

the family, Gordon-Reed and Onuf write, “would radiate out to the community, the state, and the nation. The American nation would, in turn, become an example to the world of the capacity for relationships based on harmony, bonds of trust, and mutual interest to keep peace in the world.”

Jefferson’s famous prescription for republican government rested on what he called “ward republics.” “Divide every county into hundreds, of such size that all the children of each will be within reach of a central school in it,” he wrote in 1810. Each hundred was to elect all local officials, including jurors, and have civil officials “to manage all its concerns, to take care of its roads, its poor, and its police by patrols.” These “little republics,” he wrote, “would be the main strength of the great one.” Ironically, Jefferson found the model for them in New England, not in Virginia. “These wards, called townships in New England,” he wrote in 1816, “are the vital principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation.” Indeed, the goal was to make “every citizen...an acting member of the government.” He could only hope that “in the fulness of time” Virginians and the rest of the nation would follow the progressive example of the Easterners.

Jefferson’s concept of a republican nation composed of self-governing states, counties, and “wards” which, in turn, were composed of family units, predated the groundbreaking discovery of fractals in 1975 by the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, an occasional visiting professor at Harvard. A form of geometric repetition, fractals are, as one writer described them, “smaller and smaller copies of a pattern successively nested inside each other, so that the same intricate shapes appear no matter how much you zoom in to the whole.” Mandelbrot’s favorite example was the cauliflower—“a single floret,” he wrote, “looks like a small cauliflower. If you strip that floret of everything except one floret of a floret...it is again a cauliflower.”

And so, as Gordon-Reed and

Onuf demonstrate in their excellent book, Jefferson’s self-fashioning as blessed family patriarch was inextricably and intimately tied to his vision of self-governing communities and a self-governing free nation. Monticello was what Jefferson wanted for himself—and, minus slavery, it was also a prescription for a free republican nation in which citizens could enjoy their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In his imagination

and in his mind, the mountaintop home over which he presided constituted an ideal model for the nation and the world. ▢

*Susan Dunn, Ph.D. ’73, McCoy professor of humanities at Williams College, is the author of many books, including *Dominion of Memories: Jefferson, Madison, and the Decline of Virginia* (reviewed in the March-April 2008 issue, page 26) and 1940: FDR, Willkie, Lindbergh, Hitler—The Election Amid the Storm.*

## ALUMNI

## Mexico Debates Marijuana

*A new tack on stemming drug-related violence*

by LYDIALYLE GIBSON

JUAN FRANCISCO TORRES LANDA, LL.M. ’90, a corporate attorney in Mexico City, has never used marijuana and doesn’t plan to start now, even though he recently became one of only four people in Mexico granted the right to

do so, after a legal battle that went all the way to the country’s Supreme Court.

For him, the fight isn’t about the freedom to grow his own pot or a desire to get high. It’s about the catastrophic violence engulfing his country, fueled by drug traf-



**Plaintiffs Pablo Girault, Armando Santacruz, and Juan Francisco Torres Landa show off the permits allowing them to grow and use marijuana.**

ficking—murders, kidnappings, torture, extortion—and the desperate search for some way, any way, to stop it.

BETWEEN 2007 and 2014, according to data from Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography, the country recorded more than 164,000 homicides, as many as half or more (estimates vary) attributable to drug violence—and no comprehensive count exists for the thousands of drug-related kidnappings. In 2011, at the height of the cartel wars, 27,000 people were killed. And this January, a newly elected mayor in the central city of Temixco, who had vowed to combat organized crime “frontally and directly,” was shot to death at her home less than 24 hours after taking office. Days later, UCLA researchers released findings that the drug violence in Mexico was undoing a century's worth of gains in male life expectancy.

