



## ***THE PLEASURE OF RETURNING, 2014: HOW AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES WORK***

**JULIETA ALMEIDA RODRIGUES, PH.D.**

**I** returned last week from the United States and what a pleasure it was to be there!

**I** know three universities rather well:

- 1. Columbia University, where I finished my doctorate in 1979 with the help of the Fulbright Commission as their grantee.**
- 2. Georgetown University, where I taught in 2001, 2002, and 2004.**
- 3. The New School University, The New School for Public Engagement, where I was a Visiting Scholar in Spring 2014.**

**At these different stages of my life, my universities served me very well.**

**At Columbia University I was immersed in a new universe where discipline of thought and availability of materials was staggering.**

**At Georgetown University I felt close to the world center of power. Virtually every week, I could hear a distinguished personality speaking about a global event. Several times I went up and down in the elevator with Madeleine Albright, who must have taught at the same time I did. Like me, she was also a graduate of Columbia University.**

**At the New School, where I found a group of creative scholars under the guidance of Professor Gina Luria Walker, I was Consultant for Project Continua for Iberia and Latin America.**

**What is the pleasure of returning to an American University? I will**



briefly describe five points, all well worth considering in the current context of Portuguese society:

1. These are places where merit is recognized and the good people always come up. In meritocratic environments each one knows his or her place and acts, therefore, accordingly.

2. These are places for dialogue and communication and where the exchange of ideas is possible. The professors teach, the students learn and both are able to listen to each other.

3. These are places to broaden and enlarge our global views of the world through the availability of knowledge. We feel here the notion of a melting pot, that cultural interchange is valuable.

4. These are places where values exist and play a role. A feeling of mutual trust and respect exists between scholars, professors and students.

5. These are places where the role of the *Alumni* Offices is paramount.

We belong to an institution for life; *alumni* are bound by the obligation to honor their university. I find that there is a huge ignorance about these matters in the Social Media in Portugal. The Fulbright Commission, therefore, must continue to play the fundamental role it has played so far in this country.

To conclude, I would like to introduce the photographer Manuel Pessoa-Lopes, here in the audience. He illustrated the cover of my book, which has just been released in the United States, *The Rogue and Other Portuguese Stories*. His remarkable photograph is called "Downtown Lisbon seen from the medieval city wall at Palace of Independence".