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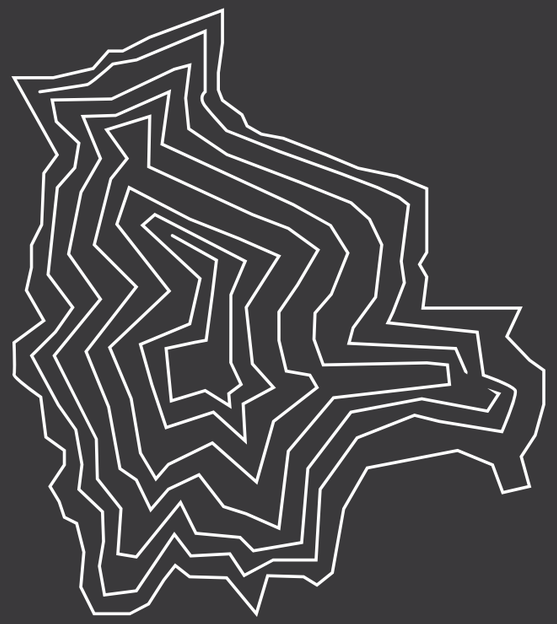


Editorial #72:

Gold and Blue

By William Wroblewski

As is the case for many Latin American cities, **fútbol** is the sporting lifeblood of La Paz. And here, the fans are as devoted as anywhere. Just go to any **clásico** at Estadio Hernando Siles, where the two rival local clubs battle it out, and you will understand what passion really is. The teams' rabid supporters camp on opposite curves of the stadium – Bolívar to the north, The Strongest to the south – each side trying to outdo the other with songs of support to their heroes and jeers of insults to their rivals across the bowl. This is one of the biggest, rowdiest events in La Paz, and is not to be missed.

At these games, the stadium becomes a sea of two colours. The rough and rowdy Strongest fans, identifying themselves as '**Tigres**', cast a golden hue across their half, their bright banners waving in the wind. Across the divide, Bolívar supporters adorn themselves in blue, shouting calls to their dear '**Celeste**'. Both sides exude this passion inside and outside the stadium, and the colours of a person's clothing on the street is often an easy signifier of their loyalties. It is clear that these two colours hold very special meaning to the people of La Paz.

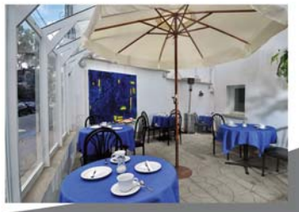
This month, we wanted to explore those colours, gold and blue, a little more thoroughly. With such cultural significance for our city's sports-minded denizens, we sought out other ways in which gold and blue make La Paz, and greater Bolivia, what it is.

This issue of *Bolivian Express* is divided in half between the gold and the blue, much like the stadium during a crosstown matchup. We meet a Bolivian hopeful striving for Olympic gold, and learn some of the myths of golden corn that have been told for generations across the Andes. We imbibe on the sweet golden nectar of **chicha** near Cochabamba, taste the variety of flavours of local brews, and learn of one man's vision to turn fields of grain into Bolivian alcohol independence. Perhaps most importantly, we ask the hard question on everyone's lips: why is all the chicken at Bolivian **carnicerías** unnaturally golden-hued?

Turning to the other side of the stadium, we explore the realities of feeling blue, from a lighthearted look at the common experience of traveller's blues to the very real issues of mental health and psychological treatment. We meet an incredible woman leading the way for members of Bolivia's transgender community, often identified with the colour blue. And we learn about an important national archive often associated with blue that is affecting Bolivian politics from the top down and the bottom up.

Walking the streets of La Paz in the small hours, thinking about the colours gold and blue, the obvious becomes clear. Morning light here can offer a golden sun so close you can touch it, and a blue sky so crisp you can feel its soothing chill on your face. In this city, these colours seem brighter, and offering sensations to those standing under them. This may just be an effect of the altitude. But it may be something else. Like sitting in the stands at a clásico, gold and blue are all around you when in Bolivia, and if you let these colours sink in, the feeling can be electric.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary.



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AN **ALCOHOL INDEPENDENCE** FOR **BOLIVIA**

Text: Federico de Blasi

A **Truly Bolivian Vodka** Takes the Stage

In 1825, Simón Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre y Alcalá finally defeated the Royal Spanish Army, bringing independence to Bolivia and sanctioning the end of the Spanish reign in Alto Perú.

Now, nearly 200 years later, Bolivia is reaching for another independence of sorts, less important of course, but a significant one nonetheless. And this time, the hero doesn't wear an ornate jacket, nor have a gun, nor travel on horseback. The protagonist is Leonardo Diab, who is trying to gain an alcohol independence for Bolivia, which until recently has imported most of its spirits from abroad (save for the traditional **singani** and a few others). In 2012, Diab and his partners realised that Bolivia was rich in raw materials that could allow for production of high-quality liquors. And so began their effort to give Bolivians an authentic national vodka.

This is the idea behind Bolivian alcohol independence: to abolish the country's 'dependence' on alcohol imports. According to Diab, his mission is 'to create a national product which can compete with foreign products'. And in December 2014, the first bottle of 1825 Vodka was ready, with a name that intentionally recalls Bolivian independence.

1825 Vodka is made with a special **trigo amazónico**, cultivated during winters in a region close to Santa Cruz. Once harvested, this golden grain is transported from the **Media Luna** to the Parcopata neighbourhood in southern El Alto, where the distilling takes place. (This location is key, because it allows Leo and his partners to take advantage of a law that grants benefits to entrepreneurs who want to start businesses in El Alto.) Here, the wheat is fermented for four days, distilled, and bottled.

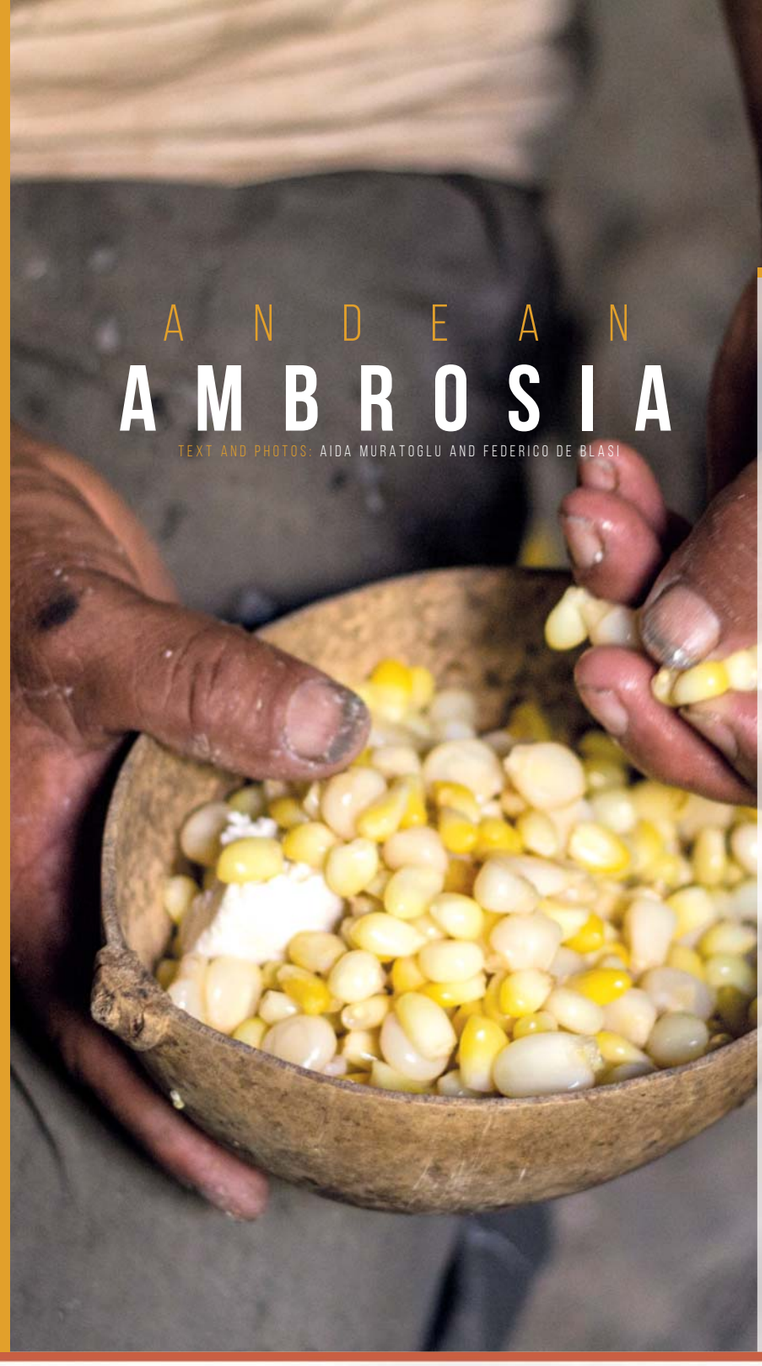
THEIR MISSION: 'TO CREATE A NATIONAL PRODUCT WHICH CAN COMPETE WITH FOREIGN PRODUCTS'.

