Bolivia: Latin America's Experiment in Grassroots Democracy

written by Nancy Romer | March 4, 2009

A NEW ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENTS with a range of socialist programs is sweeping Latin America. New trade agreements that embrace the possibility of pan-regional alliances are being forged. Venezuela, Ecuador, and to a significant extent Argentina, Chile, Nicaragua, and Brazil articulate some policies of uplifting the poor and challenging US and neoliberal hegemony. Other nations are making their way to this list. Among these synergistic movements, no country in Latin America is better positioned to become a democratic socialist state than Bolivia. It has all the potential elements of a powerful bottom-up people's movement, rich in cultural and organizational forms. It has the poorest and most indigenous population in South America, has overthrown more governments than any other nation in the hemisphere, and has sufficient if yet untapped natural resources, if distributed fairly, to dramatically improve the lot of its people. It likely has the most varied and effective grassroots, egalitarian organizations in the world.[1] In December 2005, that movement elected its first indigenous president, Evo Morales, and a national assembly majority organized through the electoral party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS — movement toward socialism). Many Bolivian activists speak of a "radical humanism" rather than a strictly class-based society, a multi-leader, multi-movement power and "pluri-national" society that derives ideas and strength from its multiplicity; many seek a movement that exerts control rather than a party or government that seizes control.[2] All of these goals are contested. The struggle for the future of Bolivia poses the most fundamental questions facing socialist transformation. Will the grassroots movements succeed in being independent of the government, continuing to exert power from the bottom and succeed in winning the nationalization of natural resources, economic development, redistribution of land, basic changes in the constitution, expansion of the public sector? Can these changes occur in the face of intimidation and threats (and potential military incursions) from the national elites representing the interests of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and U.S. Embassy? Can the varied visions of a socialist project, articulated by the indigenous, workers, peasants, urban, rural, and varied regions, join together in sufficient solidarity to prevail against the forces of reaction as well as left sectarianism? Can there be sufficient diversified economic development to create the material conditions of a decent standard of living for all? These are the big questions, answered in small and large ways by each of the movements, political actors, and policies in Bolivia. The direction of the story line will have an enormous impact on the nature and outcome of the overall socialist project in Latin America.

Neoliberalism's Assault on the Bolivian People

LATIN AMERICAN LEFTISTS CALL NEOLIBERALISM "CAPITALISMO SALVAJE" (savage capitalism).[3] This project of the international corporate class started in 1973 with its frontal attack on the welfare state of Chile, installing Pinochet's fascist, neoliberal government. Its kickoff assault in the first world was the NYC Fiscal "Crisis" which succeeded in crushing the labor movement and signaling the decline of the public sector. During the 1980's, Reagan and Thatcher further refined the ideology and applied it relentlessly to the developing world and Latin America in particular. The goal of the neoliberal program is to squeeze money from the bottom to the top, from the poor to the rich. It forces a pro-business climate by changing the laws to allow the corporations to simply take over land and industries and lay off the workers. It drives small farmers off the land and creates massive farms using chemically based agricultural practices harmful to the land, workers, and consumers. It eliminates and/or privatizes government services and denies social rights that the

people previously won in struggle. It deepens the misery of darker-skinned people and uses racism as a means to create social divisions. It buys and sells governments and makes them obey. Collaborating media giants convince the rest of us that "there is no alternative." As David Harvey's theory of capital accumulation by dispossession asserts, they institute a wealth creation program for the rich and an unjust program for all others, a program where the rich harvest all the gains and the poor catch all the liabilities. They pray to the god of the "market" and convince us that this makes "common sense."[4]

Bolivia's "Perfect Storm"

LANDLOCKED BOLIVIA HAS BEEN A NATION OF GREAT NATURAL WEALTH (silver and tin historically, and now natural gas) and great political oppression. Like other colonized peoples, the indigenous and later mestizo peoples of the region saw the profits from their labor and land go to the first world, initially through monarchies, then through corporations that stole their natural resources, captured their governments, and created local mestizo elites to do their bidding. Most of these elites were lighter-skinned Bolivians, but not always. The powerful use of racism by capitalism has been a constant theme in Bolivia's history. With its large indigenous population, most Bolivians who consider themselves mestizos are also dark-skinned; the culture, the national monuments and treasures, the music and dance, the foods, the methods of political protest, are rooted in their indigenous heritage. While indigenous peoples have been consistently repressed, oppressed and exploited, their cultures have remained substantially intact and have served as sources of ideas, solidarity, organizing methods, and power. But still, as in almost all nations of the world, the darker-skinned people have the least power and status and are significantly more likely to live in poverty. Since the 1980's, structural adjustments imposed by the IMF-World Bank- U.S. Embassy to pay off debts, meant massive firing of public workers, in education, health, utilities, transportation, and sanitation. With international barriers to capital eliminated, the flight of capital from less profitable labor markets like Bolivia to places with more docile workers like China, further laid off 35,000 unionized factory workers. Plummeting tin prices and the militancy of the politically powerful miners union motivated the lay-off of thousands of miners: in 1985 there were 30,000 miners, in 1987 there were only 7,000. The new "pro-business" laws allowed land to be bought up by foreign and local agribusiness as well as permitting local markets to be flooded with cheap U.S. government subsidized agricultural products from the United States. This made small scale, even subsistence farming impossible. Newly privatized public service jobs in energy, transportation, and utilities led to multinational corporation control over vital parts of the economy and the further lay-offs of an additional 14,000 workers in these industries. In a population of just under 9 million, over half under 18 years, these layoffs had enormous impact. Pushed off the land and out of their workplaces, unemployed people searching for ways to earn their living flooded the cities and created impoverished makeshift communities immediately adjacent to them. Most of the jobs they eventually got, often at levels way below subsistence, were in the informal economy, selling in local markets, often sitting at stalls for 8-12 hours a day with pitifully little to show for it. Many worked in tiny family enterprises doing contract production work. The real income of Bolivians dropped significantly during this period.[5] Bolivian migrant labor in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, the U.S. and Spain, provided remittances that kept many families alive. The majority of people caught in this historic sweep, were the indigenous. The bold moves of the government elites representing the interests of the U.S.- and European-based corporations, created a reaction and a unity among key elements of society that ended in a "perfect storm" for revolution in Bolivia. The segments of the population key to riding out this storm and turning it in their favor were the indigenous peoples, unions and marginalized workers, coca growers, landless peasants, women, and students uniting in a "re-articulation" of left-indigenous forces. [6] Organizing to defeat the sources of shared oppression, each sector rose up non-violently and unified in the period between 2000 and 2005. While neoliberals would rather rule by economic and political power, when those fail they turn to violent

repression. But government murders of hundreds of demonstrators and activists only strengthened the activists' resolve. Their unity across sectors was based on their shared analysis of neoliberalism with racism as its handmaiden. The poor and working class, the darkest-skinned people in the society, unfettered by a government which had so long ago stopped serving their needs, joined together to take charge of their own government and lives in what became the first revolutionary movement of the 21st Century, ending in an election of a self-described socialist-leaning government.[7] We will briefly look at each of these sectors in turn and then examine the dynamics yielding accomplishments and failures, of both the new government and the people's movements, since that election.

