

## **Vigilante Justice in Bolivia: Popular Protest at the Margins**

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### *Abstract*

Vigilante justice has become an increasingly prominent phenomenon in Bolivia and throughout the world. In Bolivia, residents have ‘taken justice into their own hands’ through the lynching of alleged criminals. At the same moment, Bolivia has received international attention for a number of collective protests against neoliberalism within its borders. While harshly violent in nature, I argue that lynching is a form of collective protest against an exclusionary and neoliberal state that has forsaken its duty to protect its citizens. Tracing the structural similarities between the “self-construction” of illegal settlements in Cochabamba’s periphery and the “self-help” nature of lynch justice, I argue that collective organizing in its many forms has become a powerful means to petition the state for the fulfillment of collective rights.

This study offers insight into the dynamic relationship between societies and law in the increasingly complicated realm of citizen rights. Of particular relevance to Latin American studies, my research attends to the deeply political nature of vigilante justice across the region. Understanding the rationales behind lynching is a requisite step in producing an inclusive and representative system of security and justice.

## *Vigilantism Worldwide*

Though the term ‘vigilante’ may bring to mind images of the popular comic book superhero *Batman* or the historic cowboys of the American West, vigilantism has become an increasingly prominent occurrence in our contemporary world. In the first comprehensive analysis of vigilantism, H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg define vigilantism as a form of establishment violence that “consists of acts or threats of coercion in violation of the formal boundaries of an established sociopolitical order which, however, are intended by the violators to defend that order from some form of subversion” (1976: 4). In its contemporary manifestations, the term vigilantism encapsulates everything from the “Minutemen” patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border to seemingly spontaneous forms of mob justice from Guatemala to South Africa. A number of scholars have identified neoliberal globalization as a primary causal factor in the recent increase in vigilantism; as David Pratten and Atreyee Sen point out, “if the politics of deregulation, the franchising of sovereignty, and the ‘privatization of indirect government’ are the signature features of the current international economic regime, then vigilantism is both a logical response and an integral aspect” (2008: 2). While neoliberal globalization does not imply the disappearance of sovereign states, it does entail a transformation of their role in the contemporary world order and a “fragmentation of their control of organized violence” (Pratten and Sen 2008: 4). Though vigilantism may be a logical conclusion within a macro perspective on the changing nature of security and policing worldwide, its local significance exhibits the increasingly complex and paradoxical terrain of citizens’ “rights.”

## *Lynch 'Justice' in Bolivia*

This paper focuses on one type of vigilantism occurring worldwide: the seemingly chaotic and spontaneous practice of lynching. As a component of a larger comparative study of lynching in Bolivia and South Africa, this paper will focus on its occurrence in Bolivia. Though Bolivia is at the forefront of a growing global movement against the social injustices of neoliberalism, the country has also received international attention for the growing prominence of lynching within its borders, a form of summary “justice” that is playing an increasing role in both the discourse and practice of security in Bolivia. Known as *linchamientos*, the word derives from the English cognate ‘lynching’ but carries with it important distinctions from the lynching of African Americans in the early twentieth century American South. In its Bolivian context, the term lynching refers to the extrajudicial killing of an alleged criminal by a large group of citizens and is often perceived as ‘mob violence’. Scholars have contended that contemporary lynchings are caused by a number of different factors: increasing crime, weak rule of law, a national history of violence due to decades of authoritarianism, and neoliberal economic policy. While each of these factors likely plays an important role in the prominence of lynching in contemporary Bolivia, the occurrence of lynching also brings to light significant questions on the relationship between the state and its citizens, and how citizen “rights” are both understood and experienced. Communities have actively resisted police who attempt to disrupt a lynching, in some cases blocking road passage and in others throwing stones at patrol cars upon their arrival. In one case in March 2008, three police were lynched after their alleged attempts to extort money from the community. As Daniel Goldstein establishes in his anthropological study of lynching in Cochabamba, “People ... regard the police as another threat to their security: though officially an

arm of the law, the police themselves are seen as lawbreakers, incapable of providing justice because they, too, are unjust” (Goldstein 2004: 195).

