Americas

Mariah Grant, Alfredo Gutierrez Carrizo,
Janet Oropeza Eng and Carolyn Stephens


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North America

Mariah Grant

Events in North America during 2014 were dominated by protests in the United States against the killings of two African Americans, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, by police. Both incidents were interpreted by demonstrators as reflecting institutionalized racism within the police force, provoking broader discussion of the inequalities experienced by black citizens, particularly in cities. Yet not only are these shared by other marginalized communities, including the country's indigenous population, but they also extend into education, health and employment. These disparities are especially evident in urban areas, where they are often manifested in pronounced physical, social and economic segregation.

Below: Navajo women perform a *jingle dress* dance during a powwow at Nakai Hall, Window Rock, Arizona, USA. *Donovan Shortey*

In Canada, though the proportion is lower than the national average, the majority of the country's indigenous population are based in towns or cities and now comprise the fastest growing segment of the urban population. Their experience of urbanization is characterized by widespread exclusion in access to housing, employment and a range of other areas, a reality that has not only contributed to the recruitment of some indigenous youth into criminal gangs but also the disproportionate rate of sexual violence suffered by indigenous girls and women in urban areas. This issue drew national attention during the year following the murder of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine in August and the subsequent attempted murder of 16-year-old Rinelle Harper in the city of Winnipeg. In Mexico, indigenous women in Ciudad Juárez, many of whom have migrated to the city in search of employment, continued to face similar levels of sexual violence during the year.

Canada

According to the most recent census data from 2011, Canada's indigenous population now exceeds 1.4 million, comprised of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, all of whom have distinct ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and traditions. Yet these communities also share

similarities, including a troubled history of land rights and jurisdictional violations by corporations and the Canadian government, as well as impediments to realizing self-determination and political representation. However, a landmark ruling in 2014 set a new precedent for indigenous land claims and demonstrated the ability of indigenous communities to successfully defend their traditional land titles against state and private interests. On 26 June, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled on the case, recognizing the title of the Tsilhqot'in Nation over approximately 1,700 square km of land south-west of Williams Lake, British Columbia. Aboriginal title as defined by *Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia* (1997) requires an indigenous people to prove that land was occupied by them solely prior to sovereignty, something no group had successfully done until this most recent case. In doing so, the Tsilhqot'in Nation proved that the British Columbia provincial government breached their duties to consult them 20 years ago prior to issuing logging licences on Tsilhqot'in Nation traditional lands.

The ruling therefore has wide implications for future development projects planned by the Canadian government over the next decade, amounting to C$650 billion of investment in mining, forestry, gas and oil projects, many of them to be undertaken on traditional indigenous lands. In particular, the creation or extensions of pipelines from the oil sands of Alberta to other areas within Canada or onwards into the United States have been strongly opposed by indigenous communities. While the extension of the Keystone XL pipeline was hotly debated and protested against in the United States, other pipelines such as Enbridge's proposed C$7 billion Northern Gateway pipeline, which would carry oil from Alberta to the coast of British Columbia, has been publicly opposed by First Nations since 2010. In the summer of 2014 several First Nations from British Columbia launched as many as nine legal challenges trying to block the pipeline and by September the legal case lodged by Gitxaala Nation became the first approved for hearing by the Federal Court of Appeal. As of January 2015, a total of 19 court challenges had been filed against the pipeline by various First Nations.

Despite these successes, significant political divisions led to the sudden resignation of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, Shawn Atleo, on 2 May. His resignation came during a period of discord within the AFN over the federal government's proposed First Nation Education Bill, C-33, which Atleo supported. The bill was announced by the government in February 2014 with a promised C$1.9 billion in new funding for indigenous education to support reforms aimed at raising the 40 per cent high school graduation rate among First Nations on reserves. However, there was significant opposition to the bill for a number of reasons, including a lack of control of curriculum development by First Nations themselves, as well as hostility among many First Nation chiefs towards the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In May the federal government dropped the proposed bill, citing a lack of support among AFN leadership. In the months that followed three chiefs, Ghislain Picard, Leon Jourdain and Perry Bellegarde, vied to be elected the next AFN National Chief.

While Perry Bellegarde was elected on 9 December, concerns were raised over the absence of women candidates for the leadership role, as well as the organization's ineffectual lobbying of the federal government to address many ongoing issues, including legal investigations into the disappearance and murder of indigenous women. Though in February 2014 Amnesty International released a statement outlining the critical need not only for a government inquiry, but also a National Action Plan to address the severe violence faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and girls in Canada, no steps were taken by the government during the year to do so.

For Canada's Afro-descendant population, 2014 was also distinguished by attempts at education reform. The first Africentric programme at a public Canadian high school was inaugurated during the 2013/14 academic year, with a class of 19 first-year high school students at east Toronto's Winston Churchill Collegiate. The programme was initiated amid controversy, with the initially proposed pilot school, Oakwood Collegiate, rejecting it due to an outcry from teachers, students and parents

over concerns about segregation and creating divisions among pupils. Despite this, by February 2014 the Africentric programme at Winston Churchill Collegiate was proving successful. The programme seeks to lower the 40 per cent high school drop-out rate among Toronto's Afro-descendant youth by providing core subjects that draw on African and Caribbean culture and history, and is strongly attuned to the skill levels of individual students.

Among Canada's religious minorities, and specifically the country's Muslim population, 2014 saw some positive developments in terms of political recognition and freedom of religious expression. Naheed Nenshi became the first Muslim mayor of a major city not only in Canada but throughout North America when elected as mayor of Calgary in 2010; he was awarded the prestigious World Mayor prize by the City Mayors Foundation in February 2015. In addition, the proposed Quebec Charter of Secular Values, bill 60, introduced by the Conservative Parti Québécois (PQ) in November 2013, was dropped by the Liberals following the August 2014 elections when they won control of the Quebec parliamentarian government from the PQ. The bill had proposed banning government employees from wearing religious symbols at work. While it would have had implications for individuals of all religions, concerns were raised that it was specifically discriminatory against Muslim women who wear various forms of hijab. Yet despite this victory in defeating a bill that progressives denounced as racist and xenophobic, in January 2015, following the attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris, an SOM survey found that 59 per cent of Quebecers were in favour of reviving the Charter of Secular Values and efforts to pass the bill were reignited among the PQ.

While Canada boasts a land mass totalling nearly 10 million square kilometres, making it the largest country in the Americas by territory, and the second-largest in the world after Russia, a significant majority of that land is uninhabitable due to extreme climates. As a result, the majority of the population resides in a small proportion of the country and is overwhelmingly urban, with 81 per cent of the population living in metropolitan areas. The proportion is lower among indigenous peoples – as of 2011, 56 per cent of indigenous peoples were living in urban areas in Canada, a 7 per cent increase from 1996. For Canada's First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other indigenous peoples these factors not only affect the rates of violence among women and girls from these groups, but also the increasingly urban indigenous population's ability to access social services as well as quality education, employment and housing. Furthermore, urban indigenous peoples now make up the fastest growing section of Canadian society, predominantly residing in the cities of Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa-Gatineau, Montreal, Saskatoon and Regina.

Right: Imam Syed Soharwardy pauses while talking to his fellow Muslims during a service against extremism in Calgary, Alberta, 2014. *REUTERS/Todd Korol*

In Winnipeg, which is home to the largest number of urban indigenous peoples in Canada, the first Métis mayor, Brian Bowman, was elected in November 2014. His election was seen as an important advance in bridging the growing sense of separation between the indigenous and non-indigenous population. This rift was made clear by a Probe Research survey released in October 2014 that revealed that 75 per cent of Winnipeggers surveyed believed ethnic division was a serious issue within the city. The view was consistently held by people of different backgrounds, with 74 per cent of indigenous peoples and 75 per cent of non-indigenous peoples in agreement.

One exacerbating factor in this division is the disproportionate impact of violent crime on some urban indigenous communities, particularly in relation to gang membership in Winnipeg. However, this is precipitated by a number of factors which influence gang and violent crime involvement. For the First Nations, Inuit and Métis of Winnipeg and other urban centres, discrimination, poverty, cultural alienation, spatial segregation, sub-standard housing and decreased access to labour markets have helped push many indigenous youth towards gang affiliation. Yet it is critical to also recognize the gains that have been made by the indigenous

population: in Winnipeg, the indigenous middle class is growing rapidly, thanks in part to increased access to better education.

Nevertheless, the urban exclusion that drives many into violent gangs has also contributed to increased rates of violence inflicted against indigenous women, which is also strongly associated with their secondary status based on gender and their belonging to a marginalized community. During the year, indigenous community groups were instrumental in increasing awareness about the high numbers of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, as part of the Idle No More movement. This was thanks in part to the efforts of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NAWC) as well as the release of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report in May 2014 which cited 1,017 homicides and 164 missing persons cases of indigenous women and girls between 1980 and 2012. Rights groups such as Amnesty International have also questioned the accuracy of available police statistics and believe the true figures may be much higher. What is certain is that indigenous women are disproportionately targeted. According to some estimates, for example, indigenous women aged between 25 and 44 are five times more likely to die from violence than Canadian women of other ethnicities in the same age group.