Indigenous Peoples

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTOR in this narrative is the huge, displaced, and poverty stricken indigenous populations that amassed around the big cities over the last 25 years. With these changes in employment and urbanization came shifts in the fulcrum of political agency, from class-based organizations, i.e., unions, to territorially based organizations often focusing on racial/ethnic exclusion and natural resources. These organizations were inspired by and interdependent with indigenous-campesino as well as workplace-based unionism.[8] La Paz has a population of 800,000 and is perched 12,000 feet above sea level. El Alto is located immediately above La Paz, right below the international airport, at an elevation of about 14,000 feet. In 1950, El Alto's population was 11,000; by 2001 the official census was 650,000 but many estimate El Alto's population at closer to 1 million.[9] Its geographic location between the capital city and the international airport is strategically crucial, and provides a ready tactical site — the "bloqueo" or roadblock stopping all traffic on major roads–and thus a direct source of power to the mostly indigenous population of El Alto. El Alto's residents' close ties to their indigenous roots and their pueblos or rural home communities, their social isolation from much of the rest of La Paz and Bolivian society, the discrimination and racism they experience every day, has toughened the people of El Alto and made them depend upon their own leadership, their own visions for the future. Over the last 20 years, the people of Bolivia have suffered a great decline in their standards of living and the break up of their historic communities and families. Now in El Alto, 67 percent live below the poverty line, 60 percent have no sanitary facilities in their homes, 60 percent of residents are under 25 and only 10 percent over 50; Sixty-nine percent of the adults are in the informal sector or contingent work, commonly in family enterprises, and 43 percent of them are wage-workers mostly in manufacturing and services often in the home–the highest percentage in the nation: they are a poor, uncomfortable, displaced, young and somewhat desperate group. Their homes and markets are incredibly densely packed; their commerce, mostly informal, dominates community life.[10] They bring back and forth anything they can to their rural and urban communities and families and most are tightly connected to their pueblos. Many mayors of these pueblos reside mainly in El Alto, indicating the political and economic flow between El Alto and the mostly Aymara Altiplano (Andean highlands).[11] When problems arise in a particular pueblo, Alteños (those living in El Alto) have sprung into action in defense of these towns. These solidarities are part of the social and political networks that unify both identity and political action within the nation. Raul Zibechi describes spread out, horizontal, extended family dwellings and streets as in El Alto, that create new forms of living/productive/social/political spaces from which the previously marginalized or "subaltern" peoples organize. New urban activism emerges from the power of being outside the grip of the corporations and the state, outside their hierarchical structures of wages and social control, outside the geographic grid unifying the capitalist cities.[12] The fierce resistance Alteños present is demonstrated repeatedly. Alteños destroyed the pedestrian overpasses from which the repressive military would spy and fire upon residents. Thus the military could only enter the community through the streets and be confronted directly by the people. Zibechi points out that the logic of the factory and of capitalism is the homogenization and hierarchical organization of the working masses.

After capital flight, massive layoffs, and abandonment of the factory and welfare state model, we then see a shift toward heterogeneity and horizontal structures and relationships. In El Alto, the 400-550 neighborhood organizations have a tight representative and service delivery structure (Federation of Neighborhood Assemblies–FEJUVE), parent councils connected to schools that have parallel local and city-wide organizations, and participation that builds broad experience and local "organic" leadership. A system of "rotational democracy" has developed in which participation within each family, block, or neighborhood to the higher level of organization may be frequently changed or rotated, insuring very broad involvement and political education as well as frequent turnover of leaders. Multiple leaders are seen as sturdier and less likely to be bought or killed off.[13] Unlike unions that tend to replicate the hierarchical structure of the capitalist workplace, decision- making and power in these neighborhood structures are much more horizontal. Attendance is required but once the meeting starts a deep democratic vision is reported to transpire. Alteños had long ago stopped relying on the Bolivian government on every level and had a parallel government to the official one: they collect taxes and provide direct services to the people. They even have a local, indigenous and extra-legal structure in which they try criminals according to indigenous values, not written law, and have gone so far as to lynch people they see as having committed crimes.[14] This is the base of the power of the El Altos of the world — the people that capitalism and racism exploit and abandon and the spaces and organizations they create to resist and rebuild.[15] Zibechi posits that Marxism alone cannot explain the way forward; rather a new amalgam of theory, ideas, and, moreover, practice, will prevail in leading and explaining the movement. Real challenges rarely come from organizations that mirror capitalist organizations; perhaps they can only come from structures that are formed by an altogether different physics.[16] With these tight organizational structures, internal education, and political solidarities that are often unseen or unnoted by others,[17] El Alto has effectively flexed its political muscle frequently over questions of autonomy, exploitation and government policy. Using the tactic of "el bloqueo," tens of thousands of their people organize to collectively exert their power in forms that are rooted in their cultural histories and their visions of the future. The Katarista movement, named after the 18th Century indigenous warrior Tupak Katari, began in the mid-1970s and joined an analysis of indigenous exploitation and exclusion to that of social class. This influence helped to forge indigenous-worker alliances. "Black February" 2003, massive street demonstrations of workers, indigenous, progressive professionals and bourgeoisie, university students and teachers, was initiated by high school students in El Alto and then joined by their counterparts in La Paz. They cried out against further taxes on wages and the illegitimacy of the old government. Rising up again in "Red October" 2003, that same coalition ultimately ousted hated President "Goni" Lozada, and demanded the nationalization of the country's gas reserves and a process to create a new constitution recognizing indigenous rights and organizations. In 2005 these same united forces participated in a general strike led by the indigenous Alteños: they surrounded La Paz and blocked its roads around the question of nationalization of gas. These actions led to the resignation of President Carlos Mesa and a new election for president.[18] Confrontations with the Bolivian military were constant, but often mitigated by indigenous women spreading the indigenous flag as a tablecloth on which they shared meals with the soldiers, symbolically both welcoming them to join with their people and showing their own dominance in the struggle.[19] United with parallel organizing in other parts of the country, this kind of massive coordinated struggle, drawing over two million protesters out on the streets and roads, many for days on end, resulted in the fall of two pro-neoliberal governments and ultimately the election of Evo Morales, the nation's first indigenous and socialist president. These scenes echoed Bolivia's iconic symbol of challenge to colonial rule: in 1781, Tupac Katari (like his counterpart Tupac Amaru, both Andean indigenous revolutionaries) and Bartolina Sisa massed the Aymara around La Paz and held it under siege for weeks. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, scholar of Bolivian revolutionary movements, suggests that "The nightmare of the Indian siege continues to disturb the repose of Bolivian Creoledom."[20] Fear of the "dark masses" plays upon the minds of ruling elites, reflecting intense racism and the obvious reality of numbers on the side of the indigenous. They may fear the revenge they might deserve.

