La Fábrica Recuperada: ¿Otra Economía?

by Patricia Kent

During this time of great economic uncertainty, questions of whether there is another way become more pertinent, pressing harder from the back of our minds into the foreground. Does profit have to be the end all be all of our society? Is competition truly advantageous and rational? And more importantly, can we make change happen from beneath the capitalist superstructure under which we live? As the economic downturn spreads across the globe, some trabajadores south of the Equator are taking the means of production into their own hands.

In 2005, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on the emergence of El Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas (The Recovered Factory Movement, MNER) in Buenos Aires and the experiences of the many workers now organized into cooperative businesses. The scene was ripe for revolution, though I didn’t know if it would last.

During the presidency of Carlos Menem, public utilities and transportation, as well as state-owned banks fell to private ownership and the peso was again aligned with the dollar. During this time, the national debt rose and the IMF called for cuts in pensions and salaries. The financial crisis, a result of Argentina’s debt default of US$ 145 billion, the largest default to date, and the mounting unemployment rates led millions of Argentines into the streets on December 19 and 20th 2001. Shouting, “¡Que se vayan todos!” or “Out with them all!” signified a moment of realization amongst the lower classes—that the state and the market were in cahoots against them. Labeled the argentinazo, this day came to signify the unification of the Argentine masses.

A recovered factory is the result of arduous struggle. It begins when small to medium sized business owners default on their loans or can no longer afford to pay high utility bills or worker salaries. Upon bankruptcy, workers who may have no other employable skills or have been loyal to their bosses for years lose their jobs. As we all know, it’s not the best time to be unemployed. In an effort to survive, workers who wish to continue to work and produce goods will illegally occupy the grounds of the business, maintain the equipment, and continue to work.

The recovered factory movement proves not solely to be a fearful response of individuals in the face of unemployment, but a construction of various, complicated origins and the need for self-representation in a corporatist... 

Continued on Page 4 —>
Solistas and human rights activists,

This upcoming April, we each have a great opportunity to learn more about the factors surrounding the human trafficking industry at the conference entitled "Modern-Day Slavery in the Americas: A Regional Approach to a Global Epidemic." The conference, jointly sponsored by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the Mexican Consulate of Albuquerque, the Latin American and Iberian Institute, several UNM Law School student organizations, and SOLAS, is free and open to the public although advanced registration is required. (See page 5 for more information on the conference.)

I encourage your attendance at the conference on the issues of human trafficking. Human trafficking encapsulates all forced labor, usually performed by women and children, that falls under a form of "modern-day slavery." These are global human rights concerns crossing borders and oceans in which we all should actively fight against. It's disheartening that the United States' resources and media publicity center on the issues of illegal immigration, border crossings, "loss of jobs" to foreign nationals, and the war on drugs when perhaps the greatest victims within these primarily economically rooted problems are the numerous exploited lives of women and children involved in grave human right's offenses.

As of this writing, 10 female bodies have been uncovered in Albuquerque’s West Mesa area with full media coverage and police investigations around the clock. Although authorities suspect these murders to be that of a serial killer, we do not know _______ the circumstances of those murders.

What if our media and criminal justice authorities placed the same magnitude of concern over the violations of human rights experienced by immigrants within our borders as well as those abroad? The April conference will provide a good forum for conversation between our community in New Mexico, the Mexican Government, and international activists. Hopefully the media and law enforcement officials will also give the conference some thought.

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Letter from the SOLAS President:

Queridos Lectores,

Espero que estén disfrutando su semestre y que todo este bien. Ya casi son vacaciones de primavera!!!. Sabemos que muchos alumnos tomaron exámenes de comprensión este semestre, por ellos y otros que tuvieron un semestre difícil, espero disfruten y gocen estas merecidas vacaciones.

Como ustedes saben, en esta revista hemos contado con artículos que abordan temas del mundo en general, EEUU y obviamente la universidad, pero me gustaría hacerles saber que también pueden mandar artículos de temas que nos afecten directamente e incluso personalmente. Estoy muy contenta con sus respuestas y el interés que han demostrado en “Limón”. Espero que sigan utilizando este espacio en la mejor manera que deseen y sobre todo saquen el mayor provecho posible.