In March 2014, prior to the release of the RCMP report, the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women presented their own report, *Invisible Women: A Call to Action*, during the 41st Parliament, Second Session. The report uncovered a number of significant yet varied factors contributing to the epidemic of disappearances and murders of indigenous women and girls, with one of the most defining being the deprivation, poor living conditions and discrimination experienced by many indigenous people on a routine basis. The report also revealed that 70 per cent of disappearances and 60 per cent of murders, according to available police statistics, occurred in urban areas.

While the prevalence of disappearances and murders of indigenous women and girls over the past 30 years was a focal point of public dialogue and local-level action in 2014, for most of the years prior there had been widespread public indifference. Indigenous peoples and women's rights groups, including the NAWC, have advocated for years with little success for

improved prevention initiatives. However, public apathy has begun to shift and over the last few years a number of individuals, women's groups and indigenous rights organizations have worked tirelessly to reduce violence against indigenous women and girls.

It was their efforts that helped ensure the murder of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine in August, as well as the sexual assault and attempted murder of 16-year-old Rinelle Harper in November, both in Winnipeg, did not go unnoticed. Multi-ethnic vigils were held and groups urged local officials to take action. As a result, the Police Service's Community Relations Unit met with leaders of five of the seven First Nations that fall under Treaty 1 to discuss the role indigenous men play in violence against women, while also identifying indigenous leaders who will stand up against gangs. On a broader level, Leah Gazan, the president of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, started the 'We Care' movement to raise awareness of violence against indigenous women among all Winnipeggers. Nevertheless, although local-level initiatives assisted in initiating dialogues and plans of action to address the root causes of the violence in Winnipeg and throughout Canada, the national-level response from the Harper government was dismissive of the social factors at play. Instead, the prime minister negated the findings of several federal, provincial and community studies by stating that this issue was not a 'sociological phenomenon' and needed to be addressed through crime-prevention tactics. In early 2015, however, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women released a report, supported by a statement from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), that found Canada's lack of action constituted a 'grave rights violation' against indigenous women and girls.

United States

In the first half of the year the early effects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which seeks to expand access to affordable and quality health insurance, began to be felt across the United States. Previously uninsured and poor populations – disproportionately represented by minorities of various ethnic backgrounds – were

Right: Demonstrators protest the shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown was shot by a police officer in August 2014, sparking sometimes violent protests. *Panos/Hossein Fatemi*

especially targeted for enrolment. In California and Connecticut new methods were employed during the second open enrolment period for health insurance coverage under the ACA at the end of 2014 to reach out to Latinos and African Americans, particularly young men in urban areas. In light of this a new strategy was initiated, using community newspapers and local media to advertise the benefits of signing up for coverage through the ACA that would more readily access Latino and African American men in urban centres. By the end of the year, the proportion of the country's uninsured population had fallen from 18 per cent in 2010, when the ACA was signed into law, to 13.4 per cent.

But while a majority of states expanded health care coverage to this demographic through Medicaid as part of their implementation of the Act, 16 states refused to do so, impeding access to health insurance for those most in need of coverage. Among them was Texas, where a highly restrictive anti-abortion law that took effect on 1 September has forced many of the state's abortion clinics to close. By the end of the year, only one continued to operate south of San Antonio. This specifically hinders Latina women, who represent a large percentage of those living along the Texas–Mexico border, from accessing sexual and reproductive health care.

Indigenous land rights continued to be threatened by major development projects, specifically linked to the extractive and fossil fuel industries. Throughout 2014 indigenous groups in the United States, including the Ponca Nation and Oglala Lakota, led land rights movements in opposition to a bill that would allow the expansion of the Keystone XL pipeline connecting the oil sands in Alberta, Canada to Steele City, Nebraska. The bill was subsequently vetoed by President Barack Obama in February 2015.

A surge of unaccompanied minors from Mexico and Central America arriving in the US in spring 2014 set off heated debates surrounding

the country's immigration policy, including the detention of children. One positive milestone for many of the country's immigrants was Obama's announcement at the end of the year of an executive action which would potentially provide amnesty for nearly 4.9 million undocumented migrants. The Board of Immigration Appeals also made a watershed ruling that 'married women in Guatemala who are unable to leave their relationships' constitute a unique social group who may apply for asylum. Both measures attracted strong resistance, and at the beginning of 2015 the Amnesty Bill was put in jeopardy as Republicans in the House of Representatives sought out means by which to cut the required funding to the Department of Homeland Security.

Yet the event that arguably had the greatest implications for minority rights during the year, sparking protests and allegations of institutionalized racism in the country's police force, was the shooting death of Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old African American, by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri on 9 August. Although witness testimony is conflicting, Brown was described by some as holding his hands up while he was shot repeatedly. In the ensuing weeks, the streets of Ferguson were filled with demonstrators who believed that Brown's death reflected widespread racial prejudice among law enforcement personnel. Though there were incidents of looting and arson of local businesses, the response by police was also criticized as excessive. Within a week a state of emergency was declared in the suburb and a midnight curfew was enforced.

The demonstrations and violence in Ferguson led to ongoing discussions about ethnic profiling and the incidence of homicide by police while on duty in the United States. This is a particular problem in its cities, where ethnic minorities are often concentrated – in 22 of the country's 100 largest urban areas, they now make up a majority of the population – as evidenced by statistics on police stops and street interrogations in New York City. Data collected by the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) since 2002 on the use of 'stop-and-frisk' by the New York Police Department (NYPD) shows that, of those individuals engaged by the NYPD officers, 54 per cent were African American despite them making up just 25.5 per cent of the city's population. Nearly 9 out of 10 of those targeted were completely innocent, a fact corroborated by the

NYPD's own reports.

Research published during the year, drawing on data between 2010 and 2012, revealed that African American men and boys are 21 times more likely to be killed by on-duty police officers than their non-Latino white counterparts. In 2014 some of these individuals included Akai Gurley, Ezell Ford and Rumain Brisbon, though one of the most high-profile incidents was the killing of 43-year-old Eric Garner by an NYPD officer on 17 July in Staten Island, New York. The arrest and fatal choking of Garner, who was unarmed, were captured on video and quickly spread across the internet. In the video Garner can be heard pleading, 'I can't breathe' 11 times. This plea, along with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, soon became rallying cries of the anti-police brutality and racial equality movements in the United States. Popular outrage was further inflamed by grand jury rulings towards the end of the year that closed criminal proceedings against both officers involved in the Brown and Garner killings, triggering further protests in cities across the country.

However, though protests during the year focused almost exclusively on incidents of police brutality against the African American population, in recent years indigenous people have been killed by law enforcement at nearly the same rate as African Americans. While garnering little to no media attention, indigenous groups utilized the hashtag #NativeLivesMatter to galvanize support within their community and to highlight the disproportionate levels of police brutality experienced by some of the 5.2 million indigenous people in the country. As is the case with African Americans, these incidents occur against a broader backdrop of social disenfranchisement: 27 per cent of indigenous people live below the poverty line nationwide, compared to a national average of 14.3 per cent, and with more than 70 per cent of indigenous people now residing in urban areas these high poverty rates are now experienced significantly within metropolitan settings. Furthermore, indigenous people living in urban areas also encounter increased impediments to accessing education, employment and health care: for instance, only about 1 per cent of spending by the Indian Health Service is allotted to urban programmes. While these issues intersect with some of the inequalities experienced by other ethnic minorities in urban areas, indigenous peoples have experienced discrimination where other ethnic minorities have found opportunities, particularly in relation to accessing urban labour markets.

One contributing factor to the tensions that arise in urban areas between minority or indigenous communities and law enforcement agencies is the involvement of some members in violent crime, including gang membership. However, this occurs among the complexities of social, political and economic exclusion that fuel criminal behaviour – factors that are often overlooked in public discussions of urban violence within minority communities. The simplistic and discriminatory representation of these issues was reflected in comments by former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who stated in an interview in the wake of Ferguson that '93 per cent of blacks are killed by other blacks' and argued that attention should be focused on reducing crime within African American communities rather than the killing of Brown by a white police officer, which Giuliani regarded as 'the significant exception'.

While Giuliani's comments were criticized by many commentators as harmfully reductive and misleading, evidence suggests that crime within African American communities is disproportionately high, with African Americans being four times more likely to die from homicide compared to the national average. However, in addressing urban violence it is not useful or effective to reinforce the inaccurate notion that members of minority communities form the overwhelming majority of perpetrators. New research on gang membership is evidence of this. A joint report from the US Department of Justice (DoJ) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reveals that the use of law enforcement data creates incorrect perceptions about the ethnic make-up of gangs. The National Gang Center relies heavily on this data set and in doing so reports that 84 per cent of gang members belong to ethnic minorities. However, when these statistics are combined with self-reporting studies, the demographic of gang membership changes considerably. This is

the case in the evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education Training (GREAT) programme, which indicates that nationally about 25 per cent of gang members are non-Latino whites. The report further notes that the factors driving gang membership should not be simplified in these terms: 'most risk factors cut across racial and ethnic lines, including the negative consequences associated with poverty, immigration, discrimination and social isolation'.