Union Militancy

BOLIVIA HAS A LONG HISTORY OF UNION POWER AND ORGANIZATION. Since the 1930's a wide range of leftist groups were in the leadership of a militant trade union movement that defined the left wing of Bolivian politics. In particular, the miners' union was extremely strong, ideological, often utopian socialist, and served as the leadership for the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), Bolivia's workers federation.[21] They, along with indigenous farmers, were the core activists in establishing a democratic revolution in 1952. This revolution, organized by the MNR (National Revolutionary Movement) succeeded in wresting control from the oligarchy through an alliance of the middle class, professionals, urban dwellers, workers and peasants that accomplished a number of important reforms. It nationalized the mines and Standard Oil in Bolivia, creating local participatory structures, and establishing some land reform. Lack of implementation of the improved laws, exclusion of indigenous peoples from positions of power, and continued economic domination by U.S. and multi-national corporations ultimately reunited the people's movements in continuous waves of rebellion. However, it created an historical memory of the possibility of revolution for workers and campesinos and thus informed their alliances and politics. Since the 1950s the main organizational form in Bolivia had been the union: the blind beggars had a union, ice cream vendors had a union, retirees had a union, and of course workers in every sizable workplace and campesinos had unions too. In addition to bargaining contracts for their members, they played an enormous role in the broader social and political struggles–the activists were mostly social unionists who understood the need to fight the bigger wars of the people in order to win victories in the battles for workers' rights. The miners and the teachers union in Bolivia, both heavily influenced by Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky as well as utopian socialists, were major players in the historic labor movement that evolved in Bolivia. The organizational and ideological grounding of the union movement has affected all other progressive movements in Bolivia today.[22] But since the 1970s, workplace-based labor unions began their steady decline both in the size of their memberships and in their importance to the political life of the nation. By the 1990s, with the combination of the flight of capital to more compliant labor markets and structural adjustments, mass layoffs occurred and the people became deeply impoverished. The great labor movement that resided in the miners' union in Potosí and Oruro fragmented as their workforce and source of power drifted to the cities and to the agricultural Chapare to search for any work.[23] By 1990, 9 out of 10 new jobs were in the informal economy.[24] Furthermore, changes in labor legislation in the 1990s prohibited labor unions in workplaces with fewer than 20 workers. These forces created a "new working class," one that looked different from earlier incarnations, but a working class that was able to be organized and politically vibrant.[25] By the mid-1990s some Bolivian unionists, such as Oscar Olivera, former shoe factory worker and president of Cochabamba's Central Labor Council, took stock. After studying the changes in the workforce, they concluded that very few workers labored in sizable factories or workplaces, that most were part-time and/or temporary workers, and that the major site of work had become their own homes in family units, in their local communities, and the informal economy. They further concluded that organizing workers into traditional unions would not work. For unions to stay relevant and retain their historic role of defending the working class, they had better do their organizing in the communities where the political action was likely to occur. They decided to use their skills and capacities to create a new venue and organizational form to represent and lead the impoverished working class.[26]

Water Wars — Territorial Organizing for Pachamama — Mother Earth

LIKE MANY MOVEMENTS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH, a major fight in which labor and other sectors participated was about water. [27] In Cochabamba, as in much of Bolivia, the water system was built and maintained by individual families and communities, especially in the poorer communities, and later unified by the city itself. When the old government announced that they would sell the water

system to a private company, a Bechtel subsidiary, Aguas de Tunari, the people rose up. The people were even prohibited from collecting rainwater as it competed with the privatized water system! In the struggle that began in 1999, a "Coordinadora" or people's assembly was organized to lead what the Bolivian people called "the water war." By 2000, the Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida (the coordinating committee in defense of water and life) had grown into a movement with representatives from the various neighborhoods in Cochabamba, as well as the unions, churches, universities and schools, nearby farmers, and NGOs. The local citizens, Cochabambinos, knew that privatization of the water system they had built with their own hands and given to them by their ancestors and Pachamama. would mean higher costs for water that they could not pay.[28] The Coordinadora became the locus of the struggle that united tens of thousands of Cochabambinos in a horizontal, non-hierarchical structure. The Coordinadora held meetings, mostly outdoors, with hundreds and sometimes thousands of people debating strategy and tactics, voting in very loosely defined representation, achieving consensus, and then releasing the participants to return to their groups and act. The structure and implementation of decisions was loose but powerful because people felt the importance, seriousness, and agency of their efforts. No micromanagement here. No checking with the leader. Meetings often went on for many, many hours, sometimes for days, with constant reinforcements of food, etc.[29] The Coordinadora signaled the necessary unity between urban and rural political actors, strengthening the hand of each.[30] This rural-urban, multi-class "territorially-based" alliance involved "new social subjects," specifically not labor unions or even just neighborhood associations. Alvaro García Linera, now Vice President of Bolivia and a sociologist, described the new forms of organizing such as the Coordinadora: they "do not create a border between members and nonmembers in the way that unions used to do." Susan Spronk suggests that "According to this view, trade unions with their struggles over legal contracts, closed membership and hierarchical leadership structures no longer represent the interests of the majority of the population, especially those engaged in informal types of work.…the Coordinadora…is a better vehicle for organizing the working class because the only criterion for membership was active participation in the daily struggles."[31] Massive peaceful civic strikes and roadblocks shutting down the region around Cochabamba were met with violence (over 100 people were injured) and arrests of leaders by government forces. Mass demonstrations continued and were further echoed by campesinos in the Altiplano (including La Paz and El Alto) and the Chapare (farm region close to Cochabamba). Ultimately the government capitulated and rescinded the privatization scheme in the face of this resilient and complex movement to protect the natural resources that the people painstakingly developed by themselves. This process of mass organizing through a Coordinadora was repeated in Cochabamba, and in other parts of Bolivia again in 2003 with the "gas war" in which the Bolivian people rose up against their misery and demanded that the great wealth of the nation, now natural gas or hydrocarbons, provided by Pachamama, be returned to the people: they demanded the nationalization of gas. This demand was echoed across the nation and led to a national referendum supporting the nationalization of gas and the fall of hated President Lozada.[32] The issue of privatization of water reverberated again in La Paz in January 2005, as the prices for the privatized water rose dramatically and as service to surrounding areas of El Alto was denied altogether. A general strike in El Alto, organized primarily by the federation of unions (COR) and neighborhood organizations (FEJUVE) yielded the return of public ownership of the water system. Territorially based organizations demanding control of natural resources, the "price of fire," of the necessities of life, intensified.

Coca Growers (Cocaleros)

THE COCA GROWERS or cocaleros from the nearby Chapare, Bolivia's most fertile and temperate region, were allies of unions, workers, and community residents from Cochabamba. The population of the Chapare swelled as privatization and then closing of the mines forced mass migrations of politicized, mostly indigenous, miners into farming one of the few cash crops–coca. Chewing coca

leaves has been a sacred and social tradition of indigenous peoples in Bolivia since pre-colonial times. They use it like caffeine: it keeps you awake, allows you to work for long hours without food, curbs your appetite, keeps you warm in the cold Andean climate, and gives you energy. Bolivians take a large number of dried coca leaves, chew them intensely for hours into a wad, extract the juice, and enjoy.[33] During the years of neoliberal-inspired economic decline, masses of laid off miners and other workers made their way to the Chapare in order to farm coca. Ex-miners received $150 as severance pay and many spent half of that on coca seeds to begin to grow this sustaining crop. Cocalero unions grew into muscular power bases in the markets and the communities; they established armed self-defense committees that protected their families from coca eradication programs enforced by the Bolivian military or counterinsurgency forces supported by the United States.[34] The six major cocalero unions ultimately united into the organization, the Confederation of Campesino Workers' Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB); it was seen as a prime leader of national resistance to neoliberalism.[35] The coca growers union opposed the use and sale of coca for export as cocaine; the market they defended was domestic and multifaceted.[36] However, some cocaleros did participate in the world traffic in cocaine for the United States and other markets. The U.S. government's "war on drugs" gave the Bolivian government a ready excuse to repress the growing movement of agricultural workers who were demanding the right to earn a living on the land as well as a right to own and grow what they wished on it. Coca leaf production was one of the few viable crops and the coca farmers were not going to let it be taken from them. To them, the U.S.'s "war on drugs" was a war on the farmers; it certainly was a war on the leadership of the farmer's movement as they jailed many of the leaders, including many who are now government officials. Like the United States' "war on terror", the earlier "war on drugs" offered a way to destroy any political opposition to the local elite government. The United States even objected to coca use for food, clothing, and medicinal purposes. In classic contradictory fashion, the neoliberal expansion of local resource exploitation (e.g., in logging and rubber tapping) increased the national demand for coca by Bolivian workers in these industries.[37] The unification of the federated grassroots organizations of cocaleros, women farmers, and indigenous groups created the Assembly for the Sovereignty of the People (ASP), which elevated two major cocalero leaders, Filipe Quispe and Evo Morales. The cocaleros' proven organizational effectiveness and numbers, plus their willingness to defend themselves, united indigenous, labor and national sovereignty issues into a powerful whole. They formed the electorally based Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), which lost its first national election in 2002 by a margin of just 2 percent. In 2005, MAS successfully organized the electoral victory of Evo Morales, the nation's first indigenous president and a symbol of Latin American independence from U.S. hegemony.[38]