The prominence of lynching appears to not simply be a response to a gap in state control over crime, but rather a loud commentary on the very nature and practice of law in Bolivia. As such, its occurrence calls into question Rosenbaum and Sederberg’s previously cited contention that vigilantism is intended to defend the sociopolitical order from some form of subversion. While lynching is an attempt to defend the sociopolitical order through the sustenance of a system of justice and security, it also perhaps represents a form of protest against the state, and thus works not simply to maintain a certain order but rather to revolutionize its very basis in a hierarchy of rights contingent on socioeconomic status. Spectacles of collective violence are “systems for not only the performance but also the creation or transformation of social order” (Goldstein 2004: 16). A closer look at how people in Bolivia experience law in practice and how they interpret and use the discursive power of “rights” exposes the far more complex significance of lynching.

We are witnessing a transformation in the role of the state in regards to security world wide, and the practice of lynching is intricately tied to the relationship between communities and the state in Bolivia. Bolivia and its observers worldwide have witnessed an increase in protests against neoliberalism, and collective rights have become “the preeminent discourse for subaltern groups” to petition the government for reform (Goodale 2009: 18). While much more violent in nature than other protests throughout Bolivia, lynching is a form of collective action in response to the state’s perceived violation of the collective right to security. It is clear that the relationship between lynching and other forms of collective political action utilized by Bolivia’s often silenced indigenous majority garners further attention.

I argue that lynching is a form of popular protest through which a community objects to the state's violation of its collective rights and makes demands on the Bolivian state for security and freedom from crime through collective organization. While shockingly violent in form, it shares significant similarities with other forms of collective organizing against the rights violations of an exclusionary state. Lynching has a number of parallels with the methods through which marginalized communities in the Andean region of Bolivia have made demands on the state for the fulfillment of their basic rights as citizens. In order to substantiate this point, I first consider the development of informal settlements in Cochabamba's southern zones, and the methods through which collective bodies in these marginalized zones have pressured the state to recognize their existence and fulfill their rights to be legally included in the development of the city as a whole. Next, I consider how increasing insecurity within many of the same communities is perceived as a direct violation of collective rights, and how lynching has become a form of collective protest against the state and a means to insist on inclusion in the benefits of citizen security. My point here is by no means to justify lynching, but rather understand its occurrence as a violent form of political protest manifesting the process in which collective groups in Bolivia relate to the state and procure their basic necessities. Before contextualizing the discussion of lynching within an analysis of collective rights and collective action, it is first necessary to introduce the role of collective rights in Bolivian politics.

#### *Collectivist Traditions in the Bolivian State*

While liberal political theory has classically defined citizenship as a set of rights and responsibilities established through an interaction between the state and the individual, anthropologist Sian Lazar argues that citizenship in Andean Bolivia is defined also by the participation of the individual in collectivities, such as neighborhood associations or unions.

Collectivist ideology has a long history in Bolivian politics; Lazar contends that Bolivia's collectivist traditions draw on "indigenous communal practices, Trotskyite trade unionism, anarchosyndicalism, and other threads" (2008: 3). This is not to say that individualism does not play an important role in the construction of citizenship in the Bolivian state; voting is a classic manifestation of how citizenship is experienced by individual Bolivians. Yet, Lazar establishes that collectivities act as mediators between the state and the individual, and thus the "collective self" becomes a rights-bearing unit in relation to the state. A look at the settlement of the city of Cochabamba's peripheries offers a strong example of how collective bodies act as powerful negotiators with the state and therefore how rights (and thus the violation of rights) are experienced collectively. While citizenship in Bolivia is perhaps an increasingly complex set of practices, experienced through both individual and collective action and relation to the state, collective organizing has become the primary means through which marginalized communities in Bolivia establish their presence and petition the state for rights.