The protests against the killings of Brown and Garner were also demonstrations against segregation in the cities of the United States. Demonstrators filled the country's metropolitan freeways as a means to draw attention to the historical role they have played in dividing urban populations, dating back to 1956 when Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act. This facilitated the expansion of suburban, mostly white and middle-class neighbourhoods and assisted in the overall economic growth of the United States. However, the ramifications within urban areas are still felt today, as freeways frequently divided them along ethnic lines, isolating majority from minority communities. Urban infrastructure, along with other development projects and subsequent housing schemes, helped establish spatial segregation. Other factors include the movement of non-Latino white households out of integrated neighbourhoods, self-segregation by minority communities and, more recently, discriminatory gentrification projects in minority neighbourhoods.

Decades of research has tried to determine to what extent spatial segregation impacts on minorities in urban areas and issues such as educational attainment, social isolation, housing, poverty and health. In Chicago, a 2012 joint report from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the Center on Human Needs at Virginia Commonwealth University found that ethnic segregation in the city's neighbourhoods caused as much as a 33-year difference in life expectancy between non-Latino white residents and certain minorities. However, other recent studies based in Chicago and elsewhere have suggested that African American and other non-Latino minorities were more likely to report poorer health while living in predominantly non-Latino white neighbourhoods compared to those living in segregated minority neighbourhoods. One rationale given for this, substantiated by past studies, is that social isolation of minorities living within non-Latino white neighbourhoods leads to higher incidence of poor health.

Another issue that is especially acute within urban areas is educational inequality, with new evidence demonstrating continued school segregation, particularly within the country's inner cities. A report from the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights from March 2014 identifies that African American and Latino students on average have less access to rigorous educational programmes and are more frequently taught by lower-paid teachers with less experience Furthermore, African American students are four times as likely and Latino students are twice as likely as non-Latino white students to attend schools where one out five teachers do not meet all state teaching requirements. The same Department of Education report found that ethnic minorities are more likely to be suspended or expelled overall, and that African American students are three times as likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their white peers. Though the reasons for the increasing segregation within the schooling system are diverse, there are clear indications that school zoning policies favour affluent neighbourhoods, leaving minority students from poor inner-city areas disadvantaged and forced to attend under-resourced schools. The movement towards privately funded charter schools is also exacerbating unequal access to quality education among the country's youth.

Sub-standard education for poor students attending schools in less affluent neighbourhoods, as is the case for many minority children, has a lifetime effect on their future economic well-being. Furthermore, limited educational opportunities for minority students have been associated with a phenomenon known as the 'school-to-prison pipeline', particularly as the expansion of police officers inside schools has led to increased contact with the criminal justice system. Infractions which were previously dealt with by teachers and school administrators now lead to fines and even incarceration in juvenile facilities. This experience has long-term

ramifications, as children and adolescents sent to juvenile facilities are 37 times more likely to be arrested again as adults. Students with criminal records are further marginalized in some school districts through the use of alternative schools, which segregate them from the general student population. The discrimination faced by African American and other ethnic minorities within the school system is borne out in their disproportionate incarceration rates in the country's prisons, with African Americans accounting for 41 per cent of those imprisoned despite making up just 13 per cent of the national population.

Housing in urban areas of the United States has played a long-standing and important role in establishing and maintaining segregation. The 1937 United States Housing Act (USHA) led to large-scale public housing projects nationwide, which accelerated in the country's urban centres in the 1950s and 1960s. Ethnic minorities have historically been over-represented among those in public housing within city centres. The USHA housing scheme has also been associated with high crime rates and perpetuating cycles of poverty. By the 1990s a number of major cities, including Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia and New Orleans, began tearing down public housing units, replacing them with mixed-income housing. The full impact of this shift in urban housing is not yet known, and controversy remains over whether it is helping to alleviate segregation or simply pricing low-income and working-class families out of their neighbourhoods.

In the years prior to the recent housing crisis in the United States, a shift in the urban demographic took place as African Americans started moving to the suburbs – a product of the demolition of public housing but also a developing African American middle class. During this period, owning a home became a reality for more and more minorities, with home ownership among African Americans and Latinos peaking in 2006 at the beginning of the recession. However, home ownership throughout the country began to stall in 2007 and dropped off steadily in 2008 when the housing market crashed. Since then, an increasing amount of evidence has shown that minorities were exceptionally hard hit. This was due to a number of factors, including predatory lending tactics by banks that saw African Americans and Latinos taking out a disproportionate number of risky subprime mortgages and high-cost loans. This led to massive foreclosures on homes owned by minorities, with certain urban areas, such as Detroit and Atlanta, particularly devastated.

However, throughout 2014 the effects of the recession continued to subside. In December unemployment declined to its lowest rate since mid-2008, the housing market was bouncing back and more people in the United States were once again buying homes. Yet the economic recovery did not benefit everyone equally, as African Americans and Latinos continued to face high rates of unemployment and under-employment, as well as foreclosures and discrimination in accessing home loans. One factor in this unequal recovery is that minorities experienced significantly greater losses as a result of the recession: Federal Reserve Data shows that from 2010 to 2013 the median income of minority households fell 9 per cent, compared to 1 per cent for non-Latino whites. Home ownership among minorities during that same period fell from 50.6 per cent to 47.4 per cent, but among non-Latino whites the period saw a reduction from 75.3 per cent to 73.9 per cent. The decline in home ownership also disproportionately harmed minorities, particularly African Americans. One reason is that financial assets, such as stocks and bonds, have recovered in value quicker than housing, which non-Latino white households are more likely to own through retirement accounts compared to minority households. Therefore, during the foreclosure crisis when African Americans and Latinos lost their homes they were also frequently losing their main asset and source of savings.

Furthermore, in 2014 a new trend in the housing market emerged that is unequally harming certain minority groups, particularly in urban areas most affected by the recession. Home equity firms are buying up large numbers of foreclosed houses in these areas and then renting them back out, frequently to African Americans and Latinos who lost their homes during the crisis. This has, in part, led to what was described by Housing Secretary Shaun

Case study *by Mariah Grant*

Detroit – rebuilding the city from the bottom up

Throughout the recent recession in the United States, the city of Detroit, Michigan was seen as a cautionary tale of economic boom and bust within the country's urban centres. Nicknamed Motor City, USA, Detroit was the thriving epicentre of the automobile industry from its early days in the 1900s to the 1950s, when the city boasted 296,000 manufacturing jobs. However, by the end of the 1950s the automobile industry began a slow decline, culminating in the 2009 bankruptcy of auto-giants Chrysler and General Motors. With the fall of the industry, among other factors, came the economic decline of the city itself. On 18 July 2013, a bankruptcy petition was formally filed on behalf of Detroit.

During this period of industrial and economic decline, the population also drastically decreased, dropping 25 per cent between 2000 and 2010 alone. Yet mass migration from the city did not happen equally among Detroit's residents. The make-up of the city is unlike that found in the country as a whole as ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, make up the overwhelming majority of Detroit's population. This has become even more evident in the wake of the recession as a disproportionate number of the city's white residents have left: in the meantime, the share of ethnic minorities, particularly Latinos, has continued to increase.

The most visible effects of Detroit's decline have been pored over repeatedly in media reports across the world, including the dereliction of its housing stock, the shutting off of water supplies to certain areas and the bulldozing of entire neighbourhoods. What attracts less attention is the array of community-led initiatives under way to revitalize the economy and rebuild local areas. However, this process has been slow and far from easy as old barriers, particularly racial discrimination, persist.

For Lauren Hood, a life-long resident of Detroit and Community Engagement Manager at Loveland Technology, a company working on mapping blight in the city and making such data widely accessible, moving forward starts with looking back. 'When people get to Detroit and they want to work on revitalization efforts', she says:

'they don't take into account the prior racial history – Detroit has always been one of the most segregated cities. People need to be talking about racism and inequity before they can start to take different ideas back to the places where they work and start to do things differently.'

To help facilitate these dialogues, Hood runs a racial equity training programme to encourage 'some critical thinking', as she puts it.

'There's so much out there about Detroit that people just read it and accept it on face value, but people need to be asking questions and thinking about things and not just accepting it because they heard it five different times. People need to do more research, and what I'm always hoping for is people leave [the trainings] with more questions.'

