university teacher and the responsibility of a Latin Americanist educator toward his students and toward the area in which he claims to have knowledge.

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Note: Dr. Nelson Valdes, Asst. Prof. of Sociology at UNM, delivered this talk on Sept. 25, 1984. In it he raises the question of the university’s responsibility to relate justice and scholarship, an issue that is still pertinent today. It was published in the UCM Prophet. He has allowed us to publish it with his permission in LIMON.
Dear Readers:

This year 2006-2007, I hope to fill the pages of LIMON, with your help of course, with riveting political information from Latin America, Indigenous America, the Borderlands, and related themes. This newsletter should be an outlet to let your political opinions and voice be heard on this campus. Please take the time to create dialogue on pressing issues by contributing to our newsletter. Additionally, I really want people to contribute information on current work done by organizations in the campus or in the community related to Latin American peoples.

I am always open to ideas and if you have any questions or suggestions regarding LIMON, please contact me at ymorales@unm.edu.

Sincerely,
Yvette Morales
LIMON Editor

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

YWU: Young Women United is based in South East Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is a youth organization for young women of color (ACTIVISTS) from the ages 13-19 (circle of strength) and an older group 19-35 (Circle of Fire). We work on community based issues that involve women of color and we focus on changing the society for those who are coming up in our community. We've been working on a campaign for 3 years trying to get comprehensive sex education in middle schools and high schools. We have done a lot of work and been noticed! It's been really hard but we will not stop until we see what we want actually being taught in schools. We attended the 2006 legislative session in Santa Fe, presented our memorial and were tabled, but we will be back in 2007.

Please check out our SISTERFIRE EVENT, a benefit for YWU, on Saturday October 21, 2006 at City on a Hill (formerly the LOBO theatre). Live Music, Hip Hop, Poetry, Theatre, Art, Dance! An organizing project created by and for young women of color in Burque. For more info contact Young Women United at (505) 831-8930.

HIGHLIGHTING YOUR LOCAL ORG:
Dear Solistas:

SOLAS is you. We are a diverse student community with different social and cultural backgrounds, yet we are a family. We view ourselves as a familia that values academics, culture, and community. This is the fuel that ignites us! We have many activities coming up: our usual brown bags, monthly movies, social events, community service, and much more. I encourage you to come out and join us for the various events planned for this fall. This semester, we will participate in the ‘Reflejos de las Mujeres de Juarez Symposium’ sponsored by the Arts of the Americas Institute, The Peace and Justice Center and several other organizations. I invite you to get involved in this community event; if you are interested in volunteering please contact me. Also, we will start planning the Zapatista Fundraising and the Sin Fronteras Film Festival, so keep your eyes open.

In becoming part of our community please offer your suggestions, this is your organization! Express your ideas, take risks, and challenge the status quo. Nothing is more important to the success of our organization than your feedback, support and participation. I would also like to congratulate all of the new officers; I am looking forward to working with all of you this year and I would also like to welcome all of the new LAS students; I am looking forward to knowing each and every one of you. To all of the returning SOLAS members, this would be a good year to stay abreast and active. To Yvette Morales, the LIMON editor; what a tremendous job you have done. To the LAII, thank you for your ongoing support.

As the semester progresses I will update you with news and information through our list serve. Feel free to e-mail at ivis@unm.edu, or stop by the office, with your questions and concerns. To learn more about our awesome organization, visit our website: http://laii.unm.edu/solas/. I look forward to another exciting year for SOLAS. Have a wonderful and successful semester.

En Solaridad,
Ivis García Zambrana
SOLAS President
CUCHARITAS PARA LAS LOMAS: The Albuquerque community works from the heart, By Cecilia Chavez, Community Organizer

The Cucharitas para Lomas initiative promotes the advancement of Fundacion Maria Sagrario AC, a grassroots organization of women in Lomas de Poleo, a colonia on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez. Fundacion Maria Sagrario was founded by Paula Flores, the mother of Sagrario, who was murdered in 1998. Maria Sagrario was one of the 400 victims of violence against women in the area, a situation that is ongoing since 1993. The Fundacion has founded a preschool for children of the colonia; it also trains women in literacy and occupational skills, as well as provides a base for activism against the violence against women.

