

Introduction to the Forum: Updating the Role of Latin America in World History

We are living, learning and teaching in the not-so-new days of the New World History.¹ Parallel with and related to the rise of the World History Association and subsequent addition of World History to the collection of Advanced Placement courses offered by the College Board, the published works of world history have blossomed in terms of quantity and quality. The backbone of the teaching field, survey texts, has strengthened with more and improved offerings. Individual research and teaching fields, including U.S. history, have slowly made a global shift that parallels increased interest in the lives of diverse peoples in multiple areas of the world.

Why an update?

In 2010, with myself as Guest Editor, *World History Connected* published a Forum, a topical collection of articles on Latin American in world history. In my introduction to that Forum, I bemoaned the lack of participation in world history circles by Latin Americanists.² As noted by Patrick Manning (world historian and a past President of the American Historical Association) the advent a generation ago of Area Studies (regional approaches to societies, languages and cultures) was drawing attention to the study of the southern hemisphere and non-Western world generally.³ Yet, at the time, I could offer no solid data for the adoption of a wider sphere of historical inquiry among scholars of Latin America, and have none to offer at the moment, but anecdotally I will suggest that there has been more involvement by Latin Americanists in the WHA and other global history circles since then. The contributors to this issue are proof of the quality of scholarship and teaching that has emerged.

Nonetheless, historical studies are still fairly wedded to the comfortable notion of regionality. There is a way out for us, however, as we construct global narratives in our teaching and research. Take note of the titles or subtitles of some textbooks in the field:

“Traditions and Encounters” or “Networks and Hierarchies.”⁴ In a nutshell, world historians honor the work of individual regional histories (and Area Studies specialists) in summarizing trends in the “traditions” or their structures of “hierarchy” comparatively, balancing this with attention to connections such as “encounters” or “networks.” The goal of Latin Americanists interested in world history ought to be offering quality histories of a variety of peoples in the region, not just the big civilizations and more developed nations and also paying more attention to the global connections beyond conquest and dependence. This Forum features five different voices seeking to promote those goals.

Monica Bond-Lamberty and John Maunu are very experienced high school teachers of world history. We have featured her article at the top of our collection to set the tone as its promotion of accessible ways of improving and expanding Latin American content in world history classrooms. Her personal connections to the region guide her practice as a teacher, but, she argues, are not necessary for success in the classroom as much as commitment to the needs of students in a globalizing world. She offers multiple suggestions for expanding our vision of what and whose histories should be brought forth, as we move beyond the limitations of the major civilizations, nation-states, and political and economic history to feature ordinary people and cultural themes.

We follow Bond-Lamberty’s work with three pieces by world historians involved in the world of higher education. Andrae M. Marak also makes use of personal narrative to launch his piece on history and historical memory of Sonora in northern Mexico. His work grows out of early memories on learning about native peoples, wondering in his teen years about their absence or misrepresentation in the historical narrative and public expressions of the past. As historians we are all aware of the damage that has been done by literature and movies on the public understanding of the past of marginalized peoples. One obvious example is the noble and necessary aspects of slavery made explicit in the American film, “Gone with the Wind.” Of course, native peoples of the Americas have routinely been miswritten in our history. Marak provides a corrective in his case study of the Comcáac people, designed to expand our horizons as world historians. This work continues our theme of expanding the role of Latin American history in the world history narrative beyond the great civilizations and nascent nations model that has thus far held sway.

Whereas Andrae M. Marak seeks to broaden Latin American history by de-marginalizing the Comcáac, Suzanne Litrel’s contribution to this issue seeks to de-marginalize the modern nation of Brazil. Although comparable in geographic size to the United States, Brazil receives significantly less attention in both world and Atlantic history: Brazil’s colonization by Portugal leaves Brazil on the margins of traditional historical narratives whose chief focus is on non-Spanish colonized areas. Most students are aware of Columbus’s “mistaken” arrival in the Americas in 1492—but how many know about the accidental discovery of Brazil by Cabral in 1500, which played a major role in the in the ‘Columbian Exchange?’”

