

**Jorge Marshall, Director of Expansiva UDP Public Policy Institute interviews Harley Shaiken, Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at UC Berkeley**

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**JM: Professor Shaiken, thank you for being with us. The first thing that I want to ask you is about the agenda between the United States (U.S.) and Latin America. In our continent it seems that President Obama is trying to set up a new agenda. Can you tell us what are the main elements of this new agenda?**

**HS:** I think President Obama has a great interest in Latin America and a very positive perspective. He comes with an international background that is very unusual for U.S. Presidents and his whole career is academic, even before as a student, is giving him an international focus that I think is quite important. At the heart of his program toward Latin America is the notion of establishing a partnership that's real and that's beneficial for both sides, and he has repeatedly said he looks towards a partnership with equals, where there's give and take, where both sides listen and at the end of the day it's possible, by country level as well as more broadly for the region, to have some productive results from this new relationship.

**JM: And what are the elements that Latin America can expect to be new in this agenda? What are the topics that are going to be part of this agenda in this partnership relationship between the U.S. and Latin America?**

**HS:** Well, I think the process itself is not insignificant. The fact that he does talk about a partnership. More specifically I think he is showing a willingness to engage very tough issues from something like: climate change – which is very contentious in many ways-, not abstractly, is easy to accept and difficult to implement; immigration which is such a critical issue to many countries in Latin America particularly in Mexico, the President has said he plans to engage that; some time after healthcare and climate change. That's a major step. He has shown a willingness to engage with Cuba, the initial steps have been modest but in a framework where nothing has happened for decades I think it shows a new willingness to look to the future and he is aware that this is symbolically an important issue in Latin America-

**JM: What are the constraints that we face in this common effort between Latin America and the U.S. to construct the new agenda?**

**HS:** I think there are a lot of constraints. This is, of course, not peculiar to President Obama, any U.S. President or any President of a country faces many constraints. In the case of president Obama, he is dealing with an uncertain

economy which brings its own set of political tensions and demands for resources for new programs. He is also talking about an extremely uncertain situation internationally, whether it's Iran, or the wounding down of the war of Iraq, or the evaluation of where Afghanistan might go. All of this requires attention, political capital, and a real engagement. So the combination of the economic uncertainty, an ambitious domestic agenda and an international set of issues that are very tough and very demanding, all this feeds into what the President is able to do in the context of Latin America. But I think he has genuinely good feelings towards to the region and his awareness as to how important this relationship is to the United States means that there are possibilities to do some programs that are innovative and that look towards the future.

**JM: You mentioned climate change and environment. Considering a country like Chile, what would you say are the opportunities that topics like energy or climate change offer to our country?**

HS: I think there are unique opportunities for Chile in particular when it comes to climate change and pioneering renewable energy. We tend to associate innovation with either large advanced industrial economies or minimally large emerging nations. Size does matter, but the flip side of large size is at a small country that has an understanding at this issues, the resources available and the basic infrastructure to begin can play a pioneering role. In the 21st century, when it comes to innovation at the cutting edge of something like renewable energy, it's a very flat world it is possible not simply to talk about Chile deploying the technology, but also developing and manufacturing the technology. It has unique qualities both in terms of it's political understanding, in terms of the efficiency of its governmental process, in terms of the resources that Chile has from its copper funds and... Simply put the Atacama Desert, a place that is ideal globally for the diffusion of solar energy.