
Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Summer Research Fellowship Application

I. General Information

- a. Name: **Isaac Campos**
- b. M#: **02922228**
- c. Department: **History**
- d. Position: **Associate Professor**
- e. Project title: **"Narcodynamics and the Evolution of Mexico's War on Drugs, 1912-1940"**
- f. Probable Results of a Grant (such as external funding, publications, or presentations): **A published article and, eventually, a published book.**
- g. Other Funding Applied For or Received for This Project (list source and amounts requested and awarded): **I will be applying for the \$12,000 summer URC Faculty Research Grant**

II. Budget: \$742 (see below for details)

III. Project Proposal (see below)

IV. Taft Grant History (See below)

V. Curriculum Vitae (see below)

II. Budget: Research Supplement Request

I am requesting \$742 in research funds in order to pay my research assistant in Mexico City, Ximena López Carrillo, to work for 100 hours in the archives of the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP). The SEP was the key instrument of the state in its educational and “hygienic” campaigns between 1920 and 1940. These hygienic campaigns involved efforts to stamp out vice, especially alcohol abuse, but also the use of illicit drugs. The SEP archive was recently moved to the National Archives in Mexico City and is available for research but largely uncatalogued. Thus I need my RA to spend significant time there searching for drug-relevant documents. If she were to finish her work in fewer than 100 hours, I would shift her to the archives of the Supreme Court of Mexico which also has a large collection of documents that I have not yet had an opportunity to fully digitize. Between these two projects she will easily be able to work the full 100 hours.

I have been working with Ximena since last spring. She is an extraordinarily good research assistant, just finishing a BA at Mexico's National University, and preparing to apply to Ph.D. programs (history of medicine) in the U.S. and Brazil. She is extremely smart, reliable, hard-working, and efficient. I pay her \$100 pesos/hour which, at today's exchange rate, is about \$7.42 USD/hour. This is a very fair wage in Mexico and reflects my happiness with her work and my desire to keep her working for me as long as possible. If necessary, I can provide her CV and evidence of previous work she has completed for me.

At today's exchange rate, 100 hours of work (\$10,000 pesos) would equal **\$742 USD.**

III. 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.¹

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

¹ For a first-take on this period in Mexican drug history see William O. Walker, III, *Drug Control in the Americas* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1981).

to this theory, understood how to both profit from and, critically, control the scope of drug trafficking in Mexico.²

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 at least 60,000 dead since 2006 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?³

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

² Luis Astorga, "Drugs and Politics," in *The Political Economy of the Drug Industry: Latin America and the International System*, ed. Menno Vellinga (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

³ For the cynical-politician hypothesis, see Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "Fragmentos de historia de las "drogas" en México 1870-1920," in *Hábitos, normas y escándalo: Prensa, criminalidad y drogas durante el porfiriato tardío*, ed. Ricardo Pérez Montfort (Mexico D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 1997). For the alleviation of discontent theory, see Benjamin T Smith, "The Rise and Fall of Narcopopulism: Drugs, Politics, and Society in Sinaloa, 1930-1980," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 7, no. 2 (2013): 125-65. On U.S. Pressure, see Walker, *Drug Control in the Americas*. On the long history of prohibitionist sentiment, see Isaac Campos, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2012).

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. This will constitute an important contribution to the global literature on illicit drugs, the historiography of twentieth century Mexican politics, culture, and social life, as well as the history of U.S.-Mexican relations.

Research Plan

Over the last several years I've collected, mostly in digital format, the bulk of the necessary historical material for this project. This research has been conducted at the archives of Mexico's Secretariats of Public Health and Foreign Relations, the National Archives in Mexico City, the archives of the Department of State and Federal Bureau of Narcotics in Washington, as well as the archives of the British Foreign Office in London. In addition I've gathered countless newspaper and other documents through digitized library resources. What I now need is time to work through these many thousands of documents and begin drafting the chapters of the book. I plan to spend the summer of 2015 here in

Cincinnati working out of my office and UC's various libraries. My goal for this summer is to complete the sections of the book that relate to the 1910s, which constitute roughly a third of the overall project. In the process, I will draft an article on the emergence of Mexico's first opium and cocaine regulations and how these were shaped, but not inspired, by the emerging international prohibitionist movement. By completing one third of the project this summer, I will be right on pace to have a complete draft of the book roughly five years out from the publication of my first monograph. This constitutes an excellent rate of productivity in the field of history, a book driven-field requiring extensive multi-archival research for each project.

Finally, the completion of this book is crucial to my professional development both here at UC and in the field of history. A second book is the key element for promotion to full professor in the History Department, and a high-quality second monograph would expand my profile in both Latin American and drug studies.

