AT CUSLAR'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, WE ASKED EXPERTS TO HIGHLIGHT MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR THE HEMISPHERE IN THE COMING DECADES. HERE'S WHAT THEY SHARED WITH US.

UNITE THE POOR TO END POVERTY
SHAILLY GUPTA BARNES OF THE KAIROS CENTER

INSTITUTIONALIZE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
HANNAH WITTMAN
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA CUSLAR COORDINATOR, 1999-2000

REGULATE RESOURCE EXTRACTION
RAYMOND OFFENHEISER
PRESIDENT, OXFAM AMERICA CUSLAR MEMBER, 1973-1977

RECIPIROCITY IN LEARNING AND RESEARCH
CORNELL GLOBAL HEALTH STUDENTS HOSTED 12 CO-RESEARCHERS FROM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN OCTOBER AFTER RECEIVING DOMINICAN HOSPITALITY ON THEIR SUMMER CUSLAR-CORNELL SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM.
Seek root causes of migrant crisis

by Tim Shenk

These days most news about “the migrant crisis” refers to Europe, where around 850,000 Syrian refugees made their way seeking asylum in 2015. While the Syrian case is perhaps the most visible, displacement and involuntary migration are ongoing problems of increasing global scale and scope.

There are significant numbers of Asian workers in the Middle East, Nigerians in China, 5.7 million internally displaced people in Colombia, and children are still coming to the U.S. from Central America. Movement of people is one result of crises related to poverty, food and resource extraction, topics our speakers at CUSLAR’s 50th Anniversary events cited as today’s central challenges.

Conditions trigger the movement of the tired, poor and huddled masses, and these millions require a response. Even amid recession and jobless recovery, the United States has continued to be the top destination for migrants. The current U.S. administration has been unable or unwilling to develop a response that prioritizes the rights of migrants, despite a more humane rhetoric than many Republican presidential hopefuls have expressed.

As one example, it may be useful to revisit a recent U.S. version of “migrant crisis” from the summer of 2014, when unprecedented thousands of Central American children were detained on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Instead of directing resources toward reducing poverty and violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. government allocated “tens of millions of dollars” last fiscal year to strengthen Mexico’s southern border, according to an October article in The New York Times.

“Essentially,” writes Times op-ed author Sonia Nazario, “the United States has outsourced a refugee problem to Mexico that is similar to the refugee crisis now roiling Europe.”

 Barely a year into its implementation, it’s already clear that the Southern Border program is a massive failure, according to human rights groups in the U.S. and Mexico. Increased agents, checkpoints, towers and technology haven’t deterred migrants — rather, people are now forced to take routes that are more dangerous.

Priest and advocate Alejandro Solalinde says increased policing of the border has only made things worse: “The National Migration Institute should guarantee migrant rights, but they’ve become the migrants’ biggest threat,” he told La Jornada. Solalinde cites rampant extortion, abuse and collusion with organized crime by Mexican officials, who he alleges are tasked with carrying out a security plan drawn up in the United States.

Though no longer in the national spotlight, children have not stopped attempting the journey north. Despite a 73 percent increase in migrant detentions in Mexico, The U.S. Customs and Border Protection office reported apprehending 111 percent more unaccompanied minors in September 2015 than in September 2014.

Migrant crises are symptoms of deeper crises and cannot be solved by building bigger walls or deploying a bigger security force. Because so much of human migration is triggered by adverse economic conditions or by displacement by extractive industries, migrant crises will only get worse until the root causes are dealt with. That’s why the Kairos Center’s call to figure out how to “unite the poor to end poverty” is so important today.

CUSLAR is a Cornell University-based organization, founded in 1965, which seeks to promote a greater understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. CUSLAR members are a diverse group of people united in our concern about the role of the United States in the social, political and economic affairs of the region. CUSLAR supports the right of the people of Latin America to self-determination and control over decisions that affect their lives and communities.

CUSLAR is a project partner of the Center for Transformative Action.
CUSLAR affected my husband Jan and me very deeply, and it helped us to realize that we get things done by organizing. We could have just had a march, but we said, no, we need an organization. We need to figure out strategies, and figure out the key points where our activism can make a difference.

CUSLAR helped us to develop a vocabulary to describe things that may have sounded inflammatory but in fact reflected reality -- the challenge is still to become better world citizens, invest less in military and work for social justice at home. We thank you for being members of CUSLAR throughout these amazing 50 years!

Cornelia Butler Flora
Founding CUSLAR member

CUSLAR collaborators and alumni shared congratulations, memories and encouragement at the organization’s 50th anniversary celebration on September 25.

How excellent that CUSLAR exists --

it shows that the U.S. government and policies are one thing, but that the desires of the American people are something different altogether.

For me as a Dominican, it is a great pleasure to meet men and women like you, who in difficult moments for us, dared to raise your voices for justice.

Now we find continuity in the young people present who are part of CUSLAR today, who continue the struggle for a better world.

Fidel Santana Mejía
Professor of Sociology
Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo
President, Frente Amplio

CUSLAR was born in the heady days of the mid sixties, following another U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic.

Those of us involved back when were largely green graduate students with only vague, often incoherent ideas about our future thesis topics, jobs and how we would relate to Latin American and Caribbean development issues.

CUSLAR and kindred organizations sustain an ethical responsibility among university students today and tomorrow. Let’s continue the work!

La revolución no se da de un día para otro.

