

Taft Faculty Release Fellowship Cover Sheet

Date of Application: 1/14/13

Name, Department, Rank: **Isaac Campos, Associate Professor**

Time Period: **Spring Semester, 2014**

Location: **Either Cincinnati, Mexico City, or Cambridge, MA**

Title of Project: **"Narco-dynamics and the Evolution of Mexico's War on Drugs, 1912-1940"**

Requested Research Supplement (if any): **\$1480.00**

Probable Results of a Grant (such as external funding, publications, and presentations):

Eventually a book though the project is still in its early stages (I just published my first book last spring!)

Other Funding Applied For or Received for This Project (list source and amounts requested and awarded):

- **The Social Science Research Council's "Drugs, Security, and Democracy Fellowship." There is no set amount for this award but it would cover the expenses to move with my family to Mexico for five months of research (Jan.-May 2012). It does not cover salary replacement, however.**
- **The David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies Visiting Fellowship, Harvard University. This award would be for \$25,000 in living expenses while in Cambridge during the Spring Semester, 2014. This does not cover salary replacement.**

Please note: I have not included Willard Sunderland's letter in the PDF as requested because he was told by Sean Keating that he could just send it after the prompt. I needed to get mine uploaded so that my other writer could get the prompt to send in his letter. Sorry if this causes any confusion.

Checklist

- Signed Cover Sheet
- Project Description (800-1200 words)
- Supplement explanation, if necessary
- 2 page CV
- One external letter of support sent to Taft.

Review Taft website for full application guidelines



Taft Grants Received in the Last Five Years:

1. Type and Dates: Taft Publication Costs, December 2011
Amount: \$1000
Project Title: *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs*
Resulting Publications and Presentations: My book of the same title (UNC Press, 2012)
2. Type and Dates: Taft Summer Research Fellowship, summer 2011
Amount: \$8,715.00
Project Title: "Dr. Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, Drug Policy, and U.S.-Mexican Relations"
Resulting Publications and Presentations:
This research is being folded into my present book project.
3. Type and Dates: Taft Travel for Research, Feb. 2011
Amount: \$1,086.00
Project Title: *Home Grown, Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs*
Resulting Publications and Presentations: My book of the same title (UNC Press, 2012)
- 4.. Type and Dates: Taft Center Fellows, 2010-2011 Academic year
Amount: N/A
Project Title: "Drugs, Justice, and Subaltern Mexico City, 1934–1940"
Resulting Publications and Presentations
I finished my book and began this second book project.
5. Type and Dates: Taft Travel for Research, Nov. 2009
Amount: \$1137
Project Title: *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of the War on Drugs in Mexico*
Resulting Publications and Presentations: Some of this research went into my recently published article: "Degeneration and the Origins of the War on Drugs in Mexico". The rest went into my book.
6. Type and Dates: International Conference Travel Grant, June 2009
Amount: \$1870
Project Title: "The War on Drugs and Human Rights in Mexico, 1890-2009"
Resulting Publications and Presentations: Presented this paper at the Latin American Studies Association Conference at Rio de Janeiro in June of 2009.
7. Type and Dates: Taft Cost Share, January-June 2009
Amount: \$15,000
Project Title: "Marijuana, Madness, and Modernity in Global Mexico, 1545-1920"
Resulting Publications and Presentations: Contributed to all of the papers and presentations listed above as well as to the research for my book.

Project Description

Over the last century, the history of illicit drugs in North America has resembled a dynamic system comprised of at least six major ingredients: policy, poverty, profit, ideology, empire, and corruption. Policy of course is the lynchpin of these “narco-dynamics.” Drug prohibition is the sine qua non of the War on Drugs, the factor without which there would not exist the illicit status that has made certain fetishized substances (the opiates, cocaine, marijuana) so historically important. Thus, as I argue in my recently published book, in Mexico the drug war's deepest roots can in fact be found in the colonial era (1521-1821) where the earliest manifestations of prohibitionism appear. However, this dynamic system that feeds on poverty, corruption, and ideology, that plays out within unequal international relations, and whose extraordinary opportunities for profit never fail to inspire new generations of law breakers, only began to take shape after modern drug prohibitions actually came into effect. In Mexico that system developed between 1912 and 1940, from Mexico's signing of the Hague International Opium Convention, to the first incidence of serious narco-imperialism on the part of the United States in Mexico, an incident which forced the termination of a revolutionary Mexican drug treatment program that would still be considered progressive by today's policy-reform standards.