The bottle's design represents the dualism between the Andes (through the shape of its lower half) and the Amazon (its upper half) to show the contrast of Bolivia's natural landscape. And in order to confer even more Bolivian-ness to the product, the centre of every bottle features the face of Inti the Sun God, a symbol of Inca culture, surrounded by plumages of Eastern **macheteros** in a fusion of **camba** and **kolla**. Diab and his partners wanted to create 'an imposing and easily recognisable bottle' that reflects the company's motto: 'The perfect balance between the Amazon and the Andes'. Even the water used in the process is carefully selected, sourced from local mountains and rainwater, endowing the vodka with an excellent freshness.

Although the Bolivian consumer is often skeptical about new products, and its international competitors are strong and consolidated (think Absolut and Smirnoff), 1825 Vodka can be found in La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. It is also exported to Lima, Peru, and Diab and his partners are reaching out to fine-dining establishments throughout Bolivia, hoping to convert the drink into a cultural staple.

As evidence of the success and quality of 1825 Vodka, it has won two international prizes to date. First, at the 2016 San Francisco World Spirits Competition in the United States, it won a silver medal. And later that year, it received the same award at the International Spirits Challenge in London. Vodka 1825 even made its way to the Bolivian pavilion at the Expo 2015 in Milan, Italy.

Internationally recognised and increasingly popular at home, 1825 Vodka is leading Bolivia's alcohol independence, warming chilly Andean nights while cooling broiling Amazon afternoons.



ANDEAN AMBROSIA

TEXT AND PHOTOS: AIDA MURATOGLU AND FEDERICO DE BLASI

Soft morning sunlight filters through a rectangular hole in the metal roof, a high ceiling hovering over the brick room. I can only imagine what the orchestral sound of rain pounding onto the corrugated tin would make when it visits the small village of Tarata, an hour south of Cochabamba.

A tentative beam of light hits rising steam, illuminating the chilled, dark room with silver wisps of warmth. The room smells of soft fermentation, of a bowl of cereal left one too many nights in the kitchen sink, of a forgotten tea bag found weeks after the caffeine high. A fire crackles humbly beneath a bubbling cauldron-like structure, and the sharp notes of smoke balance out the sour stench of the slowly fermenting **chicha**.

We have been invited into Xenón's **chichería**, a space reserved for the creation of the ancient Andean drink *chicha*, a fermented mixture of water and maize. **Chicheros** in this region make *chicha* using **choclo,** a type of juicy, white corn native to the Andes. Xenón's family has been brewing the beverage for longer than he can recall.

In this valley region of Bolivia, the role of *chichero* passes through the male line of this family, but Xenón has no sons to his name. Nevertheless, he works tirelessly, silently scooping the hot liquid between vats to accelerate fermentation.

Xenón handed us a large gourd full of the murky, golden-tinged liquid and urged us to try it. We each took a tentative sip. We could taste the sweet fermented taste of kombucha. The *chicha* felt smooth in the mouth but sharp on the back of the throat. Looking up expectantly to give our thanks, Xenón scolded us for not finishing the serving in one go. Sheepishly, we stuck our heads back into the bowl and gulped down the dregs.

While in Tarata, we stumbled upon a *chichería* full of men of all ages playing dice and sipping the drink at 10:30 in the morning. They greeted us with warm handshakes and single kisses on the left cheek, offering sips from their cups. Such congregations have defined this community for thousands of years.

Chicha's origins are, much like the drink itself, quite murky. Although the exact date of its inception has been lost to collective memory, *chicha* has served as a central part of Andean daily life for millennia. Spanish colonists coined the umbrella term *chicha* to describe both alcoholic and non-alcoholic derivatives of the maize-based drink, found all over South and Central America, effectively erasing the history of the varied tradition with colonial violence. Thus, Peruvian **chicha morada**, made of purple maize, resembles a dark red wine, while **chicha de jora**, made of *choclo*, has a golden hue. *Chicha* found in the Peruvian village of Pinchoyo is served with small chunks of maize.

As brewing techniques vary from *chichería* to *chichería*, the categorisation of the drink and its various forms is far from complete. This evasion of classification serves as a powerful form of indigenous resistance. *Chicha* is the people's drink.

XENÓN'S FAMILY HAS BEEN BREWING THE BEVERAGE FOR LONGER THAN HE CAN RECALL.

Traditionally, *choclo* is blanched and then masticated, mainly by female members of a community; chewing the maize helps release specific enzymes that later aid in the fermentation process. Although most *chicherías* have long since traded out mouths for mashing tools, the tradition still stands in some communities today.

In Tarata, *chicha* is brewed in the early hours of the morning, before the noon sun overwhelms the quiet town. Daily maintenance is minimal – as with most fermenting substances, the process regulates itself.

Four *chicherías* lie in quick succession just beyond Puente Melgarejo, a bridge built into the middle of the street, where, legend has it, generals would celebrate military victories with *chicha*-fueled dancing. Celida Tapija owns the *chichería* two doors to the right of the bridge. She wears a bright red apron atop her floral shirt and serves us lunch as she patiently explains her brewing process.

Having visited three different *chicherías* and spoken to their respective *chicheros*, we discovered at least two alternative ways to make the drink. They each, though, agreed that the complete process lasts a week. This starts with the harvesting of maize, followed by the drying and crushing of it. With this, **mucu** is created, a dense substance that will eventually become *chicha*. On the second day, the boiling *mucu* is drained,, and boiled again. Then the compound, called **arrope**, must be put back into a large clay pot for another day. On this third day, it is drained again to separate the residue, and to be mixed by a large wooden stick called a **mis'keta**. Finally, the liquid is ready to ferment for up to four more days.

Historically, women and young community members were responsible for the first steps of the fermentation process. These gender roles seem to remain today in Tarata, as women own *chicherías* and spearhead the fermentation process.