The Student Organization for Latin American Studies of UNM, along with the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice and conscious individual volunteers, will be holding a book drive for books in Spanish for the 170 preschool children in the colonia at a couple of Albuquerque elementary schools.

Also, to supply the kitchen for the preschool, we are requesting monetary donations to purchase cucharitas, bowls, mugs, pots and pans so the children can receive a warm cooked meal at preschool. The total amount we would like to raise is $1,200.

We are supporting the Amnesty International-UNM fundraiser event on November 18th at the Golden West (downtown). The event, featuring four musical bands, will raise funds for a building in which the women can expand their base and training activities. We will keep you posted.

For further information, please contact Renee at 344-5735 or Ivis at 363-8893. You can drop your monetary contribution at SOLAS or at the Peace Center, 202 Harvard SE, 87106 from Monday to Friday, 9 am - 5 pm. Make your check to ACP&J or SOLAS, earmarked 'cucharitas'.

We need volunteers!

Please contact us!
I began my formal studies in Nahuatl over a year and a half ago in San Agustín Oapan. Nestled between high mountain ranges and the Balsas River, Oapan is one of several politically, economically, and socially vibrant Nahuatl-speaking communities in central Guerrero, Mexico. With support from a LAII FLAS fellowship, Oapan became my second home in the summer of 2004. This summer, after a year of colonial Nahuatl study at UCLA, I returned to Oapan for two weeks in August to continue my study of Nahuatl and work on transcriptions of colonial Nahuatl litigation texts related to my own research of Spanish-Nahua relations within colonial urban centers.

Although I had been informed, or rather warned, about the physical rigors of studying an indigenous language in the remote mountainous regions of southern Mexico, I took on the challenge and came away with much more than only language skills. What I gained from my immersion in this region that summer was a glimpse of the gendered interplay between community residents and outsiders, not to mention lifelong compañeros in research and revelry.

Much of my time away from my language studies was spent practicing my communication skills in Nahuatl while learning to become, as the ladies in the village put it, cihuatl, a woman. Vero, Margarita, Isabel, Ernestina, Emiliana, and Tia, the women of my host family and some neighbors, would give me biweekly assignments, including grinding chiles in a molcaxetl to make a chilmolli, grinding maíz in a metlatl to make tortillas (and then cooking them on an extremely hot comalli), and, curiously, meeting them for weekly meetings in the community plaza to take part in the local politics. Oddly, the other three female Nahuatl students present in summer 2004 had not been receiving similar treatment, although they did take part, at times, in my “training.” While I had been studying them and their language, had the community ladies taken me on as their summer project? Or, did the ladies’ behavior differ towards the four of us (the female students) due to other factors, such as appearance, personality, communication abilities in Nahuatl, and/or race/ethnicity?

This summer, because I was accompanied by a male researcher, I could not compare the treatment I received from community ladies with that received by other outsider women. Also, because of the brevity of my research visit, there wasn’t time to “train.” However, at the party held by my host family the night before I left, guess who made some nicely shaped tortillas? That’s right! I am woman! Hear my hands tortear!

In my research visits to Oapan, Guerrero over the past two years, I have experienced what may be the true rigors of fieldwork, which may have less to do with physical environment and much to do with the gendered social constructs of a particular community as well as the gender of the researcher. In any case, fieldwork in Oapan has had a lasting impression on my studies. For those interested in studying Nahuatl, I highly recommend its study in Oapan, via the Yale University summer language institute taught by Dr. Jonathan Amith.
In summer 2006 I had the opportunity to join a UNM study trip to Nicaragua and Costa Rica called “Social Dynamics of Global Change”. Without doing justice to the complexity of the program, we studied the local and not so local responses to global changes. The variety of the trip was surprising, ranging from law and economics to NGOs and peace education; we had the opportunity to meet with experts, teachers, grassroots organizers and professionals from these areas. The people we talked to and the institutions we visited had a profound impact on me and on the other students in our group. I’ll discuss three themes that emerged in our time there—CAFTA, machismo, and community education.