In the first segment of my analysis of lynching as a form of collective protest for collective rights, I will develop two related points on the role of collectivities in Bolivian politics. First, collective organizations act as important entities through which Bolivian citizens relate to the state, as units through which rights are both experienced and fought for. As Lazar points out, "collective groups are in the position of being supplicants for resources from a frequently capricious state" (2008: 260). The rights of Bolivian citizens are thus not experienced only individually, but also through the individual's place in a collective body that, to a degree, the state produces through its own absence. Second, collective organizing has become the preeminent form through which subaltern actors in Bolivia make demands on the state, as it serves as a rare means for the country's indigenous majority to find voice within an exclusive

system. The role of the collective body in the experience of citizenship is perhaps most apparent in the development of the peripheries of Bolivia's cities. A prime example can be found in the development of the city of Cochabamba's southern zones. Before directly addressing the two aforementioned points, I will first offer a brief description of twentieth century immigration waves to urban centers and the development of their peripheral zones, focusing specifically in Cochabamba.

### *Urban Development on Cochabamba's Peripheries*

The margins of urban areas are not simply territorial spaces at a city's periphery, but have long been perceived as boundary zones between the civilized and uncivilized; all too often inhabitants of the city's margins are treated as the dangerous "other," constantly a threat to those inside the city's walls. Yet perhaps of even greater importance to this work, margins are also "sites of practice on which law and other state practices are colonized by other forms of regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to secure political and economic survival" (Das and Poole 2004: 8). The southern zones of Cochabamba developed as such sites, where settlements were constructed in the absence of, and often in opposition to, formal urban planning, and new forms of regulation and organization are continuously evolving. As the inhabitants of such seemingly irrational and 'illegible' places, immigrants to Cochabamba are often seen as a chaotic disruption to the old city's orderly construction.

Immigration to Cochabamba has consistently grown since the early 1950s, yet the city's response to migrants has remained comparatively stagnant. As the city's old neighborhoods could not accommodate the arrival of immigrants, new neighborhoods were settled without urban planning or city approval. The municipal government attempted to control rapid expansion of its city limits in the 1950s through a Regulatory Plan that marked specific areas for the



construction of new neighborhoods, while attempting to contain others as public sites and green spaces within the city. As city planners ignored the increasing rate at which the city's peripheries grew paired with a chronic deficit of planned residential space, low quality housing rapidly developed as the city turned a blind eye (García 2002: 111). Due to the municipality's neglect of the peripheral areas of the city, the growth of migrant settlements occurred in stark juxtaposition to the development of new avenues, buildings, parks and houses in the city's wealthier regions; after all, "the "modern" Cochabamba envisioned and partially implemented by the city's planners, politicians, and professional elites was never meant to include them, the squatters and settlers of the margins" (Goldstein 2004: 57). Unable to produce a rationalized and orderly system of development in the rapid expansion of Cochabamba by the mid-1970s, the city government deemed new settlements "illegal," immediately creating a justification for their exclusion from the benefits of citizenship. A drastic fall in the price of tin precipitated widespread migration to urban centers throughout Bolivia in the 1980s, transforming many of Oruro's tight-knit class of miners into new settlers in the outskirts of Bolivian cities.

A clear division emerged in Cochabamba between the orderly streets and parks of the northern part of the city, and the apparent chaos and improvisation of its southern zones. From 1987 until 1992, an average of 13,500 immigrants moved to Cochabamba each year (García 2002: 108). Bolivian scholar Maria del Carmen Ledo García emphasizes this point, stating, "The city of Cochabamba is a clear example of the growth of two opposite worlds. On the one hand, there is the planned space...on the other hand, the unplanned districts, mainly in the south-west, concentrate the largest proportion of households affected by chronic poverty" (García 2002: 196). A lack of state intervention in the development of the south-western region of Cochabamba is not mere oversight or lack of necessary resources on the part of the municipal government, but