Kirk Mayes, another life-long Detroiter and the CEO of Forgotten Harvest, a non-profit formed in 1990 to relieve hunger and prevent nutritious food waste in the Detroit metropolitan area, emphasizes the role that community programmes can also play in reducing divisions. In his years working on various economic and social development projects, including Forgotten Harvest, he has learned that:

'no matter what color we are, no matter what we believe, love looks a lot the same, fear looks a lot the same, who you care about as far as parents and kids, it looks a lot the same. We focus so much on our differences because our differences are what we basically get thrown in front of our face every day for whatever reason and not enough about our very basic similarities as human beings'.

According to Mayes, Forgotten Harvest plays an important role in breaking down barriers and connecting people of different backgrounds through their community volunteer opportunities within their food processing warehouse and community farm. Mayes felt that the organization, 'is contributing to helping our region heal and providing a platform for people around us to contribute to people who are in the most need'. And he emphasizes the positive energy that communities are now creating themselves.

'Truly, in order to understand what's happening in Detroit and to get a feel for the vibe of the revitalization, that is very palpable and tangible here – there is a part of the experience that you just have to feel and witness for yourself.'

This is not to say that Detroit does not have its problems, including the painful physical realities of a city shrinking rapidly from its former size. 'We have a lot of vacant houses,' says Rico Razo, District 6 manager at the office of Mayor Mike Duggan. This can create serious issues for neighbours as abandoned houses, besides their demoralizing effects, can have health and crime implications. To address the issue, a volunteer group called 'Operation Detroit Blight Fight' was set up. Razo highlighted that within his district, which has the highest Hispanic population, the team would spend every Sunday helping seniors with clean-up and boarding up unoccupied houses. At present the group has 100 members and an official kick-off was launched on 31 March 2015 in commemoration of César Chávez Day.

Razo recognizes that Detroit's divisions have not gone away. 'Some of the areas that may not have demolition dollars, they don't see houses coming down in their neighbourhoods, they don't see revitalization happening, they're still saying we have two cities.' Nevertheless, though aware of the challenges ahead, he remains cautiously optimistic about the future. ■

Left: Derelict buildings currently being redeveloped by a non-profit organization called Face the Station, who are working to renew the area opposite Michigan Central Station, Detroit, 2014. *S. J. Carey*

Donovan as 'the worst rental affordability crisis that this country has ever known'. In Los Angeles, for example, where Latinos make up 48.3 per cent of the city's population, residents are now experiencing the highest rent to income ratio of any city in the country. Yet within certain neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, community-led initiatives are working to provide affordable housing as well as social services. The Esperanza Community Housing Corporation (Esperanza) is one such initiative. Established in 1989 to respond to development projects that threatened destruction of homes within the Figueroa Corridor neighbourhood, where 70 per cent of residents are Latino with the rest a mix of African Americans, Asians and non-Latino whites, the organization began providing affordable housing, health, arts, education and economic development programmes. By the end of 2014 Esperanza had completed nine affordable housing developments totalling 165 units, and had begun the Mercado La Paloma community revitalization and entrepreneurship project, and initiated the Semillas de Esperanza ('Seeds of Hope') community garden, all the while continuing to provide a number of services to the local community.

Central America

Janet Oropeza Eng

Throughout 2014, the situation for Central America's minorities and indigenous peoples continued to be characterized by dispossession of land, targeted violence and other rights violations by criminal gangs, paramilitary groups and security forces. In many cases, these incidents are associated with state-sponsored development projects, agri-business and natural resource exploitation, enabled by limited land rights and widespread impunity for the perpetrators of these abuses. As a result, thousands of people belonging to indigenous and Afro-descendant communities were displaced during the year across the region.

Insecurity, poverty and dispossession of communal land have all contributed to migration, often forced, to urban areas among these groups. While cities potentially offer the possibility of employment, basic services and other benefits, in practice discrimination and violence are frequently recreated in urban areas – meaning that indigenous and minority residents continue to struggle with similar issues of poverty and marginalization.

Guatemala

Guatemala had nearly 16 million inhabitants in 2014. According to official statistics, approximately 40 per cent are indigenous; however, according to indigenous peoples' representatives, the true figure is closer to 60 per cent. The indigenous community in Guatemala comprises 22 different peoples, including K'iche', Kaqchikel, Mam, Q'eqchi' and Matan, while the country also has a small community of Garifuna people, amounting to less than 1 per cent of the population. This makes Guatemala a rich and culturally diverse country.

During 2014, ongoing aggression against human rights defenders by security forces or paramilitary groups persisted. From January to September 2014, 60 attacks against indigenous and environmental activists defending indigenous lands were reported. The deployment of 20,000 military throughout the country to oversee public security in 2014 is expected to exacerbate this volatile situation. The extractive industry model promoted by the Guatemalan government and the construction of large-scale development projects on indigenous lands without community consent has been a source of ongoing disputes with resistance movements. These conflicts are exacerbated by the fact that the existing legal mechanisms available for indigenous communities seeking to defend their rights to land and to free, prior, and informed consent are not effective tools for this purpose.

For example, two large-scale development projects involving a hydroelectric scheme in Margaritas Copón and a dam in Santa Rita were carried out by the government in 2014, despite the opposition of Q'eqchi' Mayan people. In the first case, 15,000 Q'eqchi' Mayans were forcibly evicted, even though they voted against

Above: Mayan children in San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala, 2014. *Gary Fikes*

the construction of it in a binding referendum. In the second case, indigenous protests against the project were violently repressed in August resulting in three Q'eqchi' Mayan casualties, in addition to a previous fatality and many people injured during an earlier attack in April.

Indigenous farmers have also been involved in increasing conflict over the possession of their lands. In 2013, the Ministry for Agrarian Issues reported that nearly 60 per cent of the land conflicts' plaintiffs were indigenous farmers.

The justice system and the rule of law also encountered important setbacks during 2014. Former president Efraín Ríos Mont's May 2013 conviction for the genocide committed during the civil war, including the deaths of more than 1,700 Ixil Mayans, the displacement of another 29,000 and numerous other rights abuses, did not make any progress. A congressional resolution passed in May denying that acts of genocide had occurred during the civil war decreased victims' chances of achieving the justice process which they have long demanded.

The removal by the Constitutional Court of Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz the same month, based on the argument that her term was legally already over, was interpreted by many as a deliberate effort to undermine ongoing reforms to the justice system as she had prosecuted a number of perpetrators and tried to end impunity in Guatemala.

The systematic marginalization of indigenous communities from the country's political, social and economic life, despite representing a large proportion of the population, continues with no meaningful efforts by the government to overcome it. The two government agencies in charge of preventing and addressing ethnic discrimination, namely the Indigenous Women's Public Defender Office and the Presidential Commission against Racism and Discrimination, lack the financial and human resources to perform their duties. In July, indigenous community groups protested throughout the country to raise awareness about the discrimination that indigenous peoples face.

During 2014, women in Guatemala continued

to experience disproportionate levels of violence and marginalization, despite serious reforms to improve laws on equality and violence prevention. Sexual violence, maternal mortality and femicide – Guatemala has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world – remain ongoing issues, along with political representation: as of 2012, less than 10 per cent of elected legislators –15in all – were indigenous and, of these, only four were indigenous women.

During 2014 there were also some positive developments for minority and indigenous communities. These included the investigation and prosecution of a number of perpetrators, resulting from a collaborative effort on the part of the United Nations International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the Attorney General's Office. In June, two former soldiers were arrested in a case concerning the sexual assaults of 15 Q'eqchi' Mayan women in 1982 in Zarco, followed by the arrest shortly afterwards of three former policemen in relation to the 1990 murder of Myrna Mack, an anthropologist working on and defending indigenous peoples' rights.

There was also progress regarding the redress of thousands of Maya Achi indigenous people and their family members who were either displaced or massacred over the construction of the Chixoy dam in the 1980s. Following an Act passed in 2014 by the US Congress that denied financial aid to Guatemala unless it implemented reparations for the people affected by the dam, President Otto Pérez Molina publicly apologized to the victims and signed an agreement to execute a reparations plan for the affected indigenous communities. The plan has a budget of US$154 million and includes the construction of housing, infrastructure and other amenities for the affected communities, as well as land restitution. This case sets a historic precedent for redressing violations of indigenous peoples' rights over the past decades as well as ongoing land conflicts. Furthermore, in August a local court in Sipicapa ruled that mining permits and activities are illegal if local communities have not been given information and are not consulted. This ruling set legal precedents for indigenous movements upholding their land rights. The case involved a prospecting permit that was issued without prior consultation to Entre Mares de Guatemala S.A., a subsidiary of Canadian mining company Goldcorp Inc.

Guatemala's long civil war, ongoing conflicts related to large-scale development or extractive projects and extreme rural poverty have all contributed to the migration of indigenous people from rural to urban areas, mostly to Guatemala City. This migration has added pressure to a metropolitan area that has historically lacked proper planning policies, with a large proportion – over 40 per cent – of the city's population living in slums or shanty towns. Following this pattern, indigenous people migrating to Guatemala City and other urban areas have established or settled in informal and unplanned urban spaces or shanty towns that lack proper basic public services, such as water and health care, and are often located in dangerous or inaccessible areas.

