

# Innovators

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CIVIC INNOVATOR

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## Monica Carrillo

Peru

**M**onica Carrillo is a published poet, the leader of a band and can boast having produced her own radio show. Any of these activities would have established the 29-year-old Lima resident as a pace-setter for a vibrant new generation of regional artists and activists. But Carrillo's work

with Afro-Peruvian youth has also turned her into an internationally recognized advocate for some of her country's most neglected and long-suffering citizens.

Carrillo is the founding director of LUNDU, a Lima-based human rights organization that works to improve conditions for Afro-Peruvians who, representing between 7 and 10 per-

cent of the population, suffer disproportionate rates of poverty and discrimination. "There's no other place in South America that has the same levels of offensive, aggressive racism as Peru," says Carrillo. "The other day I left my house...and counted the number of insults I received in 20 minutes: 12. People say these things and they don't run away, because they feel they're in the right."

A communications graduate of the Universidad Nacional de San Marcos in Lima, Carrillo produced a radio program dedicated to women's rights, and served as a coordinator of the Peruvian youth delegation to the 2001 United Nations' World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, before founding LUNDU with the help of friends and family in 2001.

LUNDU operates in two centers, one in Callao (in the department of Lima) and one in El Carmen (95 miles southeast of Lima in Ica). The name refers to a traditional African dance and in Kikongo, an Angolan dialect, means "successor." The LUNDU centers serve as after-school spaces for young people—especially young women—to get together, speak freely about concerns and use art as an outlet for expressing their frustrations over the racism of mainstream Peruvian society. In addition to weekly workshops for the organization's 35 participants, the spaces remain open throughout the week for help with creative projects and homework.

Carrillo and a team of four travel every Saturday to El Carmen to organize workshops that focus primarily on sexual education. The effort is a response to the spike in incidences of HIV/AIDS resulting from the area's growing sex tourism industry. In 2006, a documentary produced by MTV Europa and filmed by Carrillo about LUNDU's work in El Carmen, was

Overlooked no more:  
Carrillo performs and organizes  
to increase awareness of Afro-  
Peruvian culture.

# and innovations in the hemisphere

among six finalists at the UN Documentary Film Festival in Geneva.

But Carrillo's activism extends beyond strengthening the Afro-Peruvian community. She wants Peru's rich Afro culture to be recognized as part of the national identity, something she says is long overdue. "When you come to Peru—unlike Colombia or Brazil—you don't find anything [that represents Afro-Peruvian culture]," she says. "You'll find traditional music, but you won't find paintings or sculpture."

Carrillo is currently building a marketing strategy for selling Afro-Peruvian artisanal products, labeled *Estética en Negro*. Her organization plans to sell furniture, crafts and even a CD of songs written and recorded by LUNDU participants to be distributed locally and abroad with the help of international partner organizations; Carrillo expects merchandise to hit the shelves this June. The proceeds will go toward scholarships for LUNDU youth. So far, four young people have received funding for secondary education.

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POLITICAL INNOVATOR

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## Camilo Soares

### Paraguay

Once an activist, always an activist. The political trajectory of **Camilo Soares Machado**, only 33 and already Paraguay's Minister of Emergency Preparedness, has spanned the full scope of activism, from student organizing to the highest echelons of politics.

As a middle-class student at a wealthy high school in Asunción, Soares became preoccupied by his country's social disparities. At the age of 15, he organized the first high school student council in Paraguay.

The same year, he directed a successful campaign to halve the cost of public transportation for students in Asunción. In 1996 he joined other young Paraguayan activists to create *Casa de la Juventud* (Youth House), aimed at involving the new generation in Paraguay's transition to democracy, which had begun in 1989 with the end of the 35-year reign of dictator Alfredo Stroessner.

*Casa de la Juventud* became the hub of a network that drew young people from all over the country to express themselves artistically and politically. "The central problem in Paraguay was that it was a completely dis-articulated society, in which social organizations did not have relevance and citizens did not have enough organizational power to provide a counterweight to the political regime," Soares recalls. As projects coordinator, Soares guided the group's transformation into a

national presence. It sponsored cultural and arts-related activities, published its own magazine, *Tokorre*, and established its own radio station, *Radio Rebelde*.

Soares' entry into his country's political arena was inevitable. In May 2006, Soares and a group of colleagues founded the *Partido del Movimiento al Socialismo* (P-MAS) to chart a new progressive agenda for Paraguay. In November 2006, P-MAS won a seat on the municipal council of Asunción. By then, Soares was already on familiar terms with national leaders. He had met current President Fernando Lugo in 1992 at a national strike in San Pedro, where Lugo was then the Catholic bishop. When Lugo was elected in 2008 as the first national leader in more than 50 years not connected with the Colorado Party, he named Soares Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

As minister, Soares has piloted major reforms that have transformed the operations of the three-year-old agency (known as SEN in its Spanish acronym). He shifted the focus of SEN's operations to prevention from its former status as a first responder to national emergencies. The ministry should "not only put out fires, but prevent them before they begin," he explained. The first test to this new approach came in response to the drought that has afflicted Paraguay's western region since the fall of 2008. Under Soares' direction, SEN worked with the indigenous populations in the region to build water-collection systems and other mechanisms to prevent further damage to the land resulting from natural disasters.