rather a product of the fact that 90% of urban planning has been allotted to the ‘true city,’ the parts of the city developed through strict urban planning rather than informal settlement. The differences between the “two opposite worlds” have only become more accentuated over the past twenty years, as Bolivia has adopted neoliberal economic policies. While halting inflation, there has been a widespread increase in social misery and the poorest sectors of the Bolivian population have been most affected by structural adjustments (Klein 2003: 246). In response to the city’s active exclusion of its peripheries, the residents of Cochabamba’s southern zones have organized as bodies that both experience and respond as collective units to the state’s failures.

### *Collective Organizing for Basic Rights*

In the peripheral zones of Cochabamba, neighborhood organizations have become the central mediators between individuals and the government, and the neighborhood acts as a common entity through which community members petition the government for the fulfillment of their rights (García 2002: 181). Theorists have argued that city migrants tend to seek out and create collective organizations in new cities (e.g. Lazar 2008). As membership in such local groups serves as a central means through which residents relate to the state, a strong sense of commitment and responsibility to the collective organization also develops as a part of the lived experience of citizenship in Bolivia (Lazar 2008: 65). In the southern urban outskirts of Cochabamba where a high instance of lynchings take place, the growing socioeconomic and spatial segregation of the city further induces notions of exclusion from the benefits of citizenship and a concurrent deprivation of the rights of the community as a collective body. In the eyes of residents of the city’s peripheries, the limited resources of their communities are perceived as a form of direct exclusion from the rights of citizenship within the city. Thus, the extralegal establishment of infrastructure is justified by the state’s failure to fulfill its duties. In

the absence of state help, communities have been largely “self-constructed”, a process that has taken place in urban peripheries across Bolivia and worldwide. Residents work collectively to contribute funds and labor to neighborhood development outside of the strict regulations of city planning. In Cochabamba, Goldstein describes this process of community formation:

Recognizing that any improvements in local services and infrastructure would have to come either through self-help development initiatives or through active political lobbying of external sources of assistance, barrio leaders began a campaign of community formation designed to produce a coherent, unified, and mobilized collectivity out of the assortment of barrio residents (2004: 107).

This process of collective development is defined by both a desire for state provisions such as basic infrastructure and a willingness to self-construct the neighborhood when the state fails to meet its duties. In a number of ways, these forms of self-help correspond with neoliberal development orthodoxy that propounds a minimal state role and limited reliance on the state for citizen welfare (Lazar 2008: 71). As the state further withdraws from a developmentalist agenda, collective organizations have stepped in to fulfill its role. Vigilantism follows the same logic of self-help within a neoliberal state.

As a logical product of the construction of collective bodies as the primary developers of peripheral urban communities in lieu of state involvement, collective organizations have become the preeminent form through which subaltern actors in Bolivia make demands on the state. In large part, this was due to the particular character of development in the city, as has been described. Yet as James Scott describes, states have a tendency towards a perpetual project of making the complexities and intricacies of their populations legible (1998). The state thus attempts to rationalize the development of collective bodies, making them orderly units of the state itself. This process of rationalizing the seemingly chaotic settlement of Bolivia’s urban peripheries took place through Law 1551, more commonly referred to as the “Law of Popular Participation” (LPP). The primary objective of the law, as expressed in Article 1, was as follows:

[To] incorporate the indigenous and rural communities and urban neighborhoods into the juridical, political, and economic life of the country. Its aim [was] to improve the quality of life of Bolivian men and women ... by strengthening the political and economic means and institutions necessary for perfecting a representative democracy, facilitating citizens' participation and guaranteeing equality of representation at all levels between men and women (Goodale 2009: 50).