Indigenous people in Guatemala's urban areas experience high levels of discrimination and exclusion based on their ethnic background, dress and language. Since many do not speak Spanish and wear their traditional clothes, they are marginalized from the formal labour market, limiting their opportunities to access social security and a better income. For example, according to one estimate, 80 per cent of maids working in private homes are indigenous. Because of their concentration in such low-paid jobs, indigenous families in Guatemala's urban areas mobilize all their members, including children, to work.

Though indigenous peoples are under-represented and excluded from political life and decision making across the country, despite representing at least 40 per cent of the population, they do typically have more representation in local government. Nevertheless, the major political parties and local authorities continue to exclude indigenous peoples from their structures and do not uphold their demands and rights. The only existing indigenous political party, Winaq, usually wins only around 3.5 per cent of the vote and has limited financial resources.

Guatemala's urban areas continue to experience high levels of urban violence, which particularly affects indigenous peoples, especially indigenous

women. Urban violence has been shaped by a long-established pattern of gender violence against indigenous women that goes back to the Guatemalan civil war, when they were seen as 'trophies'. Currently, indigenous women are the most targeted victims of human rights violations.

Nonetheless, urban spaces can also provide greater opportunities for indigenous development. In this regard, a study found that human development among indigenous peoples is higher in Guatemala's urban areas than in rural areas. Since it is likely that many indigenous people who are forcibly displaced to urban areas become permanently settled in their new locations, as the government is not helping them secure their property nor resettle, inclusive urban planning policies that consider and consult indigenous communities are urgently required. This demand has come from indigenous people themselves. This was illustrated in 2014 when local Mayan communities in Guatemala City opposed the construction of a US$60 million Maya Museum of America, arguing that they had not been consulted about the plan and could be adversely affected as the proposed development would demolish a long-established Mayan arts and crafts market, hosting 55 small businesses.

Honduras

Honduras has reportedly had the highest murder rates in the world for the past several years, sustained by a widespread culture of impunity and human rights violations. Against a backdrop of violence and insecurity related to gangs, drug cartels and land grabs, many communities have been forcibly displaced. For example, in Mosquitia in north-eastern Honduras, according to reports during the year, five indigenous communities have been forced to abandon some or all of their territories after they were appropriated by drug traffickers. Clandestine landing strips – surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed men – have been a particular problem as they block community access to traditional lands and bring gang violence to previously remote areas.

The state's response to this upsurge in violence has focused on increasing militarization, an approach that has contributed to the deteriorating situation in the country. In this context, human rights organizations and the Ombudsman Office have expressed concern about a military police force deployed in 2014 to perform security duties. The judiciary is a largely ineffective channel for accessing justice and recent legislative reforms have further undermined its independence. In 2014, a case involving the killing of murdered four unarmed indigenous Miskito people, two of them pregnant women, during an operation against drug traffickers, was dismissed. The families of the victims appealed the ruling. Violence against women is also widespread, with an estimated 453 women reported to have been killed between January and November 2014.

Journalists and human rights defenders continue to be intimidated or murdered without adequate investigations by police and judiciary. Honduras was recently described in a report by the NGO Global Witness as the most dangerous country in the world to be an environmental activist, with 101 deaths between 2010 and 2014. Most of these victims were indigenous and minority representatives defending their lands against the construction of large-scale development projects, extractive industries or agri-businesses. Examples include opposition to the Agua Zarca hydro-dam on the Gualcarque River; anti-mining resistance in northern Honduras by Tolupán leaders; and the Bajo Aguán movement conflict over palm oil industries. In all these cases, activists have been terrorized or murdered, often with the complicity of security forces.

Nevertheless, there were some positive developments during the year. In August, José Arnulfo Jiménez, a former member of the military who committed abuses against the press and civilians during the coup d'état in 2009, was sentenced to five years in prison. Congress also discussed draft legislation to protect human rights defenders, environmentalists, journalists and other groups from intimidation and violence.

Around 40 per cent of indigenous peoples and Afro-Hondurans are based in urban areas, significantly lower than the proportion (60 per cent) of Latinos and *mestizos* (mixed ethnicity). Indigenous peoples are spread across different regions of the country, while Afro-Hondurans are located, for the most part, along the Atlantic

Case study *by Kara Chiuchiarelli*

The Garifuna's battle to protect their land from urban development in Honduras' 'Banana Coast'

Land rights are an ongoing struggle for Honduras' Garifuna community, who for decades have faced forced eviction and the sale of titled communal lands as their territory has been appropriated for mining, oil extraction and palm oil cultivation. But communities are now being displaced to secure access to another resource – their pristine coastline. 'There is now a process of expulsion of our people from Honduras,' according to one local Garifuna community member. 'From tourism to extraction megaprojects, the initiatives have been imposed without making the necessary consultations. "Model cities" are the latest forms of dispossession that affect us.'

In the early 2000s, the national Honduran government declared a plan to develop a resort in Trujillo, along the lines of Cancún in Mexico, despite the fact that those beaches had been granted as title lands to the Garifuna a century before. This plan has led Canadian developers to buy up land – including land titled to the Garifuna people – in Trujillo for vacation homes and a cruise ship port called 'Banana Coast', themed around what the developer has described as the 'glory days' of the region's banana trade in the first half of the twentieth century. This was a period when foreign industries appropriated vast tracts of Honduras land and established considerable control over the area, with little regard for the wishes, traditions and cultures of the local people.

Now the community is having to defend its land against development plans by the Honduran government.

Today, tourism development seems likely to have similar effects. Efforts to urbanize Trujillo and its surrounding coastal communities threaten the Garifuna's traditional lifestyle, cultural heritage and identity as a people. Though the unique value of Garifuna culture is widely recognized – in 2001, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Garifuna culture one of nineteen Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity – the community is already struggling to preserve its rich heritage in the face of entrenched poverty and discrimination.

The community now faces a range of other challenges, including climate change, environmental vulnerability and HIV/AIDS. While Garifuna community members need greater access to employment and other opportunities, these are unlikely to be realized if development is simply imposed on their territory without their consultation or consent. In this context, empowering local Garifuna is an essential step in their fight to protect their ancestral territory from a form of urbanization that largely excludes them. ■

coast. Both groups, besides facing entrenched discrimination and limited access to essential services, have struggled to defend their lands in a context where land tenure ownership has not been fully resolved: only about 10 per cent of indigenous peoples, for example, have a government-accredited land title. Violence, land grabbing and deep poverty in rural areas has forced indigenous peoples to migrate from the countryside to cities in search of security and employment.

Migration has posed considerable challenges to Honduran cities, which lack adequate planning policies or infrastructure to serve this growing population. As a result, many minority and indigenous migrants have settled in shanty towns or urban belts that lack transportation, public security or basic services. For example, there are more than 400 informal settlements located around the capital, Tegucigalpa, in earthquake-prone areas of the city. Minority and indigenous communities in Honduran cities continue to face ethnic discrimination, poverty and marginalization. In major centres such as Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula, a culture of national unity has long been promoted based on *mestizo* values – another factor promoting discrimination, as it leaves little room for minority and indigenous expression. Indigenous and Afro-Honduran migrants also struggle to access urban labour markets due to discrimination, with many ending up in low-paid or informal employment. An added difficulty is that Honduran cities have among the highest rates of urban violence in the world, exacerbated by rapid urban growth: San Pedro Sula was recently ranked as the most violent city worldwide outside a conflict zone. Due to their marginalization, minority and indigenous urban residents, particularly women, are highly vulnerable.

Nonetheless, living in urban areas can offer opportunities for marginalized groups to access services and other benefits. For example, in terms of education, a 2011 National Survey of the Perception on Human Development revealed that indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants had higher literacy levels in cities: 94 per cent of those in urban areas are able to read and write, with an average of 8.5 years of schooling, compared to 79 per cent and 4.3 years in rural areas.

South America

Alfredo Gutierrez Carrizo and Carolyn Stephens

Ahead of the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) in New York in September 2014, the Indigenous Forum of Aba Yala – a collection of indigenous organizations from different countries across South America and neighbouring areas – issued a declaration highlighting the continued discrimination faced by indigenous communities and, in particular, the destructive impacts of mining, forestry and other industries on their development. Among other demands, the Aba Yala Declaration called for 'the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the evaluation of the post-2015 agenda, based on self-determination, autonomy and territoriality, free, prior and informed consent, spirituality, interculturality, women and youth, reciprocity and solidarity'. The outcome document of the WCIP, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly, included a reaffirmation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the principle of free, prior and informed consent. The outcome document went on to list a series of commitments to strengthen the position of indigenous peoples, including the development of disaggregated and holistic data on indigenous well-being 'to address the situation and needs of indigenous peoples and individuals, in particular older persons, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities'.These texts represent increased recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples internationally as well as in the region. While 1 January 2015 also marked the launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent, many Afro-Latin communities still struggle to achieve the same level of acknowledgement, particularly as they have often been invisible in official data sources. In Chile, for example, Afro-Chileans were not included as a separate ethnicity on national censuses and

other surveys until 2014, when the government launched the first ever study on their community – an important milestone, given that their efforts to be included in the 2012 census had been unsuccessful.

