

March 2019

Letter from the Editor

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Recommended Citation

Finn, Johnny (2019) "Letter from the Editor," *Journal of Latin American Geography* 18(1): 6-7.

DOI: 10.1353/lag.2019.0000

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1296&context=jlag>

Letter From the Editor

Dear Colleagues:

It is with both excitement and humility that I take the reins as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Latin American Geography*. Chris Gaffney's four-year run as JLAG's editor is going to be a hard act to follow. During this period the journal attracted an increasingly diverse set of authors and theoretical, methodological, and topical perspectives, it experienced sustained growth in readership, and it climbed in Google Scholar's ranking of Latin American studies journals. This culminated with the recent announcement that the Conference of Latin American Geography (CLAG) was awarded the 2019 AAG Publication Award for its publication of JLAG. This is a huge honor, and a testament to the quality, importance, and impact of this journal. Congratulations to Chris and to the JLAG editorial team, and thank you to all the authors, reviewers, CLAG board members, CLAGistas, and everyone else whose efforts made this possible.

Since its inception, JLAG's core mission has been to provide a space for publishing a broad range of high caliber geographical scholarship on and from Latin America. Because Latin American geography is inherently pluralistic and spans the breadth of the discipline, it is vital that JLAG continue to reflect and promote this tradition of academic diversity. I consider it my primary editorial goal to continue this mission while working to increase the hemispheric, even

global reach of the journal, to maintain it as the obvious choice for publishing geographical research on Latin America, and to increase its standing among top journals in all disciplines of Latin American(ist) scholarship.

At the same time, recent events in the hemisphere make increasingly clear to me the need for critically and politically engaged scholarship that directly addresses deep economic inequality, ongoing violence against women, people of color, and the LGBTIQ+ community, border militarization and the criminalization of migration and of migrants' bodies, and the profound unevenness of the impacts of environmental destruction, amongst much else. These are defining issues in contemporary Latin America, and they are inherently geographical. For us to shy away from them for fear of seeming too political would be for us to cede vital opportunities where geographic scholarship can have an important impact not only on the production of academic knowledge, but much more broadly on policy debates and public understanding.

I strongly believe that JLAG can and should reflect the academic diversity and pluralism of Latin American(ist) geography that lies at the core of JLAG's mission while simultaneously being a space for politically and critically engaged scholarship.

To that end, in late 2018 we released a broad and general call for papers that rearticulated JLAG's editorial priorities to continue publishing cutting edge scholarship on all dimensions of Latin American geography,

to expand our engagement with critical geographical scholarship, to actively seek submissions that draw heavily on the rich scholarly debates happening in Latin America, and to invite submissions that broadly fall under the rubric of Latinx geographies. That CFP remains open and is accessible on the CLAG website.

As we look forward to 2019 and beyond, I'm pleased to announce that Gabriela Valdivia (UNC-Chapel Hill) will be joining JLAG's editorial team as an associate editor. Jörn Seemann (Ball State University) and Martha Bell (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) will both continue their roles as associate editors, and Eric Carter (Macalester College) remains as JLAG's book review editor.

I'm also thrilled to introduce an expanded International Editorial Board that reflects the theoretical, methodological, and regional breadth of the journal. This editorial board

is vital to JLAG's ongoing success. Each board member serves a three-year term during which time they commit to conducting thorough peer reviews of two to three articles per year, to submitting or attracting at least one manuscript to the journal, and to promoting the journal throughout their professional networks. I invite you to read about each of the members of this important editorial board on the next page.

With that, I'm happy to present this first issue of 2019, which features a diverse set of seven articles, three JLAG Perspectives essays, a second installment in the JLAG Retrospective series, and an outstanding group of book reviews.

I'm grateful for this opportunity, and I truly appreciate the ongoing efforts of authors, reviewers, and of course readers.

Johnny Finn