Scott S. Robinson
First CUSLAR student coordinator, 1965
Tlayacapan, Morelos, Mexico

We still expect that CUSLAR will be an instrument in helping people to understand what the U.S. can do in order to allow Latin American countries to have their own say in what they need to do and how they need to do it. The only thing we in Latin America want is the privilege of having our own determination.

CUSLAR has been able to send students to Latin America who returned transformed with a commitment to the transformation of society. Nothing radicalizes you more than reality. If you look at the world with open eyes, an open mind and an open heart, you cannot be indifferent to the suffering of millions of people. CUSLAR is a beacon of light, not only in Ithaca, but around Latin America. May that continue for many, many years to come.

Joel Gajardo
CUSLAR Coordinator, 1974-1978

Participants at CUSLAR’s 50th Anniversary celebration.
Clockwise from top: Sept. 26 panel on social movements in the Americas; Jordan Cowell documents the discussion; Michelle Valentin and Julia Smith take part in conversation before the start of the formal events.
by Jordan Cowell

Entiérndanlo, entiérndanlo,
Nuestros ríos no se venden.
Entiérndanlo, entiérndanlo
Guatemala no se vende.
Entiérndanlo, entiérndanlo
Nuestros pueblos no se venden.

Listen, listen,
Our rivers are not for sale,
Listen, listen,
Guatemala is not for sale,
Listen, listen,
Our people are not for sale.

CUSLAR’s 50th Anniversary celebration closed on the evening of September 25 as Cuslareños, past and present, joined in song. Shailly Gupta Barnes of the Kairos Center at Union Theological Seminary learned this song from a Mayan leader from Guatemala, whose movement is at the forefront of a struggle against a mining company attempting to exert itself on their land.

The song’s message encapsulates the strength and unity of a collective protecting themselves and their land against a capitalist system that values profit over people.

In her speech, Barnes connected her work to combat poverty on a global scale with the goals and ideals shared by CUSLAR.

Poverty affects people both economically and socially, and “because the economy and society are now global, we work on a global level,” said Barnes. The Kairos network is growing, she noted, currently reaching 30 different states within the United States as well as 17 countries.

Barnes explained the organization’s name through the meaning of the word kairos: “It is a Greek term that indicates a break in time. Chronos is chronological time, and kairos is a breaking in of time, and sometimes, the breaking through.”

“We feel that if there is an opportunity that if we understand this moment, the potential for real transformational movement exists.”

-Shailly Gupta Barnes

"These are moments that happen in history where something, or God if you believe in God, is breaking into the world as there is emotion and movement breaking out of the conditions that are existing. And so we see the moment that we are in in the United States but also in the world as one of these kairos moments.”

“And there have been kairos moments in all of human history, and because they are moments, they come and they pass. We feel that if there is an opportunity that if we understand this moment, the potential for real transformational movement exists.”

Barnes emphasized the importance of acting upon this kairos moment of today in the fight against global poverty. She underscored the integral role of the United States in relation to the rest of the world.

“Because of the unique place that the United States plays within the world, economically, militarily, and culturally, we see a particular need to catalyze this movement here in the United States.”

In the wide struggle against poverty, the Kairos Center brings together “grassroots formations of the organized poor and dispossessed who are on front lines of major struggles against hunger, homelessness, healthcare violations, discrimination based on race, gender, immigration status, militarism and ecological devastation.”

Barnes noted the necessity of collaborating with and learning from neighboring groups in the Americas. This necessity stems from the large role the United States government has played in the Americas, past and present, by contributing to repressive dictatorships in Latin America as well as foreign policies that have proven devastating for the affected nations.

By reframing these “north and south divides” that permeate common ways of thinking and by analyzing who benefits from and who suffers from the current structure, it becomes possible to strategize a move towards global unity.

Barnes aims to link people in solidarity

LEARN MORE!

To learn more about the Kairos Center or the New Poor People’s Campaign, visit:
kairoscenter.org
poorpeoplescampaign.org

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER
Winter 2015-2016

About Shailly

Shailly Gupta Barnes has a long history working with poor and marginalized communities: in a West African farming community, as part of a legal team to fight for Colombian waste pickers’ rights, as a member of the Poverty Initiative in the United States, and now as Program Manager at the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice.

The Kairos Center uses human rights and religion as important channels to build a social movement to end poverty, led by the poor.
through the struggle against poverty

The global movement to extinguish poverty is both possible and necessary, according to Barnes. First, the inequalities in the United States need to be integrated into the global conversation. By connecting the United States to the rest of the world -- treating this nation as an essential piece of the global movement rather than an isolated entity -- the “us versus them” framework shifts. Global strength depends on breaking down these divides.

Second, Barnes highlighted the importance of solidarity and support across borders in regards to natural and manmade disasters. The devastating conditions of today differ from past eras, as newer technologies “wreak havoc on the natural world that we can’t recover from, especially if we are alienated from other parts of the world.”

Third, Barnes recognized that universal devastations -- conditions such as poverty, which touches nearly every corner of the globe -- cannot be resolved by organizations or movements that are only centered locally.

Global unity must extend beyond mere support of other groups. Rather, stated Barnes, it is about “fundamentally re-conceptualizing how we work together across borders and rethinking what the basis of that global unity is.”

“Our struggles are not just interconnected, they’re interdependent. If we don’t all win, none of us win, so we can’t be pitted against each other. This implies a revolution of how we understand human rights.”

According to Barnes, it goes beyond winning our struggles because we are bound by a shared liberation, which we must reach together, to be truly free.