Both indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, however, share similar challenges of targeted violence, dispossession from communal lands and limited access to health, education and livelihood opportunities. To varying degrees these factors are driving displacement and migration across the region, particularly in Colombia, where ongoing conflict and insecurity have forcibly uprooted tens of thousands in 2014 alone. This mass displacement and migration in turn is driving increased urbanization, even from more remote communities.

In other cases, while they have not always received much coverage, indigenous and Afro-Latin communities have been based in urban areas for generations. Though many are resident in the region's megacities, capitals and other major centres, including many migrants in search of education and employment, a large proportion of the urban population is also based in smaller towns that act as a hub for isolated communities. These settlements may be predominantly inhabited by indigenous or Afro-Latin communities, often in relatively inaccessible locations such as Brazil's Amazonia region, with strong links to the surrounding rural hinterlands as inhabitants travel back and forth to access provisions and services.

Urbanization can improve the lives of indigenous and minority populations by providing them with better access to essential services such as education. Urban areas have even supported the strengthening of identity among these groups as their concentration in cities can provide opportunities for activism and political mobilization. Nevertheless, in practice their experience in cities is often characterized by poverty, violence and poor living conditions in low-income settlements. While gaining in terms of access to urban services, they also struggle to maintain their traditional cultures and languages in urban contexts. Sustainable and inclusive urban development, then, though often overlooked in general discussions about the region's indigenous peoples and minorities, could play a major role in improving the situation of these communities even in rural areas as the impacts of urbanization are increasingly felt even in remote parts of the region.

Argentina

Historically, Argentina had an extensive and diverse indigenous civilization. According to the 2010 census – though it was criticized at the time by some communities who believed that the minority and indigenous populations were under-represented in the final count – Argentina has a population of over 40 million people. The 2010 census counted a total of 955,032 people self-defining themselves as indigenous – forming 2.4 per cent of the national population. This was 355,000 more than the estimated number of self-identified indigenous produced in a special 2004 indigenous survey. This increase in self-identification reflects a change in attitudes towards indigeneity, particularly among urban young people, who are now more willing to self-identify as indigenous. There is also better understanding within Argentina of the country's strong indigenous roots. Despite the still low proportion of people self-defining themselves as indigenous, a 2014 DNA study of the Argentine population for the WCIP found that 56 per cent of Argentines have at least a measure of indigenous DNA.

A further 150,000 people in the 2010 census – the first to measure ethnic minorities as distinct groups – self-identified as Afro-Argentines, less than 1 per cent of the national population. This group has long been invisible in the country, but there is now an increasing willingness to self-identify and a renewed awareness of the community's rich heritage. Argentina's Afro-descendant community originated in the slave trade, a fact that has a bearing on their continued discrimination today. However, a UNESCO-sponsored programme, *Sitios de Memoria*, has been developing a series of sites linked to the slave route running through Argentina to Paraguay and Uruguay. This continues to play an important role in raising awareness about the legacy of slavery for the Afro-Argentine community among other Argentines and among an international audience. A *New York Times* article, published in September 2014, highlighted

Above: Qom man protests in Buenos Aires against alleged repression from the government, 2013. *Demotix/Lucas Simonazzi*

the vivid cultural life and commemorative value of sites like Capilla de los Negros, a chapel built by freed slaves in 1861.

Despite enjoying unique cultures and facing distinct challenges, both indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Argentina continue to struggle against deep-rooted discrimination. Yet there is also an increasing capacity to mobilize against injustices and rights abuses. In January 2015, for instance, the widely publicized death of a Qom child from malnutrition in a small town in Chaco prompted widespread outrage among indigenous communities across Argentina and a potential case against three ministers of the national government for failure of duty to the Qom community. Indigenous communities have also struggled to defend their land rights against increasing agro-industrial and extractive industries. The Mapuche people, for example, have repeatedly seen their territory encroached upon by oil and gas prospectors. However, throughout the year communities began fencing off their communal territories in response to the national government's auctioning of large tracts of land to foreign companies for oil fracking. Though exploration continued, this resistance successfully disrupted local operations in the short term and brought attention to the ongoing discrimination experienced by Mapuche and other indigenous peoples.

Though a large proportion of the country's wealth and resources is concentrated in urban areas such as the capital Buenos Aires, the deep levels of disadvantage experienced by urban-dwelling indigenous peoples have persisted. Yet Buenos Aires and other cities in Argentina have also served as centres for self-expression. In April 2014, ahead of Argentina's participation at the WCIP in September, a historical act took place in Buenos Aires: the President of Argentina inaugurated the exhibition *Salón de los Pueblos Originarios* in the national Government House. In April 2015, too, a crowd of indigenous women marched through the city centre to demand improved rights, participation and a bill of 'good living' for women in Argentina.

Case study *by Vanessa Mazzei*

Promoting indigenous participation in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra

Bolivia has some of the highest levels of poverty in South America, and it also stands out as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the region with the highest percentage of indigenous people in Latin America – an estimated 62 per cent of the population. Yet indigenous communities have nevertheless struggled historically to secure equality. In this regard, constitutional reforms in 2004 acknowledging the 'multi-ethnic and multicultural' nature of the republic therefore represented a milestone for the community, particularly its recognition of their right to full and effective political participation.

Helping with the implementation of these reforms has been the primary focus of organizations such as Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB). In recent years the government, while encouraging indigenous participation in civil society in rural areas, has to some extent overlooked the phenomenon of rising migration to cities. The department where this shortcoming has been most evident is that of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, which has the highest concentration of urban indigenous inhabitants in the country. This is the main reason why the city was chosen for the UN Democracy Fund-sponsored project 'Nunca Nos Fuimos: We Never Left', with the aim of promoting greater visibility, political participation and representation of indigenous people in the city.

Despite their increasing presence in Bolivia's cities, indigenous communities are not always considered part of the urban fabric. One issue that has contributed to this situation is the lack of reliable data, creating significant barriers to developing effective programmes that could make a difference. Consequently, the first phase of the project focused on the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, culminating in the launch of a book in October 2014. The subsequent distribution of this data among indigenous leaders, government representatives and academic institutions has had a very positive impact on the community's advocacy and coordination.

A key aspect of indigenous urban communities is their sheer variety, with each group having their own distinct organizational structures, skills, social connections and ways of occupying urban space. Learning about these is key to developing appropriate responses. Nevertheless, one common factor is that the pursuit of better living conditions drives much migration to urban areas, as well as the desire to give more visibility to the indigenous movement. In urban centres there are more possibilities of appealing to public opinion and institutions, of forming alliances and filing lawsuits.

It is also very important that indigenous communities are able to maintain their culture and identity in an urban context, including their organizational forms, specific customs, original languages and traditional crafts, as well as their rights to collectively owned lands. The project therefore also focused on strengthening associations and networks among these communities, creating a forum for shared dialogue and decision making. This was one of the most significant milestones of the project, with the launch of two major events that were attended by hundreds of people. This helped raise awareness of indigenous peoples' issues among a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, government

officials, NGOs, journalists and the general public.

The project also focused on strengthening capacity in other areas, with training for indigenous leaders on national law, citizenship and governance. In addition, a proposal summarizing the aspirations of the different urban indigenous communities was developed to be included in the Municipal Charter of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. After a consultation between the population and their representatives took place, lawyers completed a constitutional review and finalized the document. Other activities include awareness-raising initiatives among the general population about the challenges these communities experience, including the distribution of a documentary and a touring photographic exhibition, 'Being Indigenous in the City', that has received around 15,000 visitors. Forums, websites and active social networking have also been implemented to engage younger generations.

An important date for APCOB and the urban indigenous people of Santa Cruz de la Sierra will be August 2015, when the Autonomy Commission of the City Council will submit the Municipal Charter, a document which will include the indigenous peoples' proposal. This document will then undergo constitutional review and, if approved, will be submitted to referendum. APCOB's work played an important role in influencing political representatives to include these provisions – an important step forward for indigenous peoples' rights in Bolivia's cities. ■

Brazil

The ongoing challenges experienced by Brazil's indigenous peoples were highlighted at the beginning of 2014 with the publication online of images of one of the country's few 'uncontacted' communities. The photographs, taken illegally on a reconnaissance flight monitoring the intrusion of criminal groups in the area, provoked widespread debate over the protection of these communities from outside interference. The pictures, taken in March, showed indigenous inhabitants in a state of fear as the low-lying plane passed by.

