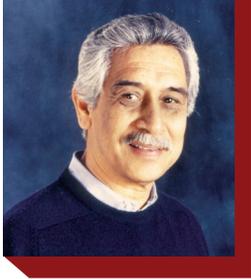


FROM THE DIRECTOR



Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D.

This is the last time I will address you as the Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies since I will be retiring in August of this year.

I have served as the Director of CMAS for 34 of my 40 years with UH. In 1974, I was the first Mexican American professor hired in the Sociology department. While there, I held a joint appointment in Mexican American Studies where I was responsible for developing new courses, serving on its committees, and being a liaison with the Houston community. As a native Houstonian and a UH graduate, I was elated to be working at my alma mater and being involved with Mexican American Studies..

When I became the Director of CMAS in 1980, the Center had limited resources. But with the assistance of legislators, community leaders, students, colleagues, corporations, and many others, we were able to secure a financial base that enabled us to become one of the premier Centers in our field in the United States. None of our services would have been possible without the assistance of a wide range of supporters who believe in our mission. I am truly grateful for their assistance. Their tangible and intangible support has allowed us to achieve excellence in our endeavors.

As I review our groundbreaking efforts I take pride

in what we have accomplished together. We offer a minor in Mexican American Studies. We administer an undergraduate recruitment and retention program that has won accolades from the State of Texas for its success in graduating low income students. More than 30,000 students have visited our campus through our college career days. We offer graduate fellowships to students seeking advanced degrees who may become the next generations of scholars in our field. We developed a Visiting Scholars Program that fosters research, publications and the possibility of employment at the University of Houston. CMAS established the UH series in Mexican American Studies that publishes books that focus on Houston and Texas. We host annual lectures or conferences on a wide range of relevant topics and are a source of information for local, state, national and at times international media. Importantly, we have also secured endowments that are providing support for our activities and will continue to do so in perpetuity.

The Center has also engaged in research. During the 1990's we conducted a series of exit polls aimed at highlighting the Mexican American voter in comparison to other groups. Some of the polls were conducted in contentious local races. These surveys became popular with the media given that no one else in city was taking an in-depth look at our community's vote. CMAS also surveyed the relationship between Hispanics and African Americans that resulted in the book *Black Brown Relations and Stereotypes*. In collaboration with HISD one of our Visiting Scholars conducted a drop out study. Others wrote books about Houston which are published

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NOTICIAS

CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Paula Mendoza

UH Regent and CMAS Supporter

The exceptional Paula M. Mendoza is a native Houstonian and one of its brightest stars. Well-known for her passion for many causes, such as education, the development of resources and standards of excellence, professional ethics, and law enforcement, Paula Mendoza has touched many lives within the Latino and greater Houston communities

Ms. Mendoza became acquainted with the CMAS mission about seven years ago through her work with the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Academic Achievers Program Manager Rebeca Treviño asked Mendoza to speak at the annual Leadership Retreat at Camp Allen. Visiting with the young students that day and hearing their personal stories of accomplishment resonated deeply within Mendoza. Part of the reason for that resonance originated in Mendoza's own childhood with parents who were themselves tremendous advocates for obtaining an education. However, as Mendoza explains: "My parents were passionate about education, but we still didn't know about going to college, or getting career counseling, or applying for scholarships." As Mendoza became acquainted with



Paula Mendoza

the full range of CMAS programs, it became apparent that CMAS offered, in Mendoza's own words "a complete package" for students: mentoring, career counseling, financial aid, and a supportive network of staff and other students engaged in the same endeavor, reaching for the same outcome.

Mendoza has volunteered on committees and boards for an amazing variety of Houston educational institutions and non-profits, such as Texas Southern University, Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, the Houston

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the M.D. Anderson YMCA.

Her appointments in several key positions have given her a prominent public profile. For instance, she served on the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy from 2003 to 2007. She was both Chairman (2009-2010) and Commissioner (2007-2013) of the Texas Ethics Commission. In 2006-07, she served as chairman of the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce. In 2013, she was named by then governor Rick Perry to the University of Houston Board of Regents.

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CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

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HOUSTON

CENTER for MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) at the University of Houston was established in 1972 as an interdisciplinary academic program encompassing the liberal arts, education, and social sciences focusing on the Mexican American and broader Latino experience in the U.S. Its mission is to advance knowledge, promote critical thinking, and foster the value of service to the community.

