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Tuning the Rabeca:

Highs and Lows in Pernambucano Folk Culture

By Raphael Soifer

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J, my first rabeca teacher, saw me basically as an ATM with a foreign accent. To him, I was just another gringo with an interest in traditional Pernambucano music and a pocketbook. Beginning shortly after Carnaval, we would meet in the park at the entrance of Olinda's high city twice a week to practice. There, I'd try to memorize complicated finger patterns and fast-paced bowing techniques while wilting in the afternoon sun, under attack from all sides by *mourissocas*, vicious little mosquitoes. After a while, we began to attract small audiences: homeless breadfruit vendors, yellow-shirted ACNO guides (RS-7) winding down from a day of leading tourists around the high city or chasing after cabs, and grandmothers bringing toddlers to and from the playground. They'd stop and listen as I screeched my way, sweaty-fingered, through tunes that J presented to me as the very soul of Pernambuco. Usually, our local audience members would wait until I'd finished a run-through to ask: "What kind of instrument is that?"

A rabeca in action. (photo by Liz Hardwick)

The rabeca (pronounced ha-BEH-ca) is a four-stringed fiddle, originally from North Africa, that made its way to Brazil via the Iberian Peninsula sometime in the 16th century. Though the instrument looks virtually the same as a violin, *rabequeiros* and music scholars are quick to distinguish between the two. The rabeca is fundamentally a folk instrument, made by the people and for the people, while the violin — a later invention — was designed for an aristocratic audience. While violinists hold their instrument under their chins, rabequeiros hold theirs against their chest, which limits somewhat the range of their fingers (although it makes bowing slightly easier). Violins, based on more advanced Renaissance technologies, are engineered for a higher timbre and a fine, clean sound. Rabecas — usually built by master craftsmen out of native wood — produce rougher, less ethereal notes.

When I first heard a rabeca in January, I was struck by its earthiness, and by its unexpected harmonies. The mournful sounds of *ciranda*, a circle dance often accompanied by rabeca, seemed to have more in common with Middle Eastern musical scales than with samba. The instrument called to mind Northeastern Brazilian scenes that I'd only read about, or at most, seen through a bus window, like the sun rising over dusty earth and scraggly cacti in the *sertão* (the semi-arid interior region). I'd never heard of the rabeca before I made it to Olinda, and I resolved to give it a try. It struck me as a visceral route to understanding more about the Northeast by familiarizing my fingers, wrists, and ears with its sounds and rhythms.

I wasn't alone in seeking out the rabeca as a key to the region. Plenty of Northeasterners, especially middle-class urban hipsters, are doing the same thing. In Olinda and Recife, where the

instrument never had much of a tradition, the rabeca has experienced a revival in the past decade as musicians and audiences seek out regional folklore. Rabecas aren't nearly as ubiquitous as the deep *alfaia* drums that form the base of *maracatu* percussion groups (RS-7), but they're not hard to find, either. Like the *alfaia,* the rabeca has become a symbol of regional pride and a crossover instrument, showing up in places as diverse as literary salons and rock-fusion concerts. Rabeca lessons aren't necessarily easy to find — certainly not when compared to the *maracatu* mini-courses that draw in tourists by the dozen — but they're far more popular than J led me to believe when I began training with him.

For all of its crossover success, though, the rabeca is in danger of losing ground in its traditional venues. While urban *rabequeiros* can count on small but dedicated audiences paying for shows, master musicians in the interior have to look to the outside — specifically, to the government — to receive financial support. Preserving and valorizing endangered traditional arts has become a hallmark of cultural policy under Lula. The federal government's current strategy is to grant official recognition to folk traditions while working to eradicate many of the circumstances — especially poverty and illiteracy — that played a role in their creation. The recognition is long overdue, but it also creates a new set of problems. To what extent can outside funding help maintain traditions that have always relied on and existed for their community alone? And what will "professionalization" do to a tradition where, historically, many practitioners have been illiterate?