At the artisanal *chicherías* we visited in Tarata – rumoured to offer the best *chicha* in Bolivia – *chicheros* don't export their chicha in any sense; they don't even sell it at the local **mercado**. The only way to try the drink is as it was originally meant to be tasted – fresh out of the warm clay vat, sitting on a plastic stool, surrounded by laughter under the warm sun.

Over lunch of fried chorizo and boiled *choclo*, Serrus, a local, tells us *chicha* could be dangerous if ingested in large quantities. Twenty minutes later, Esperanza, who works in the *chichería* next door, boasts that she sips the good stuff eleven hours a day. Whether drinking *chicha* religiously or casually, supporting local *chicherías* remains a steadfast and important part of the culture here, and perhaps provides recognition to the local resistance.

CHICHA IS THE PEOPLE'S DRINK.

WHY IS BOLIVIAN CHICKEN SO ORANGE?

TEXT: ALEX WALKER
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Now, we all know that you can't make an omelette without cracking some eggs, and neither can you truly master investigative journalism without asking the big questions. 2017, the Year of the Rooster no less, has prompted *Bolivian Express* to pluck up the requisite courage to answer the biggest chicken-related question of all. Having put to bed the respective debates over which came first, the chicken or egg (the egg, obviously), and why on Earth the chicken keeps on crossing the road (because it's got a death wish), it's time for the crux: why is La Paz's chicken quite so golden-orange?

Immediate assumptions proved unsatisfactory. Due to Bolivian chickens' notorious ability to see in the dark, the obvious answer might be a densely carrot-heavy diet affecting their skin pigment. Alas, not true. Next, we wondered whether a double yolk, one destined for chickenhood, the other acting as a dye, might be the cause of these vibrant-orange caracasses. Again, a misconception. Could it be that the right-wing cockerel community wanted to resemble their tangerine-hued ringleader, Mr. Trump? Apparently not. Finally, it was posited that the media omnipresence of the artificially golden pin-up family, The Kardashians, might have led to an idolising culture of fake-tanning among this, the cluckiest of birds. Perhaps, much like the aforementioned omelette-destined eggs, we'd cracked it. 'Don't count your chickens,' they said. . . 'Go and do some actual research,' they said. . .

An afternoon knocking on the fiercely guarded metal gates of the La Paz headquarters of *Sofia* and *Imba*, two of Bolivia's major chicken vendors, proved as unfulfilled as the bucket list of an aspirational battery hen. However, as it so often does, our answer came courtesy of the workers on the ground.

Trawling through Mercado Villa Fátima, a vegan's equivalent of Hell, or Hull to use its biblical name, we discovered that the bizarrely satsuma-coloured chicken on show was a result of an orange preservative embalmed on the late-chicken's skin in order to increase the death-span of the animal on the shelf, and to feign the golden hue acquired by a rich, corn-heavy diet.

Groundbreaking stuff.

ODE TO PICO DE ORO

I scour the menu for an item of splendour
And then I catch sight of my old friend, Paceña.
Down she falls from bottle to glass
Like problems dropping away from the past.

Bubbles surge up like a hoppy jacuzzi,
Arise now, Paceña, it's time to get boozy.
A thick head of foam like an albino's mohican
Forms a craterous ooze at the glass's meniscus.

Pico de Oro – or 'gift of the gab' –
This beer is more lippy than you've ever had.
To my own lips, I raise the glass up high,
To ready my tastebuds I close both my eyes –

Gravity performs the bulk of the task
Releasing a flavour that nothing could mask.
The beer cascades, the diaphragm pops
And triggers a crippling bout of hiccups.

My stomach fizzles like berocca in a bath,
Pressure is building in both throat and arse –
Then, with the inevitable wind outpour,
The waiter arrives. So I order one more.

THE TOP 10 BOLIVIAN BEERS

BOLIVIA'S BEER SCENE HAS NEVER BEEN QUITE SO ARTSY NOR QUITE SO CRAFTY. MICROBREWERIES ARE SPRINGING UP AS OFTEN AS POSTERS CALLING FOR ACCESS TO THE SEA, WHILE THE TRADITIONAL BEHEMOTHS PACEÑA AND HUARI SHOW AN EVERGREEN QUALITY THAT WOULD PUT EVEN MICK JAGGER TO SHAME. AS SUCH, BOLIVIAN EXPRESS THOUGHT IT WAS HIGH TIME TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A COMPREHENSIVE AND DEFINITE TOP 10. WATCH OUT, THINGS COULD GET FIZZY.

TEXT: ALEX WALKER
PHOTOS: NICK SOMERS

10. JUDAS

BIO: It was an interesting marketing ploy by these **alteño** brewers to name their potent lager after the proverbial thorn in the side of Jesus, who is something of a cult hero for many of its customers – like Donald Trump releasing a soft drink called 'Bad Hombre', or Gotham a cheesecake entitled 'Bane'. For accuracy, though, the name Judas does seem unerringly apt. This 7%-strong, explosive pseudo-lager will, without doubt, betray you at some point during the night.

SPECIAL SKILL: POTENCY
WEAKNESS: LOYALTY
DID YOU KNOW? After getting stabbed in the back – and liver – by this carbonated firewater, you will not rise again two days later. This is a joint marketing falsehood planted by both the brewery and the Bible.

9. BOCK

BIO: While fine wines intensify with age, Bock's manufacturers have seemingly made a conscious decision to mellow the taste of this once-punchy lager. Its unique flavour and 7% alcohol content are created by a process called bottom fermentation, with extra months of cold storage required to iron out such a strong brew – so strong that you will be doing some bottom-fermenting of your own should you quaff this carbonated yeast feast.

SPECIAL SKILL: BOTTOM-FERMENTATION
WEAKNESS: FLATULENT CUSTOMERS
DID YOU KNOW? Residents of La Paz will often use the popular phrase 'Put a Bock in it!' to friends they deem tiresomely sober.

8. STIER HONEY BIER

BIO: ABBA got it right when they wrote the politically groundbreaking lyrics 'Honey, honey, how you thrill me, ah-hah, honey honey'. Stier Honey Bier is the proverbial 'nectar' of the gods. Brewed in **cochabambino** hives by an army of honeybees, this artisanal pollen-fest is both a love and a taste machine. Ooh, it makes me fizzy.

SPECIAL SKILL: SLAVE LABOUR

WEAKNESS: CROSS-POLLINATION

DID YOU KNOW? Stier was marred by a 2012 scandal after investigative journalists working for La Razón revealed that it had been employing bees without payment, against their will, and under threat of destitution.

6.5. PACEÑA PICO DE ORO

BIO: Advertising powerhouse Paceña sponsors everything from World Cups to cirrhosis of the liver. Brewed by CBN (Cervecería Boliviana Nacional), Pico de Oro's gold logo is as synonymous with the tourist's view of Bolivia as coca tea, alpaca-wool jumpers, and President Morales' unquestionable footballing ability. Unquestionable for fear of indictment, that is.

SPECIAL SKILL: ICONICISM

WEAKNESS: RHETORIC

DID YOU KNOW? Although the name Pico de Oro translates as 'Gift of the Gab', there is no current evidence to suggest that beer can speak.

6.5. HUARI PILSENER

BIO: Brainchildren of the CBN family, Paceña and Huari are somewhat reminiscent of identical twins separated at birth. Were this a film, the two long-lost lagers would go on to lives of *Sliding Doors* divergence. In reality, though, they both share a very similar stomach-destined fate.

SPECIAL SKILL: EMULATION

WEAKNESS: ORIGINALITY

DID YOU KNOW? The Andean Huari civilisation, preceding the Inca Empire, was named after their penchant for this lager. No smoke without fire.