Reflecting on global strength and a common liberation

I think back to Saturday morning, September 26, when the Cuslareños, old and new, poured into Anabel Taylor Hall to share hot coffee, warm words and a passionate discussion of social issues in which each person is visibly, personally invested. It was powerful to be surrounded by these caring, engaged and informed world citizens. They are people who share similar values and goals as the ones I have held close to me but have not quite yet figured out how to act upon. These are people who care about people. CUSLAR and the Kairos Center share the goal of creating mutual understanding across borders and fostering a sense of global support and unity.

In her speech, Shailly Gupta Barnes recognizes that before a successful movement can take place, there needs to be a shift in consciousness. She demands a shift in our entire system of thinking. This notion struck me, and I believe it is true that if we attempt to combat these issues by approaching them from the same frame of thought we always have, we cannot make a true productive change. This change stems from values, ideology and recognizing our strengths and struggles in connection to the strengths and struggles of other people. We really do share victories and defeats.

Reflecting upon Barnes’ words, it becomes clear that we cannot beat poverty if we treat it as an isolated entity. It is connected to a web of other societal and systematic inequalities, each of which needs to be targeted to kill the monster, so to speak. We must address racism, ecological destruction, capitalism, militarism and sexism, to name a few.

Tackling all of these issues seems a daunting and impossible task at times, but when it comes down to it, reinforcing authentic human connection and mutual understanding are an essential starting point. By appealing to our humanity and addressing the humanity in others, we can progress together -- despite the geographical, religious, cultural or political differences that may seem impenetrable at times. This is how we can create global unity and move towards Barnes’ notion of a common liberation.

Jordan Cowell is a senior at Ithaca College, studying Culture & Communication and Sociology.
Oxfam president: Resource rights and protections are fundamental

A talk by Raymond Offenheiser
President, Oxfam America
CUSLAR member 1973-1977

Editor’s note: This is an abridged transcript of Offenheiser’s talk at CUSLAR’s 50th Anniversary celebration on September 25. The full text of the talk can be found at cuslar.org/50th-anniversary.

At CUSLAR in the 1970s, much of our focus was on the brutal suppression of civil and political rights across the Latin American and Caribbean region -- Pinochet in Chile, military rule in Argentina, Somoza in Nicaragua.

Today, by contrast, the agenda for much of the work that groups like Amnesty, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch do is focused on economic and social rights. With that in mind, I’d like to focus my comments on the struggle for resource rights and protections, as a window into one of the major drivers of conflict and rights violations across Latin America and the world.

To frame this challenge, let me describe a typical situation of Andean peasant farmers in northern Peru. Families that have farmed and herded animals for generations discovered that a mountaintop removal gold mining project has been approved that spans five peaks rising above the fertile valley below their land.

Dead fish in local streams critical for irrigating farms and supplying homes in the valley, caused by cyanide release from the mine. Expanded mining operations to a sacred mountain that is a major watershed for the valley and is a designated national conservation area. Somehow, the company has persuaded the government to override all previous agreements and release these lands to the company.

One family is attacked and killed by mining company security guards.

"Communities face the loss of assets and livelihoods as corrupt local and national leaders collude with corporations."
- Raymond Offenheiser

Their crime? Building a small cottage on land they had farmed and grazed for generations that now the mining company claims as theirs.

These are true stories that have occurred around the Yanacocha mine in Cajamarca, Peru over the last 15 years. They encapsulate the struggles that grassroots communities are facing in rural areas all over the world as the process of globalization accelerates the penetration of major corporate interests into remote regions in pursuit of access and control of land, water, oil, gas and minerals.

Communities face the loss of assets and livelihoods as corrupt local and national leaders collude with corporations. They secure deals that marginalize indigenous populations. And in many countries, weak national institutions fail to execute existing legislation to protect the interests of their affected populations.

The stakes are high in these struggles. Economic growth has exploded over the last three decades of globalization and the markets in India and China have created insatiable demand for consumer goods for a growing middle class. There is no corner of the globe that is not being explored or staked out by some company or nation for its potential extractive value to meet the needs of energy, food or hard rock minerals.

Now that I have laid out the problem, let me sketch out the opportunities for action.

For centuries, mining, oil and gas companies could toll away in obscurity and with impunity. They could count on support of corrupt leaders to provide their military to deal with inconveniences like recalcitrant community groups or arbitrary arrest of capital city environmentalists.

Today, however, there are opportunities to turn the tables. A succession of failures like Yanacocha has cost numerous CEOs their jobs and their shareholders billions of dollars in shareholder value and company reputation.

So what are key issues to be addressed? I will offer two, but there are others.

Free Prior and Informed Consent, or FPIC, is the notion that any community should have the right with sufficient advance warning to say yes or no to the presence of a large extractive project in its midst. For years, mining companies simply made deals with governments and assumed they could bully communities out of their way with government support. That’s no longer the case!

ABOUT OXFAM AMERICA

Oxfam America is a global organization working to right the wrongs of poverty, hunger, and injustice. As one of 17 members of the international Oxfam confederation, we work with people in more than 90 countries to create lasting solutions. Oxfam saves lives, develops long-term solutions to poverty, and campaigns for social change. oxfamamerica.org
enabling them to hold their governments accountable to invest these profits into critical national development priorities. Until recently, this kind of data was unavailable to citizens. As a result of work of Oxfam and other INGOs, legislation was passed as part of the Wall Street Reform Act requiring all EI companies registered on the NYSE to disclose all financial dealings with any country where they have projects anywhere in the world. The wider significance of these victories is the fact that they are occurring at a moment when it is clear that the days of abundant foreign aid are over. Foreign aid is flat-lining and donors are now looking to national governments to share the burden of financing their own development. My message to CUSLAR activists is that this is an area to give attention to. Much has been achieved in a very short time in terms of significant reform, and much more is possible in other areas like indigenous and human rights policies for companies, decentralization of revenue to affected communities and mandated beneficiation, to name a few. This is a moment that all of us who were part of the solidarity moments of yesteryear should cherish and those of you who are members and CUSLAR followers today should see as a sign of hope and enormous opportunity. I hope we can collectively grasp it.