In effect, the law transformed urban communities that were once perceived as disorganized settlements into *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base*, or Territorial Grassroots Organizations. The law gave OTBs legal status and the capacity to resolve disputes according to the “ways, customs, and standards” of the OTBs themselves (Goodale 2009: 50). Goodale points out that while many have perceived the LPP as a response to indigenous group demands for self-determination and a transformation of legal relations through a realignment of power, the law also corresponded with the neoliberal principles that characterized the highly criticized market reforms of the 1990s. This point is well articulated by Goodale in the following quote:

The legal redefinition of collectivities in Bolivia during the 1990s had the effect of *expanding* the categories of Bolivians whose subject positions were recognized within Bolivia's legal framework, rather than transforming the framework itself ... the reconceptualization of Bolivia's different collectivities as rights-bearing juridical subjects during the 1990s simply reinforced Bolivia's basic legal-ideological framework by reinterpreting its principles in terms that reflected shifting political and social realities at the end of the twentieth century (2009: 51).

The state itself thus had an important role in producing collective bodies as the primary means through which individuals relate to the state and petition the government for necessary resources. In many ways, this has been perceived as a success throughout Bolivia, an important initiative towards the decentralization of power and funding, and the localization of development plans and projects. Most importantly, it has given legal recognition to previously “illegal” and subsequently invisible populations at Bolivia's urban peripheries, an advance largely in line with the hopes of the communities themselves.

Hence, the collective group has become a powerful means through which Bolivians negotiate with the state and make visible large segments of the population that have been

ignored. Contemporary demands for security have emerged in a somewhat similar form. The realm of citizen security perhaps exemplifies the complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between the state and collective bodies in Bolivia. While lynching is a violent and atrocious act, it carries with it certain logic. The same discrete rules of inclusion and exclusion that have decided what spaces within Cochabamba receive the city's development funds dictate the provision of security to the city's residents. Furthermore, the "self-help" logic of lynching has important correlations with the "self-constructed" nature of the peripheral zones of Bolivia's cities. In both cases, collective action takes place in response to the exclusion of the community from the benefits of citizenship. And in both cases, residents of Bolivian cities' margins have found collective action as the most effective means to petition an inattentive government for collective rights. A consideration of crime and insecurity in Cochabamba's peripheral zones is now useful in order to build a comparison between different forms of "self-help" initiatives at the margins of the Bolivian state.

### *Crime, Insecurity, and the Violation of Collective Rights*

There exists widespread agreement in Western political theory that citizen security has historically laid the basis of the modern state system. From Hobbes' articulation of security as the predecessor to all other rights (1651), and Weber's classic definition of the modern state's monopoly over the means of coercion (1918), security has been the primary factor legitimating state control. Yet in the marginalized communities of the outskirts of Bolivian cities, "the neoliberal state is widely perceived as having failed in its obligations to protect its citizens from predators" (Goldstein 2004: 3). Alongside other state led social provisions, security and policing have decreased with cuts in state spending. While the wealthier zones of Cochabamba enjoy private security guards and increasingly high walls, poorer residents suffer the consequences of

shrinking state responsibilities. Security becomes further means through which politicians and state institutions exclude the poor from the benefits of citizenship in the Bolivian state. As basic infrastructure and urban development are reserved for the wealthy portions of the city, so are basic policing and the right to a life free from crime and violence. A fact that is apparent through the widespread increase in social protest against state retrenchment under neoliberal reform, “local actors increasingly interpret state neglect of social services as a denial of civil rights, including the right to a life free from crime and violence” (Goldstein 2004: 23). Considering the exclusionary politics of local development in Cochabamba, it is clear how security has rapidly become a question of rights. The security of Cochabamba’s citizens thus becomes a complex arena in which the logic and meanings of law in Bolivia are produced and reformed and collectivities respond to the state’s failures.

As collective subjects of the state, residents of Cochabamba’s southern zones have “taken justice into their own hands” where the state has refused to fulfill its obligation to provide for their security. A resident of Villa Pagador in Cochabamba’s southern zone states, “It is well known that for poor people there is never justice. Therefore, we have to protect ourselves, by ourselves” (Achá 2003: 28).