Thank you for your consideration.

IV. Taft Grant History

2013:

- Faculty Release Fellowship: “Narco-Dynamics and the Evolution of Mexico’s War on Drugs”
 - Results: Spent the winter in Mexico collecting documents for this project. I also completed a co-authored article that is coming out this winter in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* (the leading journal in my field). I also co-edited the same special issue of that journal.

2011:

- Publication Costs: *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs*
 - Results: Publication of my book.
- Summer Research Fellowship: “Dr. Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, Drug Policy, and U.S.-Mexican Relations”
 - Results: I completed significant research on Salazar Viniegra but have not yet published the results as I wasn’t able to complete that research until last winter (the bulk of the materials on Salazar are housed in the Archives of Mexico’s National Psychiatric Hospital. They do not allow digital photography or copying, so research there is extremely slow). However, this research is certainly going into my second monograph and perhaps an article before then.

2010:

- Travel for Research Grant, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs*
 - Result: contributed to the final version of my book.
- Center Fellows, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico’s War on Drugs* and “Drugs, Justice, and Subaltern Mexico City, 1934-1940”⁴
 - Completed the *Home Grown* manuscript and began to research the next project which is what I’m actually working on now (under a different title).

⁴ I initially applied for the Center Fellows in order to work on the project I was calling “Drugs, Justice, and Subaltern Mexico City, 1934-1940.” However, between applying for the Center Fellowship and the start of the award period, a new database of Mexican newspapers became available which constituted an extraordinary new research opportunity for the book (prior to this time there was not a single Mexican newspaper even indexed for the period I was working on). Thanks to the time provided by the Center Fellows grant, I was able to make extensive use of this extraordinary new resource on a relatively short timetable. The result was a new chapter of my book (Ch. 4), a radical reorganization of the monograph, and, to my knowledge, the first ever quantitative discourse analysis in a book on Latin American history. The award ended up allowing me to vastly improve my book while beginning the next project as well. Hence the odd double title above.

2009:

- Travel for Research, “Marijuana, Madness, and the Origins of the War on Drugs in North America”
 - Result: my book *Home Grown* (at this time I didn't have the title figured out)
- International Conference Grant, “The War on Drugs and Human Rights in Mexico, 1890-2009”
 - Result: Presentation at the Latin American Studies Association Conference in Rio de Janeiro

Isaac Campos
Associate Professor of History

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

2006–2012

PUBLICATIONS

BOOK:

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

ARTICLES:

"Toward a New Drug History of Latin America: A Research Frontier at the Center of Debates," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 95, no. 1, 2015 (Co-authored with Paul Gootenberg and part of a special issue we edited on the "New Drug History of Latin America").

"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

"Best Book," New England Council of Latin American Studies, 2013

"Honorable Mention" (i.e. runner-up), Bryce Wood Book Award, for the best book in the humanities or social sciences in English, Latin American Studies Association, 2013
Social Science Research Council, Drugs, Security, and Democracy Fellowship, 2013-14
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (Harvard), Cisneros Visiting Scholar, 2013
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
Mellon Fellowship in Latin American History, 2004-05
Foreign Language and Area Studies, Academic-Year Fellowship, 2003-04
Tinker Foundation, Summer Research Grant, 2001
Derek Bok Center, Excellence in Teaching Award, Harvard University, 2001
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Research Travel Grant, 2000

PAPERS PRESENTED RECENTLY

"Mexican Immigrants and Marijuana in the United States, 1900-1930," David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University, November 25, 2013

"A Cross-Examination of Bonnie and Whitebread: The View from the Border," Alcohol and Drugs History Society Conference, London, June 22, 2013

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

RADIO APPEARANCES

All Sides with Ann Fisher, Ohio State Public Radio, Nov. 6, 2014
The Morning Show, Utah Public Radio, Aug. 12, 2014
Backstory, various NPR affiliates, January 17, 2013
The State of Things, WUNC, Chapel Hill, NC, June 14, 2012
Cincinnati Edition, WXXU, Cincinnati, May 13, 2012
Mario Ávila, Radio Fórmula, Mexico City, Nov. 13, 2010
These Days, KPBS-San Diego, Oct. 7, 2010

BOOK REVIEWS:

Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug in History Transnational*, <http://geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/transnat.asp?lang=en>, (Dec. 2009).

Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*, in *The Americas*, 66, no. 2 (Oct. 2009), 301-302.

Steven Topik, Carlos Marichal, and Zephyr Frank, *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000*, in *The Americas*, 64, no. 2 (2007): 298-300.