5. SAYA DORADA

BIO: An ale touched by Midas and manufactured in Achocalla, this golden Kölsch beer is as smooth as Marvin Gaye in a seedy karaoke bar. Silence may be golden, but Saya Dorada is the definitive 24-karat real deal. So gold, in fact, is Dorada that rapper 50 Cent is alleged to have traded his entire jewellery collection for a half-pint of the golden nectar back in the early noughties.

SPECIAL SKILL: BLING

WEAKNESS: VALUE

DID YOU KNOW? Saya Dorada, translating as 'Golden Skirt', was particularly popular among the Spice Girls during the mid-to-late nineties. Not Ginger though. From 1991 to 2004, she only drank Scrumpy Jack.

4. CORSA DUNKEL

BIO: Bringing Oktoberfest to Santa Cruz, this dark, malty, Munich-style lager out of Sabores Bolivianos Alemanes (SBA) brings a taste of Bavaria to the jungle. A particular favourite of both Simon and Garfunkel after the latter cleverly realised that his surname rhymed with 'dunkel', Corsa brings us the closest thing to Guinness outside Bolivia's Irish Pub scene.

SPECIAL SKILL: SLAVE LABOUR

WEAKNESS: CROSS-POLLINATION

DID YOU KNOW? After a long and drawn-out legal battle with Vauxhall, SBA eventually secured joint custody of the name Corsa in 2013, settling out of court for a Mars Bar and a packet of Kettle Chips.

3. NIEBLA RED ALE

BIO: Aromatic, flavoursome, and fruity, Niebla puts the 'art' into artisan. The brewery's title translates as 'fog' in English, and true to cliché, beyond the fog lies a sparkling clarity of taste that marks this Red Ale as one of the most distinctive brews in Bolivia. Every cloud has a silver, or in this case red, lining.

SPECIAL SKILL: TASTE

WEAKNESS: METEOROLOGISTS

DID YOU KNOW? Despite popular misconceptions amongst deuteranopes, Niebla Red Ale is not, in fact, red.

2. TED'S CHALA

BIO: Brewed in Sucre by Café Florin owner Ted Handele, Chala boasts a truly unique flavour. A wheat beer infused with spice, cilantro, and orange peel, Ted had mastered artisan before brunch had even been invented, let alone guacamole abbreviated to 'guac'. Brewed using Dutch and Belgian methods, Ted has taken the philosophy of 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em'. And thank Judas he has.

SPECIAL SKILL: ARTISANALITY

WEAKNESS: CUDDLY TOYS

DID YOU KNOW?

Ironically, although this small brewery gained international notoriety after Seth MacFarlane's comedy film *Ted*, Chala is actually poisonous to animated toy bears.

1. PROST PREMIUM LAGER

BIO: Another masterful product from SBA, this light wheat lager is premium in both name and quality. Prost's flavour guru Guido Mühr is German, and the company prides itself on bringing traditional Bavarian quality to its beers. And it hits the spot with the precision of a German penalty taker.

SPECIAL SKILL: GERMAN EFFICIENCY

WEAKNESS: ANGRY MOTORISTS

DID YOU KNOW?

On account of his fierce rivalry with French F1 driver Alain Prost, Brazilian racer Ayrton Senna was often seen urinating into discarded Prost Lager bottles before throwing them onto petrol-fueled bonfires.

GOING FOR GOLD

ÁNGELA CASTRO LEADS THE RACE FOR BOLIVIAN OLYMPIC GLORY

TEXT: SOPHIE HOGAN
PHOTOS: NICK SOMERS

The deep breath before walking to the starting line. The seconds before everything you've ever worked for is put to the test. The starter gun goes off. The crowd erupts. All these things are what many Olympians experience after years of toil. From all corners of the world, including Bolivia, athletes are only focused on one thing: the medal they could win if they push harder than ever before and put everything into this one moment. Even then, some don't make the podium, but that doesn't mean they haven't achieved things many of us could only dream of.

The history of the Olympics is long, grand, and prestigious, and almost all the countries in the world have taken part in the games at least once. We are all aware of the prominent nations at the Summer Games – China, the United States, and the United Kingdom. However, it can sometimes be forgotten that other countries do their best to get on the medal table just as much as the big dogs. In Rio 2016, Bolivia went for it with more gusto than ever, with double the competitors than in London 2012. The likes of cyclists, walkers, and even a judoka comprised the team competing for Bolivia. President Evo Morales even offered cash incentives to athletes who won medals, with high hopes for many of the members of the Olympic team.

There were 12 members in the squad at last year's games. Though none of them earned a medal, there were results that these athletes could definitely be proud of. José Quintanilla, a bright young star of Bolivian swimming, qualified for the men's 50 metre freestyle, which is no mean feat. He became a global sensation after being spotted crying tears of joy at the Opening Ceremony in Brazil. Additionally, two of the walkers, Wendy Cornejo and Stefany Coronado, placed 31st and 43rd respectively in the 20 kilometre walk.

The most successful team member in Rio was Ángela Castro, a 24-year-old walker from La Paz. Her bronze medal at the South American Championships in Lima, Peru, led to her being the flag bearer for both the opening and closing ceremonies. Placing 18th in the 20 kilometre walk, in front of her teammates, put her in Bolivia's record books as the most successful Bolivian Olympian in history.

'I started in 2009, with my brother coaching me a little,' she says. 'One day he actually forgot take me home from training, so I decided it was time. I went off alone to start competing in bigger things. I fell in love with the sport, and kept with it,' she adds, looking out at the battered track of the Estadio Hernando Siles.

'WHEN I GOT TO THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE, IT WAS LIKE BEING THRUST INTO A DREAMWORLD. I JUST WANT TO DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN.' – ÁNGELA CASTRO

Ángela was still struggling to hit the mark in 2015, which was also the same year her father passed away. Times were hard, but she knew she had to keep going. '2016 was a much better year. There was less weight on my shoulders than in 2015, with my father being sick,' she says. 'I went to Mexico in March and I made the qualifying time for Rio. I trained there for a month and focused on constantly improving.' To Ángela, arriving in Rio was something like a dream. She says it was most certainly the best thing that had ever happened to her. 'When I got to the Olympic Village, it was like being thrust into a dreamworld,' she smiles. 'I just want to do it all over again. I made it into the top 20 in Rio, and now I'm aiming for the top ten, but it's going to be a lot of work.'

The walking team went to Santa Cruz some months before Rio to prepare for the drastic weather change, since the altitude is lower, the sun is hotter, and the air is more humid there. 'I remember I competed at two in the afternoon when the sun was extremely strong, but we were prepared for all of it, physically, psychologically, and emotionally,' she explains. 'I was so nervous, but I was going to give it everything I had.' Her resilience shows through her training. I watched one of her daily training sessions, which consist of two and a half hours in the morning and the same in the afternoon. Her self-assurance and strength are evident. After the Olympics, she should be more confident than ever.

Ángela's pride at leading the Bolivian team in Rio is visible in her face when she is asked how it felt to compete for her country. 'I would never want to compete for anyone else,' she says. 'I am always proud to be Bolivian.' Ángela says this despite the small amount of support and the large helping of negativity that the team has received from the Bolivian public. 'Only having 12 athletes meant it was more difficult for people to take the team seriously,' she recalls. 'That doesn't matter to me too much, though. I always seek to improve myself and I always want more. That's what the name of Bolivia gives me: I want to be in the top ten, go to another country and hear my country's name.' Ángela is unafraid to admit her desire to win a medal for Bolivia, and she won't rest until she achieves that goal.