In Costa Rica much of the discussion centered around CAFTA—the Central America Free Trade Agreement—which has not yet been approved there. The biggest problem with neoliberalism, as one classmate put it, is the removal of obligation on the part of the state to provide for the well-being of its people. As a result, Nicaragua is an example of a neoliberal government that doesn’t provide adequate basic social services for its people. Costa Ricans had a sense of pride in their state-run services, such as healthcare and education. From what we experienced, the negatives of CAFTA seem overwhelming. Protests and blockage of streets by taxis are likely to emerge in the coming months to counter CAFTA passage in Costa Rica.

In Nicaragua machismo, the concept that justifies male chauvinism and violence against women, is a very serious problem. Members of our group met with a representative of Red de Mujeres, a grassroots organization that has 250 women working in communities in northern Nicaragua to educate men and women about domestic violence and also provides legal advice for abused women. Grassroots organizations such as this one arise out of a need for social protection, which the state has failed to provide as a result of the cuts in social spending.

We learned that sex education is non-existent in public schools in Nicaragua, resulting in ignorance about sexually transmitted diseases. An organization we met with, Puntos de Encuentro, produces telenovelas and radio programs in an effort to educate Nicaraguan young people about STDs, HIV/AIDS, cultural myths and customs that degrade women.

One of our professors said that he sees the greatest battle of our time as a war not on terrorism or drugs, but the war on poverty. If it is indeed a war, then under CAFTA and the Structural Adjustment Policies of the World Bank and IMF, the state has been disarmed. If what some of our speakers said is true and CAFTA is inevitable, then the hope falls to grassroots organizations like the ones we met with in Nicaragua to keep populations from slipping back into poverty and ignorance.
The stalemate arrived at in the US congress by competing visions for border security and immigration reform reflects the irreconcilably divergent positions found in society at large. Concerns range: from asserting sovereignty over US territory and fortifying the border against terrorist infiltrators, preserving Anglo-Saxon aspects of US culture, protecting jobs and stemming the tide of outgoing remittances; to gaining official oversight over extant migrant populations, ensuring the availability of labor for key sectors of the economy, and allowing for a semblance of civil rights. The resulting immigration debate has occurred along a continuum ranging from punitive and forceful exclusion on one side to acceptance and integration on the other. This continuum and the various root rationales for exerting alien population control and frontier defense are not new phenomena to the southern US border region. In fact, many current strategies for addressing immigration and border issues recall the 18th century Bourbon policies for northern New Spain.

Throughout the northern reaches of New Spain, the physical presence of free nomadic peoples and their adherence to native ways were roadblocks to Spain's territorial expansion and cultural hegemony. As with current US views towards immigration, "the Indian question" concerned both sovereign control of area and maintenance of dominant cultural practices such as the Castillian tongue, Catholic faith, and sedentary lifestyle.

Since the expansionist entrepreneurial españoles required Indian labor to exploit the newfound virgin territories, strategies such as reducción served to coercively corral Indians into consolidated pools "susceptible to surveillance, taxation, and recruitment."[1] Because immigrants in the US, like the Indian populations in 18th century northern New Spain, are at once desired for their labor and unwelcome for their tendencies to retain cultural traits and resist total assimilation, the "immigration crisis" has proven as difficult to resolve as the Bourbon "reconquest" of the northern frontier.[2]

As Spanish settlement progressed northward, roaming hoards of natives like the Apache relentlessly made bold incursions, taking Spanish lives and livestock. In the same manner that recent terrorist strikes have rendered the US population more fearful and thus worried about border security, the northern provinces of New Spain increasingly "sunk into a state of depression and fear because of the almost constant Apache raiding."[3] In short, the sieges rendered the settlers unsettled. Clearly, public security concerns have served as impetuses to governmental border reforms both in the 21st and 18th centuries.

Modern day proponents of physically securing the southern US border in order to halt the illegal entrance of foreigners found their views codified in legislation mandating an "increase in full-time border patrol agents" and a high-tech barrier--with "layers of reinforced fencing, the installation of additional physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors"--stretching the length of the US/Mexico boundary.[4] Along almost the same path in the second half of the 18th century, colonial Spain attempted to erect a similar type of stream-lined territorial defense with the relocation and fortification of presidios to create "an impregnable 'cordon of presidios' spaced uniformly across the frontier from the Gulf of California to the Gulf of Mexico."[5] The plans called for the professionalization and enhanced equipment of the presidial
soldiers, who were to "give mutual aid to one another and to reconnoiter the intervening terrain" in order to protect the frontier settlements from attack and pursue evildoers.\[6\]