The rabeca is a living instrument, and its new and traditional practices blur constantly. This blurring is on display every Wednesday, when a bar at the foot of Olinda's high city highlights *forró,* the Northeast's most celebrated popular music. *Forró* is high-octane dance music, driven by beats from a *zabumba* bass drum and a steel triangle the size of a coat hanger. Usually, *forró* is based around an accordion, and it's increasingly commercialized to include synthesizers, drum sets, and electric guitars. On Wednesday nights in Olinda, though, Cláudio Rabeca (his stage name), a local *rabequeiro*, leads the band, playing *pé-de-serra* tunes. (*Pé-de-serra* — literally, "foot of the hills" — refers to rustic, old-time *forró)*. What seems like the entire population of the high city comes out for *forró* nights, where the gringos try to master basic steps, locals twirl around the dance floor, and everyone hits on each other shamelessly. Cláudio's *forró* is a crowd-pleaser for a primarily young audience, but his technique is grounded in rabeca tradition, and most of his tunes are several decades old.

J aimed to be even more old school. Twice a week, he gave me a crash course in some of the rabeca's more esoteric tunes. All of them were at least a hundred years old, and most were in scales that I didn't think I'd ever heard before, and time signatures that took me days to even approximate. We'd practice for a couple of hours until sunset, or until my wrists cramped up. Over the course of the lessons we became friendly, but I always felt that J was looking to take me for everything I was worth. Generally, I'm supportive of locals' efforts to rip off the gringos. If folk culture is to continue as the base of Olinda's economy, I hoped at least that my *reais* didn't just go to tour operators, hotel owners, and hyper-capitalist landladies. But J's shamelessness in trying to sell me an idea of "authenticity" for the highest possible price started to wear me out. Once, even though I'd just paid him 50 *reais* for a two-hour lesson, he somehow coerced me into paying his 5 *real* admission for the Wednesday night *forró.*

J may have seen me as little more than a meal ticket, but he seemed to see the rabeca the same way. J is a self-styled multi-instrumentalist who studies at Pernambuco's most prestigious public university. He began playing the rabeca when he participated in a public literacy initiative during which he lived in the interior for several months, teaching government-designated masters of folk culture — mostly middle-aged men — how to read. During the course, he picked up the basics of the instrument, and since then, he didn't seem to have learned much. He practices from time to time, but he's more interested in making it as a musician in Europe than in kicking around backcountry Pernambuco, trying to glean the instrument's secrets by watching the masters play.

During our first lesson, J told me what he considered to be the secret of the rabeca. Maybe I looked a little anxious. It was at least 90 degrees in the park, and the bugs were fierce. We already were about 30 minutes into the lesson, and J still hadn't let me try to play a single note on the damn thing. He had brought two rabecas with him, along with brochures and magazines about the instrument and its history, and he was waxing eloquent about the importance of the rabeca to Pernambuco's identity. Finally, as he got ready to hand me his "reserve" instrument, J decided to let me in on the first of the rabeca's great mysteries. "Someone asked a master *rabequeiro* what the difference is between a rabeca and a violin," J told me, "and he said that all violins are the same, but that each rabeca sounds like itself."

I doubt that Itzhak Perlman would agree. I understand J's "secret," though, especially since it came via a master *rabequeiro*. The violin comes from an erudite European tradition. It conjures images of written sheet music, of elegant symphonies in gilded concert halls. To traditional *rabequeiros* from the interior of Pernambuco, violin music is strange. The wealthy, Europe-imitating society it represents is out of reach, and historically, has kept locals poor and subservient.

A rabeca, on the other hand, is inseparable from local culture. The instrument is carved by hand from one of three local woods, and its shape and sound depend on the builder's skill. Traditionally, there's been no written music for the instrument, which is often passed down between generations. *Rabequeiros* have had to improvise strings out of available material and create tunings based on their own instincts and on what the stubborn handmade tuning pegs will permit. A violin might arrive in a music shop in Recife, gleaming and prohibitively expensive, but it seems to arrive

without a clear history. A rabeca sounds like the community it comes from.