Landless Peasants Movement

GEOGRAPHICALLY AND ORGANIZATIONALLY CLOSE TO THE COCALEROS were the landless peasants organized into the Movimiento Sin Tierra–MST–people without land. Internationally organized through Via Campesina, or "peasants' way," with Brazil's MST being the strongest branch of this hardy tree, peasants have shared experiences of global capital under neoliberalism taking their land, making them homeless, and destroying their livelihoods and ways of life. MST-Bolivia is primarily organized in central Bolivia–in the Chapare — and in the east — around conservative Santa Cruz. MST-Bolivia engaged in intense land occupations, mass demonstrations and marches across the country, enjoying the support of other progressive forces in demanding agrarian land reform with full implementation. On the very day that MST activists completed their cross-nation march and arrived in La Paz, November 28, 2006, the Bolivian Congress passed new agrarian land reform, beginning a process of transferring land not being productively used by present large landowners to landless farmers. Of course this has touched off enormous controversy and fear among the landowners.[39] Recently, the MST-Bolivia campesinos have attempted to establish farmer cooperatives and collectives in which they share the various processes involved in agricultural work.

These experiments in collective farms are small scale and deeply democratic in process. These farming communities lack basic services and are far away from markets, making life very difficult indeed, and they are the frequent targets of violent attacks by thugs and right wingers. Their creative popular education, based on models of Italian Antonio Gramsci and Brazilian Paulo Friere, is building the political infrastructure and community necessary to advance peasant interests. Again, they mirror similar strategies in Brazil and other nations with strong peasant movements.[40]

The Bolivian Women's Movement

AS IN MANY OTHER DEVELOPING NATIONS during the 1980s and 90s, NGOs of many sorts spread over Bolivia's political scene, some productive, others less so.[41] NGOs modeled after Western liberal feminist organizations attempted to create a women's movement that would increase women's lot via representational rights. Often allied with the politics of the Bolivian elites and UN power structure, they ignored or tried to represent the interests of Bolivian women without their deep participation. Autonomous Latin American feminists refer to this phenomenon as "gender technocracy."[42] While some middle class and professional Bolivian women connected to these NGOs, most working class, poor and indigenous women did not. However, a range of more authentic women's organizations emerged in response to the patriarchy and exclusion Bolivian women experienced. Based on a politics of decolonization and radical democratization, women's organizations articulated a varied mix of pro-indigenous, pro-worker, anti-neoliberal, and anti-patriarchal politic. Women were key actors in all the movements that braided together to form the new government and played particularly strong roles in the neighborhood councils and campesino/a movements ; they gained experience and confidence as their roles expanded. Anarcha-feminist Mujeres Creando (women rising) saw itself as autonomous but aligned with the other progressive parts of the movement. Mujeres Creando seeks a dialogue that exposes everyday experiences of women as a reflection of the structural problems and exclusions of the society. Their creative street actions and communications have expanded awareness and militantly nurtured women's broader participation. They have helped to identify patriarchy in the movement; while in its early stages, it has been widely accepted, at least theoretically if not in action, by the broader movement. The Feminist Assembly, joining indigenous and urban organizations, is a parallel organization to the Constituent Assembly movement, and hopes to press for fuller representation of women in the new constitution and a greater focus on women's role in society. It also seeks to challenge how colonialism is internalized and reproduced in society. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, a prominent feminist leader with strong indigenous ties, sees the creative power of women in a wide range of organizations and movements, but identifies the "left mestizo perspective" represented by Vice President Linera, with a liberal vision of women's citizenship, as not nearly transformative enough.[43]

Students, Teachers, Universities

BOLIVIA'S EXTENSIVE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION, historically enjoying political support from the unions and other progressive forces, has suffered the de-funding and privatization schemes seen all over the hemisphere and beyond. The largest public university in La Paz, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, is dramatically underfunded, lacking in everything from computers (only one in each department) to desks and chairs. The students are poor and working class and scrappy enough to hang in for long periods of time–commonly 10 years–to finish their coursework for degrees. More privileged Bolivians send their children to either private universities or go abroad. By charter the large public universities in the cities across Bolivia are self-governing and supposedly off limits to government intervention. Major policy and leadership are determined by a council of students and faculty, organized through their respective departments.[44] Unions of faculty, unions of administrators, and student federations are all linked to national organizations and play varied roles at different times and places. The bureaucratization and ossification of unions in

Bolivia in general is particularly true of those in universities. Zibechi explains that the union bureaucracy mimics the organization of capitalism and renders it impotent to challenge the system it claims it wants to change.[45] Student federations, mostly Trotskyist-led, with much further left analyses, have generated little fire. Perhaps because of their somewhat privileged class position, university activists are likely to follow along only after a struggle is already in full swing. This was less true of students in El Alto, who, through the Movimiento Jovenes de Octubre (movement of youth of October 2003), fought for and won the expansion of the Universidad Publica El Alto that provides an intellectual and organizing link between its students and faculty and the community around them. [46] During the period of structural adjustments in the 1980s and 90s, Bolivian public universities suffered greatly, with endless cutbacks in faculty, staff, salaries, and the imposition of student fees that did not exist. In the past, faculty, staff, and students had previously been much more involved in community life–in politics and service–but the neoliberal influence shut that down. High stakes tests were imposed and competitive admissions policies established that were open to corruption. The government attempted to influence the curriculum to address corporate rather than community needs, and casualized the teaching workforce so that now 80 percent of courses are taught by part-timers. This mirrors the patterns throughout the Western Hemisphere if not the world.[47] Despite the "autonomous" structure, there is plenty of indirect government influence. During the upsurges of 2000, 2003, and 2005, there was a great deal of student activism and radicalism; faculty and staff tagged behind but did join.[48] University people participated in the Coordinadora in Cochabamba and neighborhood councils in El Alto and beyond. During the 2005 upsurge, the Universidad Autonoma de San Simon in Cochabamba hosted major conferences and meetings of the Coordinadora and others, serving as a site of communication and struggle, welcoming the masses to their own public universities that should serve them.[49] Frequent strikes marking the first five years of the century made it hard to complete course work.[50] But the universities became safe harbors rather than battleships. In contrast, the public school teachers' union (primary and secondary teachers) whose work lives are much more proletarianized and whose students are significantly poorer, have been highly significant political actors on the Bolivian stage left. They have played the repeated role of teacher unions throughout Latin America that identify with the interests of their charges, are often embedded in their own working class communities, and fight with ideological intensity.[51] Similarly, high school students, particularly those from El Alto, have demonstrated a more aggressive and sustained political presence compared with their more privileged college compañeros. The new government has begun to invest in rebuilding the public school system: its needs are enormous. Evo Morales has promised to apply 30 percent of the proceeds from the nationalized hydrocarbons to the public universities to be spent equally on infrastructure, research, and community outreach programs. This rebuilding of the public sector, and especially linking it to service to the communities, further challenges the neoliberal policies that diminished the public universities. So the faculty and staff are fairly hopeful and pleased with the new government at least for right now.

