



CENTER FOR
LATIN AMERICAN & LATINO STUDIES
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

Message from the Director
July 2017

Dear CLALS Community,

The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies was established at American University in 2010 as a vehicle for generating and transmitting state of the art analysis, and for diffusing knowledge to the widest possible audience among the citizenry and opinion leaders inside and outside academe. Transmitting the findings of our research is a responsibility that we have always taken seriously, but it is one to which we have assigned renewed priority at a moment when American policy makers openly question the value of knowledge and the legitimacy of science and non-partisan analytical contributions to public debates.

These are times when we feel compelled to redouble our efforts to understand societal engagement with [climate change](#) and other environmental challenges; efforts to protect the rights and promote the wellbeing of [Latino populations](#) living in the United States; and dynamics of inequality, impunity, and human rights violations throughout the Americas. It is also a moment that reinforces the need for constructive analyses of Washington's engagement with Latin America. These are themes about which the Center has received a number of [grants](#) over the past year, and we intend to continue pursuing opportunities to develop research and intervene in the public arena on these and other questions.

I will be on sabbatical during the fall semester, devoting my time in large part to thinking through how best to re-orient my own research, teaching, and programmatic development objectives to deal with the times in which we are living. My taking time away from the Center is possible only because of the deep engagement in our work of dozens of AU faculty and fellows and Center staff, and particularly the willingness of my colleague [Jayesh Rathod](#), of AU's Washington College of Law, to stand in as Acting Director.

Jayesh brings to this role a deep understanding of the mission and capabilities of the Center, and a lot of new ideas, which I am confident will generate new lines of inquiry while sustaining our efforts in areas where we have maintained ongoing currents of work. [North America](#), asylum free zones, and linkages between social science expertise and immigration court decisions are among the areas of work that we expect to develop during the coming months, while continuing to disseminate the results of our work through [social media](#), our website, the [AULABLOG](#), and other instruments. As always, your ideas, and elbow grease, are more than welcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin Hendberg".

CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDIES

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