When our lessons began, J talked big, paying plenty of lip service to Pernambuco's secrets and promising to take me into towns in the interior with an illustrious history of *rabequeiros*. At that point, he was the closest I had to an expert. He was a Pernambucano musician, after all, and he'd hung out with the masters. I was making some progress in our first lessons, holding the bow better and building stronger finger muscles, but whenever I tried to adjust the tuning pegs, I somehow wound up with all four strings in B flat. J could fix the tuning, but after a few weeks of lessons it became clear that the rabeca was a lot more complicated — as an instrument and a local phenomenon — than J had presented to me. Plenty of locals had never heard of it, and many of those who knew about it had anecdotes that differed from J's "secrets." Our trip to the interior never happened. J bought a ticket to Sweden instead, and I bought his "reserve" rabeca, vowing to continue practicing on my own.

Like so much of the music, dance, and ritual that I saw while in the Northeast, the rabeca seems both immediately accessible (for a price), while shrouded in mystery and confusion. Some of the aspects of Northeastern culture that I understood the least — religious rites, *frevo* processions, or community gatherings — proved quickly accessible, while things I'd taken for granted — theatre productions, poetry recitals, or dance-party etiquette — were unexpectedly complicated. Every time I felt like I had some aspect of the Northeast at my fingertips, something reminded me of how much of the region I still didn't get. At the Wednesday night *forró* or at concerts given by rising local *rabequeiros,* I gained a strong sense of how history and tradition are embedded in every interaction. As my own playing grew stronger — or at least less shrill — I began to appreciate how much I could see, feel, and even approximate without necessarily understanding.

CONDADO, PERNAMBUCO, IS A SMALL TOWN in the north of the state's Zona da Mata, the sugar cane planting region that served as the active center of Brazil's economy for much of its colonial history. At 8 p.m. on May 31st, it looked and sounded like pretty much any small town in the Northeast on a Saturday night. Men in fedoras with neatly trimmed moustaches sat around plastic tables on the sidewalk, sharing beers and cans of Pitú cachaça as the familiar, synthesizer-heavy strains of commercial *forró* and *brega* ("cheesy") music blasted out of speaker systems in all of the bars.

In a simple residential neighborhood away from the main streets, though, well over a hundred people circled around a *banco,* a simple white bench, placed near the intersection of two dirt roads. Around 9:30, a group of five musicians in blue pants, yellow shirts printed with flowers, and white hats approached the *banco*. At a signal from Cláudio Rabeca, the *rabequeiro* from Olinda's Wednesday night *forró*, they launched into a fast-paced reel. The four percussionists accompanied Cláudio's nimble fingerwork with a frantic gallop played on the *pandeiro* (a Brazilian tambourine), *bagé* (a thin slotted stick), and *mineiro* (a long metal tube filled with seeds). The locals in the crowd, especially the kids, responded immediately, moving into the center of the circle to dance a *mergulho* (a "dive") full of rhythmic stomping and athletic leaps and bends.

The *mergulho* opened the long and complex spectacle that is a *cavalo marinho* (literally, a "sea horse"). This blend of music, dance, theatre, and religious ritual has been a cornerstone of *matuto* culture (from the Zona da Mata) for at least a couple of centuries. The central plot of the *cavalo marinho* revolves around two slaves, Sebastião and Mateus, who steal and kill their master's bull, which is miraculously revived at the end of the performance. Mateus and Sebastião's story serves as the basis for introducing dozens of other characters and scores of songs and dances over the course of several hours. (Traditionally, the performance lasts until daybreak, although that night in Condado, it only went until about 5 a.m.). The *banco* of musicians, led by the *rabequeiro*, accompanies all of the action.

Condado has a long history of producing rabeca virtuosos. Seu Luis Paixão, whom many consider to be Brazil's

Cláudio Rabeca tunes up before the cavalo marinho *in Condado, Pernambuco.*

Dancing the mergulho

foremost living *rabequeiro*, was born and raised in the town, and still lives there when he isn't on tour. Even so, Estrela de Ouro (Gold Star), the town's original *cavalo marinho* group, has had a hard time keeping a rabeca on their *banco.* The group's long-time *rabequeiro* left a few years back to found his own *cavalo marinho*, and there were no suitable replacements in town. Eventually, Estrela de Ouro found Cláudio in Olinda. A native of Natal, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, Cláudio worked as an industrial engineer for almost a decade before making his way to Olinda. There, he began to study rabeca, and proved to be surprisingly adept. He soon left engineering to devote himself full-time to the instrument.