Recuerden, estamos viviendo un tiempo de cambio, con un nuevo presidente, una economía inestable y sobre todo la vida de muchas personas ha dado o esta dando un giro brusco. Nuestro presidente ya menciona que quiere parar la guerra en Iraq, ya firmo un pacto para cerrar Guantánamo, y ya esta poniendo en marcha un plan para rescatar nuestra economía. Por otro lado, vivimos a tan solo unos kilómetros de Cd. Juárez México, ciudad que actualmente esta viviendo momentos bastante difíciles en términos de inseguridad. Estos acontecimientos son muy importantes para el futuro de EEUU y me gustaría saber su opinión al respecto.

También me gustaría mencionar algunos eventos que son importantes para la universidad y el mundo en general. Habrá conferencias en Santa Fe (RMCLAS) y UNM (Derechos Humanos: Tráfico de humanos) estas serán dos grandes oportunidades para aprender y conocer mas sobre estos temas. Presten atención a lo que esta ocurriendo actualmente en el mundo y en nuestra universidad, y envíenme sus pensamientos y opiniones.

Gracias a todos por sus interés!!!

Atentamente,

Abby Diaz

(adiaz3@unm.edu)

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Letter from the Editor:

Queridos Lectores,

Espero que estén disfrutando su semestre y que todo esté bien. Ya casi son vacaciones de primavera!!! Sabemos que muchos alumnos tomaron exámenes de comprensión este semestre, por ellos y otros que tuvieron un semestre difícil, espero disfruten y gocen estas merecidas vacaciones.

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Atentamente,

Abby Diaz

(adiaz3@unm.edu)
SOLAS News and Events:

Wednesday, March 11 at 12:30 in the Herzstein Reading Room: Brown Bag Lunch – Dr. Paul Zandbergen, from the Department of Geography, will be giving a talk entitled, “Capacity Building For Civil Society in Water Resources Management in Brazil.”

Wednesday, March 25 at 12:30 in the LAII: Brown Bag Lunch – Shaun Haines, M.A. student in Latin American Studies

Thursday, March 26 at 6:30 PM in the LAII: Showing of the Film Trade — This film Trade (synopsis below) will illustrate many of the issues that will be presented at the conference entitled “Modern-Day Slavery in the Americas: A Regional Approach to a Global Epidemic” jointly sponsored between several Law School student organizations, SOLAS, the LAII, and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Mexican Consulate of Albuquerque. (See page 5 for more information on the Conference.)

Film synopsis for Trade (2007) - With a star-studded cast (Kevin Kline, Kate del Castillo) and director Marco Kreuzpaintner, Trade addresses the issue of sex/human trafficking that occurs on the North American continent. A series of women’s lives unfold to reveal the brutality of the sex industry and graphically show how women are coerced and forced to participate as sex slaves to repay debts. Most of the movie takes place in either Mexico or Texas using women immigrants as prime targets for sex trafficking.

Refreshments will be served.

Wednesday, April 1 at 12:30 in the LAII: Brown Bag Lunch – Gustavo Larach, M.A. student in Art History, will be giving a talk, “Mujeres de Puertos Cabezas: The Outset of an Epic.” During the 1960’s, the Nicaraguan painter Armando Morales worked on large abstract collages, using cut and painted pieces of canvas. The practice evolved into an intense study of pictorial form, which ultimately was instrumental for shaping Morales’s particular mode of pictorial production, a mode which assembles compositional units into a visually coherent whole, while many elements may remain separate or discrete. When his work became figurative, during the 1970’s, Morales used the pictorial devices he had developed through his abstract work to create an onerific air in his images, but also to disrupt the logic of realist space to configure his images to the poetic demands of his content. Gustavo Larach will explain in his lecture how Morales’ work is in fact a trait of magical realism and of the real world in art. Mujeres de Puertos Cabezas is a case in point, an image where the artist depicts an episode that is crucial to the formation, in 1927, of the revolutionary movement lead by Augusto César Sandino, Nicaragua’s national hero.

