

E Pluribus Unum?— Ethnic Identities in Processes of Transnational Integration in the AmericasEröffnungstagung der ZiF: Forschungsgruppe *E Pluribus Unum?*

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Nach einem Jahr intensiver Vorbereitungen startete die ZiF: Forschungsgruppe E Pluribus Unum? – Ethnic Identities in Processes of Transnational Integration in the Americas mit einer viertägigen Eröffnungstagung in das Forschungsjahr. 60 WissenschaftlerInnen und Kulturschaffende aus 17 Nationen diskutierten vom 8. bis zum 11. Oktober Fragen zur Konstruktion und zum Gebrauch von Ethnizität im heutigen Nord-, Süd- und Mittelamerika. Die Interdisziplinarität des Dialogs gründete dabei auf der Teilnahme von Wissenschaftlern aus der Soziologie, Geschichte, Hispanistik und Amerikanistik sowie aus den Literatur-, Kultur-, Film- und Erziehungswissenschaften. Die Wahlkampfkampagne Barack Obamas, die während der Konferenz die Medien dominierte, war dabei nur einer der Faktoren, der demonstrierte, dass die während der Eröffnungskonferenz fokussierten Fragestellungen zu Ethnizität im Kontext von Transnationalisierungsprozessen derzeit von eindeutiger Relevanz sind.

After a year of intense preparations the ZiF's current research group got off to a splendid start with its inaugural conference, which was held from October 8 to 11, 2008. The organizers of the research group—JunProf. Dr. Sebastian Thies (Latin American Studies and Media Studies, Bielefeld University), Prof. Dr. Josef Raab (American Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen), and Dr. Olaf Kaltmeier (Sociology, Bielefeld University)—had launched a call for papers that elicited an overwhelming response. Out of close to 100 paper proposals about half were chosen for presentation at the meeting—in addition to lectures by several keynote speakers. In the end, scholars from no less than 17 nations gathered to discuss constructions and uses of ethnic identity in North, Central, and South America today. The election campaign of Barack Obama, which was in full swing at the time of this conference, was just one of the factors underlining the topicality of this meeting and of the research group that it inaugurated. The age of globalization has spawned a renewed focus on political and cultural negotiations in what one might call with Pierre Bourdieu the field of identity politics. This development manifests itself throughout the American hemisphere: new indigenous movements have contested post-colonial forms of political representation in Ecuador and Bolivia; the debates on ecological consequences of industrialization and on intellectual property rights have put indigenous groups from the Amazonian region on international agendas; large numbers of people have been mobilized for and against immigration reform in the U.S.; and the votes by members of so-called 'ethnic minorities' were especially coveted in the 2008 presidential election campaigns in the United States. In current academic discussions, concepts like *multiculturalism*, *new ethnicities*, *creolization*, *hybridity*, *mestizaje*, *diasporas*, and *post-ethnicity* articulate positionings vis à vis these developments that are profoundly changing our understanding of 'ethnicity'. Demands for an 'un-raced' society, culture, and language are voiced by Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison and many others.