Regional Difference and the Right Wing Response

BOLIVIA HAS SEVERAL DISTINCT REGIONS that have yielded very different political and social alignments. The Andean Altiplano, including La Paz and El Alto (with 1/3 of the total population of the country) is mostly poor and indigenous. This includes the major mining areas, such as Potosí and Oruro. The Chapare and Cochabamba, in the hills of the middle of Bolivia, are also heavily indigenous. Both regions have suffered the most economically and have spawned militant, progressive people's movements. The lowlands, in the tropical eastern part of the nation, has a different history. It is the nation's wealthiest region, with the greatest oil and gas reserves, fertile land, and with what little manufacturing is left in Bolivia. It is also the location of the largest latifundias or mass industrial farms owned by the oligarchs who remain. Santa Cruz, the largest city in this region, which identifies itself as the most mestizo, has been the heart of the right wing

reaction to MAS and Evo Morales's presidency. Culturally it seems closer to Miami than to La Paz and openly denigrates people from "the west," meaning indigenous people from La Paz, El Alto, Potosí, and even Cochabamba. As a region they rejected the candidacy of Evo Morales, elected representatives from right wing parties, and have resisted reforms proposed by the new government.[52] The Cruceños (those who live in Santa Cruz) have demanded "autonomy" from the rest of Bolivia, wanting to keep the proceeds from their rich oil and natural gas reserves under their regional control. This would undermine the future of the national economy. They are also demanding that the congress achieve a 2/3 vote for any change of law–that would give the right wing capacity to block any changes they did not like. There are constant rumors that "los indios" are vengefully taking over and that Evo is encouraging the wholesale expropriation of everyone's land and homes by the landless. Using the militant methods so common on the left, the right wing Cruceños have staged hunger strikes, mock lynchings of indigenous people depicting "Evo" and "Linera," and mass demonstrations of up to a million people right before Christmas, staged at their massive statue of El Cristo, to oppose Evo's administration and their reforms. Organizations such as the Union Juvenil Crucenista (youth organization) and the Comite Cívico Pro-Santa Cruz play major roles politically and sometimes sponsor violent interchanges with western, indigenous, pro-MAS people.[53] Oscar Olivera asserts that the right wing has two interrelated goals: to destabilize the new state and to spread fear. This is supported by the right-leaning mass media.[54] Right now the country is deeply polarized, east vs. west, indigenous vs. mestizo, rich vs. poor. The economic dimension seems to hold the greatest weight as always, whereas the other dynamics, especially that of race, are more of a foil or deflection to drum up support for the right among the Cruceño poor and working class. Nicole Fabricant, on the ground in Santa Cruz one year after Evo's election reports, "The country is completely polarized. Cruceños (from Santa Cruz) who were supporting Evo's administration and held powerful positions, recently resigned. There is talk of a civil war, paramilitary groups are walking up and down the streets monitoring indigenous organizations, left-wing NGOs etc…"[55]

The New MAS Government: Initiative, Contradictions, and Missteps

ANYONE WHO HAS PARTICIPATED in a successful movement for official power, whether a union leadership or government, knows that proposing and pressuring for change is much easier than actually carrying it out. Formal power brings with it the weight of the law, and raises the questions of if and how to balance forces to buy some political space in which to maneuver, and if and when to rid the system of its old power structure in order to shepherd in a new one. Alliances and actions, in small and large ways, are critical; and a window of opportunity stays open just so long before forces of right and left begin to act upon the formalized power. Knowing which forces form the true base, the movements the new power serves, goals, and ideology of the leaders will inform a strategy of the new power. Times of formalized power are exhilarating but hard ones, indeed, for all the actors in this grand and important drama. The goals of the people's movements that brought Evo into power are: 1) empowerment of indigenous peoples previously denied; 2) recovery of natural resources, e.g. water, gas, oil, forest, land, for the common good not commodification; and 3) restructuring the political system to create equality, respect for differences, and transparency. In order to achieve these grand goals nonviolently, the government must constantly mobilize the people's movements and minimize attacks by the forces of reaction. Quite a balancing act–and perhaps an impossible one! This is all made harder yet with a party that is mass-based but does not offer sufficient space for true debate of strategy and tactics. The relative newness of MAS, its many competing forces, and its political heterogeneity makes clear direction difficult. The debate on both the importance and specific role of the party, in this case MAS, as an electoral not a vanguard or political party, is endless but crucial in defining a way forward. Evo's inauguration in January 2006 signaled his dual loyalties to the indigenous movement (a ritual at Tiwanaku, the ancient site of indigenous power) and the Bolivian nation (official La Paz swearing in). Traditionally dressed, Evo welcomed the movement into the state, promising transformation. But soon after that glorious prelude came an

ominous sign. In February/March 2006 airline workers of the privatized LAN in La Paz went on strike to nationalize a failing airline. At first Evo was supportive, but when the airline workers moved to take over the airline, they were stopped by the military. The LAN workers saw this as Evo's refusal to break with legalities in order to support social justice. Others saw this as the government's public commitment to the rule of law: if the law doesn't serve the people then change the law. But that must await the future. This theme repeats itself frequently. Olivera reports that "Evo is in a house that is not his"… rather, he is heading a government enforcing capitalist laws.[56] The legacy of neoliberalism and the intense poverty of the people have created some painful divisions in the working class. There are contradictory interests held by the "new working classes" intent on controlling public services and natural resources and getting the most for their collective money. But this often comes into conflict with the demands of workers in these industries, the "old working classes," who want more jobs in these industries with higher pay and benefits. Poor people in the "new working classes" often feel that public service workers make so much more than average workers. Deals cut between public service workers unions and privatizing forces have notoriously undercut class unity.[57] This contradiction is further complicated by the continued lack of government funds for certain public services. The "people" end up administering an inadequate system that tries to shortchange its workers! In contrast, Evo has expanded economic support for the military and police. Unlike Chavez who came up through the Venezuelan military, Evo Morales has been seen as "the other" by the Bolivian military. He was the leader of the forces that the military was ordered to crush. Though some elements in the military supported the MAS, some advisors feared that the military could be prime actors in creating alliances with right wing forces for a coup.[58] So early on, Evo invested in relationships with the military by retiring 28 of the most right wing officers and promoting those from intermediary ranks. He opened the military academy to indigenous candidates and constructed new barracks. Evo located the military as central to the nationalization of the gas fields and tin industry and put them in charge of twenty-five new technical centers serving industrial development, thus creating an alliance between the military and the people's movement toward nationalization of natural resources. He created alliances between the military and campesinos in crowd control so that they could, together, lead a victorious parade ushering in the constituent assembly process and re- arming the campesinos.[59] Another example of these contradictions is provided by the miners. During the years that the mines were partially privatized and tin prices were way down and thousands of miners were laid off, individual miners formed small cooperatives to work the tin mines while a small number of miners stayed with the union and continued to work for the smaller still-nationalized mines. Now that international tin prices are way up and tin mining seems more possible, the competition between the cooperatives and unionized miners has been so intense that in early October, 2006, a violent battle between these two groups ensued in Huanuni in the state of Oruro, leaving 17 dead and dozens wounded. Federal police were called in to end the bloodshed, some say to repress activists. Both groups of miners were Evo and MAS supporters, but both feel abused by Evo's desire to appease both sides. Where jobs are scarce and very difficult (miners usually die from lung disease or accidents within 10 years after entering the mines) and there are few alternatives, groups that might be allied under other circumstances can fight to the death for the chance to work and therefore survive.[60] Furthermore, Evo's practice of appointing movement leaders to official positions can complicate matters. The first minister of mines was the president of the cooperativas' union and later replaced by the unionized miner's leader. The latter was wise enough to advocate for the hiring of 4,000 cooperative miners to the newly opened nationalized mines, thus beginning to forge some peace. The use of sectoral leaders in government roles has additional shades of difficulty. Very few new government appointees had any experience to support their transition to government leadership, which can work both ways. But Evo has felt it necessary to bring in, as reinforcements, many of the old more experienced government functionaries, many of whom are white or mestizo. Vice President Linera, a white, highly educated Bolivian with a radical history,[61] had led the push toward a more effective government that has angered many of the movement leaders who feel pushed out. Other movement leaders, such as trade

unionist Oscar Olivera of the Cochabamba Water Wars, have stepped aside government roles, believing that the role of movement leaders is to continue to organize the people and to exert pressure on the government from the left. Replacements of the replacements in government positions have made it hard to implement needed changes. Meanwhile, the fragile government, attacked by the right, reels from criticisms on the left and the perceived need to keep order.