### *The Logic of Lynching*

Since lynching first became a prominent point in public discussion in Bolivia in the early 1990s, a number of explanations have surfaced. After the first widespread waves of vigilantism occurred in 1994 and 1995, the supposed savagery and backwardness of its participants was the primary focus of the media and a number of politicians and residents of Cochabamba. Yet over time, a clear transformation in prominent interpretations has taken place. Goldstein marks a shift in public discourse surrounding lynching occurring in 2000 and 2001 and refers to this shift as

the emergence of a “new interpretative frame.” While previous lynchings were blamed primarily on the lynch mobs themselves, new *structural* explanations for the lynchings emerged in the media and society, blaming ineffectual institutions and extreme poverty. This shift is worthy of note, considering that lynchings have primarily taken the same form throughout the last two decades in Bolivia, and increased in frequency. Goldstein cites this as perhaps a success on the part of the lynch mobs, as their message appears to find grounding in the public and impel discussion on the state of citizen security and justice in Bolivia (2004: 211). Crime rates may not be dropping in Bolivia, but citizen security has become a prominent point of discussion in media and politics.

I argue that lynching reflects the power of collective bodies in negotiation with the state; the collectivity has become the primary means through which communities relate to the local government and an influential means to petition for rights. As such, rights and the violation of rights are experienced collectively, and the response is by and large produced by collective action. Collectivities in Bolivia have developed a certain degree of agency through their capacity and willingness to step in for the state where it has failed. Many barrio residents contend that police corruption and the failure of formal institutions of justice to serve the poor are the primary reasons behind lynching (Goldstein 2004: 179). We can extrapolate from this point that lynching is not simply a form of crime control, but also a commentary on the state of citizen security in Bolivia and the failure of the government. In the face of widespread corruption and clientelism, the collective body is perceived as carrying a certain legitimacy that state officials have lost, or perhaps never had. As Lazar points out, the collective group is able to negotiate with the state with some degree of power, a point she further explains in the following quote:

Part of what enables them to [negotiate with the state] comes from their ability to maintain the perception of two carefully delineated spheres: the people on one side and the politicians and businessmen on the other. They use this distinction to describe their relationship to the state

because they maintain the perception that the state or nation (“our dear Bolivia”) is equivalent to the former and is being betrayed by the latter (Lazar 2008: 261).

With the nature of this relationship in mind, the reasoning behind lynching is seen with greater clarity as an act through which the collective body gains some negotiating power in relation to an exclusionary governing system. Goldstein recognizes dual themes underscoring the discourse on lynching: a desire for security and legal protection through state provision as well as willingness to produce self-help forms of justice where the state fails to fulfill the community’s needs (2004: 200). As has become clear in the preceding pages, these two interwoven themes are also observed in the initial development of Cochabamba’s southern zone and the seemingly ceaseless fight on the part of its residents to secure state aid; organized collectivities of new residents express a deep desire for the assistance of the state yet demonstrate a willingness to step in and fulfill the state’s role in light of its failures. The practice of lynching and its relationship to the state embodies the same negotiating power of the collective body that is observed in the initial transformation of illegal settlements into formal, rights-bearing entities. First, it carries the authority of a supposedly united people and is an attempt to fulfill a role in which the state has failed: the provision of security for the community. Second, it has led to an increase in state involvement and concern with citizen security, alongside attempts to co-opt and control vigilante acts under the umbrella of legitimate coercion.