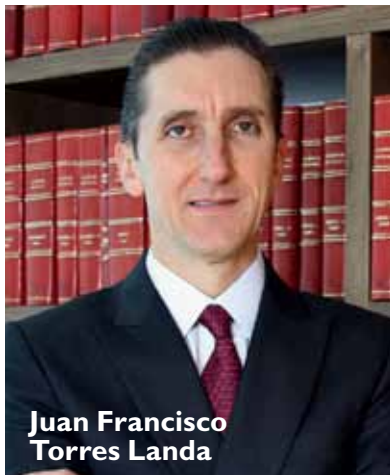
“It's a disaster,” says Torres Landa. And Mexico's prohibitions against drugs, along with its ceaseless campaigns against traffickers, he argues, “have themselves created more damage than the damage they were supposed to mitigate.”

Which is why, in 2013, he and Armando Santacruz, M.B.A. '87, whom he met through the Harvard Club of Mexico, along with two other plaintiffs, sued for the right to grow and consume their own pot. As members of the anti-crime organization México Unido Contra la Delincuencia (Mexico United Against Crime/MUCD), all four would like to see marijuana legalized outright.

On November 3, the Supreme Court ruled 4-1 in the plaintiffs' favor, declaring that the country's laws against the possession and use of the drug represented a violation of their fundamental human rights, specifically “the right to the free development of one's personality,” enshrined in the Mexican constitution. (The ruling applies only to the four who brought the case, though; for it to become law, the Supreme Court would have to decide four more cases in the same way. And it may get the chance: since December, at least five other sets of plaintiffs have applied for permission to grow their own marijuana,

the first step in filing suit.) With the lawsuit, the plaintiffs risk exposing themselves to danger—and indeed, they are careful never to call out a cartel by name, never to attack any specific person—but, Torres Landa says, “When you see damage being done, you cannot simply watch. You cannot stand by and say it's OK for people to be kidnapped and extorted. No.”

American consumers are, by far, the prime market for Mexican drug traffickers, so legalizing marijuana in Mexico, where the drug is less popular, will not immediately undermine the drug cartels' business. But as Santacruz and Torres Landa hoped, the court decision did open a conversation that had remained stalled for years: about the effectiveness of Mexico's drug laws (some of the most severe in Latin America), and about the wisdom of its tough-on-crime approach.



**Juan Francisco  
Torres Landa**



**Armando Santacruz**

Since the ruling, President Enrique Peña Nieto, a longtime opponent of marijuana legalization, has said he welcomes a debate—though he hasn't changed his mind—and has promised to convene medical experts and sociologists to discuss possible reforms. A senator from Nuevo Leon, a state deeply scarred by drug violence, proposed legislation to allow the import of medicines made from cannabis. And Mexico City's mayor introduced a plan to potentially legalize medical marijuana nationwide. The city's archbishop, Cardinal Norberto Rivera, gave his and the Catholic Church's assent. “We have no problem,” he told reporters, with the drug's medicinal use. Months later, Torres Landa says, “This topic has not faded. It is being discussed not only in the executive branch and the congress, but in offices, restaurants, and colleges. It is a true awakening.”

After more than a decade, the country's American-backed “war on drugs” has imprisoned thousands of Mexicans but secured few lasting victories against organized crime, political corruption, and the flow of drugs and money throughout Mexico. “The cost to society” of drug-related incarceration, Santacruz says, “is huge; the destruction of lives is huge. This is a totally dismal, totally destructive policy.”

Organized crime “is tearing the country apart,” Mexican Supreme Court justice Alfredo Gutierrez Ortiz Mena, LL.M. '96, said during a December talk at Harvard on the role of the court in Mexico's democracy, and meanwhile, the issue of drug policy “had been pushed under the rug.” He ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in November and in his talk compared the landmark case to the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Brown's* role in sparking an American conversation on civil rights. “If the court had not stepped in,” he mused, “would the states have done something? Would the federal government?”

TORRES LANDA and Santacruz found themselves asking similar questions about Mexico's drug policy. The men seem unlikely antagonists in a fight over access to weed. Husbands, fathers, buttoned-down professionals, each has

served as president of the Harvard Club of Mexico. Born in the state of Guanajuato, Torres Landa was raised in Mexico City and earned a law degree from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and worked for several years at a firm in Mexico City before moving on to Harvard and six months in practice in Washington, D.C. He then returned home to the firm (which in 2014 merged with the international firm Hogan Lovells), where he is a partner.