Over the last ten years and in the face of numerous conflicts, the industry has had to concede to the activists that this approach is counter-productive and undermines their ability to secure social license to operate. Absent this formal consent, their billions of dollars of capital investment are worthless. Activists have forced most of the major global mining companies to adopt FPIC as policy.

This process was aided by a famous case in Tambogrande, Peru, in which a community referendum indicated 98 percent disapproval of major project by Manhattan Minerals and the Peruvian government respecting the referendum withdrew the company’s license to mine, costing them millions in lost share value.

A second front in the battle with companies is around the issue of revenue transparency. Revenue transparency allows citizens access to a true accounting of the financial benefits accruing to their community and to the nation from EI projects as well as

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Food sovereignty: New challenges

by Michelle Valentin

At CUSLAR’S 50th Anniversary celebration at Cornell University on September 25, several guest speakers focused on the pressing challenges facing the hemisphere in the coming decades. Hannah Wittman, in particular, discussed the challenge of institutionalizing food sovereignty and the role of social movements in developing just and equitable food-related policies.

Wittman, a professor at the University of British Columbia and former CUSLAR Coordinator, began her discussion with several questions. “What is food sovereignty? Is it food self-sufficiency? Is it just caring about what my family eats? Is it just caring about what my country can produce? Is it food security and making sure everyone has enough food to eat at the household, community, national or global level?”

First, it is important to distinguish between food security and food sovereignty. According to Wittman, food security is the idea that everyone should have access to healthy and culturally appropriate food. Food sovereignty takes this definition further. Developed by members of La Via Campesina in 1996, the concept of food sovereignty requires that the people who produce, distribute and consume food should also be in charge of controlling the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution rather than the corporations and market institutions that have come to dominate the global food system. Food sovereignty is the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, as well as their right to define their own food and agriculture systems, since they are the ones who produce it.

Food sovereignty is a movement born in Latin America, and is centered on three principles: ecological sustainability, distributive justice and procedural justice. La Via Campesina is a global coalition of farmers, peasants and indigenous people from the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia, who realized they were facing the same challenges of survival in the face of free trade negotiations and loss of national agricultural support. This diverse group overcame cultural barriers, and came together looking for a new way to survive while working the land, in a way that involves larger sustainability, social justice and solidarity.

There are several ways in which communities and states are putting food sovereignty into practice, mainly as a collection of demands of governments by peasant and indigenous movements, to resist the advances of agribusiness and its profit-making logic in the countryside.

Latin America has been a global leader in this respect, with Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela having the concept of food...
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, continued from facing page

Food sovereignty has been enshrined in their constitution. Ecuador has taken on the responsibility of enacting policies and programs that will provide foundation for food sovereignty in the state.

The 2008 constitution in Ecuador strives to take into account the historical values of indigenous communities. This constitution stresses the idea that community groups have the right to safe and permanent access of healthy and nutritional food, preferably produced locally, and in line with their personal identities. Wittman explained that despite this constitutional commitment to improve food security for Ecuadorians, social movements struggling to see these words put into action.

Another mechanism by which food sovereignty is starting to be tested in practice is by redistributive land reform and reconstruction of markets to improve food distribution and access, especially in Brazil.

In addition, the Fome Zero, or Zero Hunger, social welfare program in Brazil has created innovative links between public nutrition and food security programs and rural development initiatives through mediated market support for the family farm sector. Through this program, foods coming from settlements are redistributed to schools, hospitals and day care centers. This program has been given high marks by participants, since social movements were involved in the design of these policies. It has proven crucial for the users of the policy to be involved in their design. However, despite the program’s potential, only 5 percent of family farmers in Brazil are able to practice it due to the country’s financial crisis. Although food sovereignty has been transformed into policy, by social movements themselves in many instances, the challenge now is making that policy a reality.

Excerpt of 1974 story:

"On Oct. 3, 1973, two men assassinated Jose Domingo Colombo, a journalist for the paper El Norte in the small town of San Nicolas. A man whom his editor had described as without enemies, philosophically inclined and not political, Colombo had earlier refused to print a right-wing manifesto and his life had been threatened as a result...."

"Two men between the ages of 35 and 40 abruptly walked into the office of the telephone operator, grabbed her headphones and made her lie down on the floor. One of them stood guard in the hallway. Meanwhile the older of the two, who was carrying an ‘Itaka’ shotgun, went inside. From this point things are not very clear. The office workers said they did not see anything but only heard the shots..."
Dominican sociologist Fidel Santana Mejía shared perspectives with CUSLAR members and alumni on social movements in Latin America at the organization’s 50th anniversary celebration on September 26.

Santana noted, “Since Westerners arrived, this land has been the land of resistance to all forms of oppression.”

Santana was among several speakers who engaged in thoughtful analysis on key challenges that face the hemisphere and what a “new internationalism” would entail.