Lynching represents a cohesive, collective body’s attempt to fill in for the state’s failure, a fact that brings widespread attention to the topic of rule of law in Bolivia. As a collective body through which citizens make demands on the state, the local community becomes the primary means through which residents both experience insecurity and articulate their demands for increased attention from the state. The act of lynching is represented to the public as the voice of a unified people against a wrongdoer who infringed on the rights of the community as a whole. I



say it is *represented* as such because in many cases there are individuals within the community who attempt to intervene to stop a lynching, at times resulting in their own lynching. Yet as a form of collective violence, it is easily represented as the consensus of the community, instilling a level of moral grounding into its occurrence. While other forms of collective social protest in Bolivia have been celebrated nationally and internationally for their visibility and subsequent success, Goldstein argues that “lynchings are also spectacles, intended to catch the eye of an inattentive state and to perform for it visually and unmistakably the consequences of its own inaction” (2004: 182). The number of “attempted” lynchings that occur per each lynching further substantiates his point; lynching is often a drawn out process during which both the police and media arrive to witness and document the event. The fact that lynching is a form of collective violence leads to its immediate appeal to a media and public fascinated with violence.

For communities suffering from crime and ignored by the state, the right to security becomes a justification for extralegal violence in the presence of a corrupt police force and inattentive politicians (Goodale and Merry 2007: 61). In many cases, residents of a community in which a lynching is taking place assault the police who arrive to disrupt the lynching, a fact that seems to contradict community justifications for lynching as a response to weak rule of law and a lack of police presence. Yet the underlying reality is that the police are also perceived as threats, complicit with the alleged thieves. Furthermore, the inability of the state to fulfill its duties incapacitates any official attempting to indict the lynch mob. As a federal prosecutor articulated, “If the State were more efficient in the investigation of these acts, it would jail all those who instigate and carry them out, but since the legal entities charged by law with guaranteeing personal security have failed to do so, they lack the moral authority to try the lynch mob” (qtd. in Goldstein 2004: 197).

Rather than attempting to prosecute lynch mobs, the state has attempted to co-opt vigilantism, making it a legible and regulated form of legitimate coercion and an arm of the state. The 2002 Program of Participatory Vigilance led to the construction of Neighborhood Security Brigades across Bolivia that would empower citizens to work alongside the police force to arrest and detain alleged criminals. While the state condemns the violence of vigilantism, it has attempted to utilize community organizations to combat crime in lieu of a widespread increase in the strength of the police force, an action that would contradict the neoliberal orthodoxy of cutting social spending. More recently, vigilantism has become a central topic of debate over the new Constitution, as it proposes the empowerment of forms of community justice alongside the central legal system. While community justice is based on notions of community reintegration rather than retribution, opponents of the new Constitution, as well as lynch mobs, have utilized the term community justice to describe lynching. Questions of citizen security at the margins of the state have thus taken center stage in Bolivian politics. It would seem that the collective bodies that have used lynching to communicate their dissatisfaction with the state have successfully gained its attention.

### *Conclusion*

As I have argued throughout this paper, collective organization has been a primary means through which subaltern groups experience rights and the deprivation of rights, as well as petition the state for their fulfillment. In the preceding pages I have not attempted to justify lynching, but rather elucidate its significance within a broader analysis of the nature of citizenship in Bolivia. I have argued that lynching is another manifestation of the role that collective bodies have come to play in Bolivian politics as powerful tools of protest against an exclusive state and a means to claim citizenship within that state. In a country that has

historically excluded its indigenous majority from the benefits of citizenship, collective protest has proven an effective means to petition the state and make harshly visible the populations that have otherwise been kept at its margins. This fact is demonstrated through the preceding analysis of the self-constructed nature of communities alongside the self-help security initiative that is vigilantism. The self-constructed nature of Cochabamba's urban peripheries demonstrates a collective initiative to take action where the state will not. Though shocking in form, lynching demonstrates the same themes of "self-help" in response to the state's failures. Lynching is paradoxical in a sense; it represents a protest against the state as well as a desire for inclusion in the benefits of citizenship. The underlying fact is that lynching in Bolivia occurs disproportionately in urban zones that have constantly needed to petition the state as collective groups for the fulfillment of their basic rights. Contextualizing lynching within this history demonstrates the deeply political motivations for lynching and the continuous need for communities in Bolivia's urban peripheries to assert their very existence.

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