

Bolivia: Indigenous Challenges to Neoliberalism

Session 11

Postero, Nancy. 2005. "Indigenous Responses to Neoliberalism: A Look at the Bolivian Uprising of 2003." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 28 (1): 73-92.

1. What are "neoliberal" reforms, from what you read in the opening pages of the article? List some of the key features of neoliberalism in this context?
2. Postero asks: What does a protest against neoliberalism have to do with indigenous rights? Why would it be wrong to argue that the 2003 uprising was an "indigenous" uprising? What might that tell us about the ultimate prospects for "indigenous resurgence"?
3. Pay special attention to the first time you encounter Evo Morales' name in the article. In what context does he emerge as one of the key actors in this story?
4. How did the social and political struggles against the state and neoliberalism create an avenue for increased indigenous power? Think also of what the author identifies as the three main ways that neoliberal reforms have affected indigenous groups.
5. The flip side of Question #2 above, might be this: how do struggles against neoliberalism sometimes create opportunities for heightened indigenous self-consciousness *as indigenous*?
6. Contrast the figures of Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe, and relate that to your answers to questions #2 and #5 above.

Fuentes, Federico. 2007. "The Struggle for Bolivia's Future." *Monthly Review*, July-August: 95-109.

This article, written from the perspective of an enthusiastic supporter of Evo Morales, presents an overview of events that outlines some of the key transformations that Morales has attempted to bring about, and the kinds of obstacles he has faced. Do not read this hoping to memorize all the details and events, but rather try to get a sense of general directions and trends, and how the author explains them.

1. How does Fuentes explain what the reasons are for the electoral victory of Evo Morales in December of 2005? How does his explanation compare/contrast with what you read in the previous article above?
2. In Morales' constituency base in the Chapare, how did indigenous identification and trade union militancy come together?
3. Take note of where the author outlines the organization of indigenous coca-growing associations, and how their struggles preceded the struggle against neoliberal reforms by over a decade.
4. What are the main features of "indigenous nationalism" as outlined by Fuentes?
5. Do you think that Fuentes overemphasizes indigenous/ethnic factors at the expense of class in his outline of events?
6. Why was winning state power less than a "victory" from Morales' point of view?
7. Fuentes speaks of a "new Bolivia," that "would be based on recognition of the indigenous majority through a united, pluri-national, decentralized, social, and communitarian state." That is quite a menu. Do you see any problems with this?

New Internationalist. 2008. "I Will Return and I Will Be Millions." April. 4-7.

1. In what historical context does this article place Morales' movement?
2. Do you get a sense, from reading about the socio-economic changes brought about by the Morales government, that this is a government by the indigenous people, for the indigenous people?
3. What is the "cultural revolution" that one speaker says has occurred?
4. While the article says that Bolivia's "revolution" is not solely about race or culture, what evidence do they provide of an indigenous resurgence in terms of a re-valuing of indigeneity?