Santacruz also grew up in Mexico City; he studied accounting at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México before attending Harvard Business School. He is co-founder and CEO of Grupo Pochteca, a raw materials, chemical, and paper-distribution company with operations in Brazil, Central America, and Mexico.

Both men remember a different, safer Mexico. As a child, Santacruz traveled



on the equivalent of a Greyhound bus to a family ranch in Chihuahua, some 800 miles from Mexico City: “When I turned 13, my mom allowed us to go there on our own.” By the 1990s, however, things had turned “nasty,” and in 1997 he and others started MUCD. Its lead founder—and one of the legalization plaintiffs—is Josefina Ricaño de Nava, whose son, Raul, had been kidnapped that May by a killer nicknamed “El Mochaorejas”: The Ear Chopper. “He used to send them to the families to put pressure on them to pay up,” says Santacruz. In the end, Raul was killed; a family member found his body at the morgue months later. And three years ago, Santacruz’s own brother was abducted, although he was released unharmed. Torres Landa had a cousin who was kidnapped and killed. “And an uncle,” he says, “whom I was able to recover.”

In 2004 a MUCD-organized “Let’s Rescue Mexico” march drew 250,000 people, all dressed in white, onto the streets of Mexico City, and the group has pushed for reforms in policing and criminal justice. But, Santacruz says, the group saw that such efforts

“would always be overwhelmed by the power and the incredible force of the drug business.” Torres Landa adds, “The drug policy we have lived with for many years has in fact generated tremendous availability and diversity of drugs, and in a way that the government exercises no control over whatsoever.”

CHANGES in drug policies among other countries in the region should bolster efforts in Mexico. In Colombia, personal marijuana use is legal, and Uruguay legalized cannabis in 2013. The following year Chile planted its first crop of medical marijuana, using 850 seeds imported from the Netherlands.

But public opinion in Mexico has solidly opposed legalizing pot. In part, say Santacruz and Torres Landa, that’s because the drug, paradoxically, is little known locally. In a 2011 survey, about 2.5 percent of Mexi-



The lawsuit has its origin in MUCD, a citizens’ group formed in 1997 to try to reduce crime.

cans reported having used marijuana during the past year, versus the 7.5 percent of Americans who report having used it in the *past month*. The Supreme Court ruling has been widely reported

and “gives us a chance to spell out the real dangers,” Santacruz says. “Look, pot is certainly dangerous....But it’s not going to turn you into Godzilla. And if anyone you know smokes under regulated conditions—which is what we’re proposing, that the government regulates it—we will all be better off than if people have to touch base with organized crime every time they need to get some dope.”

Most pivotal in shrinking the Mexican marijuana trade are the evolving revisions of U.S. marijuana policies. “Honestly, it will be best for us when the U.S. fully legalizes,” says Santacruz. “Legalizing locally here in Mexico, we can reduce some



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of the problems, but we still will have the illegal export market.” Some 40 percent to 70 percent of the pot consumed in the United States comes from Mexico (estimates vary among U.S. law enforcement groups)—enough to represent roughly 15 percent to 30 percent of the cartels’ overall revenue. But in recent years, 23 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana in some form, and Mexican suppliers, reportedly, are already being affected: between 2012 and 2014, Border Patrol seizures of Mexican pot fell by 23 percent, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). And late last year, multiple news reports described how legal marijuana grown in the U.S. was driving down the price so sharply that some Mexican farmers had stopped planting it.

