

Statement on the deterioration of democracy and human rights in the United States

March 2025

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. Since its foundation in 1966, its mission has been to foster intellectual discussion, critical research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and their peoples throughout the Americas and their diasporas, encouraging civic engagement through public and plural debate and respect for academic freedom and human rights.

The Executive Council of LASA is deeply concerned about the deterioration of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights in the United States since the inauguration of the new president. We are alarmed by the administration's blatant disregard for the Constitution, the separation of powers, and judicial independence. As researchers of Latin America, we have a robust understanding of the consequences of authoritarianism and its devastating effects, including the erosion of basic freedoms such as freedom of expression and association as well as academic freedom.

We are also concerned about the impact of specific policies adopted by this administration on the lives of many vulnerable people, from the arbitrary cuts in foreign aid including essential humanitarian assistance to mass deportations of immigrants and the revocation of Temporary Protective Status for Haitians and Venezuelans. Many LASA members work closely with or are part of these communities.

Nearly half of LASA's members live in the United States and work in institutions of higher education. The leadership of LASA is disturbed by the administration's attacks on education, from funding cuts to the stated intention to eliminate the Department of Education, to efforts to legislate our classrooms. Such policies undermine the development of an informed, educated citizenry and endanger academic freedom, which are fundamental to democracy.

In addition, we are alarmed by the administration's unilateral approach towards Latin America, the most egregious example being its stated desire to take control of the Panama Canal. We call upon the administration to adopt a foreign policy based on respect for the sovereignty of Latin American nations and other nations throughout the world.

Since its foundation, one of LASA's missions has been to help build constructive relationships between the United States and Latin America. Many of our members have played an instrumental role in the struggle for democracy and human rights. We urge U.S. policymakers to adopt a more inclusive and respectful approach towards Latin America, prioritizing human rights, academic

freedom, and collaborative development, and to protect the important work being done in higher education on these issues. Finally, we remain committed to advocating for these principles and supporting our members in their efforts to create a more just and equitable world.

About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the world's largest professional association constituted by individuals and institutions devoted to the study of Latin America and the Caribbean. LASA currently has over 12,000 members from around the world and a committee that defends academic freedom and human rights.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or send an email to lasa@lasaweb.org.

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