

## ANTI-GENDER POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

### Country Case Studies Summaries

#### ABSTRACTS

### **“Gender Ideology”, Catholic *Neointegrismo*, and Evangelical Fundamentalism: The Anti-Democratic Vocation**

by Gabriela Arguedas Ramírez

This article offers a synthesis of the theoretical development in the cultural studies of religion, that analyze the phenomenon of neo-Pentecostal religious fundamentalism and Catholic neointegrism. The flag against the alleged "gender ideology" (i.e., a movement against all theories and activities that refute the way gender, sexuality and reproduction are understood by the Catholic doctrine) is one of the central pieces in the ultraconservative rhetoric. Likewise, the processes of strategic alliance that these movements have been engaged in for at least two decades counter the loss of political and cultural power of the religious in the public sphere and government. The main political objective shared by the various conservative-religious-neoliberal groups that use the rhetorical resource of "gender ideology" is to take control - through the electoral mechanisms of formal democracy - of the State and its institutions, and, from within, impose their social and economic vision. The theoretical roots and influences of anti-gender campaigns can be traced back to Catholic fundamentalists in Spain, more especially Opus Dei, and the American Christian Right, who have the potential to expand beyond the religious realm once they operate change in their discourses, disguising their religious elements so that they have more legitimacy in the secular public sphere, especially aiming towards the education field as a tool for ideological perpetuation.

**Gabriela Arguedas Ramírez** is a pharmacist, bioethicist, doctoral student in Society and Culture. She is a specialist in human rights and has been a consultant for the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights. She is currently **(A)** professor at the School of Philosophy and **(A)** researcher at the Center for Research in

Women's Studies at the University of Costa Rica, where she is director of the Graduate Program in Women's Studies.

## **The Case of Argentina**

by Maximiliano Campana

This report attempts to account for various anti-gender reactions and politics that have been promoted in Argentina in recent years, and their connections with the various Latin American realities. In this sense, it deals with the discussions that remain in debate in Argentina on the confessionalism/laity of the state and how the Catholic Church and the national government are deeply intertwined in the socio-political reality of the country. The Catholic Church's privileged role has shaped local reality since the nation's establishment, and it generates to this day strong resistance not only by those who advocate for the total separation of state and church, but also by members of other faiths who oppose taking a subordinate place in national politics. The second part of this report focuses on the political and social role that self-proclaimed "pro-life" organizations play in preventing the recognition and advancement of sexual and reproductive rights of citizens ("anti-rights" or anti-gender groups), and in particular with regard to women and groups in the LGBTTI movement. In this specific part, the report focuses on different anti-gender campaigns carried out by conservative forces with special focus on the legislative debate to decriminalize and legalize abortion in Argentina in 2018. It also presents main social, religious and political actors who have been key to understanding how policies and discourses against sexual and reproductive rights snuck onto the political agenda and public opinion, and how the fight against "gender ideology" was introduced in the country as a reaction to the discussion for the decriminalization of abortion, sexual education and LGBTTI rights. Finally, the report gives an account of the significant resistance that these anti-gender groups face by trying to install its own political agenda in Argentina.

**Maximiliano Campana** is an Argentinian lawyer with a doctorate in Law and Social Sciences from the National University of Cordoba, is the Coordinator of the

Sexual and Reproductive Rights Program of the School of Law of the National University of Cordoba and President of the Public Interest Legal Clinic of Cordoba. He has currently a post-doctoral scholarship granted by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET) for carrying out research on conservative religious sectors in Argentina.

## The Case of Brazil

by Sonia Corrêa and Isabela Kalil

In 2018, Brazil experienced an electoral whirlwind when Jair Bolsonaro was elected president. In his inaugural speech, he established as his government's commitment "to fight against gender ideology". However, gender, sexuality and reproduction had not been recognized or seriously examined by a large majority of analysts as a fertile locus for the mobilization of old anti-democratic forces and the production of new synergies in the conservative field. This study aims to do so and had a privileged view as it was carried out during the 2018 election. This article provides readers with a compilation of the political circumstances that contributed to the current Brazilian scenario and an analysis of the structure that gave fertile ground to the flourishing of anti-gender forces. It then cites key findings based on the conservative discourses analysis on gender in the press, in internet searches and in field research, which managed to outline profiles of Bolsonaro in order to understand political rationality and how they manage to mobilize feelings and arguments. The research points out how, in the case of Brazil, the debates on the inclusion of issues on gender and sexuality in education were and still are a privileged space for the Brazilian anti-gender campaigns has developed to its current state: its ecumenical character, through an alliance between fundamentalists Catholics and evangelicals, associated with conservative ultraliberal secular groups.

