

IN MEMORIAM



Susanne L. Jonas, 1941–2022

SUSANNE JONAS PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 80 ON AUGUST 31. SHE joined the *Social Justice* editorial board in 1986, a natural progression after a long association and many shared projects. More recently, she contributed to the advisory board. Along with numerous articles, she assembled special issues ranging from *Latin America Faces the 21st Century* (1992, with Ed McCaughan) to *Immigration: A Civil Rights Issue for the Americas in the 21st Century* (1996, with Suzie Dod Thomas), *Beyond the Neoliberal Peace: From Conflict Resolution to Social Reconciliation* (1998, with Ronnie D. Lipschutz), and *Latin America Revisited* (2014, again with Ed McCaughan).

Susanne brought to the table half a century of research and publications covering the decisive moments in the troubled history of US relations with its neighbors south of the border. It was not unusual for her to know the president of Brazil or Mexico's foreign minister. She was keenly aware of developments concerning the Mexican Left. For example, she and fellow board member Betita Martinez traveled to Mexico and accompanied democratic, independent Mexican union activists outside the capital to observe voting in Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' unsuccessful presidential bid in 1994. Close acquaintances included artist Rini Templeton and Alejandro Alvarez, who was associated with the Mexican journals *Corre La Voz* and *Punto Crítico*, the latter a publication initiated by student movement leaders imprisoned following the repression of 1968.

Susanne completed her doctoral work during the tumultuous late 1960s and early 1970s at UC Berkeley, focusing on US hemispheric strategy in Guatemala from 1950 to 1974. That brought her together with like-minded scholar-activists. Her publications on Guatemala with NACLA-West in the 1970s caught the attention of the late Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton, who cited her work in his book on US imperialism in Central America. She, in turn, was associated with Brigada Cultural Roque Dalton from the early 1970s onward. Susanne regularly contributed to *Latin American Perspectives* and supported a host of organizations dedicated to helping people in the region. Among the latter, she was a long-time supporter of Central American Resource Center, CARECEN SF, located in San Francisco's Mission District. Her article "City of Refuge, City of Survival Struggles: Contradictions of San Francisco for Low-Wage Latino Immigrants" (*LASA Forum*, 2012) reflects those concerns.

News of her death on August 31 quickly reverberated throughout the Americas, from her Bay Area home down to Guatemala and other Latin American countries. Her 1984 work *Guatemala: Tyranny on Trial* compiled testimony of the Permanent People's Tribunal (with Elizabeth S. Martinez and Ed McCaughan). This process brought her together with Raul Molina Mejía in 1983, who had been acting rector of the largest and oldest university of Guatemala and cofounded the Unitary Representation of the Guatemalan Opposition. He emphasized the importance of her contribution for the Tribunal's conclusions and stated that her body of work constitutes required reading for understanding the political history of Guatemala from 1944 to the present. Susanne worked closely with the Facultad Latino Americana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO-Guatemala), which published Spanish editions of her seminal works, *La batalla por Guatemala: rebeldes, escuadrones de la muerte y poder estadounidense* (1994) and *De centauros y palomas: el proceso de paz guatemalteco* (2000). Her later books mirrored her advocacy of the 1996 Peace Accords in Guatemala and monitored its tragic shortcomings. Many remember Susanne for her incisive insights, disarmingly pointed interviewing style, and careful research on Latin and Central American and global affairs. Yet she was also an excellent musician, linguist, teacher, and friend.

Jonas's middle name was Leilani, marking her birth on December 31st in Honolulu, Hawaii, just weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. In May 1938, her parents, German Jews, had fled Nazi persecution. Susanne's passion for studying the genocide of Indigenous people and the plight of migrants in Guatemala therefore had a deep family connection. Right after Pearl Harbor, US military authorities in Hawaii interned her parents because they were

technically “enemy aliens.” Soon after Susanne’s birth they departed for the mainland, settling in Cincinnati, Ohio. There she graduated *cum laude* from Walnut Hills High School, participating in the school newspaper and literary magazine, choir, and history and debating clubs. More honors followed as her higher education unfolded at elite universities: Radcliffe College/Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and University of California, Berkeley.

At Harvard, she met a young medical student, Thomas Bodenheimer, while playing together in the orchestra. They married in 1963 and eventually had a daughter, Rebecca.

Another enduring legacy was Susanne’s participation in UC Santa Cruz’s Latin American and Latino Studies Department. A founding member of the department, she first lectured there in 1986. With such a stellar track record, including collaboration with the Holocaust Museum in Washington, a smooth ascent into a comfortable academic career might reasonably have been anticipated. But her chosen field, political science, was then predominantly male and her strident critique of US foreign policy garnered disapprobation, not institutional support. Nonetheless, Susanne’s courses were popular among students and her scholarship continued evolving. Her final book, *Guatemala-U.S. Migration: Transforming Regions*, coauthored with sociologist Nestor Rodríguez, required that she learn about newer theoretical trends as she shifted focus to the issue of migration.

Susanne is predeceased by her parents, who died in San Francisco in 2007 and 2014, and by her second husband Thomas C. Holleran, in 2011. She is survived by her sister, Linda Schroeder of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and by her daughter, Rebecca Bodenheimer, son-in-law Lázaro Moncada, and their two children, Julián and Xiomara, of Oakland.