Wednesday, April 8 at 12:30 in the LAII: Brown Bag Lunch – Hilary Ellenshaw, M.A. student in Art History

Wednesday, April 15 at 12:30 in the LAII: Brown Bag Lunch – Joseph Garcia, PhD student in Latin American Studies

Wednesday, April 22 at 12:30 in the LAII: Brown Bag Lunch - Lisa Burns, M.A. student in Latin American Studies, will present her research findings from a Summer 2008 FRG Grant titled: "Identifying Modes of Indigenous Political and Social Organization in Transnational Territories: The Case of the Guaraní."
system. The result, the Recovered Factory Movement, promotes a refreshing ideological base for democratic discussion, combining aspects of anarchism, socialism, and democracy, and designed from the very political experiences that have exhausted left ideologues in the past. Using their collective struggle as disenfranchised workers, they have formed a vision for the future based in the values of human labor and solidarity. By embracing cooperative ownership of and autonomy through the expropriation of factories, the workers change their relationship with the economy and increase popular participation, allowing them to embody the social transformation necessary to foresee a future free of imperialist policies and the whims of the market, “a space where the politics of the future are being reinvented.”

El Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas, a singular organization within the larger movement, began in 2001 with the winning of the first expropriation law (N° 12565) regarding the Fábrica GIP-Metal. This law allowed the Provincial Government of Buenos Aires to seize the factory and its machinery from its bankrupt owner, claiming it as a “public utility.” This law allowed the workers to purchase the assets over a loan period of 20 years and prevents the previous business owner from selling the factory or abandoning it. Although for the owner, selling the factory at a bargain basement price during this devastating economic recession would be more beneficial than continuing to run the factory, it would force the multitude of workers to join the ranks of the ever growing under- or completely unemployed.

Fast forward to this past January. The workers of Arrufat, a chocolate factory in the middle class neighborhood of Villa Crespo, Buenos Aires, arrive at work to see a sign that reads: “We want you to know that, strictly for financial reasons, it has become impossible to pay the service bills. For this reason the plant is not operating. Consequently, we ask that all personnel remain off the premises until we resume activity.”

During the factory’s prime in the 1980’s, more than 300 employees worked there, helping to secure a profit of 4 million pesos in 3 months. Unfortunately, it has faced bankruptcy 3 times, bounced hundreds of checks, and became an “irretrievable” debtor of Banco Nación.

Just two weekends ago, on Saturday, February 21st, a festival of solidarity took place in Villa Crespo, complete with the sale of hand made chocolates, videos of struggle, and a musical band made up of members of the cooperative hotel Bauen. It’s exciting to see that the movement remains strong, that cooperatives still unite in the greater struggle and continue to support one another. Today, advocating the expropriation of factory property and machinery and their transformation into cooperatives, the movement unites more than 160 recovered factories. It has associations with the Colleges of Philosophy and Political Science at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and with community assemblies.

Oddly enough, I am still a skeptic. Despite all of the successes achieved by MNER, how much of their work actually perpetuates the capitalist domination that they strive so hard to free themselves of? Though much of their actual product sales benefit other cooperatives, either through trade or direct purchasing, what about the percentage that filters back into the capitalist economy? Does MNER provide an alternative economic structure or is it just a temporary response to a dire situation?
MODERN-DAY SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS:
A Regional Approach to a Global Epidemic

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Sandro Calvani, UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

AND

Gary King, Attorney General of New Mexico
Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown Hotel
2600 Louisiana Boulevard NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Human trafficking is a form of slavery in which people—mostly women and children—are bought, sold, and transported against their will in order to exploit their labor or sexual services. An estimated 27 million people are in bondage globally, and some 4 million are victimized each year through a trade that generates almost $10 billion in annual revenue. One of the most heavily trafficked regions in the world is the U.S.-Mexico border.

This conference will address the problem of human trafficking across the U.S.-Mexico border by bringing together researchers, legislators, law enforcement officials, service providers, and victim advocacy groups from both sides of the border to share cutting-edge information about the causes and consequences of human trafficking, as well as the best practices for combating this form of modern-day slavery. Recognizing that an effective plan to end human trafficking requires a multi-pronged approach, the conference aims to stimulate dialogue among the various participants, leading to the production of a scholarly volume on trafficking and slavery theory, as well as manuals, handbooks, and other best practices guides for use among legislators, law enforcement agents and service providers here in New Mexico.