**Sonia Corrêa** has been an activist and academic on gender, sexuality, health and human rights issues since the 1970s. She coordinates with Richard Parker the Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW), based at the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA), and among her most recent activities, she was a visiting researcher at the Gender Department of the London School of Economics. She is

on the editorial board of the Global Queer Politics, from Palgrave Publishing House.

**Isabela Kalil** has a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of São Paulo (FFLCH/USP). She was a researcher Visiting Professor at Columbia University (New York, 2011-2012). She acts as a professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the Foundation School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo (FESPSP), where she is coordinator of the Nucleus of Urban and Audiovisual Ethnography (NEU).

### **The Case of Chile**

by Jaime Barrientos

This exploratory study seeks to understand the origins and developments of anti-gender movements in Chile through document analysis, press, and interviews with key actors in the field. Results show that it is not possible to determine the origins of anti-gender movements in the country, although there are some important milestones, such as the legislative debates on academic freedom and the Anti-Discrimination Act. More crucially, in 2017 the presence in the country of Spanish organization Hazte Oír's 'liberty bus', as they call it, generated several controversies and tensions between 'pro-rights' and 'anti-rights' groups. Finally, the study identifies two law discussions that specially mobilize anti-gender groups in Chile: the debate on the the Abortion Law and the recently passed Gender Identity Law. The composition of these groups is heterogeneous, FROM leaders of evangelical churches (the Catholic church is discredited by cases of abuse in the country), to organized parents and representatives of right-wing political parties. Finally, faced by the constant advance of these groups, resistance is also observed, especially by the feminist and LGBT+ movements.

**Jaime Barrientos Delgado** is a Doctor of Social Psychology and an Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Chile. His research topics focus on homophobic violence, and the impact of

prejudice and discrimination on the mental health of gays, and lesbians.

## The Case of Colombia

by Franklin Gil Hernández

This study analyzes how conservative actors have been carrying out activities against sexual and reproductive rights, of gender equality policies that benefit women and LGBT populations in Colombia. For this purpose, a review of academic literature and press reports, field observations and interviews with qualified informants were made. The study observes the political uses and origins of the rhetoric associated with the so-called 'gender ideology', as well as its local appropriations. The use of the populist resource called "gender ideology" has been one of the main symptoms of these actions. But this symptom, although central, does not include the totality of actions and senses that come from different fields and agendas that sometimes converge and sometimes have transnational range. Not to mention that some of them are also scattered, discontinuous and tense, in the midst of agendas with diverse political and economic interests. The purpose of the study is to review how this phenomenon has developed, deepening in different milestones on the debates and gender controversies.

**Franklin Gil Hernandez** is a Doctor of Anthropology and Assistant Professor at the School of Gender of the National University of Colombia. His research topics are gender and sexuality; sexual and reproductive rights; sexual and racial militancy; history of the city and sexuality; abortion, gender and human rights; sexual and reproductive health; kinship; racial, sexual and gender discrimination; racial relations and racism; gender relations, race, class and sexuality; gender, sexuality and sport.

## **The Case of Costa Rica**

by Gabriela Arguedas Ramírez

This chapter describes and analyzes the main discourses of the conservative political-religious movements (Catholic and Neo-Pentecostal) in Costa Rica, which during the last ten years or so have used the term "gender ideology" in public debate. In this sense, this research makes use of the press reports, social media discourses and academic literature on the subject to analyze the Costa Rican case. Particular interest is given to the political-electoral impact that these conservative movements have obtained, through a rhetoric that capitalizes on an association between moral panic about gender and sexuality, and the fear of leftist political alternatives.

**Gabriela Arguedas Ramírez** is a pharmacist, bioethicist and a doctoral student in Society and Culture. She is a specialist in human rights and has been a consultant for the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights. She is currently a professor at the School of Philosophy and a researcher at the Center for Research in Women's Studies at the University of Costa Rica, where she is director of the Graduate Program in Women's Studies.