At the *cavalo marinho*, all of the actors and musicians except for Cláudio were from Condado, but there was a sizeable chunk of hip, middle-class Recife kids in the audience. A couple of them, who also study with Cláudio, had brought their own rabecas to try and play along. *Cavalo marinho*, like the instrument at the heart of it, is part of the trendy folk cultural revival in urban Pernambuco. Mestre Ambrosio, a rabeca-based fusion band named after the masked character who opens every *cavalo marinho*, cut two popular and critically acclaimed CDs in the late 1990s and the beginning of this decade. More recently, Graal, one of Recife's most prominent dance groups, staged a trilogy based on the rhythms and movements of the spectacle.

Government patronage and urban artists increased awareness of the rabeca in the past decade, but *rabequeiros* from the interior have sustained the instrument for centuries, and the masters of the past 50 years have played a crucial role keeping it alive. Large-scale migrations to the southeast reduced the population in the Zona da Mata and throughout the Northeast's interior, while electricity and the arrival of mass media have changed local culture, an alteration easy to hear in the electric pop music blaring along Condado's main streets.

Much of the rabeca's survival depended on Mestre

Manuel Salustiano, who died on August 31, 2008. A master *rabequeiro* from Aliança, in the Zona da Mata, Mestre Salustiano moved to Olinda as a young man. There, he ran the Casa da Rabeca (House of the Rabeca) in the peripheral neighborhood of Cidade Tabajara. The Casa da Rabeca is equal parts nightclub and cultural center. On weekend nights, the crowds pour in to listen to local musicians: *rabequeiros*, on occasion, but also accordion players, flute bands, and percussion groups spanning a wide range of styles. During the week, the Casa sells handmade rabecas built by one of Salustiano's 15 children. Salustiano also occasionally gave rabeca lessons, and was famous for saying that the only true *rabequeiros* these days are the ones (like Cláudio Rabeca) who began with him.

For now, at least, the increased support that Salustiano and other helped attract to the Zona da Mata doesn't seem to have changed much in Condado beyond the frequency of *cavalo marinho* presentations. Estrela de Ouro still gives an amazing performance. Admittedly, I couldn't follow most of the *cavalo marinho*. Even knowing parts of the story in advance, I didn't understand the logic of the sequence of events, and the actors' thick *matuto* accents and local slang made me struggle to keep up with the dialogue. Even so, I was captivated. I loved Mateus and Sebastião, who were masters of physical comedy, and who spent many of their hours on stage whacking each other and random audience members with inflated animal bladders (a mainstay of *cavalo marinho*). Even when I couldn't make out what the actors' were saying, their facial expressions and comic timing were sensational. The rhythms of the songs were infectious, and the performers' singing was a lusty, throaty, no-holds-barred explosion of sound.

As soon as Cláudio played the first notes for the *mergulho*, little kids in the audience "dove" into center of the circle to dance with men at least 10 times their age. Community members danced the *mergulho* with a look of intense concentration, and though many of them left during the course of the seven-hour performance, or chatted on the sidelines passing cans of Pitú, they watched the action with looks of pride and tremendous enjoyment. The presentation had enough going on at all times to keep a diverse selection of audience members involved. I laughed at the physical comedy and wiggled more-or-less in time with the music, but locals presumably understood the lyrics, the deeper meanings of the scenes, and why, at a specific moment, Sebastião chose to bop a particular audience member on the head.