But the rise of the Comanche empire in the north, which monopolized land and trade routes, forced the Apaches southward, so that, despite the presidial defenses, increasingly the Interior Provinces of New Spain existed as the Apaches' only source of sustenance.\[7\] In the 21st century, the dictates of migrant stomachs in the face of a new geopolitical reality has also trumped the barrier designs of border guards. Trade agreements such as NAFTA coupled with asymmetrical welfare like US farm subsidies have forced agricultural jobs to migrate north of the border, in turn attracting Mexican farmhands and handymen. Whether due to migrants being crowded off of homelands by Comanche expansion or neoliberal free trade policies, the economic "push factor" has never failed to overwhelm the technological strengthening of the border, be it in the form of the Royal Regulations of 1772 or the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.

The Bourbon Crown's reactionary countermeasures to the intractable itinerant indigenous remarkably mirror some of the initiatives being executed today by the US. Spanish frontier commanders requested more colonial soldiers to fill the ranks of the tropas ligeras and compañías volantes, but adequate forces never arrived, mostly due to budgetary and manpower constraints greatly exacerbated by the onset of war against England linked to the American Revolution. Similarly, the current demands of the Bush administration's foreign wars have exhausted the money, troops, and resolve needed for effective border operations. This vacuum left by the federal government has been filled by local law enforcement--like the sheriff of Maricopa County who has deputized hundreds of citizens and keeps illegal immigrants in concentration camps--and voluntary vigilantes such as the Minute Men. The equivalent stopgap forces in northern New Spain were the "local militias, recruited from the settlers and supported by the merchants and proprietors," who "in times of dire emergency with whatever arms and mounts they could muster were called up" to guard against marauding Indians.\[8\]

Another shared tactic between the Bourbons and the Bushes relates to the coercion of the citizenry to abide by state policy regarding alien populations. Recent legislation passed in the US House of Representatives declares as criminal anyone who "assists, encourages, directs, transports, [or] harbors an illegal "alien".\[9\] In a comparable policy, officials in New Spain promulgated regulations that encouraged common Spaniards to arrest and even murder errant "uncivilized" enemy Indians. Any Spanish subject who did not comply with these orders was "a traitor to the king, and punishment [was to] be meted out to him" declared a provincial governor.\[10\]

One more way of checking "problematic" alien populations common to both modern day US policy as well as Bourbon New Spain is deportation. The Spanish regime of the late 18th century became exasperated by the Apaches' routinely reverting from sedentary life to insurrectionary liberty after having accepted peace; so colonial officials resorted to marching war captives off to Mexico City and shipping them to Havana for a life of forced servitude.\[11\]

Evocative of the battle lines in the US immigrant/border security debate--punitive exclusion versus reconciliatory acceptance--the competing Spanish officials' stances on Indian population control and frontier defense alternated between merciless extermination campaigns and more subtle attempts at cooptation and truce treating. Whether the Spaniards pursued "pacification" by means of war or sued for peace--by providing "the Indians with their needs and desires [to] eliminate the necessity for their plundering of Spanish settlements" often depended on the particular

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commander in charge on the ground at any given time.”[12]

The more benevolent strategy of "purchasing peace" resembles the so-called "guest worker" provisions in current US immigration proposals. Using the parallel with the Spanish colonial policy, the US government is "purchasing" orderly, legal and verifiable border crossing by providing immigrants the very thing achieved by their illegal activity: access to employment. Acknowledging the link between the "dietary security" of immigrants and the vulnerability of the southern border is learning a key lesson of the border region's past.

By pursuing policies that considered the Indians' reasons for raiding and responded with generous subsidization, Spanish officials managed to coax some Indians into the imperial fold and to make the border region safer for settlement. Ingenious military displays and the most advanced technology have never trumped hungry stomachs. In that vein, the US would be wise to forgo castigatory resolutions and instead concede the right to work in the US to undocumented immigrants—thereby streamlining entry into the country so that security forces can focus more efficiently on guarding the border against non-employment-related motives such as smuggling or terrorism.