For more information and online registration, please visit:
http://laii.unm.edu/conferences
The US-Mexican border is a strikingly unique area for many reasons and in many ways. Some are positive, such as the multiculturalism that characterizes most border towns and cities from Brownsville/Matamoros to San Diego/Tijuana. In other ways, however, the friction at the fault line dividing the developed and developing worlds creates perverse realities that are nothing less than tragic for millions of people inhabiting the borderlands. One of the worst of these perverse realities concerns the narcotics trade. Illegal drugs produced in Mexico or in transit from South and Central America accumulate at the border on their way to a massive consumer market in the United States. This illicit trade has always been characterized by violence, for in the black market there is no other guarantor of contract compliance or regulation of competition. In the last two years, however, drug-related violence on the US-Mexican border has skyrocketed. My chief collaborator, Joshua Faulconer and I, spent three days on the border in January to investigate the causes and consequences of this unprecedented escalation of violence.

Our investigative mission took us first to Columbus, New Mexico, and its Mexican counterpart, Palomas, Chihuahua. Columbus, with a population of around 1,700, proudly remembers being sacked and burned by Pancho Villa and his men in 1916. Today it quietly relies on a sporadic economy of tourism and border fence construction while most residents commute to nearby Deming, NM. And despite the unprecedented levels of violence just over the border, Columbus does not have a police department, relying instead on the Luna County Sheriff and sometimes the US Border Patrol for occasional law enforcement needs. That said, the local judge and former police chief of neighboring Palomas, Xavier Lozano, keeps his waist-side pistol cocked and ready at all times. The violence in Mexico, like in the days of Pancho Villa, could spill over at any moment.

Palomas, located immediately across the border, is a significantly larger and livelier town, even with 60 percent of its local businesses shut down during the last year. Just two years ago it was bustling with activity. Main Street and its tributaries were lined with dental clinics, artisan shops, restaurants, bars, and strip clubs attending to a booming clientele of immigrants in transit to the United States and American citizens in transit to clean teeth and fun. In 2008, however, more than 40 people were murdered in the town of 10,000 (in perspective, Rio de Janeiro, considered one of the world’s most violent cities has an average homicide rate of 40 per 100,000). Further, at mid-year the entire Palomas police department of ten officers fled to Columbus after gunmen surrounded their station with burning tires and machine-gunned the building. This all happened just two miles from an active Mexican military base.

The police department is now fully re-soldiered with recruits from all over Chihuahua who make around $550USD per month. The new police chief, Manuel Antonio Chavez, says that things have been calm now for a few months. His message to Americans, echoed by many other residents of Palomas, is to come back. The local economy and spirit is in dire need of its old clientele. The bullets are no longer flying, and as long as you are not reckless, you can drive as drunk as you like.

**Juarez**

After staying the night in Palomas, we headed east on HW 9 towards El Paso. The last fifteen-mile unofficial stretch is a dirt road that connects to the El Paso municipal dump, a spectacular vantage point from which Santa Teresa and El Paso extend across the Rio Grande valley. In El Paso, we paid a surprise visit to Casa Puente, an NGO dedicated to social justice and educating people on border issues. They also have a kitchen and bunk beds—usually meant for student groups, but which were, to our delight, vacant and clean for us.

The following morning Joshua and I had an appointment with *El Diario*, Chihuahua’s leading print
newspaper. I had arranged an accompaniment with their homicide reporter, Luz del Carmen Sosa. She had taken the homicide beat just two months earlier, in place of Armando Rodriguez, who was gunned down outside his home a week after someone left a decapitated head on a memorial honoring journalists. When asked if she was afraid of being targeted herself, she responded that her anger spoke louder than her fear.

Ciudad Juarez has suffered from the recent surge in violence perhaps more than any other Mexican city. Homicides, which had been hovering around 200-300 per year since the late 1990s, suddenly jumped to 1,600 in 2008 alone. Scores more bodies, often dismembered and showing signs of torture, appeared just in the first weeks of 2009. Driving through the streets, the impact of the drug wars was highly visible. Bars and restaurants are burned down or closed up, police precincts are riddled with bullet holes and guarded by rooftop snipers, and Mexican army patrols regularly speed through the urban streets. In the backdrop one must weight the economic catastrophe: over 100,000 maquila jobs were lost last year, a situation that has surely exacerbated a drug war ignited by more political factors. Dire poverty facilitates the recruitment of drug runners and sicarios (hitmen), even at the low price of $85 USD per head.