It is safe to say that Brazil has not only received insufficient treatment in the world historical narrative, but has also been marginalized to a degree in Latin American survey texts and courses which focus on the Spanish domains. Yet, teachers and those interested in environmental, food, and gender history, as well as the frequently marginalized Brazil, will want to read Suzanne Marie Litrel's article which benefits from a dual perspective. After completing a successful career as a high school world history teacher, she joined the higher echelons of academic life with its obligation to research and write. Her work here shows the virtue of being a teacher-scholar as she brings Brazil more centrally into world and Atlantic history narratives. Her experience as an instructor enlivens her offering of two primary-source driven classroom discussion activities that are immediately usable in both remote and face-to-face teaching environments. Her experience as a research scholar enriches such activities by infusing them with material that illustrates the interconnected complexity of Brazilian history beyond its shores and within the broader historical and thematic contexts of world history.

Alyssa J. Sperry is another up-and-coming world historian with a rich background—she was a chef, as well as the holder of degrees in Global Studies and History and Anthropology—that enriches her fascinating piece on Caribbean history within the global context. As with the other research featured here, Sperry is able to show how some well-crafted micro-history from Latin America can resonate with world history more generally. She writes about food and identity in Jamaica, asking us to see the virtues of specific foodways, namely jerk meat and salt, as emblematic of Jamaican and more widely Caribbean identity within a global context. Guided by the rise of food studies, Alyssa follows in the footsteps of Candice Goucher, Jeffrey Pilcher and Rebekah Pite in showing us that as much can be learned about Latin American peoples from food as from political and economic approaches to Latin American history. Sperry's analysis of the impact of foodways of Maroon and Rastafarian peoples that lies at the roots of Caribbean culture brings our understanding of the region to a new level. Global opportunities for such connections are waiting in the wings. Let's let them on to the main stage.

Finally, we hear from the inimitable John Maunu, a high school teacher who as long served the College Board's Advance Placement program in World History and is *World History Connected's* editor for Digital Resources. In that role, Maunu has been tireless in scouring of the internet and other searches for teaching resources. He has organized and annotated a wide range of links to help teachers and researchers to bring their understanding and teaching of Latin America in world history to higher levels. His initial work on this project appeared in our earlier 2010 version in the journal. As the web is constantly shifting and growing, such work is made difficult by the constant growth and shifting of the internet. Unlike print historical sources, links can change and disappear as is well known. However, Maunu and other WHC editors have worked to ensure that these sources are

as stable as they are useful, though the only constant in this new world of history is, of course, change. That being said, the sources collected here provide multiple opportunities for teachers, researchers and students to build their knowledge base, to locate valuable resources and to more closely engage classroom activities. As several of our contributors have kindly pointed out, when we put tools of historical investigation into the hands of our students, we empower them with education at a much higher level.

In sum, Nikki Magie and I hope that you enjoy this latest attempt to further the integration of Latin American history into the teaching and writing of world history. We still have a long way to go, especially in our ongoing efforts to de-Westernize the world historical narrative. However, these pieces and other world-oriented scholarship in Latin American Studies give us all manifold opportunities to move beyond the limited narratives of Aztec/Incan civilization and impoverished or somehow immature national political and economic histories that too often dominate the historical and present-day airwaves. Our authors have shown that it is possible to learn more about the histories of Latin Americans, on their own terms, as its diverse population, past and present, become better understood as players in the world of world history.

Rick Warner is Hadley Associate Professor of History at Wabash College in Indiana. The professoriate is a second career for Prof. Warner, who worked as a professional chef in Alto California (Santa Cruz) for over a decade before taking a Ph.D. in History at the University of California there. He has been involved for many years in the World History Association, as President and other roles, and has worked for many years with the Advanced Placement World History College Board course, scoring essays and writing questions on the Test Committee. Currently he is at work on a book about Food in Latin American History, drawing on experience in his earlier culinary career. He can be contacted at warenerri@wabash.edu

Nikki Magie is a world migration historian with an emphasis on Latin America. She is an Associate Professor at Olivet College in Michigan, where she teaches World History and various regional history courses. While earning her Ph.D. at Michigan State University, she was honored with the Somers Excellence in Teaching Award. She has written for *World History Project* and is on the Advisory Board for *World History Commons*. She can be contacted at nmagie@olivetcollege.edu

NOTES

¹ See Ross E. Dunn, Laura Jane Mitchell, and Kerry Ward, eds. *The New World History: A Field Guide for Teachers and Researchers*. The California World History Library, 23. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016).

² See Rick Warner, "Bringing Latin American into World History," at <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/7.3/warner.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2020.

³ See Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴ Jerry H. Bentley, Herbert F. Ziegler, and Heather Streets-Salter, *Traditions & Encounters: A Brief Global History* (Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2008) and Stephen Morillo, *Frameworks of World History: Networks, Hierarchies, Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).