“To be a student and not a revolutionary is a contradiction” -Salvador Allende
At present this may not be an easy task; Latin America has become a controversial topic in the public arena. Ideology challenges scholarship, emotion has taken the place of reason; and rhetoric has replaced the scientific method. If this situation continues it could spell out very difficult times for those of us who have worked on Latin America. Academic freedom could be threatened. Arthur O. Lovejoy, the founder of the American Association of University Professors, defined many years ago what academic freedom is: “The freedom of professionally qualified persons to inquire or investigate, to discuss, publish or teach the truth as they see it in the discipline of their competence subject to no religious or political control or authority, except the control of standards of professional ethics or the authority of the rational methods by which truths and conclusions are established in the disciplines involved.”

Academic freedom has not been attacked yet. But the signs are not particularly auspicious. Almost 40 years ago Dwight McDonald noted that confronted with political conservatism and state power, American intellectuals have suffered from a failure of nerves. Often this has led to a retreat from advocacy and the seeking of refuge in detached neutrality. This, of course, could end up as self-censorship and silence. Scholarship turns neutral by not speaking out. And this is justified in the name of science.

Another possibility, an alternative to silence, is for Latin Americanists to sell their intellect to those with political power and financial resources. Already the U.S. government articulates its needs on Latin America and subsidizes those who claim to meet those needs of “national security.”

Noam Chomsky tells us that “It is not difficult for members of the university community to delude themselves into believing that they are maintaining a neutral, value free position when they are simply responding to demands set elsewhere.” For the Pentagon and the great corporations can articulate their needs and even pay for the kind of work that will answer those needs. But the people of the Callampas, the Ecuadorean peasants, the Cachiquel Indians are not in a position to do the same. Relevance should not be equated with serving the interests of injustice.

It is possible to be a scholar, to be objective, and love justice? I think it is possible. Moreover, it is imperative that we do so. The problem with the academic community, as a rule, is to have committed itself to an ivory tower. What S.M. Miller and Alvin Gouldner wrote in their book Applied Sociology about the social sciences is quite pertinent to Latin Americanists. They wrote, “It is the historic mission of the social sciences to enable mankind to take possession of society.” Neutrality is merely an acceptance of what is, or at least a lack of concern.

I am a Latin Americanist because Latin America interests me, what happens to the people of the region is of intellectual, and emotional importance to me. Moreover, Latin America is a theoretical, analytical and practical challenge. To study, learn and teach about Latin America is an adventure as well as a vocation. For some, Latin American Studies may be just a job. I do not think that that is the case with the students I have encountered in all my years of teaching.

But, can we be real scholars if we closely identify with the subject matter we study? Yes, moreover, it is a precondition to real understanding. But our sense of empathy, whatever its intent may be, should not get in the way of scholarship. A Latin American scholar has to be concerned with facts. Evidence is essential. But plain facts are not enough. Facts have to be put in a theoretical context. Facts should be connected in some fashion, a relationship established, a hypothesis enunciated, its logic and verifiability determined. Facts are useless without theory; without some organizing structure. Theory, of course, is meaningless without facts.

Tragically, Latin American Studies have been dominated by extremes. Either rugged empiricism: that is, facts and more facts, without any real explanation; or grand theory: theories and more theories, without any real explanation; or grand theory: theories and more theories, without any real facts behind them. We ought to remember what Herbert Spencer stated once, “Tragedy was a beautiful theory killed by an ugly fact.” And we, as Latin Americanists, should have a serious respect for the integration of fact and theory as well as a healthy awareness of tragedy. We need facts, theory, and objectivity. But objectivity does not mean neutrality.
I identify with Marvin Harris’ position, outlined in his book Cultural Materialism, on the issue of detached and value free social science. The scientific method is compatible with taking a position on the pressing issues of the modern world. Moreover, a scientific and rational perspective provides hope in dealing with those issues. Our method should be empirical; it should have logical consistency, a critical spirit, based on verifiable statements, and be open to comparison and questioning. A Latin Americanist is more than a sociologist, or a historian, or a political scientist. A Latin Americanist is a “Todologo,” someone who integrates different disciplines. A Latin Americanist does not allow personal predilections to distort or determine his or her conclusions. Antonio Gramsci said once that “Truth is always revolutionary.” And that should be sufficient.