The dates are conspicuous for they coincide almost exactly with the course of the Mexican Revolution, from its initial civil war phase (1910-1920), through the consolidation of the revolutionary regime (1920-1940). Surely this holds greater historical significance than mere coincidence. Indeed, today it is widely argued that Mexico's recent drug war bloodbath can be blamed, at least in part, on the collapse of the corrupt “soft dictatorship” that emerged from the revolution and which had been dominated by the PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party, between 1929 and 2000. The PRI, according to this theory, understood how to both profit from and, critically, control the scope of drug trafficking in Mexico.

However much truth there is in that theory, it is also clear that during the revolutionary era Mexico might have chosen a different course. The incident that concludes my research on this period

demonstrates that quite clearly: in 1940, when faced by pressure from the U.S. to abandon a new program allowing addicts “maintenance” doses of opiates, the regime of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40), fresh from having dramatically expropriated U.S. oil interests in Mexico (1938), might have stuck to its guns. But it didn't. Instead it followed a prohibitionists path whose disastrous consequences are today quite obvious, to the tune of 60,000 dead in the last six years alone. Why? Did Mexican public officials from the beginning cynically see prohibited drugs as a means to illicit riches as some scholars have hypothesized? Or did the leaders who emerged victorious after 1920, and whose legitimacy was very much in dispute, perhaps recognize that such illicit profits, spread throughout the country, were helping to alleviate discontent at various levels of society and thus helping them to maintain their very fragile status? Were U.S. pressures critical as others have claimed? Or are the roots of all of this simply found in Mexico's long history of anti-drug ideology and prohibitionist sentiment? Did Mexico's own homegrown anti-drug zealotry condemn it to this blood-spattered historical trajectory?

I suspect that by 1940 Mexico was fully locked into its prohibitionist course by the dynamic interaction of all of these factors. Thus my present research seeks to answer two broad but fundamental questions: how, specifically, did this dynamic drug-war system come into being in Mexico between 1912 and 1940? And what relationship was there between the development of these narco-dynamics and the consolidation of Mexico's revolutionary regime during the same period? The answers to these questions have tremendous significance for both the field of drug studies and Mexican history as a whole. Mexico is now the epicenter of scholarly interest in the drug war thanks to the ongoing violence there. This research promises to help illuminate the roots of the present crisis. Scholars are also still trying to understand how the so-called “perfect dictatorship” of the PRI (1929-2000), with all its related corruption and double-dealing, functioned. Though scholars have hypothesized that drug trafficking was from the beginning a fundamental component in the PRI's system of governance, very little real historical research has been performed to unearth the details of that history. My goal is to write a book that will not only fill the

existing gaps in the research, but bring together all aspects of this story, from the intricacies of policymaking and diplomacy, to the life on the ground of drug addicts; from the ongoing evolution of anti-drug ideology, to the relationship of all of this to the central currents of Mexican history.

Research Details and Schedule

Like my first book, this project will require investigation in a wide array of source materials, from the minutes of policymaking meetings, to diplomatic correspondence, hospital and arrest records, newspapers, novels, and scientific journals. These materials are housed in a variety of repositories, primarily the archives of Mexico's Secretariats of Public Health and Foreign Relations, as well as Mexico's National Archives, all located in Mexico City. Other important resources included the archives of the Department of State and Federal Bureau of Narcotics in Washington, the archives of the British Foreign Office in London, as well as the records of the League of Nations Opium Advisory Committee which oversaw international drug control during the 1920s and 30s.

I have already collected roughly 70% of the documentation necessary for this research. What I need now is time to concentrate all of my energy on analyzing those documents. I will also need to make one more trip of several months to Mexico to complete my documentary collection. I have thus applied for a full-year's sabbatical next year pending funding for the second semester. My research strategy could then take three different paths depending on the result of other grants for which I have applied.

Path #1: I am applying for a Social Science Research Council fellowship, which I would use in conjunction with the Faculty Release award to fund a five-month trip to Mexico City starting in January 2014. On this path, I would spend the summer and fall of 2013 primarily in Cincinnati analyzing the documents I have already collected. In January I would move to Mexico City for five months of intensive archival research and writing.