## **The Case of Ecuador**

by Maria Amelia Viteri

Ecuador ex-president Correa was the first in Latin America to use the term "gender ideology". He did it during his weekly broadcast in 2013, when he criticized gender studies claiming that they "academically does not stand up to the slightest scrutiny" because they would destroy the family. However, he promotes a double discourse that, on the one hand, approaches and co-opts the feminist and LGBTTI social movements, promoting a friendly discourse, while blocking the advancement of the rights of these populations. The moralistic

discourse of the former president created a basis for the further deepening of anti-gender politics in the country, in addition to having imposed obstacles to the decision to end pregnancy and the recognition of same-sex marriage among others. In that study, through press records, speeches, laws and decrees and review of academic literature on the subject, this case study explores the development of these forces in Ecuador, their main actors, how they operate, how they are financed and, in the middle of all this, it also looks into the resistance from the feminist and LBTTI movements, and the Ecuadorian feminist theology.

**Maria Amelia Viteri** is a Ph.D. and works as a Senior Researcher and Professor in the Department of Anthropology of the University of San Francisco de Quito. She is also an Associated Researcher to the Department of Anthropology of the University of Maryland, College Park and was a Visiting Professor (2019) in the Departments of Linguistics and Anthropology of the University of Kentucky.

### **The Case of Mexico**

by Gloria Careaga and Luz Elena Aranda

Since the 1990s, with the relaxation of secularism, the Catholic Church has sought to regain influence on politics, laws and public policies in Mexico. This movement enabled conservative religious politicians to intervene in public education and the media, which facilitated and expanded the spread of their moral vision. As a part of this objective, the Marches for the Family have been forerunners of the anti-gender offensives, and that would gain traction in 2017 when Spanish Hazte Oír orange bus made a stop in the country. However, is in 2018 that the alliance between the Catholic Encuentro Social Party and then candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), that an important precedent of re-confessionalization was created in the country, where the education became the main locus of action with, for example, the re-publication of the Moral Booklet commissioned by the Confederation of Evangelical Churches, among others.

**Gloria Careaga Pérez** is professor of Social Psychology at the School of Psychology at the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). She is the co-founder of UNAM's Gender Studies Program (PUEG), where she was the Academic Secretary from 1992 to 2004 and coordinated the Sexualities Studies from 2015 to 2017. She was co-Secretary General of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) from 2008 to 2014. She has also carried out studies at the Golda Meir Center in Israel and academic internships at the UNA in Costa Rica and SPW in Brazil. Gloria has also been distinguished with the Omecíhuatl Medal of the Women's Institute of the Federal District of Mexico and the Hermelinda Galindo Award from Mexico City's Human Rights Commission, for her work on human rights.

**Luz Elena Aranda** is a bisexual feminist artivist with studies in Ethnology and Dramatic Literature and Theater. Since 2012, she is Director General of Las Reinas Chulas Cabaret and Human Rights AC, a Mexican organization of lesbian and bisexual women dedicated to training, advocacy and artivism. Since 2014, she is a part of the Regional Council of International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) Latin America and Caribbean. In 2017, she assumed the position of Regional Co-Secretary and in 2019 she became Co-Secretary General of ILGA World.

## The Case of Paraguay

by Clyde Soto and Lilian Soto

This study compiled main milestones and effects of anti-gender campaigns in Paraguay, as well as their background in the country that was the “good example” for these forces. In Paraguay, anti-gender offensives have taken shape from older formations who called themselves “pro-life” and who have operated since the 1980s while the country was being democratized and the feminist agenda was being promoted. This article analyzes two general lines of development in anti-gender campaigns: actors and targets. In the 1980s, a Catholic origin organization, linked to transnational organizations, turned against abortion rights. In the 2000s, the range of actors widened with the introduction of

evangelical churches, whose targets also became broader, aiming sexual and reproductive rights in general. In the years 2010, the campaigns gained new scale. A more organic link between sectors of the political parties and institutions that share a neoliberal agenda is produced against a common enemy: "cultural Marxism", which is associated with 'gender ideology' and expands the anti-gender political project to the economic field. As a result, in 2018, under religious conservative pressure, Paraguay refrained from the United Nations' Global Compact for Migration, claiming that this instrument would mean an openness to abortion rights and "gender ideology".