The drought was just one of a series of disasters, ranging

Be prepared: Soares solicits advice from local emergency prevention committees.

from an outbreak of yellow fever to flooding, that absorbed the country's attention last year—and triggered a declaration of national emergency across 60 percent of the national territory. SEN's model of preventive action put emergency workers into the field from the start, engaging in meetings with community groups that provide feedback to help the government target its response. In its own way this represented a revolution in relations between the Paraguayan government and civil society. Traditionally, as Soares points out, bureaucrats and politicians have been wary of popular participation, but "there is no other way of knowing about problems, of recognizing problems and of handling problems without directly involving the people affected." If SEN's model succeeds, it will owe a major debt to the lessons learned from youth activism. Without "the experiences of being an activist, I don't think this vision would have been possible," says Soares.

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## BUSINESS INNOVATOR

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### Acesa Bioenergia Brazil

Imagine a sewage-treatment system that powers itself. The possibility is not just an energy issue; it's a public health issue. In Brazil, only 20 percent of waste matter is treated because the amount of energy required in the treatment process makes facilities prohibitively expensive to operate. The remainder is often dumped into rivers and other open waters, causing wide-scale pollution. But Rio de Janeiro natives **Marcio Schittini** and **Luiz Felipe Pereira** have developed a novel two-in-one solution.

The company they created in 2007, **Acesa Bioenergia**, uses power gener-

ated by sewage itself to clean up the waste. From the facility's supply of "biomass," the term for any renewable organic fuel, the company captures the "biogas" emitted by its decomposition, which can then be refined into natural gas to power the facility or for resale. According to Schittini, the system will not only produce enough natural gas to cover 100 percent of a treatment plant's energy demand but can also become a net supplier of energy. Because a plant's energy costs are second only to personnel costs, both partners hope their model will make large-scale sewage treatment viable and profitable, proving that energy happens.

Similar concepts have proved successful elsewhere. An estimated 30 percent of Denmark's energy production is fueled by biomass—though not just sewage-based. "What we're proposing is not by any stretch of the imagination entirely new," concedes Schittini. "There are available models all over the world; they just haven't been tried here in Brazil."

Due to its wealth of biomass, the partners believe Brazil is uniquely positioned to benefit from replication of these models.

Schittini, 30, and Pereira, 31, have been working together since 2004. Their project is now in a research stage at the ETE Alegria sewage-treatment plant in Rio de Janeiro, and is operating in conjunction with three other energy companies, allowing it to offer a vertical end-to-end solution, from production of natural gas to distribution.

The two are also currently in talks with several food producers to discuss gaining access to the biomass left over from their production (rather than consumption) of foodstuffs.

Few companies are aware of the bonanza that resides in their manufacturing processes. Schittini has yet to see a single company during his travels throughout Brazil that even attempts to measure how much biogas it wastes. But if Acesa Bioenergia is successful, Brazilians will soon come to see the benefits.

Waste not: Schittini and Pereira hope to convert what's fouling this river into energy.

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ARTS INNOVATOR

## Rodrigo Bellot

### Bolivia

In any conversation about Bolivia's nascent film industry, the first name that comes up is **Rodrigo Bellot**. The Santa Cruz-born director has almost single-handedly brought Bolivian filmmaking to international attention. Films such as *Sexual Dependency* have won the hearts of critics abroad and inspired a new generation of Bolivian filmmakers.

One of his recent projects, *¿Quién Mató a la Llamita Blanca?* (*Who Killed the White Llama?*), has broken box office records at home. *Llamita*, which was produced entirely in Bolivia, is a road comedy that follows a couple hired to transport 50 kilos of cocaine to the Brazilian border. It has already become the most pi-

rated DVD in the country, playing frequently in the restaurants and buses that once showcased standard Hollywood fare. But perhaps Bellot's most important contribution has been to legitimize Bolivian filmmaking as a valid art form.

His dream found little opportunity to flourish in his homeland. With no studios to work in and no Bolivian filmmaker to model himself on, Bellot, now 30, moved to the U.S. at the age of 16, escaping what he calls the "*lamento boliviano*"—a reference to the chronic Bolivian complaint about the lack of opportunities inside the country.

*Destierro* (*Exile*), Bellot's first venture into filmmaking when he was still a student at Ithaca College, garnered him an Academy Award nomination for Best Student Film in 2000. The semi-autobiographical film, a profile of a Bolivian student finding his identity "in a place that had nothing Bolivian," as Bellot describes it, was turned into a full-

length feature called *Sexual Dependency*—launching Bellot's commercial career. The film, which follows five teenagers from Santa Cruz and Ithaca coming into their own sexual and sociopolitical identity, also raised Bolivia's cinematic reputation abroad. It was entered in the Academy Awards—it didn't win—and has since been shown in more than 65 film festivals, including Berlin and Toronto.

Apart from directing and writing, Rodrigo Bellot has been a casting director for many international films—most recently Steven Soderbergh's two-part biopic on Che Guevara, *The Argentine* and *Guerrilla*. The acclaimed U.S. director's decision to film in Bolivia was helped by the presence of a growing and talented corps of film artists and technicians, demonstrating "how far the film industry has evolved in Bolivia," says Bellot. That, in fact, may be the greatest tribute of all to Bellot's pathbreaking career. 