Joshua and I had unwittingly chosen a good day to accompany Luz del Carmen. Not only was the weather splendid, but the five homicide victims revealed that day were discovered too early or too far away to rush to the scene on time. This relative peace allowed us to visit several colonias (semi-formal and shanty towns on the city’s outskirts), the notorious auto junkyards, the public cemetery, and the municipal dump. Of particular interest was a cadaver unearthing program the state was funding to sample the DNA of unidentified corpses at the public cemetery. A national database will soon allow living souls to identify relatives that have gone missing over the last ten years. We also met with pepenadores (rubbish collectors), and learned that on average they make almost twice the national minimum wage, or around $8.50 USD per day. Their syndicate has successfully prevented the government from enforcing state health codes, which constantly threaten their livelihoods.

The excitement of our investigative trip was near its end, and we had witnessed much of the impact of the recent surge in drug-related violence on the border. The causes of this violence, however, remain unclear, notwithstanding general diagnoses of globalization pathologies. Many common people are suspicious of the federal government. Quite a few people thought that President Felipe Calderon, who they allege had received campaign funds from the Sinaloa Cartel, sent the military into Northern Mexico two years ago to displace the dominant Juarez Cartel. The resulting turf war, then, explains the current violence. But despite several high-profile scandals involving bribed army officials, conspiracy theories may only be speculation. The nature of the conflict may be so complex, and the actors so many, that any causal theory, conspiratorial or not, is unlikely to adequately explain the conditions that have provoked the US State Department to label Mexico a “failed state.”

What can be more clearly evaluated are the consequences of violence and the states role in it. The economy, already suffering from the global finance crisis, is now limping on less than one leg. Social and political life has become highly restricted, as people are afraid to go out in public or speak their minds, for fear of being targeted, accidentally or not. Finally, state agents, particularly the army, are assaulting the legitimacy of the state, both because of the states inability to protect its citizens and because of human rights violations committed.

Does the US-Mexican border have anything positive to look forward to in 2009? Although political discourse in Latin America has begun to entertain drug legalization options, such major policy changes are not likely in the near future. Yet as long as the drug trade is so lucrative and Latin America is so poor, will there be any end in sight? I suppose my next question is how Americans are likely to cope with a severe economic crisis: will we do fewer drugs, or will we do more?
**XALAPA, VERACRUZ**

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**TUITION**: 5-week program: $418 for 1 course/ $716 for 2 courses/ $1014 for 3 courses & $298 each additional course

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2-week program: $386/private room - $317/shared room

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http://www.cepe.udg.mx/

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20 HOURS PER WEEK PROGRAM: 1 wk $115, 2 wks $230, 3 wks $340, 4 wks $450, 5 wks $540 Additional wks: $100

**20 HOURS/ WEEK PROGRAM**: 1 wk $130, 2 wks $260, 3 wks $335, 4 wks $430, 5 wks $500

15 HOURS/ WEEK PROGRAM: 1 wk $115, 2 wks $230, 3 wks $315, 4 wks $415, 5 wks $480

HOUSING $16/day single room, $13/day double room

with breakfast; other meals available (additional $3 - $5/day)

Posadas (inns) $20-30/day; Apts: $450-$800/month

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http://www.icomexico.com/
Abigail Maes’s Adventure through Latin America: Why Study Abroad

Since participating in my first Study Abroad program through UNM in the summer of 2007, I haven’t been able to stop. Lately, however, I have had to refrain myself from partaking in the programs: I’ve realized that if I were to continue to go abroad, I could never actually graduate from UNM!

The first program I participated in was an intensive Spanish language course in Taxco, Mexico. Taxco is a beautiful, charming, and tranquil city built on the side of a hill. For my two months there, I lived with a host family and attended school daily. At school, the students were divided up into different levels based on their speaking and writing abilities: the classes were small and very interactive. Taxco completely enchanted me and I hope to return someday to visit my host family and walk the windy, cobblestone streets yet again.

Christmas 2008 was particularly special for me because I had barely returned the night before from being in South America for almost a year. I spent the spring semester in Santiago, Chile studying at Universidad del Pacífico then the fall semester in Buenos Aires, Argentina at Universidad de Palermo. Classes are all-inclusive and students are expected to maintain pace with assignments. Although at times living and studying abroad may be stressful and confusing, it is worth it 100%. During breaks, I was able to travel around Chile and Argentina and even got to tour Bolivia and Peru.