**Clyde Soto** is a feminist, psychologist and human rights defender. She acts as a researcher at the Center for Documentation and Studies (CDE), where she currently coordinates the Women's Area. She has developed research and published on women's political participation, history of women, sexual and reproductive rights, domestic work, care and migration corridors, among other topics. She is an activist of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), of the Coordinación de Mujeres de Paraguay (CMP) and the September 28th Campaign for the Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Lilian Soto** is a politician, a feminist and a medical doctor. She was a city councilor of the city of Asunción (1991-2000) and Minister Executive Secretary of Public Office at the Government of Paraguay (2008-2012). She was a candidate for the presidency of the Republic by the socialist and feminist movement Kuña Pyrienda. She is dedicated to social sciences as a researcher and consultant in gender, public policy and public administration.

### The Case of Uruguay

by Lilián Abracinskas, Santiago Puyol, Stefanie Kreher and Nicolas Iglesias

This study seeks to identify how the discursive formation of "gender ideology" emerged, developed and consolidated in Uruguay and who are the main forces that have driven it in a long-term genealogy. Since the early 2000s, Uruguay has stood out in Latin America as the country that achieved many significant gains in terms of the so-called new democratic rights agenda. However, it was this same

perspective that drove anti-gender forces to view the country as a “bad example” that must be turned. Although anti-rights mobilizations have not reached the intensity and articulation specific to other countries examined in this series, it has been possible to point out key features that hinder Uruguay’s progressive history and recent re-configurations that have enabled their presence and strengthening.

**Lilián Abracinskas** is a feminist activist, graduated in Communications and an expert in gender, health and sexual and reproductive rights. Since 2004, she has been the Executive Director of MYSU (Mujer y Salud en Uruguay), where she coordinates the Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health Watch research team. She is a representative of the Network for the Health of Latin American and Caribbean Women (RSMLAC) at the legal policy watch MIRAJUETEMIRO and she is also a member of the advisory committee of the Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion (CLACAI) regarding Uruguay.

**Santiago Puyol** has a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science by the Social Sciences School of the University of the Republic of Uruguay (Udelar). He is in charge of the Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health Watch at MYSU, in monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of public policies in sexual and reproductive health in Uruguay and is currently a master’s student in Political Science at Udelar.

**Nicolas Iglesias** has a degree in Social Work, with a major in Theology and Religion. He is currently the coordinator of the Multidisciplinary Study Group on Religion and Advocacy Public at GEMRIP, and of the Fe en la Resistencia (Faith in the Resistance) project, in addition to being a researcher and guest columnist for a few media outlets on issues related to religion, politics and society.

**Stefanie Kreher** studied theology in Argentina and Germany until 2014. In 2015, she started the production of the documentary "Faith in the Resistance" (2018) about faith communities and the dictatorship in Uruguay. She is a reporter, researcher and author of publications related to gender, sexuality,

religion and human rights, and she also works on community projects in Montevideo and Canelones, Uruguay.

## The Case of the Organization of American States

by Mirta Moragas

2013 was the first organized deployment of anti-gender campaigns against sexual and reproductive rights within the Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHRS) and from then on these forces' presence became permanent and growing in this space. This research recounts and analyzes the development of anti-gender groups at the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) from 2013, seeking to identify its main actors, strategies, arguments and effects. To that end, this study collected and analyzed press records, interviews with activists who were present in those spaces, official documents and the academic literature on the subject. Following the concepts of "strategic secularization" and "symbolic glue" we identify how, on the one hand, anti-gender performance is capable of producing a secular discourse, based on scientific and legal arguments that co-opt the language of human rights and, on the other hand, under the formula of "gender ideology", they are able to add a variation of meanings that appeals to many conservative groups, which come together against gender. These strategies give them a formal non-religious appearance as NGOs and also dress them with an objective language, capable of producing a discursive turn, where the feminist and LGBTI movements would be "ideological". This portrayal guarantees them legitimacy to reach spaces of power while achieving society more broadly outside the strictly religious field. The IAHRS spaces are a privileged field to observe how what is happening there subsequently moves to the national level, where one sees international cooperation, shared discourses and even aesthetics.

**Mirta Moragas** is a lawyer and teacher in international law with specializations in gender and human rights by the American University Washington College of

Law. She is a consultant and researcher on gender and human rights issues. She has investigated hate crimes against transgender people in Paraguay, the impact of the criminalization of abortion on the human rights of women in Paraguay and the offensive of the anti-rights groups within the Organization of American States (OAS). As a feminist activist, she integrates organizations and networks in Paraguay and Latin America working on sexual and reproductive rights.