

CANDIDATE: Clifford Andrew Welch

BIOGRAPHY

Born in San Francisco, CA, in 1956, Cliff traveled to Mexico with his parents for the first time in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, the family supported United Farm Workers of America boycotts of non-union products and dockworker solidarity strikes. Later, Welch participated in union solidarity actions aimed at cutting off military shipments to the Chilean dictatorship. In the 1980s, as an editor of the weekly *City Paper* in Baltimore and Washington, DC, he reported on and participated in actions to end U.S. government support for counter-revolutionary groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador. These experiences helped shape his decision to earn a MA in Latin American history at the University of Maryland in 1987 and PhD from Duke University in 1990.

One of his first articles stemmed from his master's thesis, "Labor Internationalism: The Origins of United States Involvement in Brazilian Unions, 1945-1965," published in 1995 in LASA's *Latin American Research Review*. That same year, the *Journal of Latin American Studies* published a chapter from his dissertation, "Rivalry and Unification. Mobilizing Rural Workers in São Paulo on the Eve of the Golpe of 1964." These pieces signaled major themes in the author's career as a historian, mixing transnational relations with contemporary agrarian and labor history, especially in the United States and Brazil.

A 1979 bachelor's degree in American Studies from the University of California – Santa Cruz (UCSC), as well as diverse work experiences – as a dockworker, ranch hand, journalist and carpenter – contributed to broadening approaches to historical analysis. While at Duke, Welch joined LASA. Contact with its diverse scholars and activists influenced his articles, books and films. Journalism, anthropology, agronomy and politics merged in his first book (1992), a memoir of a Brazilian Communist rural labor organizer. His second book, *The Seed was Planted* (1999, 2010) required intermingling multiple disciplines. The award-winning documentary, "Grass War!" (2001) added aesthetics to the mix. One of his most recent publications, "Direitos: a luta pela lei trabalhista no campo nos estados de São Paulo e Califórnia" (2020), grew from these seeds.

Welch pursued an otherwise conventional career as a tenured professor of history at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) until 2003, when he took leave, moved to Brazil and worked for two years as a visiting professor in social sciences graduate programs at São Paulo's Catholic University (PUC) and state university (UNESP). This rewarding experience, as well as closer relationships with his research subjects, especially landless families and activists, made attractive the idea of permanently working in Brazil. After ranking first place in a 2009 civil service exam to become professor of contemporary Brazilian history at the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), he retired from GVSU. He now orients students in three graduate programs, including the Doctorado en Estudios Agrarios of the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in Argentina and one he helped create in collaboration with the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). Welch also coordinates UNIFESP's undergraduate history major.

Being embraced as a Latin American colleague among dozens of researchers in the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) working group on critical rural development studies has been reaffirming. With this group, Welch has studied and contributed to peasant movement development in countries from Guatemala to Argentina. These intense experiences enriched his life and work through close contact with scholars like Armando Bartra, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes and the immortal Norma Giarracca, Miguel Teubal and Teodor Shanin.

From 2012 to 2014, Welch joined other rural studies scholars and researchers to activate the Comissão Camponesa. It assisted Brazil's National Truth Commission and similar state commissions in identifying and documenting violations of the human rights of rural workers by state actors. Welch has collaborated with the MST on diverse projects, such as competing successfully for a Modern Endangered Archive Program grant from the University of California – Los Angeles in 2021.

A contributing editor to various publications, Welch served on the National Editorial Council of a multivolume social history of the Brazilian peasantry that was financed by the Ministry of Agrarian Development. Welch has contributed to books like *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American Social Movements* (forthcoming), *Trabalho & Labor: histórias compartilhadas (Brasil e Estados Unidos, século XX)* (Salvador, 2021), *Fifty Years of Peasant Wars in Latin America* (New York, 2020), *História oral e conflitos rurais: memórias de lutas* (São Paulo, 2020), *Land Justice: Re-imagining land, food and the commons in the United States* (Oakland, 2017), *Land Governance in Brazil: A Geo-historical Survey* (Rome, 2012), and *Camponeses brasileiros* (São Paulo, 2009).

Welch has authored articles and reviews in journals like *American Historical Review*, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *Radical History Review*, *Labor and Working Class History*, *Labor History*, *Latin American Perspectives*, *Peasant Studies*, *Agrarian Change*, *Human Geography*, *Projeto História*, *Revista Brasileira de História*, *Campo e Território*, *Revista NERA*, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, and *Social Justice*.