For the next generation — the wide-eyed kids who seemed to dance the *mergulho* expertly — there will be plenty of exposure to *cavalo marinho*. Public interest and government funds sustain more performances, so that the ceremony, traditionally held in the summer (November and December), is now pretty much a year-round event. Condado's old guard is still going strong. The May performance I watched commemorated the 72nd birthday of the actor who played Sebastião. He's played the part for 50 years, and from his stamina and athleticism, it looks like he's ready for at least a couple more decades. Mestre Biu, the 76-year-old *cavalo marinho* master, doesn't show any signs of slowing down either. In 2006, Estrela de Ouro released a commercial DVD with an abridged (two-and-a-half hour) *cavalo marinho*, and the disc has sold well in Recife and in Europe.

Cláudio Rabeca leads the banco in Condado.

Still, Cláudio told me that locals are worried that the rabeca will die out in their community. Seu Luis Paixão — who showed up later that night to lead the banco for a bit — is getting old, and is usually on tour. Recently, the city government resolved to bring Cláudio to Condado to teach rabeca to little kids and adolescents. Bringing an out-of-towner to give rabeca lessons in the Zona da Mata would have been unthinkable a couple of decades ago. (For generations, the idea of rabeca lessons

wouldn't have made much sense, since aspiring musicians learned simply by watching and imitating the local master *rabequeiro*). Condado's unorthodox scheme might be the best way to preserve the town's traditions. It will take some luck, though. The first scheduled lesson, in early June, didn't show much promise, since the car that was supposed to bring Cláudio there and back never made it to Olinda.

I NEVER HAD PRETENSIONS OF MASTERING the rabeca. Like most people with a performance-art background, though, I entertain frequent fantasies of being the next Laurie Anderson, the violin and cello-playing, free-verse writing, body-undulating superstar who always seems to have one more trick up her sleeve. In Pernambuco, of course, the rabeca wouldn't set me apart much even if I did master it, but I sometimes daydreamed about what I could do with the instrument — and what its novelty value could do for me — in Rio, São Paulo, or New York.

As cultural tourism in Pernambuco increases, the demand for local musicians has skyrocketed, especially in southeastern Brazil and in Europe. The Montreux Jazz Festival, for example, recently dedicated one night to Pernambucano rhythms, bringing *forró* and *maracatu* ensembles to international audiences. Local musicians who have made it out of Pernambuco told me that they tend to earn much greater respect — and more substantial paychecks — the farther they go from home.

Renata Rosa, an actress from São Paulo who moved to Pernambuco almost a decade ago to study rabeca with Seu Luis Paixão, is probably the instrument's best-known proponent in France. Her songs merge musical styles from throughout Pernambuco into a folk pastiche that, friends tell me, is especially hypnotic to non-Pernambucano ears. Rosa's first CD has English liner notes and song translations, but city and state seals and the federal government's "Brasil: A Country for All" logo — images that show public funding at work on most locally produced albums — are conspicuously absent.

In early June, I went to see Rosa play with Seu Luis Paixão. The concert was at the Pátio de São Pedro, an outdoor venue in central Recife where City Hall sponsors events several times a week. I got there about halfway through the show, but there were at most a hundred people in the Saturday night crowd, unusual for a space that easily draws audiences of a thousand to *maracatu* and reggae mini-sets at the weekly "Black Tuesday" series.

The crowd size didn't come as a major shock, since local friends had always been quick to criticize Rosa, and none had been willing to go to her concert with me. No one questioned her artistry or her dedication to her instrument; instead, they found fault with how she conducted herself on the street on a certain day, or how she'd seemed to stalk out of the bar that Wednesday night at the *forró*. "Gringos always love her songs," one friend told me, as she played Rosa's CD for at least the fourth or fifth time since I'd started hanging out at her house a couple of weeks before. And that seemed to sum up the Renata Rosa phenomenon. Olindenses couldn't find fault with her music, but they had a hard time with where it had taken her, or where she'd taken it.

After one of Rosa's shows, J told me during our second lesson, he saw a concertgoer upbraid her for an apparently unacceptable breach with tradition. It wasn't her genre-bending songs, her lyrical innovations, or the fact that she was a young woman making headlines for playing what traditionally has been a boys-only instrument. Instead, it was the microtuners she'd affixed to a violin tailpiece at the base of her rabeca. She'd ruined the instrument, the would-be fan told her; it wasn't really a rabeca anymore.