Challenges for Evo Morales and the MAS

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR EVO, the MAS, and the electoral revolution are the critical issues of real land reform, constituent assembly, regional autonomy, nationalization of natural resources, and expanded economic development. The demands of the administration, brought to power by a movement of the indigenous, the landless, the workers, the promise of a constituent assembly that would change the constitution to better represent the poor and working class, especially the indigenous, to involve their organizations, and to spread decision making among them, are very hard to achieve. Even some supporters believe that the Constituent Assembly process is just a historical illusion that delays the revolutionary changes that are necessary such as land reform, nationalization of natural resources and industries, and dramatic increases in public services including education and health. The first eight months of the Constituent Assembly process were squandered on bickering over procedure and rules and many believe it may be permanently derailed.[62] It is continually haunted by issues of autonomy raised by the right. While the sharply increased proceeds from the nationalized gas and oil industries as well as the tin mines will provide some of the needed capital,[63] it is likely that the Bolivian economy will need to become much more productive and diversified to be able to improve the quality of people's lives. Many of the indigenous and labor activists fear that Evo's negotiations with the multinationals will allow more neoliberal policies to continue to hold sway. But he feels he must, on some level, negotiate with capital and make some compromises in order to keep some capital in the country, at least on a temporary basis. Many Bolivian activists criticize Evo's weak results in negotiations: ownership of 51 percent of the gas reserves but little capital to make real changes, i.e., pipelines and infrastructure to harvest the gas, and thus continued dependence on capitalist partners. Proceeds from the nationalized gas have skyrocketed and are projected to grow. But what exists now is a far cry from what many expected would be a wholesale takeover of the gas industry.[64] As well, much expanded and variegated economic development must take place to provide jobs to Bolivians, make the economy more productive and active in the global economy, and staunch the hemorrhaging of Bolivian workers to Argentina, Brazil, the United States, and Europe in search of work. Vice-President Alvaro Linera has put forward the concept of "Andean Capitalism" and suggested that their administration avoid radical discourse in order to allay the fears of the right and the corporations. Despite his historic left credentials, the real politic of running a government that is being watched very carefully by national and international elites, has shifted his position. President Evo Morales presents himself on the world stage as a soft-spoken, humble farmer, critical of U.S. policies but willing to work with all. He is in sharp contrast with Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who does verbal battle with Bush as often as possible. Perhaps this mild style will serve them well, as long as it is backed up by real strength in policy serving the needs of their people.[65] Legislation enacting land reform was passed, albeit very contentiously, in the congress, but the process by which this occurred and the constant threats from the eastern lowlands make implementation of the law treacherous. In December 2006, the landless peasants celebrated their congressional victory but by now they are worrying about Evo's negotiations with the right wing lowlanders. Will he stand strong against these enemies of more equal land distribution? To appease these forces, the new government has granted the large landowners a 7-year window in which to develop their fallow plots, giving them a great deal of political space and preventing the landless from receiving that which they fought for and desperately need.[66] The U.S. government is again using coca eradication strategically to bring Evo's government to its knees. Bolivian military forces have been used to enforce small but significant amounts of coca

eradication, particularly in national park lands where it is prohibited; this was seen as outrageous by the cocaleros in Cochabamba.[67] All of this raises the question of whether a socialist society can be built peacefully and transitionally out of a capitalist framework and if it can be how quickly can it be accomplished. Keeping the base forces of the indigenous, the workers, the farmers, the landless together while moving forward "a socialismo" (toward socialism), will be a Herculean feat indeed. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui points out that the power of the state and the media empowers the electoral party and the single leader, not the movement.[68] If the goal is social democracy, Scandinavian style (Andean Capitalism), then perhaps that is possible. This might be sufficient to lift the masses out of deep poverty and to honor the indigenous peoples, if it were permitted by the present international power structure. If a revolutionized, perhaps a revolutionary, state that serves its people through the control of the workers and peasants is the goal, then gradualism may not work at all. And what would become of it given world forces today?

The International Context

BOLIVIANS COMMONLY say that the U.S. Embassy wants Evo and the MAS to fail, to fall, to be destroyed. U.S. support for the attempted coup in Venezuela 5 years ago and the successful one in Chile 35 years ago as well as the endless misery inflicted upon the Central American's people's movements in the 1980s and 90s by the U.S.- supported military dictatorships and death squads, and so many others over the years is proof positive to them that the U.S. government is perfectly willing to aid those who would overthrow a democratically elected government in Bolivia.[69] With Hugo Chavez galloping ahead, with his Socialism for the 21st Century, inspired as he says by Jesus, Marx, and Trotsky as well as Castro and Galbraith,[70] the elections of Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Michelle Bacheler in Chile, and Lula da Silva in Brazil (despite its tilt toward neoliberal accommodation with its payments of debt to the IMF and joint projects with Washington, DC) — all create a left mosaic in Latin America. Bolivia and Venezuela have announced a joint venture on gas and oil. Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have announced the formation of a Bank of the South, that would serve as a progressive alternative to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. There is a proposal for a land and river trade link from the rainforests of the Amazon to the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast–a new "Panama Canal". Telesur, a pan-Latin American TV channel has been launched in Venezuela and should decrease Latin America's dependence on the corporate media for their news. MERCOSUR has been formed as a South American trading block and in a December, 2006 meeting in Cochabamba, the major South American leaders set up a process to explore creation of a European Union-type structure, ALBA, Alliance for a Bolivarian Latin America. All this points to the potential for a strong, left-leaning and united South America.[71] Evo's announcement that Bolivian soldiers will gradually cease participation in the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WINSEC), formerly known as the School for the Americas, a crucial training ground for Latin American counter-insurgency that has been key to the implementation of US foreign policy, further severs those ties. Bolivian gallows humor has it that the only good thing about the war in Iraq is that George Bush can't invade Venezuela or Bolivia: he can't open another front. But the United States can economically, politically, and organizationally support an attempted coup. The right wing, already so Miami- identified, is hoping and, no doubt, planning for it to happen. Now that the specter of Soviet-style communism no longer exists, the reality of a socialist South America will likely be fought against in any way possible by the U.S. government and multinational corporate interests. But many Bolivian activists see the way forward as a process, a process that will include a great deal of class, race, and gender struggle as well as an acceptance of hybridity. They see the necessity of continuous organization of the base movements and a constant re-articulation of demands. Many know that all of this will take a long time and they are prepared for this long haul. To Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, tensions are a sign of vitality. To Oscar Olivera, the movement must move forward like water: transparent, in constant motion, and joyful.[72] Bolivians, significantly isolated by their poverty and geographical location (land-locked in the middle of South America) see international solidarity

as so important. Support from U.S. activists played an important role during the water wars with mobilizations against Bechtel, the corporate giant that purchased the water system in Cochabamba. Working against this potential international solidarity is the relative ignorance of Americans and the American left of the revolutions brewing in the south. Bolivians and other South American left movements have a great deal to teach North Americans, particularly about merging the leadership and interests of indigenous people of color with that of the working class. Their methods of popular education have prepared their masses with perspectives on international and domestic political dynamics. They have developed creative organizational structures and ways of growing movements that capture the desires and the willingness of people to struggle for a winnable new world. We need to educate our own people on the real role of the United States in building "democracies" internationally. We need to amplify the voices of our comrades when they ask for us to do so. We need to shine a light on any form of U.S. government aggression against these fragile socialist states in the south. They need our support and modicum of protection; we need their knowledge, organizational skills and hope.