Though a significant portion of the country's indigenous population are now urban, the majority still reside in rural areas and are often vulnerable to the effects of urbanization, particularly when Brazil's cities develop against a backdrop of unregulated or illegal land encroachment and resource exploitation. Their location in often remote and undeveloped areas rich in forestry and minerals has placed them at particular risk of logging, mining and other activities. The Awá people have been especially affected by displacement from their ancestral land by illegal loggers settling forcibly in the area. While the government has been slow to respond to address their predicament, growing national and international pressure led to the government's announcement in January that illegal settlers would have to leave the area by 9 March. This is one of the few documented instances of the government stepping in with security forces to prevent resource extraction on indigenous lands. In early 2015, reports again emerged, however, of renewed rights abuse and violence against Awá associated with illicit logging. Meanwhile, in December, a group of uncontacted Awá were brought out of the forest after having been surrounded by loggers; at the time of going to press one woman had contracted a severe respiratory illness – highlighting the extreme vulnerability of uncontacted communities.

Yet often it is government-sponsored megaprojects themselves that are displacing or otherwise affecting local communities, such as the controversial hydroelectric Belo Monte Dam currently being built on the edge of indigenous territory. This development, besides

Above: Indigenous Guarani Mbyá children in a village in the Vale do Rio Branco, Brazil, 2014. *Gregory John Smith/Children At Risk Foundation*

undermining the lives of local inhabitants long dependent on the Xingu River, is also encouraging mass migration of labourers into the region. This rapid urban development and the indirect effects of sudden, unregulated investment have reportedly devastated some indigenous communities, whose traditional livelihoods and organizational structures have been threatened by these changes.

The year 2014 was also an important one for Brazil as it hosted the FIFA World Cup. This event, amid high-profile construction in cities across the country, shone a spotlight on the struggle of indigenous peoples to protect their lands from unsustainable uncontrolled development. In particular, attention focused on the stadium in Manaus, built in the Amazon rainforest. The stadium drew heavy criticism from all sides because its construction cost millions of reais, put a heavy strain on local riverways and is unlikely to be much used in the near future. To make matters worse, the stadium's interwoven design draws on indigenous patterns, with little sign of any other more meaningful inclusion. Indigenous peoples in the area took the opportunity to highlight their struggle with a government more focused on tourism than indigenous peoples' rights.

Indigenous peoples live in every state of Brazil and represent 305 different ethnic groups and 274 indigenous languages. The north and north-east of Brazil have the largest populations of indigenous peoples, and some towns and small cities in Amazonas, Roraima and Rio Negro are largely populated by indigenous displaced people or migrants, who live in basic conditions and experience urban poverty in all its aspects of poor access to water and sanitation, violence, and women being forced into the sex trade.

In this context, displaced indigenous communities may end up struggling to integrate while maintaining their traditional cultures,

particularly in larger cities such as Rio de Janeiro, where a large proportion of the thousands of indigenous residents are concentrated in the *favelas*. In some cases, residents may also find themselves increasingly alienated from their home towns as well. Yet much of the urban indigenous population is situated in smaller urban areas, including towns in remote regions where strong links remain with the rural hinterlands, with indigenous people travelling back and forth from remote areas, and using the towns for provisions and communication. Large numbers of indigenous people travel by boat or canoe to the Amazonian town of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, for example, for products they cannot access in their villages and for services such as health care. The town is also largely populated by indigenous people, often displaced from their land by illegal and violent loggers.

Numerically, Brazil's Afro-Brazilian population is no longer a minority: for the first time, in the 2010 census peoples self-identifying as black or '*pardo*' ('brown' – to denote mixed ancestry) exceeded the population of Brazilians self-identifying as white. Yet despite their sizeable demographic, Afro-Brazilians still face major disadvantages and institutionalized discrimination. There is massive inequality in their access to education and other services, with many forced to reside in the most dangerous urban areas. With little opportunity to improve their lives, young Afro-Brazilian men in particular have been drawn into drug gangs and violence – an acute issue in a country where, according to the Mexico-based organization Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, 19 of the 50 most violent cities in the world are located.

Afro-descendant youth have been disproportionately exposed to these threats. In March 2015, petitioners from Associação Nacional dos Centros de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente (ANCDCA) brought a case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), to bring further attention to the extraordinary rates of homicide, harassment and murder experienced by young Brazilians of African descent. Homicide remains the main cause of death among Brazilian youth, particularly affecting young black males living in *favelas* and urban areas. Faced with situations of extreme violence, police and state security forces frequently resort to the use of lethal force in an effort to curb the violence. The ANCDCA accused police of disproportionately targeting young Afro-Brazilian men, stating that of the 56,000 homicides in 2012, around 30,000 of those killed were children, 77 per cent of whom were Afro-Brazilian.

Cities can also provide the space and freedom for minority and indigenous communities to engage in cultural expression and activism. One well-known example of this is the annual Carnival in Rio, offering a vivid glimpse of the city's vibrant Afro-Brazilian heritage. The February 2015 celebrations, besides showcasing the country's rich traditions of samba and tribal art, included floats that addressed issues relating to ethnic discrimination and the fight for equality.

Chile

Afro-Chileans achieved a significant step forward during the year when, for the first time in the country's history, Chile's National Institute of Statistics (INE) launched its first ever study of the Afro-descendant population in the Arica region. This will provide a valuable opportunity to gather information on a community that has never been recognized in Chilean society: previously, Chile's Afro-descendant population did not have the right to self-identify as Afro-Chileans in the national census as the government had not recognized their ethnicity. Currently estimated by community members to number around 8,000 people, Afro-Chileans are concentrated in urban areas of northern Chile.

Previously, community representatives had complained about the barriers that the lack of properly disaggregated data created in addressing their marginalization and discrimination. In 2011, John Salgado, representative of the NGO Oro Negro and the Chilean Alliance for Afro-descendant Organizations, described to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) the 'invisibilization' of their ethnicity, which meant that 'it is impossible to acknowledge problems … [as] you don't see the people who are suffering them'. As the Afro-Chilean Alliance's previous efforts to include questions on their ethnicity

Case study *by Umamah Basit*

Preserving indigenous heritage in Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro has a significant indigenous population, many of whom have been driven out of their ancestral lands in the Amazon due to poverty, deforestation and persecution. Due to unaffordable housing and lack of state support, these groups have settled in the poorest of urban slums, commonly known as '*favelas*', where they face rampant violence, among other threats and challenges. Despite increasing marginalization, however, indigenous communities continue to resist urban influences and display a strong reluctance to assimilate completely into mainstream society.

The Aldeia Maracanã movement, which came to public prominence in 2013, is a perfect illustration of the ongoing indigenous struggle to preserve their culture and way of life in the urban jungle. Aldeia Maracanã itself is a multi-ethnic indigenous village that stands right next to the iconic Maracanã football stadium, in the heart of Rio de Janeiro. This village was created in 2006 when people from 17 indigenous communities reoccupied a long-abandoned building that had housed the *Museu do Índio* ('Museum of the Indian') in the latter half of the twentieth century. Since reoccupation, the historical landmark has been associated with the celebration of indigenous culture and ideas, serving as a meeting point for people from various ethnic groups and walks of life. The compound has also provided accommodation to indigenous people visiting the city for medical care, education and business activities.

Ahead of the football World Cup in 2014, the city government announced plans to demolish the building in order to make way for a US$350 million renovation programme of the stadium. It is pertinent to note that the federal, state and city governments had evaluated the site beforehand and acknowledged that it holds historical, architectural and cultural value. Members of the Maracanã community had even hoped that the event would give them the opportunity to showcase their culture and experiences to sports fans visiting from around the world. However, despite numerous protests staged in the early months of 2013, all the families who had been squatting on the site since 2006 were forcibly evicted by Brazilian police firing tear gas and rubber bullets. Though occupants of the Maracanã were subsequently granted homes under the city's social housing scheme, none have been able to return to the 'sacred ground'.

The protests did, however, force the government to halt demolition plans and in January 2014, Rio's governor, Sérgio Cabral Filho, declared that the building may be transformed into an indigenous cultural centre in partnership with the State Secretariat of Culture.

Although the building remains barricaded today, members of the Maracanã community are hoping to convert the complex into Brazil's first indigenous university, which would teach indigenous languages and traditions to people from all parts of the country. More recently, community members formed the Aldeia Maracanã Indigenous Association and an Indigenous Regional Council: both bodies are aimed at developing and promoting policies for the social and economic empowerment of indigenous peoples living in Rio de Janeiro.

In light of ongoing urban renewal projects in preparation for the Olympic Games 2016, it is difficult to determine the fate of the Maracanã community. Few would deny, however, that at present the historical building stands as a symbol of hope and the

continued resilience of indigenous peoples. In other parts of the city too, there are visible signs of indigenous peoples seeking to preserve their traditions and sense of community. In one urban *favela*, Mare, indigenous groups organize get-togethers on a frequent basis, participating in traditional rituals and storytelling events. While many indigenous people in Brazil's cities feel they need to hide their identity, especially to obtain employment, an increasing number can be spotted on the streets of Rio wearing traditional attire. For some, this is a way of showing solidarity with the indigenous movement; for others, it is a means of connecting them back to their ancestral homes.