'I will give everything in any competition, not just the Olympics, to win for Bolivia. Here, many see it as impossible; after Rio, for me, things are no longer impossible,' she says. With Tokyo just three years away, the pressure is slowly mounting on the athletes to continue getting stronger. Only one Bolivian competed at Tokyo in 1964. We don't yet know whether more will compete in 2020 than in 2016, but we have high hopes for this little team from Bolivia.

NOT ANOTHER CORNY STORY

TEXT: YOLANDE ROWSON PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Corn is not something that I had particularly considered before coming to South America. It is just another component of the international diet modern society enjoys these days. Then I had my first **plato paceño**. Suddenly, I was confronted with corn in proportions I had never seen before: big, white door-stops of chewy starch. 'Where the hell did this come from?' I thought, delving into my third kernel. Soon I was seeing corn everywhere: in soups, toasted, boiled, in drinks, popped, in desserts.

Scientific research has only been able to make estimates about the original domestication of corn, and hard facts about where it originally came from are elusive. In lieu of data, I turn to two myths: *Heart of Gold* from the Inca tradition and the Guaraní *Myth of the Twins*.

'It is the most important crop in all of South America because it is a fundamental product,' says Milton Eyzaguirre of the Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore in La Paz. 'It is as important as the potato.' True, corn is crucial to the functionality of rural life. According to the FAO, in 2014 family farming produced 70% of Bolivia's total corn yield. The importance of the crop, however, extends far beyond its use in subsistence agriculture.

For ancient cultures, it was a life-giving gift from **Pachamama** that warranted respect and veneration. Naturally, humans sought to explain its existence. 'In myths, what is created is history that was never written in official documents,' Eyzaguirre says, 'but that allowed people to understand social, economic, and political structures in the Andean world.'

What is consistent in these myths is the idea that corn came out of sacrifice for the sake of the community, which in turn sacrificed its time and effort to cultivate it. The idea of sharing is still central in corn culture. The corn-based drink **chicha** remains a sacred and integral part of the Andean way of life, still served at traditional celebrations. Long before the first mines, a very different type of gold was coming out of the ground in Bolivia. Later, in 16th-century China and across the world, the introduction of New World corn helped overcome famine. Like its metallic counterpart, this gold has the power to shape and rebuild nations.

HEART OF GOLD

Huayru and Sara, a young couple, were members of different communities. Sara's **ayllu**, the Charcas, used lances in battle, whilst Huayru's *ayllu*, the Chayantas, preferred slings and stones.

One day, the two communities were besieged by a common enemy. In accordance with the duty of Andean women at the time, Sara's unwavering support extended to the battlefield, where her job was to provide stones for her beloved's sling.

Long had fate's eyes smiled on this daring duo, but that day she changed her mind. Sara was made for higher things than mortal life. Her heart was pierced in battle by a lance of her own people, the cruel consequence of a whim of the wind.

On beholding the object of his veneration, Huayru fell to his knees and wept in the final throes of Sara's death. He cried through the night, past the end of the battle, and beyond the following day. He was so consumed by his grief that his cries echoed through the mountains as torrents of water exuded from his eyes. His tears cleansed the wound of his beloved and paved her way to the spirit world.

In his defensive mourning, nobody dared to approach Huayru for many days and many nights. Eventually, Mama Killa (the Moon) and Father Inti (the Sun) took pity on the young warrior. Huayru stared in bewilderment as, from Sara's heart, grew a plant like none he had ever seen before. From its long stalk sprouted forms that reminded him of soldiers. Wrapped in their green armour, there lay strings of golden teeth like the smile of a woman. The taste of the matured fruit was sweet like the kisses of his love, yet bitter as the death that had parted them.

Huayru realised that he had been given the children that Sara's untimely demise had robbed him of. With great care, he took the new plant in his hands and gave it the name of his mother: Choclo. Knowing that this was a gift from the gods, he took Choclo to the temple of Punchao, the god of heat and the breath of life, offering it as a sacrifice before returning it to *Pachamama*.

In the earth, **choclo**, or corn, grew and multiplied. Like the plant that grew from Sara's heart there, the Incas grew from the heart of the earth.

MYTH OF THE TWINS

One day, a mother was walking with her twins, Guaray and Yasi. Full of mischief, the twins eluded their mother's watchful eye in order to play on the mountain. On their way home they passed over a plain, where they were sighted by the god Nandu Tumpa, who presented himself in the form of a bird. He thought they looked like the very companions he had been searching for to quell his loneliness. He swooped down upon the children and was just on the point of taking off when his progress was checked by a suddenly much greater weight. Looking down, he realised that the twins' mother had grabbed ahold of her little ones' toes and began pulling them down to Earth with all her might. The god had only to stretch out his wings a little more for extra speed, dragging the mother hopelessly along the ground before she was forced to admit defeat.

When she looked down into her hand, she saw that she still held the tips of her children's toes. She squinted her eyes to see the last of her little ones before sorrowfully turning for home. Time wore on for the grieving mother until one day she was visited by Nayderu Tumpa in a dream. The god ordered her to plant her children's toes in the **Chaco**, a large, dry region extending over areas of Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay. The next day, the mother dutifully obeyed. After a period, the rain and sun created several tall, thin plants at the site where the toes had been planted. Eventually the crop spread through all the land, as the community came together to ensure its survival. Thus maize was created.

LA PAZ, IN GOLD AND BLUE

PHOTOS: SOPHIE HOGAN TEXT: AIDA MURATOGLU

when they told us the sun would set earlier in May than it did in December
I felt a tinge of betrayal
winter in La Paz nothing like the
snow day-filled, salty-shoed, air-too-cold-it-burns-your-lungs
season I grew up on

instead, shade too cold, sun too hot when this removed from the
mechanised movements of sea level
fruit eerily ripe
sold in streets of worn out brick and midday **salteña** *stops*
under sweet tangle of telephone wires

5 am El Alto cloudy purple **api** *stewing in pots*
waiting to singe morning-bleary tongues
dogs sniff at pedestrian feet for bite of **pastel**
melted cheese stretching from pastry to mouth
fluttery clouds obscure regal Illimani

later, patchwork flicker of lights from warm comfort of yellow **teleférico**
the resilient speed of this city filtering through **salchipapa***-filled stomachs*

MORE THAN JUST FEELING BLUE

DEPRESSION AND MENTAL ILLNESS IN BOLIVIA

TEXT: CASSIE SPRY
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Mobile phones – used for talking, texting, and. . . depression management?

That's exactly the idea behind a 2015 pilot study lead by Dr. John D. Piette, PhD Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education, and of Internal Medicine Director, Center for Managing Chronic Disease. Dr. Piette and his team used automated calls to track the progress of participants and supply them with education around mental illness, including unhelpful thoughts and goals.

Bolivian psychologist Amparo Clara Aruquipa Yujra worked on the pilot study, and says it received good results and positive feedback from participants. Today, she is part of the team working on a new pilot programme to be held in La Paz. This programme will utilise more information than the first to better help participants trying to recover from depression.

The team working on the new project is collaborating with local psychologists and professionals, as well as the team from Michigan University, to create an accurate and effective programme. Resources for participants include information on self-care, community involvement, and goal setting. One aspect of the programme is aimed at helping people to deal with the issues in their lives that may make them more susceptible to mental illness, such as suffering from violence or poverty.

Another goal of the programme is to advocate for community involvement to help address mental illness. The programme will involve families and broader communities to address these challenges as a community effort.

