



- HOME
- MAGAZINE
- ONLINE NEWS
- EVENTS
- DONATE
- ABOUT US
- MALA

SEARCH >



NACLA User Login

LOGIN

PASSWORD



Register for Account

- [Hunger Strike for Labor Rights at Bata Shoe Factory in Cochabamba](#)
Bolivia Blog | Jim Shultz
- [Latin American left reacts to release of FARC captives](#)
WW4 Report | Bill Weinberg
- [Is the FARC Nearing the End?](#)
The Real News Network | Pepe Escobar
- [McCain and Obama Ignore Abuses in Colombia and Mexico](#)
New America Media (NAM) | Roberto Lovato
- [Food: A luxury item](#)
ALAI | Frei Betto
- [McCain Backer's Firm Pleaded Guilty To Funding Terrorist Group In Colombia](#)
Huffington Post | Nico Pitney
- [Exercising Ballot Power to Push Back Attacks on Immigrant Communities](#)
Alternet | Jackie Mahendra
- [As Colombia's Internal Political Crisis Worsens, Senator McCain Leaves for the Andean Nation](#)
COHA | Jessica Bryant
- [Immigration Issue About to Cross the Media Border](#)
The Field | Al Giordano
- [The U.S. and Mexico: Profile of a Dysfunctional Relationship](#)
Alternet | Ruben Navarette

Home » News » Interview with Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Interview with Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Email Print

Share: [digg](#) [del.icio.us](#) [reddit](#) [newsvine](#) [facebook](#) [buzzflash](#)

Jun 20 2008
Raphael Hoetmer

As Europe and Latin America's leaders meet behind the "safety" of barricades and thousands of police during the Fifth Official Ministerial between the two regions, the National Engineering University is host to the Third Peoples' Summit: Linking Alternatives. Activists from both regions convened to discuss alternatives to neoliberalism and a world that is more just, more democratic, and based on principles of solidarity. Portuguese activist researcher Boaventura de Sousa Santos was one of better-known participants. Raphael Hoetmer spoke with him during his stay in Lima.

How would you explain the current situation in Latin America?

Changes in the world are happening fast and show a lot of contradictions due to the host of political events that have affected us in recent years. An example of which are the changes in Ecuador, Bolivia, and more recently in Paraguay. Elections in these countries have been won [respectively] by a progressive economist, an indigenous campesino, and a priest who follows liberation theology, showing the materialization of resistance against the neoliberal policies of recent decades.

On the other hand, Latin America remains a key piece in the economic strategy of the transnational companies and the governments of the North. One must remember the capitalist system always needs new spaces for generating economic profits. In this way, the expansion of the market has come to convert water, health services, and education into commodities; something that before was unthinkable. At this moment, the commodification of natural resources is the fundamental strategy of capital accumulation in the medium-term, zeroing in on the enormous amount of biodiversity in Latin America.

This renewed focus on Latin America has been accelerated by the fiasco of the war on Iraq. The United States now realizes that during its relative absence in its "back yard" changes have come to being that present two problems for its agenda. First, social processes had advanced beyond its control, far beyond what it expected, resulting in progressive governments and in strong social movements. Secondly, those movements achieved power through democracies in a period in which the U.S. was using the discourse of democracy to justify interventions around the planet.

In this context a new strategy of counter-insurgency is developed consisting in a mix between the Alliance for Progress with a conscious policy of dividing the movements, specifically the indigenous movement. Meanwhile, in recent years, militarization has deepened and the criminalization of protest has brutally intensified.

In this context you just described, some changes to the neoliberal paradigm are evident. Do you think this paradigm has transitioned into one of security?

Yes, this seems to me as the final perversion of neoliberal re-structuring. In effect, neoliberalism tries to replace existing concepts of development and democracy with concepts of control and security due to its incapacity for generating solid popular support.

This is a consequence of a deepening social exclusion, misery, and inequality under neoliberal capitalism that implies the emergence of phenomenon I call "social fascism." This is not a political regime, but a form of social relations of such strong inequality that they even have veto-power over the lives of others. We run the risk of living in societies that are politically democratic but socially fascist.

The most painful example of this logic is the growth of hunger in the world that shows the contradiction between life (the production of accessible sustenance for the world's population) and profit (the production of profitable biofuels). The emergence of "social fascism" shows how the modernist project is broken, because it's failed to fulfill its promises of liberty, equality and solidarity, and we know now that it won't fulfill them in the future either.

In this context, we are presented with the contradiction between the security paradigm, with the fight against terrorism, on the one hand, and on the other states that re-vindicate their sovereignty, social movements, and specifically the struggle of indigenous peoples. It's in indigenous territories where 80 percent of Latin America's biodiversity lies. In this sense, organizations like the Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations (CAOI), the National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining of Peru (Conacami), and the National Coordinator of Ayllus and Marqas (Conamaq) of Bolivia are a threat to the status quo.

Therefore, the criminalization of dissent throughout Latin America is strongest against indigenous peoples, like we've seen in Peru and Chile. A clear effort exists in transforming indigenous into the terrorists of the 21st century, as shown by documents of the CIA. The document "Global Trends 2020" shows their worry about the radicalization of indigenous



NACLA | 38 GREENE ST. 4TH FL., NEW YORK NY 10013 | TEL: (646) 613-1440 | FAX (646) 613-1443

[Sitemap](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Developed by May First/People Link](#) [Design by Tumis](#) [Copyright NACLA 2007](#)