

BOOK REVIEW

Jean Yaovi Dégli - "Togo: à quand l'alternance politique?"

Manuel Alejandro Valerio Jiminián - "Constitución, Democracia y Ciudadanía"
(Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship)

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Associate Dean for Library and Information Resources Professor Billie Jo Kaufman and University Librarian William Mayer gratefully received two signed copies of two new books authored by ILSP students Jean Yaovi Dégli and Manuel Alejandro Valerio Jiminián on November 8, 2007. Jean's book "Togo: à quand l'alternance politique?" (Togo: When will there be political change?) addresses the recent turnover in regimes from the 38 year reign of the dictator Eyadéma to his son, the upcoming elections and the potential for lasting democratic change in the nation. Alejandro's book "Constitución, Democracia y Ciudadanía" (Constitution, Democracy and Citizenship) examines the creation of the Dominican Republic and takes a historical look at the development of its constitution. Both books are well timed to take advantage of recent media interest in constitutional changes in countries such as Pakistan and Venezuela.

In "Togo: à quand l'alternance politique?", Jean assesses recent Togolese history and the penchant of several leaders to alter the constitution to fit their own needs. After the death of the dictator Eyadéma in February 2005, his son Faure Gnassingbe took the reigns of power with few objections from either the opposition party or the international community. With the support of the army, which consists of 90% of Gnassingbe's tribal group and has proven adept at suppressing opposition demonstrators, he has altered the constitution once more and looks set to win the 2010 elections, creating a culture of impunity towards rule of law as a result. The army had previously killed upwards of 800 people in 2005 to ensure Gnassingbe's leadership, and their persistent human rights violations have ensured that they are unlikely to be punished for their actions. Towards the end of the book, Jean predicts the likelihood that democracy will truly take hold in Togo and whether the small human rights changes made by Gnassingbe are dependent upon the expectation that his power is not curtailed.

Alejandro first got the idea to write the book "Constitución, Democracia y Ciudadanía" from a project developed by the education department and the Dominican Republic Civic Education Consortium, the largest Dominican Republic NGO in civic education, in conjunction with the US Center for Civic Education. The text chronologically tackles all the amendments to the Dominican Republic constitution and comprehensively explains why each took place with a historical

setting. The book is designed as a textbook for high school students and first year law students, filling the gap between complex constitutional texts and everyday reading material. Alejandro wanted to make the book accessible to ordinary citizens, so that they can better understand the democratic values and principles of the Dominican Republic constitution and exercise the rights granted to them. At present, the Dominican Republic is discussing further constitutional change for 2008 and constitutional amendments are consistently in the headlines throughout Latin America.

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