Those same reports, though, noted that some farmers are switching over to poppies. That tracks with the DEA’s findings, too: seizures of heroin (and methamphetamines) along the Mexican border have

risen. To truly disable organized crime, Torres Landa and Santacruz know, will require legalizing not just marijuana but those other, harder drugs. “In the long term, yeah,” Torres Landa says. That’s a tougher sell, but one that is also gaining traction around the globe. Last year, Brazil’s Supreme Court began debating the decriminalization of marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, and Ireland announced plans to decriminalize heroine, cocaine, and marijuana possession. In Colombia and Peru, it is legal to cultivate and possess cocaine; in Germany and Switzerland, people caught with cocaine face fines instead of jail. Several countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, allow the medical use of cocaine or heroine—or both. Portugal decriminalized all drug use in 2001.

For now, Santacruz and Torres Landa are pursuing one small step at a time. “When people see that we don’t become a zombie nation because marijuana is le-

gal,” Santacruz says, “then we can move on” to other drugs. “We know it’s a long journey.” Perhaps that’s why, on December 11, when the plaintiffs picked up their permits from Mexico’s federal health authority office and displayed them for news photographers waiting outside, the two men, half-smiling, looked not so much exultant as resolute.

## Overseer and HAA Director Candidates

THIS SPRING, alumni can vote for five new Harvard Overseers and six new elected directors of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA).

Ballots, mailed out by April 1, must be received back in Cambridge by noon on May 20 to be counted. Election results will be announced at the HAA’s annual meeting on May 26, on the afternoon of Commencement day. All holders of Harvard degrees, except Corporation members and officers of instruction and government, are entitled to vote for Overseer candidates. The election for HAA directors is open to all Harvard degree-holders.

Candidates for Overseer may also be nominated by petition if they obtain a prescribed number of signatures (201 this year) from eligible degree-holders. Lists of signatures for five potential candidates were submitted by the February 1 deadline; for more information, see page 22.

The HAA’s nominating committee has proposed the following candidates.

For Overseer (six-year term):

**P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale** ’74, Evanston, Illinois. Associate provost for faculty and Frances Willard professor of human development and social policy, Northwestern University.

**Helena Buonanno Foulkes** ’86, M.B.A. ’92, Providence, Rhode Island. President, CVS/pharmacy; executive vice president, CVS Health.

**Karen Falkenstein Green** ’78, J.D. ’81, ALI ’15, Boston. Senior partner, Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, LLP.

**Ketanji Brown Jackson** ’92, J.D. ’96, Washington, D.C. Judge, United States District Court.

**John J. Moon** ’89, Ph.D. ’94, New York City. Managing director, Morgan Stanley.

**Alejandro Ramírez Magaña** ’94, M.B.A.

## A Special Notice Regarding Commencement Day

Thursday, May 26, 2016

### Morning Exercises

TO ACCOMMODATE the increasing number of people wishing to attend Harvard’s Commencement Exercises, the following guidelines are provided to facilitate admission into Tercentenary Theatre on Commencement Morning:

- Degree candidates will receive a limited number of tickets to Commencement. Their parents and guests must have tickets, which must be shown at the gates in order to enter Tercentenary Theatre. Seating capacity is limited; there is standing room on the Widener steps and at the rear and sides of the Theatre. For details, visit the Commencement office website (<http://commencement.harvard.edu>).

**Note:** A ticket allows admission, but does not guarantee a seat. Seats are on a first-come basis and can not be reserved. The sale of Commencement tickets is prohibited.

- A very limited supply of tickets is available to alumni and alumnae on a first-come, first-served basis through the Harvard Alumni Association (<http://alumni.harvard.edu/annualmeeting>). Alumni/ae and guests may view the Morning Exercises over large-screen televisions in the Science Center and at most of the undergraduate Houses and graduate and professional schools. These locations provide ample seating, and tickets are *not* required.

- College Alumni/ae attending their twenty-fifth, thirty-fifth, and fiftieth reunions will receive tickets at their reunions.

### Afternoon Program

THE HARVARD Alumni Association’s Annual Meeting, which includes remarks by its president, Overseer and HAA election results, the presentation of the Harvard Medals, and remarks by President Drew Gilpin Faust and the Commencement Speaker, convenes in Tercentenary Theatre on Commencement afternoon. For tickets (which are required, but free) visit the HAA website or call 617-496-7001.

~The Commencement Office