

# LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES



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# LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

A Journal on Capitalism and Socialism

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# LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

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## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

Issue Editor: Tamar Diana Wilson

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Cover photo: Abandoned bra found in the Sonoran Desert raises disturbing questions about the fate  
of the unknown woman to whom it belonged.

Photo © Paul Turounet 2014

# Patrimonial Violence

## A Study of Women's Property Rights in Ecuador

by

Carmen Diana Deere, Jacqueline Contreras, and Jennifer Twyman

*Patrimonial violence, defined minimally as the violation of women's property rights, is increasingly recognized as a form of gender violence, along with physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Research in Ecuador on the extent to which women are aware of their property rights and the situations in which patrimonial violence is most likely to occur shows that, while most women seem to be aware of certain fundamentals, there are many misconceptions, particularly regarding the status of individual property. Women's lack of legal knowledge often undermines their ability to obtain their rightful share of the division of property upon separation, divorce, or widowhood. Moreover, patrimonial violence is often aggravated by the presence of other forms of violence against women.*

*La violencia patrimonial, definida mínimamente como la violación de los derechos de propiedad de las mujeres, se reconoce cada vez más como una forma de violencia de género, a la par que la violencia física, psicológica y sexual. Investigaciones sobre el grado en que las mujeres son conscientes de sus derechos de propiedad y las situaciones en las que es más probable que se produzca violencia patrimonial en Ecuador muestran que, mientras que la mayoría de las mujeres parece estar conscientes de ciertos fundamentos, manejan muchas ideas equivocadas, particularmente con respecto al estado de la propiedad individual. Su falta de conocimiento legal a menudo socava su capacidad de obtener una parte justa de la división de bienes ocurrida a raíz de una separación, divorcio o viudez. Lo que es más, la violencia patrimonial a menudo se ve agravada por la presencia de otras formas de violencia contra la mujer.*

**Keywords:** Gender violence, Women's property rights, Assets, Ecuador

Carmen Diana Deere is Distinguished Professor of Latin American studies and food and resource economics at the University of Florida. Jacqueline Contreras, formerly a professor-researcher at FLACSO-Ecuador, is now at the Catholic University in Quito. Jennifer Twyman, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida when this article was written, is currently a postdoctoral social scientist at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture in Cali, Colombia. This paper is a result of the FLACSO-Ecuador and University of Florida project "Assets, Poverty, and Gender Inequalities," part of a comparative international project that included India and Ghana and was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its MDG3 Fund for gender equality. The authors are grateful to the funders and, for comments on earlier versions, to Caren Grown, Magdalena León, and the reviewers. The paper was presented at the International Association for Feminist Economics annual conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 2010, at the congress of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología Rural, Pernambuco, Brazil, in November 2010, and at the Latin American Studies Association Ecuador Section conference, Quito, in June 2011.

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