Aruquipa Yujra says the new programme was difficult to arrange, but anticipates that it will be started in the next month. 'We want to share this experience,' she says, 'and then show how this can help people with the use of community healthcare workers.'

The programme includes texts and automated calls to survey its participants and monitor their progress and the severity of their mental illnesses, using the methodology of the Michigan University study. Participants also have manuals that they can consult, with tailored text messages giving them guidance. The use of cellphones is intended to make mental health treatment more accessible to the population, the researchers say.

'PEOPLE DON'T RECOGNISE DEPRESSION AS A PROBLEM. THEY SAY IT'S A BAD MOOD, AND THAT'S IT.'
– PSYCHOLOGIST AMPARO CLARA ARUQUIPA YUJRA

Mental illness, especially depression, is in many ways hidden in Bolivia, with World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics showing that neuropsychiatric disorders contribute to an estimated 16 percent of the burden of disease in Bolivia. Across the country, there are only 956 beds available in mental hospitals – that's 9.56 per 100,000 people – yet the WHO estimates that mental illness affects one in four people throughout their lives.

'Unfortunately, what we have found in our studies is [people] don't recognise depression as a problem,' Aruquipa Yujra says. 'They just say that it's a bad mood, and that's it.'

This misunderstanding may be why nearly two-thirds of people with a mental illness never seek any professional help. Additionally, other medical problems often take precedence over more pressing mental-health concerns. '[People] often have these other problems like lack of money or other [physiological] illnesses,' Aruquipa Yujra explains. 'Having to beat diabetes is more crucial than their own mental health.'

Dr. Josue Bellot, the medical director at the San Juan de Dios Centre of Rehabilitation and Mental Health in La Paz, believes there's a strong stigma in Bolivia against people with mental illness that discourages them from seeking the help they need. 'In this country there is this stigma that psychiatry relates only to "crazy" people,' he says. 'The moment that a doctor refers a patient to a psychiatrist, the patient is labelled "loco".'

Dr. Bellot said an improvement in education, both for medical professionals and for the general public, is needed to help reduce stigma, but unfortunately, there are not enough resources available. He lamented that the few psychiatrists in Bolivia are focused on patient care, so promotion, education and prevention miss out.

But stigma is not the only barrier that makes seeking mental health care difficult for Bolivians. According to Dr. Bellot, access to health care means that seeing a professional is challenging, as there are very few centres in the country, and they are often far away. He believes that for many people, treatment is literally out of reach, as the time and cost of travel makes it inaccessible.

For this reason, Dr. Bellot emphasised the disadvantage many Bolivians face by not being able to afford treatment. He notes that treatment can take several months or longer and can be expensive, once accounting for additional factors such as occupational therapy and psychology. 'The most important factor [in being unable to receive treatment for mental illness] is the high cost of psychological medicine, and this affects everyone,' he said. 'Not everyone has $10 to spend on medicine regularly.'

The solution, according to Dr. Bellot, lies with the state.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in London said that in 2000 Bolivia was 'one of the first South American countries to have a written mental health plan', but critics, including the WHO, point to a lack of funding leading to little progress occurring in the last couple of decades.

'The state doesn't have a law for mental health,' says Dr. Bellot. 'A programme on mental health has been worked on since last year, but it is not concrete yet, and they haven't coordinated with other mental health professionals.'

Dr. Bellot believes this problem is two-fold, as the government is addressing other issues above healthcare, and, within healthcare, mental health remains at the bottom of the list of priorities. But he hopes society will pressure the government to change and come up with the necessary policies.

While the state is being criticised for its lack of effort, others are pushing forward to try and find solutions. Aruquipa Yujra said it would be a dream for programmes like hers to be the future of treatment for mental illnesses. 'Anyone can have access to a cell phone, and they don't need extra knowledge,' she points out.

Currently, the new programme is still in the research phase, and thus only benefits a small proportion of the mentally ill population in Bolivia.

'We don't have the human resources to give this service to the whole population who need [it],' Aruquipa Yujra said. But the programme continues to be developed. 'It's going little by little, but I think that, at the end, it's going to work.'

(MIS)READING BETWEEN THE LINES

A GRINGO'S ATTEMPT AT WATCHING A PLAY IN SPANISH

TEXT: CASSIE SPRY
ILLUSTRATION: HUGO CUELLAR

I'm as gringo as they come. The only Spanish I knew before coming to Bolivia was '**hola**'. I even bought a jumper with alpacas on it the other day. And yet, I've decided to see a play in La Paz entirely in Spanish. Why do I think I will understand it? Probably my white Western arrogance that everything is meant for me...

So here is my summary and review of the local play *El Proceso por la Sombra de un Burro*. Google translate says it means 'The Process of the Shadow of a Donkey' – but I have less than a shadow of a thought on what in the world that could possibly mean. Lucky for me, the play told a lot without words.

The stage set was particularly telling. There were always three gold arches in the background, that could mean anything, but everyone knows that three is the Illuminati's number. It was obvious to me that they were sending a message to the audience: the Illuminati is everywhere. The power of the Illuminati is incredible and I, for one, pledge my undying allegiance to them because they are definitely reading this article (they know everything).

I could tell one of the main characters in the play was a peasant because he was wearing a rope belt. The other was a guy in a black suit who liked fedoras more than my ex-boyfriend. They appeared to be fighting over a human slave in a donkey onesie, which was terrifying because there were *kids* watching!

The two men went to court over who would get the donkey-slave. When the peasant went home to tell his wife about his plight, she had an epiphany that slave ownership is wrong. I think she complained to her friend about it, who apparently didn't understand the issue (I guess in this alternative universe, having slaves in donkey onesies is common behaviour?). The woman decides to leave her husband, which, in my opinion, was the right call.

She then seemed to visit a witch, and gave her some gold. I'm not quite sure what the witch gave her in return, but hopefully it was something either to help her get over her broken marriage or to start a new life (maybe she wants to be an apprentice witch, that would be cool).

The witch then visits someone very rich – I know this because he was wearing the fanciest gown I've ever seen outside of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. She performed a hypnotising dance for him, probably to put him under her spell. Now with a blue-blooded man in her power, she could control the entire town!

This is where things get kind of dark. A person in a long, black cloak covering their face bribed an alcoholic pirate (who looked like Captain Jack Sparrow) to set fire to the village. It was probably Death, history's great equaliser, who could no longer stand the horror of slaves being forced to wear donkey suits.

THEY WERE SENDING A MESSAGE TO THE AUDIENCE: **THE ILLUMINATI IS EVERYWHERE.**

So fire cleansed the village and the donkey was free! With her new-found freedom, the donkey stood in the rubble of the destroyed town and chastised everyone for their behaviour. After her dramatic oration, she left, hopefully to start a revolution against slave-keeping monsters.

Even without understanding the dialogue, I'd rate this play 4.5/5. It has the excellent message of abolishing slavery and encourages everyone to revolt against the class system. The only thing that could be improved is the advertising, because there were kids as young as four in the audience and some of the themes were way too advanced for them. Either that, or I totally misunderstood the show, in which case, they should also include subtitles.

Disclaimer: This piece is a work of satire, and not intended to be taken seriously in any way. The cast and crew of El Proceso por la Sombra de un Burro *put on an impressive, enjoyable show.*

BLUE MOON:
LUNA SHARLOTTE FINDS A LOVE OF HER OWN

TEXT AND PHOTO: AIDA MURATOGLU

Luna Sharlotte Humerez exudes confidence, love, acceptance. She has mastered the art of conversation. She speaks openly and honestly, urging me to use my broken Spanish, laughing at my silly jokes. The home she shares with her husband, Henry, feels warm and pristine. The walls are a deep carmine, dotted with hand-painted white stars.