Throughout my time abroad, I made numerous friendships with locals as well as other foreigners. My experiences have provided me with a new outlook on life and have opened my eyes to the many job possibilities that lie ahead. After studying abroad, Peace Corps seems like the next best opportunity; I desire to become a part of the Corps after graduation and hopefully be stationed somewhere in Latin America. I highly recommend studying abroad. Overall, it is an incredible chance to grow, meet new people, challenge oneself, travel, use language skills, embark on adventures, and broaden horizons.

STUDY SPANISH IN MEXICO 2009

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APPLICATION DEADLINE APRIL 2 ~ TUITION FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE ~ DEADLINE MARCH 15
By Max Fitzpatrick

UNM President David Schmidly has suddenly announced that this spring’s commencement ceremonies are to feature a surprise guest, Vicente Fox, the former president of Mexico. This top billing is a surprise because UNM administration unilaterally invited Mr. Fox without prior consultation with concerned faculty and students. But it is also a surprise because you never know what words will pop out of Mr. Fox’s mouth. He has a long history of astonishing comments and bewildering actions.

Once, in a contribution to the US immigration debate, Mr. Fox wanted to recommend the noble and industrious nature of the millions of immigrants forced abroad by Fox’s neoliberal economic policies. He said, “There is no doubt that Mexicans, filled with dignity, willingness and ability to work, are doing jobs that not even Blacks want to do there in the United States.” Instead of just praising Mexicans, Mr. Fox surprised everyone by putting different races in their supposed place.

Another time, giving his two cents on US industrial policy in Detroit, Vicente Fox surely meant not to offend the thousands of autoworkers laid off in the midst of the current economic crisis. However, Fox told the downtrodden proletariat to “get over it” and prepare for a North American Union.

In conversation with an illiterate campesina woman, Fox said she would have “a happy life” because of her illiteracy. Maybe his overestimation of the benefits of marginalized education for poor women is why illiteracy increased in Mexico during Fox’s tenure.

It’s hard to believe that Fox really wants to come across as racist, classist, and sexist. Fox must be as surprised by his comments as we are. In fact, Fox seemed equally surprised by the things that happened on his watch.

In 2000, Fox’s campaign apparatus illegally collected sums of money from abroad and laundered it in the fashion of narcotraffickers. Yet Fox maintained plausible deniability.

Throughout his presidency, Fox’s wife, Marta de Sahagún, and her sons pillaged from the public purse. When a journalist wrote an account of it, the reporter found herself in house arrest. Fox must have been surprised by his wife’s public corruption and prosecution of the press.

In response to social protest at San Salvador Atenco, federal police under Fox beat and detained hundreds, systematically raped dozens of women, and killed a couple citizens. Fox said that his administration would “see that the space for investigation of any [official wrongdoing] would be totally open,” But he did not seem to notice when his own Secretary of Public Security rejected the incriminating findings of the National Commission for Human Rights and stone-walled further inquiry.

When the teachers and indigenous citizens of Oaxaca mobilized in protest of their corrupt governor and deteriorating social conditions in 2006, Fox said, “While the possibility exists to reach an agreement, we will continue to insist on...reaching an agreement and resolving everything in that manner.” With such talk of peaceful accord, Fox must have been surprised that the federal police he deployed to Oaxaca racked up 1,200 official complaints of human rights violations, including, what Amnesty International called, “excessive use of force (including lethal force), arbitrary and incommunicado detention, ill-treatment and torture, threats, harassment of human rights defenders and journalists, and violations in due process and the right to fair trial,”

Fox may have been so astonished by the actions of his wife, campaign workers, police commanders, and cabinet members, that when it came to the 2006 presidential race, he took matters into his own unknowable hands.

As an avid proponent of democracy, Fox wanted to make the selection process easier for Mexicans by clearing the candidate field of unnecessary clutter. So he stealthily tried to have the popular mayor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), arrested and disqualified from running for president. Fox later asserted that “to promote democracy...it was important to detain López Obrador,”

In order to stop AMLO, Fox
first took an unprecedented secret visit with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to discuss how the judicial and executive branches could cooperate in keeping AMLO out of the race (13). Then, Fox’s Attorney General brought trumped up charges against AMLO. In defense of this move, Fox declared that the "culture of legality implies a certain cost, and that cost is that people assume responsibility," (14). It was surprising that Fox was being such a stickler for the rule of law in the AMLO case, when similar minor infractions went unpunished all the time for people that were not popular opposition presidential candidates.

