

vested within the shantytown and squatter areas or *villas miserias*. Similarly, in Rio de Janeiro, samba schools have become important arenas of social organization that overlay their traditional role and functions. Finally, a key difference today is the fact that these cities are no longer growing fast—or at all in some cases.

FROM RURAL TO URBAN, FROM MEN TO WOMEN, FROM CLASS STRUGGLE TO STRUGGLES FOR ENTITLEMENTS

By Helen Safa

In many respects the "new poverty" of today in Latin America and the Caribbean is very different from that observed in the 1960s. As Portes and Hoffman (2003) document in their article on changes in Latin American class structure during the neo-liberal era, income inequality in Latin America today is even greater than it was in 1980, largely because of structural adjustment and neo-liberal reforms.

Other aspects of life for the urban poor in Latin America have also changed since 1960. The period of ISI from 1960 to 1980 brought about considerable economic growth and benefits to the working class because it was designed to build up an internal market, which required adequate wages to raise purchasing power. ISI also favored male employment in heavy industry and was built on the model of the male breadwinner, in which the man maintained authority in the household through his role as chief or sole breadwinner. The social wage increased as unions expanded and governments provided some public services to urban residents through expanded programs in education, health and basic infrastructure such as piped water and electricity. As my study *Urban Poor of Puerto Rico* (1974) demonstrated, most of the recruits to this expanding working class were rural migrants, and the opportunities for employment and education in the city gave them an optimistic outlook on social mobility and aspirations for their children. Failure to succeed was blamed on personalistic factors such as low educational levels or an errant husband.

Optimism came to an end in the 1980s with the growing debt crisis and structural adjustment policies imposed on loans from the International Monetary Fund. Structural adjustment severely limited government spending—resulting in the decline of the public sector and privatization of public services on which many of the urban poor depended. It also froze wages and employment, contributing to an expansion of unregulated jobs in the informal sector for the self-employed and subcontractors to the formal sector. The complex links between the formal and informal sectors belied the notion of marginality and the culture of poverty, which argued that the poor were outside the economic and cultural mainstream and passed on their poverty

transgenerationally. Social networks continued to supply sufficient social and material capital to enable the poor to survive, and for some to become socially mobile.

The final blow came with the initiation of neo-liberal policies in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s. A policy of free trade removed all protection of domestic industry and allowed cheap imports to destroy an already eroded internal market. Cheap food imports contributed to a decline in agricultural production for domestic consumption, while the prices of commodity exports from Latin America and the Caribbean, such as sugar and coffee, plummeted. A new model emphasizing export production required that wages be kept low to retain a "comparative advantage," which became all the more difficult as the international economy globalized, and Latin American countries were competing with cheap labor in China, Africa, and other areas. In my book on women industrial workers in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, entitled *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner* (1995) I showed that female employment grew largely in response to the need for additional wage earners to supplement declining male wages, and also to provide cheap labor for new export processing zones and a growing service economy. The education women received in the earlier ISI period made them a highly qualified labor force, which continues to grow today. Increased educational and occupational opportunities for women contributed to the growth of the feminist movement in Latin America, and demolished the myth of the male breadwinner, as women became important contributors to the household and national economy. Female heads of household are increasing in numbers as men abdicate their roles as breadwinner.

The wide participation of the popular classes in social movements emphasizes the degree to which Latin Americans now recognize the structural impediments to their survival (and limited possibilities of mobility) and no longer blame themselves for failure. Most of these movements are directed against the state and are based on collective interests rooted in gender, race and ethnicity (the indigenous and black movements), or on shared concerns over land, environment, or health. This demonstrates that the poor now experience a sense of entitlement and recognize their rights as citizens more than ever, and that they no longer feel themselves disconnected from the nation. With the growth of urbanization and a market economy, "refuge zones" no longer exist, and for some, international migration becomes the only outlet. With the withdrawal of social development and social protection programs as well as the growth of drug trafficking, the need to police the poor has become stronger, potentially leading to a level of immiseration that may still prove explosive. But as long as the poor still expect the state to play a key role in redressing their grievances, they remain an integral part of the nation.