Luna tells me she loves interior design. The Disney film *'Wreck-it Ralph'* plays quietly in the corner of the bedroom as Henry and Luna speak about how they met. They sit comfortably on the bed together, absentmindedly holding hands. Her long, chestnut hair whips back and forth gently as she speaks. She keeps up a stream of sweet whisperings into Henry's ear, reminding him over and over again just how much she loves him.

Growing up in El Alto in a world of brothers and kind neighbours, a father and a mother, Luna came out as gay to her family at the age of sixteen. At eighteen, she came out as transgender. Eight years later, in December 2016, Luna became the first trans woman to get married in Bolivia. On a crisp, mid-April morning in El Alto, and over steaming **salteñas** (Luna ordered hers spicy), we talked about the importance of family, how the personal is political, where religion fits into her identity, and her hopes for Bolivia's future.

Millions of people worldwide identify as transgender (trans*, for short), meaning they don't identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. The asterisk serves as a reminder that more than two genders exist, that not all transfolk are men or women, and that we ensure a space for binary-defying folk in the LGBTQ+ community.

Luna has been blessed with an exceptional support system. Henry loves her unconditionally, and their connection is magnetic. Her parents and brothers were immediately accepting when she came out as a transgender woman and have supported her fully ever since. Henry's family acted similarly. 'If my son is happy by your side, we will you support you in anything,' she recalls them saying. Thanks to this support, Luna has been able to afford gender reassignment surgery and thus does not experience the constant displays of discrimination and bigotry that many of her trans siblings face daily.

Exact statistics about the transgender population across the world prove hard to come by, as a disproportionate percentage of the trans community is homeless or otherwise unrecognised by government-run institutions. In Bolivia, intense discrimination in the workforce has forced an overwhelming majority of trans Bolivians into sex work. 'I have trans friends who were kicked out of their homes,' Luna tells me. 'They became sex workers to survive. To have food to eat and a roof over their heads.'

> 'WE HAVE TO SHOW THAT WE ARE NORMAL PEOPLE. THAT WE LAUGH AND CRY, JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.'
> - LUNA HUMEREZ

In May 2016, Bolivia passed the Ley de Identidad de Género, a law that lets people legally change their gender without undergoing hormone therapy or operations. It is the first of its kind to be passed in South America and will hopefully pave the way for more LGBTQ+ legislation in the rest of the continent, including Bolivia, where gay marriage is still illegal.

Although the law assures access to gender-specific healthcare, it does not contemplate the specific needs of transfolk once they come out or change their gender identities. Finding healthcare as a trans woman is especially grueling. 'There are no medical specialists in trans women,' Luna says. 'There is no one here. They still see us like men.' Despite recent legislative progress, on-the-ground support for the trans community in La Paz is virtually nonexistent. 'As a trans activist here. . . you have to do everything yourself,' Luna remarks. Non-profits working on LGBTQ+ rights focus primarily on preventing and treating HIV and on supporting the city's gay population.

When asked what needs to change in Bolivia in order to create a safer climate for trans people, Luna insists that we must 'socialise the law'. Historically, political shifts stem from changing attitudes within constituencies, not from the stuffy, removed annals of government. The first step to an equitable society is normalising trans identities and people. 'We have to show that we are normal people,' she tells me. 'That we laugh and cry, just like everyone else.'

Like many citizens of this Catholic country, Luna feels a connection to God. 'I believe in God,' she says. 'I don't have any religion; I am not Christian nor Catholic, not Mormon, but I believe in God and I know God is in my heart. I know that he helped me in everything that happened to me last year,' she says, referencing her recent marriage to Henry, La Ley de Identidad de Género, and being recognised for her fight for trans women and the trans community.

In the comfort of their El Alto home, Luna and Henry cuddle playfully with one another and their adorable black Shar Pei, Rulo. The bedroom light hits their faces softly as they joke around, peels of laughter filling the chilly evening air. It is clearly a scene of love, but it is also a scene of resistance.

HOW TO **BUST** THE TRAVELLER'S BLUES

FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO TRANSFORM THE TROUBLED TOURIST

TEXT: YOLANDE ROWSON
PHOTOS: NICK SOMERS

It's a depressing moment when you're halfway across the world and you feel like a lugubrious llama. Your mind, once childlike in its inquisitiveness, grows ever more cynical in the interminable haze of new buildings, faces, and meals out. You stopped trying to be authentic with your meal choices back in month number one. Perhaps even now you're tucking into your fourth spaghetti bolognese this week. You're done with the small talk and have developed a silent antipathy towards your fellow travellers.

Luckily for you, you've now made it to La Paz. Deliverance from dejection is at hand, but only if you obey the golden rule: leave all inhibitions behind.

These tips, done with gusto, will certainly help you chase away those traveller's blues.

1 STEP ONE: EAT YOUR WAY TO HAPPINESS

Begin your day with a nutritious meal of **rostro asado**. For those that have yet to sample this delight, it's essentially a sheep's head on a plate, wool and all. In your situation, it is always best to ignore the advice of your well-wishers by avoiding comfort food and introducing yourself to discomfort food. It is incredibly difficult to think about one's own problems when faced with the enticing aroma of roasted meat and the alluring sight of fur slithering off a succulent carcass.

2 STEP TWO: SALVATION THROUGH SWEAT

Meal over, it's time for some exercise. A guide book will tell you that by far the best way of seeing the city is to take the **teleférico**. This is a grave misconception. What you really need to be doing in your condition is scrapping the whole public-transport idea altogether in favour of donning your trainers and running to El Alto. It's important not to worry about the altitude-induced wheezes, or the knowledge that your maladjusted lungs are at the point of implosion. Even if your face might turn blue, you certainly won't *feel* blue anymore.

3 STEP THREE: AUDACIOUS ATTIRE

What's a holiday without a makeover? Embrace the fact that you are a tourist and that it is not only tolerated but expected that your attire will be outrageous. Now is your time to channel the nonchalantly alternative look you've been longing for. Head down to Sagarnaga for a quintessentially gringo look. Grab yourself a pair of stripy trousers, throw on a jumper (if it's got fewer than three alpacas on it, don't bother), and head out on the town.

4 STEP FOUR: DRINK AWAY THAT AWKWARDNESS

Head out and leave the old you behind and adopt a new, cooler, sexier persona with the help of your new buddy, the **chuflay**. This courage-enhancing elixir of **singani** and a choice of ginger ale or white soda, is the perfect partner for the previous pessimist. There comes a point in inebriation at which the language barriers are miraculously surmounted. Who cares if you don't know '**hola**' from '**adios**'? What you do know is you *singani* from your sambuca.'

EDITORIAL:

THE CEDIB CRISIS

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF A NATIONAL ARCHIVE

TEXT: ALEX WALKER
PHOTO: NICK SOMERS

Two months on and the noise has not yet died down. On March 21 this year, Juan Ríos, the newly appointed rector of Cochabamba's state-run UMSS (Universidad Mayor de San Simón) – where the headquarters of CEDIB (Centro de Documentación e Información Boliviana) has been based since the NGO's inception back in 1993 – gave the research and information facility 48 hours to vacate its premises. These controversial marching orders have been met with widespread criticism across Bolivia, in the mainstream press, and, of course, from those inside CEDIB itself.