Santana began his participation by discussing domination and resistance in Latin America broadly and historically. His perspective stems from direct observations and experiences in his home country of the Dominican Republic and throughout Latin America, as well as extensive study. Santana experienced firsthand the aftermath of the 1965 U.S. military intervention, a scarring chapter in Dominican history that he said has led to many of the social and political issues seen today in the Dominican Republic, problems common to many Latin American nations.

He explained that many social movements that carried out resistance to foreign occupation and exploitation were stopped or undermined in violent ways.

Santana noted that as capitalism expanded throughout various territories, it displaced traditional indigenous communities. He emphasized that with the expansion of capitalist ideologies, “you start to have the phenomenon of urban areas made up of millions of people that have been displaced from the rural lands. This creates the conditions for new modalities of resistance. It is no longer just the resistance of peasants and indigenous people, but also laborers.”

According to Santana, who resisted, how they resisted and why, depended on both local and global issues that might affect each country in Latin America differently. Therefore, some struggles pertained to the treatment of indigenous people, peasants or laborers. Others focused on the opposition to territorial occupation by foreign forces.

In many instances, people resisted local oligarchies, too. “The resistance in these cases is against governments that repress and oppress the population and steal the common resources,” Santana said. “Governments that are not providing the basic services to their populations around health, water and education are also often met with protest.”

In Argentina in the last decades, he said, the fight has become against unemployment. In many countries, including Bolivia, a wide range of opposition has come together to fight the impact of free-market models that obstruct development. He highlighted the Bolivian people’s victory after the government briefly allowed transnational corporations to privatize basic national resources such as water. Behind the slogan, “el agua es nuestra, ¡carajo!” social movements forced the retreat of companies that attempted to charge families even for rainwater they collected.

Santana identified a major tendency with regard to Latin American social movements in the era of neoliberalism, a period since the 1970s marked by privatization and the erosion of worker rights and protections and the welfare state.
“Neoliberalism has forced the weakening of some social agents in society and strengthened others,” he said. “That is, in the countries where neoliberalism has weakened the import substitution industrialization (ISI) model, the social subject that is the laborer has been weakened in favor of other subjects.”

He also noted that neoliberalism has negatively affected rural populations and peasant movements in Haiti and the Dominican Republic due to economic migration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic. The presence of a foreign undocumented and underpaid labor force has made it difficult for the local labor force to exercise their right to a decent wage.

On the other hand, he explained that “in some cases, the indigenous people and peasant struggles have been strengthened in their capacity for struggling for their identity,” like in Bolivia and Ecuador. However, in the case of Haiti, its rural economy has dissolved entirely, according to Santana. “As a result,” he said, “the majority of the population is classified as proletariat.” This refers to wage workers or working-class people.

Santana said, “In this sense, contrary to what is happening in most places in Latin America, a very strong class-based workers’ movement on the rise in Haiti.”

Furthermore, Santana declared that criminality has weakened progressive political movements throughout Latin America. Drugs have demobilized many formerly organized communities, and “the war on crime” has given corrupt police forces carte blanche in poor communities to repress social movements. Exorbitant profits to be made in the drug and arms trafficking industries in Mexico and Colombia have given rise to paramilitary, or privately funded armed groups, which are similar to military entities. He asserted that recently this has also become the case in the Dominican Republic. This large-scale organized crime, often with collusion in governments, is a bigger problem for Latin American countries than petty crime, he said.

Sometimes, Santana continued, working-class movements are strong enough to win elections and control national governments, but not strong enough to combat the interests of global capital in their country.

“In Brazil, we have a strong government that has been supported by the large worker movement and also the landless peasant movements. These movements have allowed for the emergence of a political project that has been able to govern in Brazil,” stated Santana. “Paradoxically, this government, which has been supported and created by social movements, was what helped introduce the neoliberal model to Brazil.”

Last, Santana explored Ecuador’s situation. According to Santana, Ecuador is going through a political crisis, where president Rafael Correa, initially backed by social movements, has become more of a technocrat, or a member of a class of leaders tasked with carrying out an elite agenda. Santana lamented that Correa has turned his back to the cries of his people who demand social change and has even gone so far as to criminalize organizations that criticize his administration.

Santana left the audience with several challenges facing Latin American social movements today. For example, “we must force governments to be at the service of people in Latin America,” as opposed to the other way around.

“We must find again the roots and traditions of resistance of the people of Latin America,” Santana said. “Also, it’s our job to contribute to resurgence of the social actors who today have been weakened. And create possibilities for change for social and citizen mobilization.”

The term ‘social movement’ has been used to signify a wide variety of collective attempts to bring about a change in certain social institutions or to create an entirely new order. This term is used broadly in political and religious matters, as well as in movements that represent particular identities or groups, such as the women’s movement.

In Latin America, social movements gained momentum at the beginning of the 19th century in the attempt to establish independence from European colonial powers. Two centuries later, progressive social movements continue to mobilize power to maintain and expand individual and collective rights. Meanwhile, December’s election results in Venezuela and Argentina show that social movements can also emerge to curtail these rights in favor of the interests of national and global elites.

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Elba Morales is a senior politics major at Ithaca College.
Gajardo shares insight on Chile’s 9/11

by Mikaela Lewis

“There was a rabbit trying to leave Chile, crossing the border into Peru,” former CUSLAR Coordinator Joel Gajardo told students at Elmira College September 28. “He met another rabbit who asked why he was leaving his country. ‘In Chile, they persecute elephants!’ said the first rabbit. The second rabbit replied, ‘But you are not an elephant,’ to which the first responded, ‘But how do I prove that to the military regime?’”