J had plastic tailpieces with fine-tuners on both of his instruments. Cláudio Rabeca uses them, too, as does everyone who's taken the presumptuous leap of playing with accompaniment from guitars, other rabecas, or pretty much anything beyond traditional percussion instruments. The adjustment has helped bring rabeca music back into the public eye by significantly increasing the instrument's versatility.

Shortly before Rosa's Recife concert, I leafed through her sleek CD pamphlet as my friend played her album — to which I was becoming addicted — yet again. Toward the

Sebastião, Mestre Biu (costumed as a caboclinho, *a native spirit) and Mateus.*

Cláudio Rabeca and Seu Luis Paixão

front, a close-up of Seu Luis Paixão, Rosa's first teacher, shows him holding a well-worn rabeca with a new plastic violin tailpiece, complete with microtuners. I asked my friend if Paixão's microtuners meant the end of a tradition. "You don't get it," she glared, "Seu Luis *is* the tradition." Rosa may be among the rabeca's most prominent practitioners, but to many in Pernambuco, the instrument doesn't really belong to her, or she to it. Working in a tradition that's not her own, any deviance from it is subject to intense scrutiny. Seu Luis, on the other hand, is an authentic, old school, local *rabequeiro*. Where he takes the *rabeca*, in my friend's view, is part of its natural trajectory.

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 28, A HEALTHY percentage of Olinda's high city showed up to hear Maciel Salú play from the upper deck of Bodega do Veio, a nostalgic, interior style bar on Rua do Amparo. The young musician is Mestre Salustiano's (founder of the Casa da Rabeca) son, and a rabeca virtuoso in his own right. In the past three years, fronting an electrified *forró*-fusion band, Salú has begun to make a name for himself around Pernambuco and beyond.

It was the eve of St. Peter's Day, the last in a series of Saints' Days that form the basis for Brazil's *festas juninas*, June folk festivals that celebrate the winter harvest. *Festas juninas* are commemorated throughout the country with bonfires, *pamonha* and *canjica* (different kinds of corn porridge), and a constant soundtrack of old-time *forró*. Closing out Olinda's relatively low-key celebrations ahead of a drunken *festa junina* square dance featuring men in skirts and lipstick and women wearing suspenders and greasepaint moustaches, Salú highlighted both the modernization of northeastern traditions and a deep connection to the past. That Saturday night, his repertoire was largely traditional, *pé-de-serra forró*, but other shows and collaborations with experimental bands like Mestre Ambrosio and DJ Dolores have found him mixing *rabeca* tunes and techniques from *forró* and *cavalo marinho* with everything from brass instruments to sampled electronic music.

Salú's experimentalism is based foremost on his mastery of the rabeca. His songs are infectious, especially in the live shows that he gives during pretty much any holiday in Olinda (before his June show, I'd seen him during Carnaval, and at the town's birthday in March). Public reactions to his music, however, have plenty to do with his *rabequeiro* pedigree. While folks seem eager to scrutinize Renata Rosa's slightest departures from tradition —when they're not ignoring her altogether — Salú's name recognition, local accent, and resemblance to his father allow him ample room to play around. Maciel Salú's local prominence and love of the rabeca are testaments to his father's legacy, and guarantee the tradition for at least another generation. Still, I heard a local musician worry that "in ten years, the rabeca will be a Salustiano family trademark," that use of the instrument hadn't spread or diversified enough to keep it alive and active, as it was for generations in the Zona da Mata.