Knowing the facts, or explaining the facts, is not enough. Knowledge should have a function. Otherwise, knowledge is an end in itself. I recognize that there is beauty in knowing; but there is so much more that we could do with our knowledge! Karl Marx once said that philosophers had interpreted the world, the point, however, was to change it. We could add: to change it in the way that we intended it.

Sadly we teach many courses that do not seem to link facts, theories and application. But how is that linkage made? Martin Luther King provided us with that answer. He declared that “For social scientists, the opportunity to serve in a life-giving purpose is a humanist challenge of rare distinction.”

It should not be acceptable to us, to our colleagues or to our students that we run away from this responsibility. C. Wright Mills wrote once that, “There are many illusions which uphold authority and which are known to be illusions by many social scientists. Tactily by their affiliations and silence, or explicitly in their work, the social scientist often sanctions these, rather than speaks out the truth against them. They censor themselves either by carefully selecting safe problems in the name of pure science, or by selling such prestige as their scholarship may have for ends other than their own.”

Thus, Granada, El Salvador, death squads, contras, debts and, of course, generalized silence in our profession. The Kissinger report is filled with contradictions, defining the fate of universities in the context of militarizing Latin America; few voices are raised. Instead some of us run to the state with proposals on how to implement the mistaken assumptions; for money is persuasive.

William J. Fulbright, in the 1960’s, criticized American universities because they had betrayed the public trust, associating themselves with the military-industrial complex instead of acting as independent and critical institutions. And this situation continues. Latin Americanists have to deal, in one way or another, with the question of justice. Granted, it is possible to avoid discussing issues of justice or injustice when one researches, writes or teaches. Yet, Latin American history and reality is permeated by a constant debate over the issue of justice. Economics, theology, literature, art, music, politics, theater, dance; the sacred and the profane; all call upon us to address the theme, to take a position.

Students learn in their introduction to colonial Latin American history about Father Montesinos and his 1511 denunciation of Indian slavery, Bartolome de las Casas clamored for justice as well. And so did Tupac Amaru the First and Tupac Amaru the Second. The millenarian movements led by Father Cicero in Brasil, the great pueblo revolt in 1680 in New Mexico, the insurgent territories of the Black Caribs, the palenques of Venezuela and Colombia in the 18th century. The great revolutions of the 20th Century in Latin America, beginning in Mexico have been part of the struggle for justice.

Perhaps we teach that struggle as mere chronologies, human beings are lost in the descriptions. The cry of the people that Penny Lernoux has written about is the same that Jose Hernandez portrayed in his epic poem Martin Fierro when he said:

Para él son los calabozos (For him are the prison cells)
para él las duras prisiones (For him are the hard prisons)
en su boca no hay rezones (No arguments stem from his mouth)
aunque la razón le sobre (Even when has all the reasons)
que son campanas do palo (Because the reasons of the poor)
las razones de los pobres (Are like the bells made of wood)

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But what is justice, after all? Is it possible to have an objective, value-free definition of justice? I think so. Moreover, it is imperative that we determine such a measurement, and go about our business of teaching it. Thomas Paine, in \textit{The Age of Reason}, wrote that he believed in “doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creature happy.” Those are worthy aims for any one, and definitely a useful general guideline for any person engaged in the process of educating others. But, still, what is justice?

The World Bank, in the last 10 years has provided us with important guidelines. They are called basic human needs. The meeting of basic human needs is what I would call justice. And what are those needs? First, it should be kept in mind that basic human needs are fixed, they are necessary to sustain and maintain life. Proper nutrition, food, is a basic human need. So is housing and health. A society in which people cannot afford to feed themselves is an unjust society; it is a society that does not allow their most precious resource, human beings, to grow, to develop required health. A people plagued by illness and disease from birth until death is a people living in an unjust society. True, there are illnesses that we cannot avoid. But there are many other diseases that we can eliminate. Access to health is a basic human need. And this holds true, as well, for housing. Inadequate housing does not lead to health. Poor sanitation, undrinkable water, are indicators of an unjust society.

Yet, sustaining the physical body is not enough. The World Bank and the United Nations also consider access to education a basic need; one that allows each and everyone of us to develop our intellectual potential in the same manner that we may develop our physical body. Then, there are basic decencies: the right not to be tortured, not to suffer arbitrary arrest, not to be executed or be threatened with death. And these are essential as well. If they do not exist in a society, we have injustice.

