

Introduction

Editors

THE ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE OF *SOCIAL JUSTICE* ATTEMPT TO ADD SPECIFICITY AND nuance to our understanding of the range of social processes implicit in the terms “globalization” and “transnationalism.” Globalization and, to a lesser extent, transnationalism are terms deployed with increasing frequency as shorthand for complex social processes that occur beyond national boundaries. Globalization suggests a qualitatively significant acceleration and intensification of economic, cultural, and political practices that extend across the globe. Transnationalism suggests the extent to which the social, economic, and political relations of migrant communities, as manifested in their daily lives, represent social fields that cross national boundaries. Although globalization often emphasizes the power and scope of hegemonic social forces, transnationalism more frequently refers to subaltern populations and raises the prospect of counter-hegemonic practices.

The authors in this issue focus especially on collective identities, social problems, and movements, alliances, and organizations that are to some extent transnational in scope. The first three articles concern the experience of transnational Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Mexican migrant communities. Norma Chinchilla and Nora Hamilton “outline the components for an analysis of Central American migrant transnational practices in Southern California in the context of a three-way relationship between the globalization of capital, international migration, and transnationalism.” Gaspar Rivera-Salgado also uses the framework of transnationalism to examine several cross-border organizations of Mexican migrants, including a binational project of indigenous migrants. “Their experiences,” he suggests, “may well serve other community and grass-roots organizations, given the organic integration being experienced by other social sectors and institutions” in Mexico and the United States since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Devra Weber, on the other hand, questions whether the “transnationalism” described by these authors is qualitatively different from other migrant experiences of the early 20th century. The major difference, she concludes, is access to the new communication technologies. She then asks, “But how accessible are technological advancements? Who uses them? Why? And what is their impact?”

The next three articles explore the persistent contradictions of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as manifest in the increasingly transnational

processes of constructing collective identities and oppositional movements. Ed McCaughan describes efforts by indigenous and feminist social movements and activist artists in Mexico and the United States to reconfigure *mexicanidad* and *chicanismo* in ways that are more liberating than were the old nationalist projects. He suggests that accelerated economic globalization and the changing nature of Mexico-United States integration may actually aid such efforts. Alicia Schmidt Camacho examines attempts to forge cross-border solidarity between AFL-CIO affiliates in San Diego, California, and striking workers in Tijuana, Mexico. “To the extent that the AFL-CIO’s ‘New Voice’ platform mirrors globalized capitalism’s investment in Third World workers, especially women, as a repository of surplus value,” Schmidt Camacho argues, “it is unable to sufficiently break with its reification of gender and racial difference.” Sonia Ojalvo-Hormillosa uses the experiences of gay and lesbian Asian Americans to “explore the possibilities for conceptualizing queer diaspora as a critical practice in cross-border organizing.” Her article also addresses “the citizenship(s) that are implicated in the process of transnationalism, which evokes gender and sexuality as crucial modes of analysis.”

The final five articles offer case studies of social problems rooted in the particular conditions of the late 20th-century world-system and describe the variety of responses taken by communities, organizations, and movements. Leigh Binford attempts to demonstrate that transnational migration, crime, and popular justice are “related to one another as distinct responses to economic and political fields of power reconfigured through Mexico’s deepening incorporation into international capitalism.” María de la Luz Arriaga Lemus claims that NAFTA exacerbates the crisis of public education and signifies a radical expansion of private education in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Her article describes the process by which teachers’ unions in the three countries have attempted to confront this threat with the Trilateral Coalition to Defend Public Education. Nancy Churchill offers a case study in which the social right to housing in Puebla, Mexico, was subordinated to the global logic of tourism and the urban development schemes of international companies. Her article also explores the competing discourses of social justice deployed by the Mexican government and the families resisting eviction.

Jan Marie Fritz reviews “environmental justice initiatives by nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, and/or governments in four countries — Canada, Israel, the United States, and South Africa.” Her article also discusses definitions of environmental justice and compares the term to notions of environmental injustice, environmental equity, and environmental racism. Finally, Patrick Novotny analyzes the changing context of peace and militarism issues in the United States: “With the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the peace and justice movement is a part of the redefinition of peace activism around a much more

diverse identity as a movement for peace and justice both at home and abroad.” Fritz and Novotny both emphasize sustainable development as a crucial component of the environmental justice and peace and justice movements.

Running through many of these articles is a concern with the potential for counter-hegemonic responses by popular social forces to the power of transnational capital, the logic of neoliberalism, and the coercive and co-optive capacity of states. The authors’ assessments of that potential vary considerably. On the most optimistic side, Novotny suggests that “the peace and justice movement is leading the way in creating alternatives for equitable, just, and environmentally sustainable growth.” More cautiously optimistic, Arriaga concludes that “the Trinational Coalition to Defend Public Education represents a viable means for advancing the construction of institutional structures that allow unions to work together” across national boundaries. However, both authors identify significant challenges still to be overcome. Chinchilla and Hamilton suggest that some of the organizations emerging among Central American migrant communities “present alternative models to traditional transnational institutions, indicating that counter-hegemonic projects are a realistic possibility.” Yet they share a concern expressed by Rivera-Salgado in relationship to the binational organizations of Mexican migrants that these new transnational organizations are being subjected to new versions of old patterns of clientelism and co-optation by their home states.

Schmidt Camacho, Otalvaro-Hormillosa, and McCaughan identify encouraging new developments in, respectively, cross-border labor organizing, the empowerment of Asian American queers, and ethnic and feminist movements among Mexicans and Chicanos. Still, their analyses underscore the extent to which classism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism remain pervasive. Perhaps Binford offers the most cautionary response to the question of potential counter-hegemonic practices: of the popular responses to the neoliberal order described in his study, he writes, “None involves organized resistance or presents a viable alternative around which progressive political movements might coalesce. But these responses problematize rule — even as they (temporarily) prop it....”

We hope this issue of *Social Justice* will contribute to ongoing efforts to better understand the transnational characteristics of our turn-of-the-century world-system, as well as the prospects for changing it.

— EJM