EMpire and Solidarity
In the Americas
Conference
Milneburg Hall 351
October 24 & 25, 2014
The Seventh Anniversary Empire and Solidarity in the Americas Conference explores the meanings, forms, histories, and futures of North-South solidarity in the Americas. What kinds of transnational ties have groups from both sides of the North-South divide established with each other? What kinds of strategies have they used, and toward what ends? How have these political projects varied across time and space? In what ways have cross-border solidarities shaped and been shaped by imperial power?

Friday, October 24th, 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Session One:
SOLIDARITIES IN HISTORY

PANORAMA ESTUDIANTIL: URUGUAYAN UNIVERSITY AND TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITIES IN THE EARLY COLD WAR
Megan Strom, UC-San Diego

In a section of the 1956 edition of Tribuna Universitaria titled “Student Panorama,” Uruguay’s largest student organization re-printed a United States National Student Association bulletin on the status of racial integration at universities in the U.S. South. This same section included student communiqués about the Sudanese independence movement, political corruption in Panamá, electoral fraud in Guatemala, academic censorship in Paraguay, and the anniversary of university reform in Argentina. Far from being an isolated global gaze, the reprinting of bulletins and manifestos such as these was just one of many ways the Federation of Uruguayan University Students (FEUU) helped build transnational solidarity networks with student federations around the world during the 1940s and 50s. Drawing on select publications, conference proceedings, internal reports, and oral histories, this paper explores how the FEUU at the University of the Republic in Montevideo built a diverse network of solidarities with students throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia well before the banner year of transnational student activism in 1968. While examining these networks in relation to domestic activities, this paper further demonstrates the significance of transnational solidarities in shaping the political consciousness of student activists and their agendas during the early Cold War.

TO MAKE THE REVOLUTION: SOLIDARITY AND DIVISION AMONG LATIN AMERICAN GUERRILLAS IN THE 1960S
Jonathan Brown, University of Texas

Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, both Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara attempted to unite Latin American leftists in a hemispheric-wide anti-imperialist front against the politico-economic hegemony of the United States. In important speeches, Fidel pronounced that “The duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution” and predicted that “the Cordillera de los Andes will become the Sierra Maestra of South America.” My study suggests that nationalism and ideological particularism undermined efforts to unite the Latin American left into an effective anti-imperialist front. Prospective foquista guerrillas in Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina also suffered from rejection by militants of the Communist and Socialist Parties. Moreover, few Latin American nationals besides the Cubans volunteered to fight in countries not of their birth.

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her efforts within the rising power of the US human rights movement—a development evident in the successful 1978 congressional cutoff of all U.S. arms transfers to the Argentine military dictatorship.

“WE DON’T BECOME REFUGEES BY CHOICE”: MEMORIES OF EXILE AND MIGRATION

Teresa Meade, Union College

This paper examines the refugee in history, as viewed through the lens of a woman, Mia (Tlusty) Truskier (1920-2014), who escaped from Poland in 1940 at the age of 19 and eventually became an activist with the East Bay Sanctuary, in Berkeley, California, an organization that provides legal and material assistance to refugees fleeing political, economic and racial oppression in their home country. Mia was a beneficiary of the work of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), formed in December 1950 with a mandate to assist the millions of people displaced after World War II. She then devoted her life to assisting refugees from Central America and Haiti, who form a part of the 40 million refugees in the world today. She did this work because, in her words, “No one is a refugee by choice.” From an upper middle class Jewish family, Mia and her young husband, Jan, escaped to Rome, Italy where they lived until 1949 under semi-clandestine circumstances. Mia corresponded with her mother, Paulina (Szurek) Tlusty, who remained in Warsaw forging false identity papers for Jews and others who were trying to leave. My examination of Mia and her mother’s work, and the extra-legal world of refugees fleeing from Latin America, unveils a story of risk among refugees to save their own lives and their own work to benefit others.
Session Three: 
SOLIDARITY AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

US-LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY: HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE, AND 
THE ANTI-POLITICS OF THE LEFT  
Steve Striffler, University of New Orleans

This paper offers a broad history of US-Latin American solidarity, focusing on the practices and strategies, forms of organization, and strands of internationalism (i.e. socialist, anti-imperialist, human rights, etc.) that activists have adopted and drawn from when engaging in solidarity with Latin American allies. It argues that “modern” US-Latin American solidarity emerged as an identifiable political force during the 1970s and 1980s, or roughly the same moment when human rights was rapidly becoming the dominant current through which (progressive) internationalism was understood and practiced. The dramatic ascent of human rights not only profoundly shaped US-Latin American solidarity during its formative period, but assumed and facilitated the marginalization of other forms of internationalism. Within progressive circles, human rights became the dominant way to think about and practice internationalism, a process that drew unprecedented human and financial resources to international activism, while at the same time largely detaching such solidarity from an identifiably left politics.

A TALE OF TWO PROTESTS: DID “ANTI-GLOBALIZATION” STUNT INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY?  
Eric Larson, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

As David Graeber has recently noted, “neoliberalism” is a frequently reiterated concept in much of Europe and the Global South, yet it is almost unheard of in the U.S., where the term “globalization” rose to dominance in the 1990s. Though scholars have written much about the “anti-globalization movement” of the era, they rarely note how the embrace – or Northern imposition? – of the rhetoric of globalization on the amorphous network of resistance altered the movement’s trajectory. This paper examines two of the major anti-globalization protests in 2003 –one in Cancún, one in Miami – to interpret how the romance of all things “global” altered the organizing metaphors of the movement, and how those whom I call “grassroots globalists” hoped to localize global justice. Based on interviews and archival research in southern Mexico and in the U.S., this project examines how second-generation World Bank reforms in the mid-1990s focused on inducing market rationalities in local settings rather than on facilitating macro-economic shocks and foreign investment mega-projects. While indigenous groups who first formed anti-neoliberal coalitions reacted to neoliberals’ sudden emphasis on community entrepreneurship and social capital, the broader movement drifted toward international summit protests, where the many contending perspectives collided.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND RAFAEL CORREA’S CITIZENS’ REVOLUTION IN ECUADOR  
Marc Becker, Truman State University

When a progressive president and the social movements that helped place him power come into direct conflict over policy issues, where should international solidarity activists place their allegiance? That issue has repeatedly come to the fore in Ecuador, including when Correa announced his decision on August 15, 2013 to begin drilling for oil in the ecologically sensitive Yasuni National Park. A proposal not to exploit the Ishpingo Tiputini Tambococha or ITT oilfields in exchange for international development aid was a signature policy objective of the Correa administration, and one that gained the president broad support both domestically and internationally. With the collapse of the proposal, Indigenous and environmental organizations launched a petition drive to stop the petroleum extraction. Correa claimed that foreign imperial interests were behind these organizations, and proceeded to evict the Pachamama Alliance. The divide in Ecuador spread internationally, with some activists cheering Correa’s attempts to develop the country’s economy and while others condemned the president’s attacks on grassroots activists. These debates both within and outside the country echoed a broad range of disputes that ran across the twentieth century, including what point should activists intervene in the internal affairs of another country.