Nutrition, health, education, housing, torture, arbitrary arrest, executions; all these things can be quantified. They can be measured. We could even develop an index of injustice similar to the Physical Quality of Life Index that the Overseas Development Organization designed a few years back. These are basic needs that have been recognized by western political theory since modern times. John Locke wrote,

“Men, being once born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink and such other things as nature afford for their subsistence.”

Paul Streeten, the director of the Center for Asian Development Studies at Boston University, has stated “that the basic needs of ALL should be satisfied before the less essential needs of the few are met.” This is a widely accepted concept, although never practiced in most of Latin America. Moreover, it is one that we never teach or even discuss in the classroom. Yet, the interesting thing is that numerous studies show that a commitment to justice or equity (as it is now called in the literature) leads to significant increases in GNP (See the work of Hollis Chenery, et al, \textit{ Redistribution With Growth}, Oxford University Press, 1974). Nowadays, it has become fashionable to stress liberty, particularly individual liberty, instead of collective justice or equity. Yet, even Milton Friedman has written that “in order for men to advocate anything, they must in the first place be able to earn a living.” (\textit{Capitalism and Freedom}).

Only very recently U.S. Latin Americanists began to address the issues of equity, justice, and distribution in Latin America as a major and serious scholarly question. But these interests have not been translated into new courses in the classroom, nor into research agendas that incorporate the energy of the students and the faculty.

The issue of justice and equity cannot be dealt with by Latin Americanists as if it were a moral or ethical question. Granted, people may be moved to action because of desire, commitment and identification with more precepts. But Latin Americanists must function at another level. We are scholars and not moralists; we have to be concerned with problems that are verifiable. Our work as scholars has to be based on reality rather than on subjective ethical choices. This is the case not because we
dislike moral/ethical positions; but because a moral stance can be countered with another moral stance. Whether or not exploitation is moral or immoral can be debated, what cannot be debated, if the proper evidence is supplied, is the extent of exploitation that may take place in a cotton plantation in Brasil or a banana plantation in Honduras—assuming we have concrete and verifiable facts.

Our universities teach about a Latin America that seems to be devoid of people. Thus, we learn of a Latin America that is not really rooted in reality. The past is just illusory, useful because it allows some of us to make a living. Is anything learned from it? Are any conclusions arrived at? Now, I am not just picking on the poor historians here. Every discipline we encounter in Latin American studies is so concerned with theory, and with generalities, that at no point in time anyone seems to be willing to ask: What is the point of learning this sort of thing?

The question of equity and justice is a practical development question. Moreover, it is an utilitarian necessity. It is essential that the countries of Latin America find long term solutions to their problems. It is essential that we address the issue of basic needs as a linkage between the human right to a healthy life and the necessity of economic productivity. It is a terrible waste to allow millions of children to die of malnutrition. It is also an awesome tragedy.

A basic needs approach, a commitment to justice in our classrooms will mean teaching about the material and institutional constraints to the full physical, mental, and social development of the human personality. It also means concerning ourselves with the means of conquering those constraints, offering practical guidelines, nurturing our imagination, intellect and energy toward a reasoned and rational effort.

We have a most unique opportunity at hand. We have tremendous resources at our command. We can learn, research, study, analyze, design solutions, and even engage in practical application and implementation once we have acquired the tools that the people of Latin America require. And to do so we need to be sensitive about the history, the culture, and the dynamics of that whole region.

We in the U.S. have not developed a sense of history, of the dynamic process of western civilization. We are like the angel of history that German literary critic Walter Benjamin wrote about. The angel of history, he said, ran in the future while looking backward. But we, in America, run also into the future, facing backward, but with eyes closed, imagining and romanticizing about our past and that of others. Fredrick R. Karl wrote that “A nation trying to lead the world while unable itself to distinguish between myth and reality is a force only for destruction.” It is time that we open our eyes, welcome the critical spirit, and embrace a commitment to justice, while keeping higher than even our total identification with objective scholarship.