With a combination of wry wit and seriousness, Gajardo imparted important themes that left the students inspired.

Gajardo began his lecture by introducing Chile, his home country. He spoke of Chile’s “crazy” geography: “In the morning, you can ski in the Andes mountains, stop at home for lunch in Santiago, and then spend the afternoon at the beach.” He explained that Chile has every possible type of geography: mountains, for some of the best skiing in the world, valleys, perfect for growing vegetables and fruit, particularly grapes for Chile’s fantastic wine, desert, the driest in the world which also holds the world’s most popular observatories because of its expansive and clear sky, and glaciers, all the way down to Antarctica. Gajardo explained that these geographical characteristics are the cause of Chile’s isolation from the rest of South America, which contributed to the historical stability of the country.

The main topic of Gajardo’s lecture was Chile’s political history, connected to his personal experiences. Before the U.S.-government-supported coup against the Salvador Allende administration on September 11, 1973, Chile had been one of the most stable countries in Latin America, politically and economically. “We had a very stable democratic process. Nobody was penalized for belonging to any particular political party, that was very free. So we were not really prepared for the drastic change that happened with the military regime in 1973.”

In 1970 Dr. Salvador Allende was democratically elected president of Chile. “He was the coordinator of the coalition of more progressive forces in Chile,” Gajardo noted. Allende was elected with only 37 percent of the vote, so there was ample opposition to his presidency, which caused instability. “Allende was concerned with the poor and oppressed,” said Gajardo, “although he himself belonged to a fairly well-to-do family.” For this reason, Allende instituted many progressive reforms. “Allende immediately came into the eye of not only the rich people in Chile who were afraid that some of their wealth would be nationalized, but also into the crosshairs of the U.S. government and the wealthy class in the U.S.” The U.S. government feared the spread of socialism and the loss of economic investments in Chile. This mindset is illustrated by a quotation from then Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, which Gajardo shared: “We can not allow Chile to go Communist out of the stupidity of its own people.”

“To some, the democratic process only works when the candidate they want gets elected, not necessarily the candidate the people want.” –Joel Gajardo

“The opposition to Allende was very strong, because it included the rich people, and they have the means to really create a lot of anguish.” Major companies began to slow production of goods in order to create a scarcity that could be blamed on Allende. “For instance,” Gajardo said, “we had a shoe factory that was producing 1,000 pairs of shoes a month. When Allende was elected, immediately the owner of that factory said, ‘slow down production.’ So instead of 1,000 pairs, they start producing 800, 500, and finally only about 200 pairs of shoes each month. This created a scarcity and the people began complaining: ‘What happened? We don’t have shoes in Chile.’” This problem existed with other basic products as well because “the different industrial powers were in cahoots to diminish production to create a scarcity, and this upset people because they could not find necessary goods in the market.”

Gajardo lamented: “Some people began hoarding food, because they could not find flour to make bread, and Chileans eat a lot of bread: bread for breakfast, bread for lunch, bread for dinner, all the time, bread.” The wealthy shut down flour mills to create scarcity. The bus drivers went on strike, so goods were not being distributed, also creating scarcity. All of this was done by those who controlled these industries, to reflect poorly on Allende and cause a loss of faith in his plans and leadership.

“I used to have a Volkswagen 12-passenger bus,” Gajardo shared. “I took all of the seats out to start using it to move flour from the mills to the bakeries. Several of us who were in favor of the government and trying to help create better conditions did the same.”

“In another case there was a strike of buses, so I put the seats back in my bus and I drove some routes, taking people where they needed to go. They tried to pay me and I said, ‘No, no this is a free ride.’”

Gajardo agreed with Allende’s goals of helping the poor and oppressed, therefore he did what was necessary to counteract the actions of those who would undermine the president. “People were very enthused with what Allende was doing, because we
with students from Elmira College

The military took over all of the universities, including the Catholic University where Gajardo taught. “I was not a member of any political party, but I was supportive of Allende. I did not think I had anything to be concerned about.” So Gajardo continued teaching. “When I returned to teach classes in March, the Dean of my school said, ‘Joel, we have a problem. The military intervened in the university and the president is now an admiral of the Navy. They said you cannot teach anymore, and you cannot have contact with the students.’” One of Gajardo’s ethics courses was called Christian and Marxist Understandings of Human Nature, and “when they saw the word Marxist, they assumed that I was Marxist,” he said.

“On April 19, 1974, I went home at about 9:30 at night. As I was going into my house, immediately three guys jumped on me. I thought they were robbing me, that they were thieves in my house, but it was more than that. It was the Chilean Secret Service. They immediately handcuffed me, blindfolded me, and eventually they took me to a torture cell for 72 hours.” He was then taken to a concentration camp at the national stadium in Santiago, where he was held for two weeks. “I was taken to the Minister of War, and he offered me two alternatives: stay in prison for who knows how long, or leave the country right away.” So Gajardo left. He relocated with his family to Ithaca, New York later in 1974.

Once in Ithaca, Gajardo did not stop trying to improve the situation in his home country. He became CUSLAR’s Coordinator, where he continued his activism through education about Latin America, expressions of solidarity with persons under duress and helping other Chileans to relocate in New York State.

Gajardo explained that Pinochet was never tried in Chile for his human rights violations. “One problem for the Chilean society is that our judicial system, despite everything that we knew about the atrocities that Pinochet committed, was unable to penalize him.” Therefore the collective memory of the dictatorship is somewhat inaccurate or forgotten, and the present day opinion of Pinochet is still divided. Some of the wealthy people who benefited economically from the Pinochet regime still regard him as a hero, and there are still families who have not seen justice for the treatment of their family members who were tortured, killed or exiled. The Pinochet regime broke up families by dividing them physically and politically, the effects of which still exist today.

