



Former Chilean President Ricardo Lagos Visits PC

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CAMPUS NEWS

In the span of two days, the Providence College community interacted with a former president twice. Drs. Paola Cesarini and Jeffrey Pugh, professors of political science, joined Ricardo Lagos, former president of the Republic of Chile, on a panel on transitional justice at Brown University last Wednesday.

The panel, titled "Does Transitional Justice Work?", was held at the Watson Institute for Public Policy. In a lecture hall with about 20 attendees, the

LAGOS: "Politics is not a very nice world today."

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panelists offered their expertise to answer the question as to whether or not transitional justice worked.

Speaking first was Lagos, who enacted transitional justice in Chile following the overthrow of General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet had brought a military dictatorship upon Chile after overthrowing President Salvador Allende.

Lagos touched upon how one reforms a judicial system where everyone has equal access to justice, something he did in his tenure.

The president elaborated on his administration's actions and ended by saying, "Democracy is a process that needs to be improved every day." He continued, "Yes, it is possible to implement judicial reform, but it is expensive."

Following him on the panel was Cesarini, an expert in transitional justice. Cesarini teaches a seminar on transitional justice at Providence College this semester and has taught other courses on human rights.

Before offering her extensive research on the matter, Cesarini said, "Transitional justice matters and it can work to the benefit or disadvantage of democracy." She elaborated on her point based on her studies on the subject.

On being invited to speak with a president, Cesarini said, "It was an honor." She continued, "You always hear about the name of Ricardo Lagos and when you sit next to him, you can't help but think about what he must have gone through."

She implored Providence College students to "take a trek across the city" and take advantage of the great events the Watson Institute at Brown University hosts.



Drs. Paola Cesarini and Jeffrey Pugh participated in a forum with President Ricardo Lagos at Brown University.

Pugh, whose expertise focuses on Latin America, offered his view on transitional justice based on empirical studies. He also emphasized the "consolidation of democracy."

Members from the panel, although going beyond their allotted time, engaged in a question and answer session with those in attendance. The diverse audience included scholars ranging from political scientists to students from Providence College, Brown University, and the Rhode Island School of Design.

On Thursday, President Lagos delivered the first ever Rev. Edward Clearly, O.P., lecture at Providence College in '64 Hall. Fr. Clearly was a scholar of Latin American studies. A

published author, his books were on sale at the lecture.

Pugh introduced a range of speakers leading up to Lagos's lecture. Ethan Gentes '13 offered an opening tribute to Fr. Clearly. He introduced Rev. David Orique, O.P., professor of Latin American studies and Development of Western Civilization at the College. Orique gave a brief background on Lagos's legacy and its impact on Latin America before introducing the president himself.

Dr. Hugh Lena, provost of the College, also spoke at the event.

Lagos' explained that Chile's transition to democracy was according to Pinochet's constitution, which was an obstacle encountered.

Lagos clarified that the process of bringing those responsible for the atrocities in the Pinochet regime was difficult because of how hard it was for people to share their stories. He said, "It is degrading for a woman to say, 'I was raped multiple times.'"

While some Chileans, even those in the government, believed that the country should just forget the mayhem of the Pinochet regime, Lagos made it known that "there is no tomorrow without yesterday."

The president took questions from the crowd following the lecture. Students and faculty participated in a discussion moderated by Pugh.

To conclude the event, Esteban Rojas '14 presented a gift to President Lagos. He opened the quilt and said he looked forward to bringing it back to his home in Chile.

The lecture was followed by a private dinner with members of the College.

Lagos spoke with *The Cowl* following the event and said, "It is spectacular to speak with students. They are the ones that form the ethics of the future." He continued, "When in office, it is hard for a president to speak at events like these, but I encourage all heads of state to do this after their tenures."

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