Footnotes

I would like to thank Nicole Fabricant for helping me travel throughout Bolivia, interviewing over 30 activists in a range of political arenas. The access, information, and perspectives she provided made this paper possible. Thank you also to Gerardo Renique for offering me perspective and suggestions for readings and ideas.

1. Raul Zibechi as quoted in Benjamin Dangl, *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007).
2. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Forrest Hylton, Pablo Mamani and Oscar Olivera, "Bolivia Today: Struggles over Decolonization and Collective Resources," presentations at New York University, September 10, 2007.
3. Gerardo Renique, "Introduction to Lain America Today: The Revolt Against Neoliberalism," *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 19, no. 3 (2005), pp. 1-11.
4. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Also see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan/Holt, 2007).
5. Susan Spronk, "Roots of Resistance to Urban Water Privatization in Bolivia: The 'New Working Class,' the Crisis of Neoliberalism, and Public Services," Nov. 3, 2006, submitted to *International Labor and Working Class History*. Benjamin Kohl and Linda Farthing, *Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance* (New York: Zed Books, 2006).
6. Jeffrey Webber, "The Bolivia Left and Indigenous People Join in Struggle," *Monthly Review*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Sept. 2005), pp. 34-48.
7. Adolfo Gilly. "Bolivia: A 21st Century Revolution," *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2005), pp. 41-54.
8. Spronk, 2006. While the majority of indigenous people in Bolivia do not live in El Alto, El Alto represents the best organized and fullest political expression of indigenous power at this moment. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Reclaiming the Nation: Roots of Rebellion," in *Dispatches From Latin America: On the Frontlines Against Neoliberalism*, ed. Vijay Prashad and Teo Ballve (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006).
9. Gilly, 2005, and Kathryn Hicks, anthropology doctoral candidate studying women's organizations with a focus on El Alto, personal communication, November, 2006.
10. Gilly, 2005. Sian Lazar, "El Alto, Ciudad Rebelde: Organizational Bases for Revolt," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2006), pp. 183-199. Seventy-four percent of the population of El Alto describe themselves as Aymara and for many of them Aymara is their primary, and often, only language. Illiteracy rates are very high. The major organizations

involved here are: Confederacíon Sindical Unica de los Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia-CSUTB (peasants union); Federacíon of Street Vendors/Small Traders ; Nacíonal Federacíon de Juntos Vecinales-FEJUVE (neighborhood Councils), Juntas Escolar-FEDEPAF (school councils of parents); Regional Workers Centers- COR; all interconnected locally and nationally. Indigenous women in their bowler hats, colorful shawls, flared skirts, and babies on their backs, sell all kinds of produce. The men work as vendors; they are likely, in more western dress, to sell llama meat and llama fetuses, and every imaginable dry good, hardware and appliance. They are not too happy with what the Europeans and gringos have brought them and do not disguise this sentiment.

11. Xavier Albo, "El Alto: Mobilizing Block by Block," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 40, no. 4 (July/August 2007), pp. 34-38.
12. Raul Zibechi, "Subaltern Echoes: Resistance and Politics 'Desde el Sotano,'" *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 19, no. 3 (2005), pp. 13-39.
13. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, presentation, "Bolivia Today: Struggles Over Decolonization and Collective Resources," New York University, September 10, 2007. Linda Farthing, "Anniversary Interview with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui," *NACLA Report on the Americas,* vol. 40, no. 4 (July/August 2007), pp. 4-9.
14. Sian Lazar, "El Alto, Ciudad Rebelde: Organizational Bases for Revolt," Bulletin of Latin American Research, vol. 25, no. 2 (2006), pp. 183-199.
15. After the natural disaster of hurricane Katrina and then the unnatural disaster of the U.S. government's abandonment of the poor black masses of the city, these very people began to organize in Survivor Councils, horizontally structured, community-based, and oriented toward direct action in opposition to the government. Their house gutting and rebuilding, extra-legal appropriations of previously closed public housing are examples of the sorts of organizing similar to that of El Alto. It is not surprising that the New Orleans Survivor Council activists are poor, black, and come from tight extended family cultures that were destroyed by government policies in service to capital interests. Even their alliances with immigrant (mostly Latino) workers through workers' centers, mirror the coalition of workers and indigenous peoples described here in Bolivia and in much of Latin America.
16. Zibechi, 2005. "Communal councils" supported by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela are parallel structures that organize, propose and run needed services and projects on a neighborhood by neighborhood level; this prepares people for deep participation in the political life of the nation. Local "organic" leadership is developed in these formations and feeds the broadest movements for social and political change. As well, the structures and traditions in El Alto bear much similarity to those evidenced in Oaxaca, Mexico: both mostly indigenous communities that have developed alternative public services that are supported by traditional expectations of voluntary service; in Oaxaca, this expectation of service is called "tequio."
17. Nancy Davies, *The People Decide: Oaxaca's Popular Assembly*, (Natick, MA: Narco News Books, 2007) and Anibal Quijano, "The Challenge of the "Indigenous Movement" in Latin America," *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2005), pp. 55-78. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Q & A, Brecht Forum, New York City, Nov. 11, 2007.
18. Webber, 2005.
19. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Bolivia Today: Struggles over Decolonization and Collective Resources," presentations at New York University, September 10, 2007. Feminist and women's organizing is part of and alongside the male-dominated movements.
20. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa, 1900-1980. 4th Edition* in Spanish (La Paz: Ediciones Yachaywasi, 2003). Gilly, 2005
21. Albo, 2007.
22. Rafael Puente, an ex-academic, coca grower, ex-deputy Minister of the Interior in the Morales government and now Evo's chief of popular education, personal interview, Cochabamba, Bolivia, November, 2007. Domatila Barrios De Chungara, *Let Me Speak! Testimony of*

Domitila, a Woman of the Bolivian Mines (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978). June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). James Dunkerly, *Rebellion in the Veins: Political Struggle in Bolivia 1952-1982* (London: Verso Press, 1984). Kohl and Farthing, 2006.