In the next unexpected step in the desafuero, Fox pressured legislators and directors of his own PAN party, as well as the head of his ally PVEM party, to vote against letting AMLO be a candidate (15).

The entire affair shocked the masses of Mexico City and the international mass media. Once they came to understand that one of Fox’s costs of democracy was democracy itself, they flooded the streets and the editorial pages in protest against the heavy handed winnowing of the field of presidential candidates.

Global and local sentiment forced Fox to get his Attorney General to resign. Then Fox ordered “an exhaustive review” of the handling of the case against AMLO (16). Apparently, Fox’s improper maneuvers were so astounding that even Fox was mystified by them.

AMLO stayed in the presidential race, and, to everyone’s surprise, so did Fox. Even though Mexican law restricts the incumbent from campaigning or even taking sides in the succession process, Fox evaded all expectations and announced that he would “promote the ideals, values, proposals and political project” of his party in the 2006 election (17). Fox routinely showed favor in the campaign, both with personal statements and public airtime (18). The Federal Election Institute admonished Fox for this illegal partisanship both before and after the contested election (which Fox’s candidate won by less than half a percent) (19).

Fox left his final surprise for when he left office. His successor, Felipe Calderón, entered the presidency only to find that the security situation in the country was—contrary to received reports—“cancerous,” (20). The violence surrounding the drug trade and corrupt security forces has startled observers into considering Mexico along the lines of a failed state (21).

From racist, sexist, and classist statements to implausible denials of responsibility for human rights violations; from misusing security forces to causing mass migration with corporate economic policies—it is clear that Vicente Fox is full of surprises.

It is also surprising that UNM administration wants to honor Fox for “democracy and development”, given the lowered literacy levels, high inequality, public corruption and anti-democratic misdeeds of his administration. Another surprise for UNM will be to find out that it has signed a convention with a private institute, Centro Fox, which has been illicitly financed with public monies (22).

But the final surprise will come, if Fox does headline graduation. Concerned UNM students, staff, and faculty will not let pass an opportunity to condemn an antidemocratic human rights violator.

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As the World Unwound
By Wesley A. Morton

I had a dream in which the world fell apart.

Books lost their meaning
as did the histories they held.

Walking through a dim-lit, unoccupied library
with only my echoing footsteps and unblinking eyes
as the world unwound.

The walls fell away
along with their books,
magazines,
computers,
lights,
wiring,
index cards
until the world I inhabited was pure, unbounded space.

Nothingness forever.

Empty contemplations,
vacuum mind,
no sense of time, taste, sight, sound, scent, texture.

Poemas
Por: Pablo López
(elalmapensante.com)

¿Quién ensució el balcón?

Los gorriones del ayer no fueron, volaron
hace años, y aunque se percibe la descomposición, no son visibles los restos.

Muchos se preguntan que pasó allá arriba,
todo era limpio y brillante, todo era pulcro y sedoso.

La transparencia de los ventanales quedó en el olvido, y hoy no hay más que manchas y hastío.

Algunos piensan que fue el viento el que llenó el último piso de tierra, hojas e indiferencia. Pero sólo una nube fue testigo;

un testigo mudo de la desilusión, un testigo que nunca supo silbar la secuencia, ni contar los días, ni explicar el porque del deterioro...

Era tan bello el paisaje de ese balcón.

La gente que pasaba, lo admiraba y saludaba con un brillo de fantasía que recibía sólo lo eterno.

Pero al igual que la nube, nadie pudo describir con palabras el horror del abandono: la transición de lo maravilloso a lo ruin, el paso del esplendor incandescente a la bazofia indigna.

Ya no era el balcón al que todos admiraban, muchos quisieron encontrar a los que antes allí vivieron, pero nadie los conocía, el porque, era la única pregunta...

Y después de un tiempo, los que por ahí pasaban y recordaban, se resignaron a creer que la belleza del balcón nunca fue auténtica; como un espejismo, o una ilusión colectiva, ¿y por qué no, la locura compartida?

Sólo esa solitaria nube tenía la respuesta de que si todo lo visto y vivido fue real, de que si todo lo visto y vivido fue real, o una invención de la conciencia...

La belleza del más alto piso de aquel edificio, paso desde entonces a ser una quimera.