

FOREWORD

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When we first began to witness Latin America's shift away from neoliberalism and toward socialism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, so many of us—feminist, queer, antiracist, antiglobalization, decolonial scholars and activists—held high hopes for social transformation in the region. After living through the “lost decade” of the 1980s, which exacerbated long-standing economic and social inequalities through neoliberal policies focused on servicing foreign debt, and after witnessing the deeper, far-reaching institutionalization of the neoliberal logic of “free market” development in the 1990s, with its emphasis on privatization, decentralization, and NGOization, the promise of new left experiments was exhilarating, albeit often combined with a healthy dose of skepticism. As scholars and activists imagined “another world,” many assumed that gender and sexual rights, and queer imaginings of economy, nation, citizenship, and sustainable life, would be concretely realized.

To reflect their newly proposed socialist and/or decolonial agendas, some Pink Tide governments passed national referendums to change their constitutions. Ultimately, whether such changes occurred through constitutional reform, broader legal reforms, or changes in public policy, a general aim was to share resources more equitably and increase citizen access to states' socialist-inspired redistributive projects. Through this process, there have been some exciting innovations, some of which are explored in this collection. The shared dissatisfaction among Pink Tide governments with the region's neoliberal legacy, and the global financial architecture that catalyzed and sustained it, led to an array of moderate and more radical antineoliberal and/or socialist projects. Unfortunately, as this volume documents so well, these projects have been incomplete, often fraught with tensions and contradictions. We have learned much since the inception of the Pink Tide, and have perhaps lost some hope. Yet we have also found some key political openings, fissures, and spaces in which to imagine a more just world, thanks to Pink Tide political movements and sometimes despite them as well.

This volume shatters Cold War binaries that many scholars still hold about capitalism versus socialism, and religion versus secularism, as they affect women's and LGBT rights and social movements. Feminists and queers have been attacked by all ideological sides in different historical moments and spaces, but little research has been conducted to analyze how this has occurred within Latin America's Pink Tide. *Seeking Rights from the Left* provides a deeply grounded framework for analyzing gender and sexual rights in Latin America's shift to the left, raising difficult questions about the relationships between ideology and governance, and highlighting how feminists and LGBT/queer people are often scapegoated in broader nationalist, antineoliberal, and antiimperialist struggles. Some chapters in this book take head-on the ways in which Cold War assumptions continue to haunt scholarly work on gender and sexual rights. Indeed, as several contributors point out, what we tend to see is a complex blend of pro- and anti-women's and LGBT rights discourses and practices, often converging in the same state. For example, Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa (2007–17) supported an explicit decolonial queer rights agenda early on in his administration, yet is notorious for his neglect of women's rights and his outright misogyny. A same-sex civil union bill was passed in Chile in 2014, yet despite Chilean president Michelle Bachelet's (2006–10, 2014–to date) leadership on women's and to a lesser extent LGBT issues (as former UN Women executive director, 2010–13), in Chile, indigenous women's rights lag far behind and indeed have at times been directly challenged by the state.

Despite the excitement of imagining a more just world—one that has inspired some Pink Tide states to adopt an intentional “decolonization” agenda, and even a “depatriarchalization” agenda in the case of Bolivia—these persistent paradoxes demonstrate that ideology and party politics do not determine how gender and sexual rights are or are not addressed in Pink Tide contexts. Indeed, in our increasingly globalized world, the transnational flow of resources, labor, and information about family, gender, and (homo)sexuality plays as much into leftist leaders' visions, and leftist states' articulations, of heteronormative socialism as do internal politics and alliances. Right-wing, often religiously inspired discourses claiming that “gender ideology” is “dangerous” to the traditional family are now prominently embedded in political processes in places as diverse as France, the United States, Uganda, and Malawi, as well as Chile, Ecuador, and other Latin American countries. Not surprisingly, some Pink Tide countries are thus more influenced by religion than during earlier waves of socialism, and this greatly affects

how women and LGBT people are represented in public policy, law, and state programs.

So, how do we make sense of these contradictions? This volume is the first of its kind to directly focus on these complex relationships, cultural and political movements, and processes as they occur in eight countries. Interestingly, when we analyze gender and sexual rights “after” neoliberalism (remembering that many Pink Tide states still utilize and promote neoliberal development frameworks), we find many inconsistencies across time and within the Pink Tide era: in some countries, for example, more rights were extended to women and/or LGBT people during the neoliberal period than during the more recent socialist period. Women have benefitted more from Pink Tide policy and legal changes in countries such as Uruguay and Argentina than in other nations. Moreover, Pink Tide states often prioritize one set of rights over another. For example, some states have utilized a pro-LGBT rights discourse to defend their modernization projects and brand themselves as “modern” and “civilized,” while simultaneously eroding women’s and indigenous rights. Such “trade-offs” potentially pit the advances of one group against the losses faced by another and create uneven access to socialist redistributive projects.

I invite you to read this provocative volume, which grounds and transforms our understanding of how gender and sexuality matter to and are represented in forms of Pink Tide governance and development in Latin America. These generative analyses will inspire new conversations about the central place of feminist and queer studies in (post)neoliberal politics and Latin American social movements, and remind us how notions of gender and sexuality are always present, even when unnamed.