23. Leslie Gill, *Teetering on the Rim: Global Restructuring, Daily Life, and the Armed Retreat of the Bolivian State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
24. Lourdes Benería, "Shifting the Risk: New Employment Patterns, Informalization and Women's Work," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* vol. 15 (2001), pp. 27-53.
25. Spronk, 2006.
26. Oscar Olivera, former shoe factory worker, union president, president of the Cochabamba central labor council, personal interview, November, 2006. See Oscar Olivera with Tom Lewis, *Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2004).
27. Vandana Shiva, Water *Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002). William Tabb, "Resource Wars", *Monthly Review*, vol. 59, no. 7 (2007), pp. 32-42. Benjamin Dangl (2007) refers to "The Price of Fire" or the cost of the natural resources and basic necessities of life, e.g., water, gas, land, jobs, fueling the Bolivian people's movement.
28. Kohl and Farthing, 2006.
29. Olivera and Lewis, 2005. The Coordinadora's structure and meetings were very much like the APPO–people's assembly in Oaxaca, Mexico–beginning in the summer and fall of 2006. Also see Davies, 2007.
30. Oscar Olivera, "Bolivia Today: Struggles over Decolonization and Collective Resources," presentations at New York University, September 10, 2007.
31. Spronk, 2006, p. 2.
32. Lazar, 2006.
33. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, NYU, Sept. 10, 2007. This practice was heartily encouraged by bosses who wanted their miners and agricultural laborers to work long hours without having to take breaks. Coca leaf consumption was their form of coffee break without the break Also, coca was also the "secret" ingredient in the original formula for the now- disgraced and omnipresent Coca-Cola (Museo de Coca, La Paz, Bolivia).
34. Federico Fuentes, "The Struggle for Bolivia's Future," *Monthly Review,* vol. 59, no. 3 (2007), pp. 95-109.
35. Kohl and Farthing, 2006.
36. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, NYU, 2007.
37. Martin Arostegui, "Bolivian farmers demand right to coca industry: 'If Coca-Cola can do it, why can't we?'" *The Washington Times,* April 12, 2007.
38. Fuentes, 2007. Kohl and Farthing, 2006. Morales was elected with over 80 percent voter turn-out. Nicole Fabricant, "Localizing the Global: Exploring the Role of popular Education in the Landless Peasant Movement-Bolivia," Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Proposal, Dec. 6, 2006. .
39. Roger Burbach, "Confrontation in Bolivia Over Agrarian Reform," Nov. 30, 2006.
40. Dangl, 2007. Fabricant, 2006. Abdurazack Karriem, "Marching As to War: A letter from Brazil to South Africa About Landlessness, Agrarian Reform and social Movement Struggles Against Neoliberalism," *Revista Nera*, vol. 8, no. 6 (Jan/June 2005).
41. Kevin Healy, *Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate: Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and Amazon of Bolivia* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).
42. Karin Monasterios, "Bolivian Women's Organizations in the MAS Era," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, vol. 40, no. 2 (March/April 2007), pp. 33-37.
43. Linda Farthing, "Anniversary Interview with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui," *NACLA: Reports on the Americas,*" vol. 40, no. 4 (July/August 2007), pp. 4-9.
44. These governance bodies choose their own college presidents or rectors. Full time faculty have a 15 year tenure clock, heavy course loads and miserable salaries. A largely part-time adjunct

faculty earns even less.

45. Zibechi, 2005.
46. Carlos Revillas and Marcos Antonio Grizonan Alarcon, personal interview, La Paz, Nov. 2006.
47. Nancy Romer, "Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas," *Liberty Tree: Journal of the Democratic Revolution,* fall, 2007, and Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University, and Creating True Higher Learning,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). Jennifer Washburn, *University Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education,* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
48. Many student activists at San Andrés who live in El Alto, do their political work back home. Many assert that the education in the streets through the political movements was most profound and perhaps more important than anything going on in the classrooms. Revilla and Guzman, 2006..
49. Student federations have democratically elected leaders mostly from a range of Trotskyist groups with mixed results (interviews with approximately 15 student activists from 4 different public universities across Bolivia, Nov. 2006).
50. Rafael Puente, the cocalero turned cabinet member, reported that all these neoliberal attacks have yielded some corruption and resignation among many faculty and consequently the quality of instruction has plummeted with, of course, many exceptions. In the absence of a strong, political movement among faculty, corruption sets in.
51. See www.idea.org, website of the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas.
52. Bret Gustafson, "Spectacles of Autonomy and Crisis: Or, What Bulls and Beauty Queens have to do with Regionalism in Eastern Bolivia," *Journal of Latin American Anthropology,* vol. 11, no.2 (2006), pp. 349-377.
53. The word "kolla" is used as a racist epithet. "Kollas" in contrast with "Cambas," a more endearing term, from Santa Cruz.. Gustafson, 2006. Simon Romero, "In Bolivia's Affluent East, Anger at Morales Is Growing," *New York Times,* Dec. 26, 2006. Dangl, 2007.
54. Oscar Olivera, Cornell School of Industrial and Labor, Presentation, September 14, 2007.
55. Nicole Fabricant, personal email communication, January 21, 2007.
56. Evo's explanation was that it was against the constitution for the government to allow this action and, in addition; he claimed that the airline was corrupt and that he didn't want to "nationalize corruption." Oscar Olivera, Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Sept. 14, 2007. These "law-abiding" policies were foreshadowed in the initially conciliatory role the MAS played prior to the ouster of President Mesa in 2005. MAS often looked for a "legal" solution over a movement or revolutionary one, some would say to their credit, others to their detriment (Dangl, 2007). For example, in Cochabamba the legacy of the Water Wars yielded a public water system run by a cooperative people's body; but underfunding has prevented the water system from expanding into poor communities with desperate need and it has exacerbated conflicts between the people and those who are employed by the water system who are relatively better paid than the average worker in Cochabamba. (Olivera, Cornell, 2007).
57. Spronk, 2006.
58. Puente, 2006.
59. Fuentes, 2007.
60. April Howard and Benjamin Dangl, "Tin War in Bolivia: Conflict Between Miners Leaves 17 Dead," *Upside Down World*, Oct. 10. 2006.
61. Despite the fact that Linera had been in a guerrilla organization, Tupac Katari, and suffered torture in government jails, some see the return of "whites" to lead government offices as a regression with Linera leading the way. (Pablo Mamani, NYU, 2007).
62. Pablo Mamani, "Political Change in Bolivia," Q & A at Brecht Forum, NYC, Sept. 11, 2007
63. Mark Weisbrot and Luis Sandoval, "Bolivia's Challenges," Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

64. Dangl, 2007.
65. Evo's Oct. 1, 2007 visit to NYC for the UN General Assembly gave him the opportunity to speak in several large public venues, including two major TV shows, Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* and Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*. His performances were quite brilliant and well-received but of course did not reveal the many difficulties and perhaps missteps of his administration. Also see Evo Morales, "Let's Respect Our Mother Earth," letter to the member representatives of the United Nations, Sept. 26, 2007.
66. Pablo Mamani, NYU, 2007.
67. Roger Burbach, "Confrontation in Bolivia Over Agrarian Reform," Nov. 30, 2006. Since the beginning of 2007, incidents have occurred with cocaleros vis-á-vis the US coca eradication program. The right wing governor of Cochabamba sent in the police to break up the demonstrations of the cocaleros and the cocaleros, in turn, called for the resignation of their governor. The governor fled to Santa Cruz to the open arms of the right.
68. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Q & A, Brecht Forum, NYC, September 11, 2007.
69. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism,* (New York: Holt, 2007). John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2004). It should also be noted that Bolivia was part of the successful drive to win UN approval of the Declaration of Rights of the Indigenous, September, 2007.
70. Greg Grandin, "Chavez: 'Galbraithiano'," *The Nation*, Oct. 15, 2007.
71. This is very important because in a nation like Bolivia with a left wing government, the people still only have access to corporate right wing media that undermines the socialist project of the government. As well, Evo has announced that Bolivia is quickly phasing out of the School of the Americas (SOA), the paramilitary training arm in Latin America of the US government. Also see Noam Chomsky, "Latin America Declares Independence," *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 3, 2006.
72. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Oscar Olivera, "Political Change in Bolivia," Brecht Forum, NYC, September 11, 2007.