Of course, state public policies hugely impact the extent to which indigenous and minority groups are able to maintain their visibility in society. Furthermore, as noted by the Popular Committee for the World Cup and Olympics, Rio de Janeiro, it is fundamental to give marginalized groups the opportunity to participate in discussions and decisions that directly affect them. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that members of these indigenous communities are affirming their roots. While it is important to help indigenous migrants adapt to modern urban life, it is equally important to support their efforts to protect their traditions and cultures in their new surroundings. Moreover, it is the strength and scale of the indigenous movement that will ultimately determine the fate of urban indigenous people. Had the indigenous community not shown solidarity during the Maracanã incident, perhaps the building would have been demolished already. ■

Left: Maracanã Aldeia, an urban indigenous village located in the building of the former *Museu do Índio* in Maracanã, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. *Ingrid Cristina Pereira*

in the national census of 2012 had failed, their recognition this time is a significant milestone for the community.

Unlike elsewhere in the region, Chile's indigenous population is made up largely of a single people. According to the 2012 census, more than 1.7 million self-identified as indigenous: of these, 88 per cent were Mapuche, followed by Aymara (7 per cent) and other smaller groups (5 per cent). As with the Afro-Chilean community, there have been positive steps to improve indigenous data. Beginning in 2013 and continuing until 2018, Chile Indígena, an initiative of the government's national indigenous body, the *Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena* (CONADI), aims to improve the quality of life of indigenous peoples in Chile, respecting 'development with identity' and promoting 'horizontal dialogue' between indigenous communities and the government. The project began in 2013 and will continue until 2018.

While they have historically received greater recognition than Afro-Chileans, Chile's indigenous population nevertheless continues to experience discrimination in access to education and employment. In March 2015, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Philip Alston visited Chile and in his end-of-mission statement reported that the government's response to the ongoing marginalization of the indigenous population 'has been piecemeal and especially reluctant to address the major issues of concern'. Among other measures, he highlighted the importance of adequate consultation with communities around the government's proposed plan to establish a Ministry for Indigenous Affairs, as well as the need to expand their political representation in a country where, despite comprising around 10 per cent of the population, there is currently not a single indigenous representative in the Congress. Finally, he drew attention to the domination of Chile's agriculture, forestry and mining industries by certain corporations, calling for these companies to adopt 'a set of human rights policies that conform, as a minimum, to the requirements of the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.'

Land rights and access to ancestral territory remain major issues for indigenous peoples in Chile, particularly in the south of the country, with protests continuing during the year. Indigenous activists continued to advocate for the protection of their ancestral lands from unsustainable development projects. In October, Chile's Supreme Court halted the development of the El Morro gold and copper mine owned by the Canadian conglomerate, Goldcorp, until indigenous communities are consulted. And on 17 March 2015, representatives from the Mapuche indigenous people appeared before the IACHR to bring attention to the extractive activities taking place on their ancestral lands, and the negative effects they have on their way of life and culture.

In a July 2014 ruling, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found the state guilty of violating the human rights of members of the Mapuche people. The decision in the case of *Norin Catriman et al. vs. the State of Chile* related to the government's use of anti-terrorist legislation in 2002 and 2003 against indigenous protesters, some of whom received prison sentences at the time. As Jimina Reyes of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and one of the counsels in the case noted, the Court had concluded that 'it is illegal to criminalize the Mapuche quests for their ancestral land'.

Earlier in 2014, in response to concerns raised by a UN working group, the government committed to the restitution of indigenous lands within two years. Francisco Huenchumilla, a part-Mapuche politician, was appointed as Governor of the Araucanía region; he subsequently apologized on behalf of the government of President Michelle Bachelet to the Mapuche people for the dispossession of land that took place as part of the country's 'pacification' programmes in the nineteenth century. Indigenous commentators at the time noted, however, that the government's proposal only specified the Mapuche and land registered with CONADI; which left them wondering about what would happen to other communities and other lands.

Chile is a highly urbanized South American country, with 90 per cent of Chileans now living in towns and cities. This includes a

significant proportion of Chile's indigenous peoples. According to the 2012 census, more than 585,000 indigenous people – over a third of the country's total indigenous population – now live in the greater Santiago metropolitan area, where they have formed indigenous associations, clubs, educational groups and political organizations. Yet many reportedly face continued discrimination and sub-standard living conditions in this context.

Colombia

Conflict continues to affect Colombia's indigenous and minority communities disproportionately. Colombia has a long history of armed conflict, involving the military, opposition forces and paramilitary groups, which over decades has caused the deaths or displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 137,200 people were newly displaced in Colombia during 2014 alone, although that figure is expected to rise considerably as more people are registered.

The IDMC, looking back at trends over the previous year, highlighted that the representation of indigenous communities, who comprise around 3.4 per cent of the total population, account for more than double that proportion among the displaced. Afro-Colombians are also over-represented; IDMC noted that Afro-Colombians from four Pacific coast departments alone accounted for 30 per cent of the total number of displaced in 2014. When combined, the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations make up the large majority of displaced persons: according to an August 2014 estimate by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), close to three-quarters of those displaced earlier that year were Afro-Colombian or indigenous. In both cases land grabbing, conflict and resource exploitation such as mining are factors driving this displacement.

Indigenous peoples are especially vulnerable to violence. In their 2014 report on indigenous peoples' rights in Colombia, the national organization of indigenous peoples of Colombia (ONIC) recorded 3,193 human rights abuses carried out against indigenous communities between January and September 2014, including 2,819 incidents of forced displacement, 10 known homicides and numerous threats, kidnappings and illegal imprisonment. ONIC report that in these multiple violations of human rights of indigenous peoples in Colombia the victims have often been traditional authorities, indigenous leaders and community members, threatened by different armed groups, criminal gangs and security forces. These attacks and threats occur principally in the zones of internal conflict between the armed groups and the government soldiers, as well as the government soldiers and police abusing indigenous peoples during peaceful demonstrations.

In June, reports emerged of the forcible displacement of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in Chocó by criminal groups seizing control of land, natural resources and drug trafficking routes. It was subsequently estimated that more than 2,800 people had been forced to flee their homes between May and June.

Indigenous activists continued to protest against rights abuses and targeted attacks against their community. On 20 May, indigenous peoples across Colombia published a joint manifesto highlighting the threat posed to their survival, the central importance of their territories to their cultural traditions, their respect for the environment and the need for sustainable peace in the country. Later in the year, in an attempt to halt the mass displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands, President Juan Manuel Santos signed Decree 1953 in October to implement a special interim system to enable indigenous communities to administer their territories until Congress can issue the Organic Law on Territorial Regulation.

Yet both indigenous and Afro-descendant communities continue to experience severe social prejudice. In November, the country's 2011 anti-discrimination law was used for the first time to convict a local councillor who had described Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples and displaced persons as a 'cancer'.

The Afro-Colombian community numbers around 4.3 million people, most of whom are based in urban areas. They are the majority population in towns in the north-west, and also live in low-income settlements in the major

Above: A man in Guarjia, Colombia belonging to the Wayuu community, an indigenous population which is among the most marginalized in Colombia. *USAID*

cities, including the capital Bogotá. Widespread displacement from communal lands has contributed to this process. According to one estimate, more than 70 per cent of Bogotá's sizeable Afro-Colombian community were born outside the city, a proportion that suggests the significant role that displacement has played in the urbanization of Afro-Colombians.

In this context, reinforced by existing discrimination, many urban Afro-Colombians have been exposed to poverty, exclusion and physical insecurity. Violence is a common problem in other urban areas, too, epitomized by Buenaventura, a coastal settlement of 400,000 people, of whom an estimated 84 per cent are Afro-Colombians. It was widely reported in the media during the year that this was the most violent city in the country; an HRW report published in March described how the local population were constantly terrorized by criminal gangs and extortion rings. Against a backdrop of social exclusion and poverty, with an unemployment rate of 40 per cent – around four times the average for the country as a whole – perpetrators have been able to operate with total impunity. Of over 2,000 investigations opened on disappearances in the city over the last two decades, reportedly not a single one has led to a conviction.

As in other South American contexts, the urban experience has often not been positive for the displaced minority indigenous or Afro-Colombians, but initiatives exist and have succeeded in turning lives around. Since 2011, USAID's Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Program (ACIP) has supported public–private partnerships between Afro-Colombian community organizations, local municipalities, and companies that train ethnic minorities and generate economic opportunities for them. As a result, by 2014 over 5,000 internally displaced people from marginalized urban areas of Bogotá, Cartagena, Cali and Barranquilla had achieved a measure of stability. ■