Gajardo finished by encouraging the group to question the history they are taught, to continue to be curious and seek truth. “Don’t lose your ability to be critical. Criticizing what is wrong with your country is not unpatriotic,” he said. He saw the extreme censorship of a dictatorship and the manipulation of a government of its people, and for this reason he insists on questioning everything, thinking critically and independently. Gajardo shared the history of Chile and his experiences, including the ugly parts, because he believes that is the only way this world can make progress: being honest, knowing and accepting our real history, and learning from mistakes.

Dr. Joel Gajardo is an ordained Presbyterian minister with degrees from Union Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Princeton University. After leaving Chile due to the military coup, Gajardo became the coordinator of CUSLAR at Cornell University from 1974 to 1978. He lives in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Mikaela Lewis is a December 2015 graduate of Elmira College. She studied Spanish and Educational Studies.
Reflected on CUSLAR—Cornell health exchange with students from Dominican Republic

by Julia Smith

For ten days in October, CUSLAR and the Cornell Global Health program welcomed 12 Dominican university students at Cornell University, completing the second half of a very successful and fulfilling cultural exchange.

The Dominican students stayed with Cornell student hosts and participated in many classes, cultural events, and learning opportunities. The main event of the exchange was a research symposium that showcased the projects that Cornell students created together with the Dominican students during an eight-week immersion experience in Santo Domingo. I was fortunate to be one of the eight Cornell students participating in this unique program.

From the moment we first arrived in Santo Domingo in May, we were greeted by a crowd of smiling Dominicans. Our mentor, Dr. Angel Pichardo Almonte, and students from the holistic medicine group RenaSer were ready to pick us up at the airport and immediately invite us into their world. From the moment we left the airport I knew our lives would be permanently entangled with these passionate and giving students.

As the summer progressed, so did our relationships with the students of RenaSer. These students were our tour guides, peers, mentors and friends. They taught us how to get around the bustling city of Santo Domingo and how to properly dance the bachata. They shared with us their passion for holistic medicine and social justice. They introduced us to their families, kept us safe, and made us feel completely at home. When we planned their visit to Cornell, I knew that we would somehow have to return this hospitality.

Receiving them in my home meant more to me than just providing a place to stay. Many of the students who came to Cornell in October had never before left the Dominican Republic. I felt compelled to show them the same generosity they had shared in Santo Domingo and to give them a warm welcome to our school and our country.

Research symposium

On October 16 our mixed research teams participated in the first Global Health Symposium. This allowed us to showcase our work and speak about our experiences with faculty and peers. Through this symposium, my Dominican partners and I were able to reconvene on our community research topic of diabetes and share our findings with the Cornell community. Presenting our project with my research partners, Cornell student Anshu Gaur and Scarlett Constanza and Shaila Abreu from the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD), at my side was a pivotal moment for us after two months of dedication to this topic.

These group research projects solidified our friendships with the RenaSer students during the summer, and it was an incredible experience to share this academic setting with them at Cornell as well.

Sharing with New Roots Charter School

RenaSer students also shared an intercultural experience with New Roots Charter School students in Ithaca. Spanish teacher Maria Gimma brought about a dozen of her students from New Roots to Cornell for a morning of healthy eating and learning about holistic medicine. The high school students and Dominican students created juices and salads while discussing the medicinal properties of the food and practicing Spanish and English together.

Pichardo is a physician, professor and community leader who treats patients at his holistic medical clinic, ANDA, and teaches at the UASD. He is the adviser of the student group RenaSer, which is committed to social justice through accessible and natural medicine.

Additionally, Cornell students do clinical shadowing at ANDA, a medical dispensary in Simón Bolívar, and the Dr. Reynaldo Almázar Maternity Hospital. Through this immersion experience, students improve their Spanish and learn about the health care system in Santo Domingo and Dominican culture.

Photo: Maria Gimma

As part of an October global health exchange, students from the holistic medicine group RenaSer from the Dominican Republic explained medicinal properties of fruits and herbs to Maria Gimma’s high school Spanish students from Ithaca’s New Roots Charter School. Participants then shared a healthy meal at CUSLAR’s office.

The program was featured in the Fall 2015 Cornell Human Ecology magazine. Find a link at cuslar.org.

Read more student reflections online at globalhealthindr.wordpress.com.

About the Global Health program in Dominican Rep.

In 2014, Cornell Global Health and CUSLAR launched an eight-week service-learning program for Cornell undergrads in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Students live with host families in the neighborhood of Simón Bolívar while learning about holistic medicine and creating research projects. Dominican students and Cornell students participate in a class on qualitative research methods at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) led by Dr. Angel Pichardo Almonte.
The RenaSer students’ passion for sharing their knowledge about health and nutrition was evident. Seeing connections form between the high school students and our Dominican friends was remarkable.

**Reciprocal learning**

We also had important informal time together, hiking the Cascadilla Gorge trail, exploring the Ithaca Farmers Market and visiting landmark sites on Cornell’s campus. The students took in the view from the top of the clocktower, participated in Spanish classes and shared meals at the dining halls.

We listened to Dominican music, danced salsa, and prepared homemade empanadas. We spoke mostly Spanglish. Our friendships represent both our similarities and our differences. Here lies the beauty of the relationships we are building. There is a common growth among us all in sharing ourselves and in being receptive to learn from one another. This deep and committed relationship-building is what I see as the most significant aspect of our cultural exchange and our participation in this service-learning program.