I left Olinda a week after watching Salú play, crossing the Northeast by bus with a backpack, a duffle, and J's reserve rabeca in a gig bag over my shoulder. Thanks to Cláudio Rabeca's lessons, I'd memorized the basic scales, and I had seven tunes that I could play with only the occasional screech, sometimes without missing a note. Lots of folks I met during my one-month road trip asked if I was carrying a *cavaquinho* (a Brazilian ukulele), and when I replied that the instrument was a rabeca, most of them asked, "What's that?" A couple of them had heard of it, though, and one even asked if I could play anything by Mestre Ambrosio, the first major rabeca-fusion group. I was thrilled to be able to launch into "Pé-de-Calçada," which I'd seen Maciel Salú cover from the balcony of Bodega do Veio a couple weeks before. I even attempted to approximate the song's *matuto* lyrics, a contemporary master's vision for the rabeca:

Rebeca veia, não me abandona
Zabumba, treme terra, come o chão
Na hora que o tempo desaparece
Transforma em pé de serra o calçadão

Old rabeca, don't abandon me
Zabumba, shake the earth, eat the ground
At the moment when time disappears
The sidewalk will transform into the foot of the hills. ❑

Current Fellows

Elena Agarkova • RUSSIA
May 2008 - 2010
Elena will be living in Siberia, studying management of natural resources and the relationship between Siberia's natural riches and its people. Previously, Elena was a Legal Fellow at the University of Washington's School of Law, at the Berman Environmental Law Clinic. She has clerked for Honorable Cynthia M. Rufe of the federal district court in Philadelphia, and has practiced commercial litigation at the New York office of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP. Elena was born in Moscow, Russia, and has volunteered for environmental non-profits in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 2001, and has received a bachelor's degree in political science from Barnard College.

Pooja Bhatia • HAITI
September 2008 - 2010
Pooja attended Harvard as an undergraduate, and then worked for the Wall Street Journal for a few years. She graduated from Harvard Law School. She was appointed Harvard Law School Satter Human Rights Fellow in 2007 and worked as an attorney with the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, which advocates and litigates on behalf of Haiti's poor.

Ezra Fieser • GUATEMALA
January 2008 - 2010
Ezra is interested in economic and political changes in Central America. He is an ICWA fellow living in Guatemala where he will write about the country's rapidly changing economic structure and the effects on its politics, culture and people. He was formerly the deputy city editor for The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal, a staff writer for Springfield (Mass.) Republican and a Pulliam Fellow at The Arizona Republic. He is a graduate of Emerson College in Boston.

Suzy Hansen • TURKEY
April 2007 - 2009
A John O. Crane Memorial Fellow, Suzy will be writing about politics and religion in Turkey. A former editor at the New York Observer, her work has also appeared in Salon, the New York Times Book Review, the Nation, and other publications. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1999.

Derek Mitchell • INDIA
September 2007 - 2009
As a Phillips Talbot Fellow, Derek will explore the impact of global trade and economic growth on Indians living in poverty. He has served for the past year as a volunteer for Swaraj Peeth, an institute in New Delhi dedicated to nonviolent conflict resolution and Mahatma Gandhi's thought. Previously he was a Fulbright scholar in India at the Gandhi Peace Foundation. He has coordinated foreign policy research at George Washington University's Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies and worked as a political organizer in New Hampshire. Derek graduated with a degree in religion from Columbia University.

Raphael Soifer • BRAZIL
April 2007-2009
Raphi is a Donors' Fellow studying, as a participant and observer, the relationship between the arts and social change in communities throughout Brazil. An actor, director, playwright, musician and theatre educator, he has worked in the United States and Brazil, and has taught performance to prisoners and underprivileged youth through People's Palace Projects in Rio de Janeiro and Community Works in San Francisco. He holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies and Anthropology from Yale University.

Recently Appointed

Eve Fairbanks • SOUTH AFRICA
March 2009 - 2011
Eve is a New Republic staff writer interested in character and in how individuals fit themselves into new or changing societies. Through that lens, she will be writing about medicine and politics in the new South Africa. At the New Republic, she covered the first Democratic Congress since 1992 and the 2008 presidential race; her book reviews have also appeared the New York Times. She graduated with a degree in political science from Yale, where she also studied music.

Cecilia Kline • CENTRAL AMERICA
January 2009 - 2011
Cecilia is a graduate of Georgetown University, Loyola University Chicago School of Law, and the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. In 2007 she began with Casa Alianza in Tegucigalpa, Honduras providing outreach for youth living on the street. As an ICWA Fellow she will write about youth-service programs from several Central American cities as a participant observer.

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