Throughout its near-25-year existence, CEDIB has provided a crucial academic and historical resource for Bolivia. Today, it houses 11 million physical and 3 million digital newspaper archives, alongside 77,000 books and a copy of every law in the country's history. Its higher purpose, though, and one its director, Marco Gandarillas, has gone to great lengths to emphasise, has been to hold incumbent governments to account – regardless of their political leaning – with evidenced humanitarian arguments.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that its eviction is being widely framed as a political manoeuvre. Página Siete, a daily newspaper with an anti-**MAS** track record, even went so far as to label it as 'an example of political and ideological intolerance'. Given the current administration's troubled relationships with many NGOs, many critics agree with this explanation.

As an argument, it carries the weight of history. Vice President Álvaro García Linera has long and painstakingly sought to redefine NGOs in Bolivia as vehicles for Western imperialism and intervention. In his book, *Geopolítica de la Amazonía*, he makes the bold yet thinly substantiated claim that 'in third world countries, as in the case of Bolivia, some NGOs are not really NON Governmental Organisations, but rather Organisations of Other Governments in Bolivian territory'. This scapegoating has served as a justification for the Bolivian government to claim control of organisations as their own. In March 2013, President Morales passed Ley 351, decreeing that any organisation or NGO must be legally recognised by the state, effectively stipulating that all NGOs, including CEDIB, must be aligned in their work, actions, and objectives with national policy.

This ideological oppression has been a thorn in CEDIB's side through recent years, coming to a head in June 2015 when, a month after the new Decree #2366 (opening natural protected areas to mining and oil extraction), the government announced that any NGO that interfered with said exploitation would be expelled from Bolivia. CEDIB has been one of extractivism's biggest opponents ever since.

It seems logical, then, that the appointment of the new rector at UMSS, who has established ties to *MAS*, and the subsequent forced removal of CEDIB are no coincidence. Additionally, the change comes on the heels of Bolivia's courting of investors from China, and the announcement that CEDIB will be replaced by a Confucio Chinese Institute.

This is but one, albeit very well-documented, side of the story. However, it would be irresponsible to fail to acknowledge that there might be another.

Rector Ríos' justifications for the eviction are twofold: that CEDIB have overstayed their agreement with the university for a decade, paying no rent, maintenance, or light and water bills; and that the expanding university needs the space for the *Confucio* institute. 'We have an important agreement with the institute,' he explains. 'It is a partnership that has brought many benefits to the university. If we don't comply with their requirements, we run the risk of them having to leave to the Universidad San Andrés.'

As much as it might be in the government's historical character and future interests to disrupt the work of and evict CEDIB, it must also be recognised that, given its often confrontational relationship with the government, it is in the interests of the NGO to pin its eviction on the state, continuing the narrative of political oppression that has dominated, and clearly inhibited, its past. But it is important to note that officially UMSS has constitutional autonomy, so the government technically cannot intervene. While the new rector clearly takes issue with CEDIB, whether due to the organisation's lack of recompense for the university, or an unspoken issue with CEDIB's alleged anti-government sentiment, interpreting the government's refusal to step in to save CEDIB as an active and driving force behind its eviction hinges on assumptions of a political vendetta against the NGO.

The initial populist jump to brand this situation as 'another example of government oppression' could be a dangerous one. CEDIB's modus operandi throughout its existence has been to provide an *evidenced* counterpoint to ill-advised and morally unjustified government policy. In this case, there is perhaps insubstantial hard evidence, nothing but the circumstantial traces this decision back to Morales, to claim so categorically that the government is trying to quash CEDIB. As such, CEDIB's mudslinging could be seen to undermine the credibility of its noble objectives.

Perhaps more importantly, this narrative of government oppression is not one that should be taken lightly. It could be argued that there has been a certain degree of sensationalisation around this issue, which perhaps trivialises the more serious, more tangible examples of oppression that are out there, such as the neglect of the disabled in Bolivia, President Morales' relentless quest to run for a fourth term in spite of a referendum ruling against it, and even the wider treatment of NGOs by the government.

Morales' predecessor as president and political adversary, Carlos Mesa, while eloquently taking on the point of view of those in support of CEDIB, did touch upon a vital argument when he published this poem on his Twitter page, reappropriated by a variety of media outlets:

Una universidad, cualquier
universidad, más si es estatal,
tiene la obligación de
preservar el patrimonio documental.
Mi apoyo al CEDIB

Or:

A university, whichever
university, more so if it's state-run
has the obligation to
preserve documentary heritage.
My support to CEDIB

Regardless of what is really going here, what should not be forgotten is that the rector, for whichever reason, has dealt a damning blow to CEDIB. The organisation, as yet unable to pack away the entirety of its extensive archives, has been consigned to a limbo that impinges on both the organisation's work and those who use its resources as a research tool for their individual pursuits. While it could be argued that media coverage has shown just one side of this controversial situation, the real burden of responsibility, perhaps along with the blame, lies at the door of those with the power to preserve and cherish an organisation of national importance.

GLOSSARY

BolivianExpress

ADIOS - 'goodbye'

ALTEÑO - someone or something from El Alto

API - a traditional corn-based drink, purple in color and served warm

ARROPE - in the making of chicha, a jelly-like layer composed of starch and sugars

AYLLU - community structure utilised by the Quechua and Aymara people, loosely based on family groups and crossing geographic areas

CAMBA - someone from Eastern Bolivia, near Santa Cruz

CARNECERÍA - 'butcher shop'

CELESTE - 'light blue'; nickname for Club Bolívar, one of La Paz's main football clubs

CHACO - a dry, lowland region extending over areas of Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay

CHICHA - a homemade drink popular in the Andes region, most commonly fermented and made of corn

CHICHA DE JORA - golden chicha made of Andean corn

CHICHA MORADA - a deep purple chicha made of Peruvian purple maize

CHICHERÍA - a place where chicha is made

CHICHERO - chicha maker

CHOCLO - puffy, white corn indigenous to the Andean region

CHUFLAY - a Bolivian cocktail comprising singani, lemon, and a choice of white soda or ginger ale

CLÁSICO - in La Paz, a football match between the city's two main clubs, Bolívar and The Strongest

COCHABAMBINO - someone or something from Cochabamba

FÚTBOL - 'football' or 'soccer'

HOLA - 'hello'

KOLLA - someone from Western Bolivia near La Paz

LIMÓN - 'lemon'

LOCO - 'crazy'

MAS - Movimiento Al Socialismo, the current ruling party of Bolivia

MACHETERO - someone who uses machete

MEDIA LUNA - informal definition of East Bolivia

MERCADO - 'market'

MIS'KETA - large wooden stick used in the making of chicha

MUCU - in making chicha, a chewed mass out of which the yeast is made

PACHAMAMA - Mother Earth in Inca mythology

PASTEL - fried dough filled with cheese, typically served topped with icing sugar

PLATO PACEÑO - typical dish of La Paz, made with corn, potatoes, beans, and cheese

ROSTRO ASADO - traditional Bolivian dish comprising a sheep's head, potatoes, and rice

SALCHIPAPA - a popular street food snack consisting of fried hot dog strips on a bed of chips

SALTEÑA - a Bolivian pastry filled with a stewy mixture of vegetables, meat, and eggs

SINGANI - a Bolivian brandy distilled from white Muscat of Alexandria grapes

TELEFÉRICO - cable car public transport in La Paz

TIGRE - 'TIGER'; nickname for The Strongest, one of La Paz's main football clubs

TRIGO AMAZÓNICO - 'Amazonian wheat'

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