**Redefining service**

In preparing for the program, we kept returning to the central theme of service. We read Joby Taylor’s article, “Metaphors we serve by,” during our pre-departure seminar led by CUSLAR Coordinator Tim Shenk.

Taylor shares several metaphorical narratives of how service is understood — as war, business or charity. He also says service can be seen as border crossing. He defines a border as a place of “political, cultural and ideological overlap.” This understanding of service allows participants to understand “otherness,” people with different backgrounds and worldviews, on their own terms. Service does not necessarily have to be a physical project or donation.

Although service as border crossing is the best of Taylor’s metaphors, this definition could reach further. Defining border crossing as understanding “otherness” assumes a barrier will be left between people. An additional metaphor could be service as unity.

Unity means more than appreciating the beauty of the relationships we are building. There is a common growth among us all in sharing ourselves and in being receptive to learn from one another. This is what I see has happened between Dominican students and Cornell students on the CUSLAR-Global Health program. Through friendship, the “other” melts away. Understanding breaks down barriers between people while still acknowledging and respecting differences.

**Implications for our program**

These strong connections have far-reaching implications for our program. These relationships continue to strengthen our goals in this partnership. I feel compelled to maintain my ties with these people and this amazingly warm and beautiful country. I am eager to see these students achieve all of their noble and ambitious dreams.

I am eager to continue sharing our worlds and experiences as we all grow in our parallel and entangled lives. In a way, we represent the future of U.S.-Latin American relations. Our impact may seem small right now but our strong relationships and deep mutual understanding is the beginning of a more united and empathetic world.

Julia Smith is a senior Biology and Society major at Cornell University.

**Dominican student reflections**

“Nunca hubiera imaginado que la segunda parte de este proceso de intercambio e investigación sería una experiencia tan enriquecedora. Pude reencontrarme y conocer personas maravillosas en mi breve estadía en Cornell University, además de presentar junto a mis compañeros y compañeras los resultados de nuestras investigaciones realizadas en Santo Domingo. Aprendí mucho de cada encuentro y pienso que esto fue el inicio de una larga amistad el inicio de un proceso de transformación a nivel personal y social.” — Sergio Valenzuela

“Mi visita a Cornell University fue sin duda una gran experiencia. Es maravilloso todo lo que pude aprender, poder debatir libremente sobre lo que pensamos de diversos temas, la oportunidad de conocer nuevas personas, nuevas culturas, nuevos lugares, poder llevar un mensaje a muchas personas de lo que somos como grupo y asimismo poder aprender de las demás personas con las que nos relacionamos. Me llevo los agradables momentos que pasé con mis compañeros y amigos miembros de RenaSer y mis compañeras del Programa Global Health que son únicos todos. Sin ustedes no estaríamos completos.” — Stephany Baez

**About the student research**

The student research projects were collaborations between undergraduate students from Cornell and students from the USAD. Pichardo taught students the basic methods of qualitative community research and emphasized the subjectivity that comes from it.

Qualitative research comes from people’s life stories. It is highly personal, and knowledge production is always filtered through the lenses of the researchers as well.

Students created research teams based on common interests. The topics ranged from biomedical to social, including: knowledge about diabetes, views on the relationship between cancer and nutrition, health practices of Haitians without citizenship, and beliefs associated with gender violence.

The student teams spent the summer developing the projects and collecting field data. They created focus groups and invited residents to participate in interviews. For the Cornell students, these interviews were both a valuable source of contextual knowledge about their topic and also an essential experience for practicing Spanish in a professional context.
by Tim Shenk and Alicia Swords

The Dominican Republic was in the international press in 2015 regarding threats of mass deportation. Those in danger of deportation are Haitian immigrants and especially a now “stateless” population of roughly 210,000 people born in the DR of Haitian descent who in 2013 were denied the rights of *jus solis* citizenship and relegated to a long-term “in transit” status.

We appreciate the international attention brought to this pressing issue. We denounce the deportations carried out by the Dominican government and wherever they may occur. Laws and practices that limit people’s free movement are often used to divide, and the designation of “illegal” or “undocumented” facilitates heightened exploitation.

Though we agree with the general sentiment of many recent articles on the subject, many of the perspectives are incomplete. In focusing on the most recent “news,” most articles miss some very important “olds” -- that is, the history of the island and its relationship to the global economy. Putting this case into its historical and material context may show the complexity of the human rights crisis unfolding in the DR and provide a path toward resolving it.

Much of what we aim to do is to challenge the logic of identity politics, and particularly a U.S.-based identity politics, that is being used to explain what’s happening in the DR. In order to truly address the crisis there, we must get beyond the oversimplified logic that Dominicans or Dominican officials are simply racist and object to Haitians and those of Haitian ancestry solely because of their dark skin.

Racism is a crucial factor in guiding relations on the island of Hispaniola, but it does not act alone. It must be understood in tandem with nationalism and economics. Studying this trio together may allow us to more clearly oppose the Dominican elite’s ongoing discrimination of people of Haitian heritage, while at the same time denouncing a structurally flawed global economic system that rewards this behavior.

Continue reading at cuslar.org

Excerpt from our online publication:

**Dominican Republic deportations and the global economy**

Read cuslar.org for updated coverage on U.S.-Latin American relations.

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History Is Ours: Accounts of the Chilean coup and resettlement in Ithaca, New York

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