A few days ago the Corporación de Investigaciones Económicas para América Latina, a key economic organization formed by all of Latin America, issued a report stating that from 1980-1983 the number of Latin Americans living in misery, without basic needs, increased from 130 to 150 million, this figure represents 50% of all Latin Americans. It is imperative that we as scholars and students address this massive tragedy, and devise methods to deal with it.

Action should be informed by reason. To bring together scholarship and justice should be the primary aim of Latin Americanists, as well as of the entire academic community.

From Big Noise Productions, the Fourth World War is a film about popular resistance to the never ending global war that exists to maintain power. If you care about social movements, it is a MUST SEE! This a great way to understand the need for solidarity and the concept that this is ONE STRUGGLE!
POLITICAL GRAFFITI: CIUDAD GUATEMALA

ENFERMO MENTAL AL SERVICIO DE LOS FINQUEROS Y DEL CAPITAL

University of San Carlos, Guatemala 2006.

CENTER OF GUATEMALA CITY, 2006.

Graffiti Artists Unknown. Pictures taken by YVETTE MORALES

University of San Carlos, Guatemala 2006.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER 2006

Friday 20th- Francine Cronshaw will be with us, from the Colombia Solidarity Committee of New Mexico. Subject TBA. Place: LAII, Time: Noon. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday 21st- Hispanic Health Fair. At CNM (TVI), South Valley Campus from 10-2.

Monday 23rd- Movie Showing and discussion: Granito de Arena. Granito de Arena is the story of that resistance – the story of hundreds of thousands of public schoolteachers whose grassroots, non-violent movement took Mexico by surprise, and who have endured brutal repression in their 25-year struggle for social and economic justice in Mexico's public schools. Sub Theater, UNM Campus at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday 26th- SOLAS General Meeting. SOLAS POD, 801 Yale, UNM Campus, at 7:00 p.m.

Friday 27th- Community organizer Victoria Rodríguez will be sharing with us. Learn more about South West Organizing Project (SWOP), they work to empower communities to realize racial and gender equality and social and economic justice. Place: LAII, 801 Yale, UNM Campus at Noon. Light refreshments will be served.

NOVEMBER 2006

November 2nd-5th- Reflejo de las Mujeres de Juarez Simposium- SOLAS co-sponsors with the P&J and the All. See complete calendar in this Limon issue p. 4.

Friday 10th- Sofía Martínez- New Mexico Environmental Department Justice Planning. Theme TBA. Place: LAII, 801 Yale, UNM, Time: noon. Lunch will be served.

Thursday 16th- “Working Class Feminism in Mexico ” Presented by Irene Ortiz, Feminist involved in the movement at the continental level but dedicated to work with women of the poor classes in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Place and Time TBA. Tentative: Pending Visa Process.

Friday 17th- “Working Class Feminism in Mexico ” Presented by Irene Ortiz, Feminist involved in the movement at the continental level but dedicated to work with women of the poor classes in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Place and Time TBA. Tentative: Pending Visa Process.

For updated information please continuously check the LAII website at http://laii.unm.edu or for further information on the events please contact Ivis Zambrano at ivis@unm.edu or call (505) 277-6847.
The Student Organization for Latin American Studies is an organization which seeks to promote social, political, and cultural issues pertaining to Latin America in scholarship, in activism, on the UNM campus and the broader community. Get active! If you are interested in joining attend our monthly meetings which take place every first Monday of each month. Or contact the SOLAS president Ivivs Zambrano for more information at ivivs@unm.edu or call (505) 277-6847.

**MUSICA DE LATINA/ O AMERICA**

VIOLETA PARRA- a Chilean singer of folk music most well known for her political cantos of the 50s and 60s. She is also the original composer of the infamous “Gracias a la Vida.” Her touching songs are not only the pride of Chile, but will provide you with emotional insight into political struggles.

“Por eso toco guitarra, para cantar mi dolor” –Violeta Parra

SILVIO RODRIGUEZ- the most famous Cuban NUEVA Trovador of them all. If you haven’t heard his songs, get to it because he is one of the most influential musicians of the Latin American Left. His politically charged poetic lyrics along with his enchanting sound will make your heart embrace social change.

“La Madre vive hasta que muere el sol”

-Silvio Rodriguez

LIMON welcomes IDEAS, News, PICTURES, Article Submissions, POLITICAL OPINIONS, Art, POETRY, ETC..... Regarding Latin America!