Path #2: I am also applying for a residential fellowship at Harvard where there are unparalleled library holdings for Mexican history. If this were my path, I would then also dedicate part of 2013 to applying for other funding to support a longer research stay in Mexico for 2014-15.

Path #3: If both of these fellowship requests fail, then I would spend the spring semester mostly here in Cincinnati working on the thousands of documents that I have already collected. I would also then likely pursue funding for shorter research stays in Mexico and Washington, DC in 2013-14, as well as other major fellowships to support a longer research trip to Mexico in the following academic year.

Conclusion:

Any one of these three paths would greatly advance this book project which is still in its early stages. My primary need at this point is time so that I can concentrate on the research and writing. I hope you can help me secure that much needed time. Thank you for your consideration.

Research Supplement Explanation and Budget

I need to make a trip of approximately two weeks to London to examine the files of the British Foreign Office. I have recently discovered an important series of correspondence between Mexico and Great Britain regarding the prohibition of narcotics in the 1910s. However, the Mexican files that I possess are incomplete thanks probably to the civil war that was engulfing Mexico at the time. What I do have suggests that the British might have had a more important role with respect to drug prohibition in Mexico than has previously been acknowledged by scholars. This is an important possibility that can only be investigated at the British archives. The British, along with the U.S., were the main promoters of international drug control during this era, so a trip to London could wind up bearing significant fruit for the entire era that I am studying.

Budget:

Airfare: \$1130 (CVG-London, cheapest rate in November 2013 according to Orbitz)

Per Diem: \$350 (\$25/day x 14 days) I have a friend in London with whom I could stay so I am just requesting Taft's standard "friends and family" per diem rate to help cover expenses at my friend's place.

Total: \$1480

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EDUCATION

Harvard University

Ph.D., 2006

Latin American History with a focus on Modern Mexico

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Cincinnati

Associate Professor, Department of History

2012–Present

Assistant Professor, Department of History

2006–Present

National Security Archive, Mexico City

Research Assistant to Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst and Director of “The Mexico Project”

2003

PUBLICATIONS

BOOK:

Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012)

ARTICLE:

“Degeneration and the Origins of the War on Drugs,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 26, no. 2 (2010): 379-408

JOURNALISM/COMMENTARY:

“Today’s Synthetic Drugs Provoking New Reefer Madness,” UNC Press Blog, April 20, 2012.

“In Search of Real Reform: Lessons from Mexico's Long History of Drug Prohibition,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44, no. 3 (2011): 14-18

“Mexico’s Illegal-Reefer Madness,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2009

“¡La Gente Manda!”

Nueva Época, no. 630–631 (2003): 32–40

SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS (TAFT not included)

UCSD, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, Visiting Fellowship, 2009
Darwin T. Turner Scholars Program, Student Champion Award, 2007, 2010
Harvard Graduate Prize Fellowship, 2005–06
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Research Travel Grant, 2005
Mellon Fellowship in Latin American History, 2004–05
Foreign Language and Area Studies, Academic-Year Fellowship, 2003–04
Mellon Fellowship in Latin American History, 2002–03
Mellon Field Research Travel Grant, 2002
Mellon Fellowship in Latin American History, 2001–02
Tinker Foundation, Summer Research Grant, 2001
Derek Bok Center, Excellence in Teaching Award, Harvard University, 2001
Harvard Graduate Prize Fellowship, 1999–2001

PAPERS RECENTLY PRESENTED

“Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs,” Princeton Program in Latin American Studies, Oct. 2, 2012

“Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs,” Oaksterdam University, July 21, 2012

“Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs,” David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University, April 19, 2012

“Marijuana, Mexico, and the Origins of the War on Drugs”
Presented to the Association de Latinos Profesionales de Michigan in Kalamazoo, MI, Feb. 8, 2010

“Marijuana, Mexico, and the Origins of the War on Drugs”
University of Kentucky, Jan. 29, 2010

“Cannabis, Commodity Chains, and the Origins of the War on Drugs in North America”
American Historical Association Conference, Jan. 8, 2010

RADIO APPEARANCES

Backstory, Various NPR affiliates, January 2013

The State of Things, WUNC, Chapel Hill, NC, June 14, 2012

Cincinnati Edition, WVXU, Cincinnati, May 13, 2012

Mario Ávila, Radio Fórmula, Mexico City, Nov. 13, 2010

These Days, KPBS-San Diego, Oct. 7, 2010