News Briefs

Colombia

Environmental, indigenous, and social organisations in Colombia are collecting signatures to force a constitutional referendum, attempting to insert a right to water. If passed, the amendment would make access to clean water a fundamental right, thus following the example of Uruguay in 2004. The current privatisation has increased the cost of water services for consumers.
Source: *IPSNews.net*

Paraguay

In Paraguay around 100,000 rural families have lost their land to soy plantations, now rapidly expanding due to the new and fast-growing demand from biofuels, particularly in Europe. Corruption and violence accompany the Paraguayan model of soybean production. Social movements are being criminalised while defending peasant farmers and indigenous communities who occupy the vast land plantations of the wealthy fazenderos.
Source: *www.LaSojaMata.org*

Ecuador

Many international social movements are expressing solidarity with environmental, human rights and indigenous organisations in Ecuador, who believe that Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's "promises of change are diluted by oil interests." Accion Ecologica – a LASC partner – has called for a thorough process of integral agrarian reform (land, territory, production and commercialisation) to promote the democratisation of landholding, water and food sovereignty.
Source: *http://www.accionecologica.org/*

Member Feedback

Feature Article from Issue 1

What is appealing to the LASC supporter in reading the last issue's feature article is its honesty; it is a realistic look at what is happening in Latin America right now. While it's difficult to capture the trends in such a large area with so many different dynamics, short survey pieces like this are timely indeed and help the LASC supporter keep in perspective the reality on the ground for so many ordinary Latin Americans.
Dermot Deering

LASC Recommends...

Book

The Price of Fire by Benjamin Dangl

In the last edition of Chaski we reported on the increasing polarisation of Bolivia's indigenous majority and the wealthier gas-rich States of the eastern provinces. Dangl's take on Bolivia's resource wars and social movements is an entertaining and informative read, charting the struggles of community movements as they faced down some of the richest corporations in the world. It is also highly topical, as Bolivia prepares for the recall referendum called by President Evo Morales this August. Dangl is the editor of the website www.upsidedownworld.org.

Available from the LASC Bookshop.

Film

12,000 Years of Blindness

The title is the first clue that this is no ordinary documentary. On paper straightforward reportage on the prevalence of blindness and the lack of sight-saving procedures in Venezuela, in the hands of director (former IFI chairman) Rod Stoneman it becomes something quite different. Consciously invoking the Garcia Marquez classic of magical realism, the film interspers-es cold statistics about blindness (one of which provides the title) with touching interviews and surreal shots designed to evoke the condition in the viewer. Eye-opening.

Shown at the Latin America Week Film Festival 2008. Available on request from rodstoneman@eircom.net.

Music

Morro 16

Morro 16 is a group of Brazilian musicians based in Dublin. Well, some of them are Brazilian, and those who aren't (many Irish) may as well be! All are united by one thing: a passion for samba. Some are seasoned participants in Brazilian carnival celebrations, others have become hooked on samba without ever even setting foot in its homeland! The 'bloco' made its first public performance at the recent Brazil-Ireland soccer match, tapping into and fuelling the euphoria of the Brazilian supporters on Hill 16 (hence the name 'Morro 16'). The group is part of Dublin's vibrant Brazilian music scene, and hopes to bring some of the joy of samba to this years' St. Patrick's Festival.

Share Your Experiences!

LASC's Thursday Night Talks are an opportunity for all members to come along and share their views and experiences with others. If you have recently returned from Latin America, or have a particular area of study or expertise that you think would be of interest to other members, please get in touch with us. Visual aids are always welcome but not essential. To propose a talk topic, please email: members@lasc.ie. See you on Thursday night!

Contact Us!

We want your views and opinions: on the contents of this Newsletter (in particular the Feature Article), and any other news from Latin America. The best comments will be included in the next issue of Chaski. Please contact us:
Email: members@lasc.ie
Website: www.lasc.ie
Address: LASC, 5 Merrion Row, Dublin 2.
Telephone: 01-6760435.
Editorial Committee: Miren Maialen, Muireann De Barra, Chris O'Connell, Louise Van Bruggen.
Layout: Sally Galiana

LASC