This involves designing a broad spectrum of public and scholarly programs. Located within the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, CMAS has evolved into an academic unit with several major components: teaching, research and publications, recruitment and retention, leadership training, academic advising, and community service.

Race, Health, and Citizenship on the Border

Mark Allan Goldberg, Ph.D.

I received my B.A. in History from UT-Austin and my History M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In the fall of 2011, I moved back home and began my career in the UH History Department.

While I was born here, Houston is my family's most recent stop in a multigenerational history of migration. After decades—maybe centuries—in Eastern Europe, my grandparents immigrated to Mexico City in 1929 with a wave of Jewish refugees that integrated into the city's small but vibrant Jewish community. My parents were born and raised in the Distrito Federal, and eventually they immigrated to Houston in the mid-1970s. I realized relatively recently that this story of migration, intersecting ethnicities, and transnational identities is what drove me to study identity and culture in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

My current research project, titled, "Making Subjects and Citizens: Race, Health, and Land in the Texas Borderlands," covers the period between 1780 and 1880. It explores the ways racial ideologies intersected with ideas about health and healing and influenced definitions of Spanish colonial subject hood and Mexican, Texas Republican, and U.S. citizenship.

When Spaniards conquered the New World and brought "civilization" to what became New Spain, Indian medicine became a counterpoint to Spanish medicine and served as a marker of racial difference. From the beginning of conquest, Spanish naturalists appropriated Native healing practices, such as cacao healing, and made them "Spanish" by using science to interpret and explain the efficacy of Indian remedies. By the time doctors and nurses at San Antonio de Béxar's hospital were distributing champurrado to patients in 1808, the chocolate drink had been stripped of its Indianness and transformed into a scientific and Spanish cure. The imagined boundary that elites drew between so-called legitimate Spanish medicine and illegitimate Indian medicine collapsed into *casta* divisions between *españoles* and *indios*. Spanish subjects practiced scientific medicine.

The problem for the Spaniards, however, was that they could never fully realize their imperial visions in the borderlands. Boundaries between *castas*, as well as boundaries between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" medicine, were porous, as *mestizos* claimed the privileges of whiteness and Spaniards sought out Indian healers in the borderlands. The *castas* meant little outside of Spanish settlements, in a place where colonists had to rely on Native peoples to build the colonial economy and survive.

Nevertheless, the racialized notion of "proper" and "improper" forms of healing persisted, well into the Mexican national period. Immediately after Mexico's independence in 1821, physicians worked hard to place themselves at the center of the new nation-building project and argued that scientific medicine was a marker of Mexican national progress and modernity. Mexican doctors also racialized healing and differentiated their therapies from lay practitioners, including Indian healers and *curandera/os*. But in the borderlands, where state-licensed physicians were scarce and where Native peoples



Mark Goldberg

held power, Mexican doctors relied on Indian medical knowledge. When a global cholera epidemic arrived in northern Mexico in 1833, for example, one licensed physician appropriated Native peyote healing, which became the state's preferred remedy. By the time the Coahuila y Texas government was disseminating the peyote prescription, it, too, had been stripped of its Indianness and femininity and made legitimately "scientific" and "Mexican." But, like the Spanish, northern Mexican elites could not fully institute their racialized vision of the nation that excluded "un-Mexican," Native practices, because of their close, interdependent relationship with Texas Indians.

Texas independence and U.S. westward expansion, however, changed the conversation about race, health, and nation. Instead of using medicine, itself, as a marker of racial difference, Anglo Americans constructed Native and Mexican practices as unhealthy threats to the Texas Republic and U.S. nation. In the 1850s, central Texas, for example, a decade after nurturing close economic ties with the Comanches, Anglo slaveholders sought to push the once-powerful Indians westward onto reservations. Physicians and the Texas Indian Agent framed Comanche nomadism and labor practices as hazards to Indian health. Anglos would instruct the Comanches on how to live healthy sedentary lives on the reserves, far away from Anglo settlements.

In mid-nineteenth-century south Texas, Anglo physicians helped invent "the dirty Mexican," an image that continues to circulate as part of the U.S. racial lexicon. They marked ethnic Mexican neighborhoods as filthy disease-causing environments, and ethnic Mexicans as inherently unclean. In this moment, when Mexicans were disproportionately being pushed into low-wage occupations, Anglo women relied on Mexican female domestics to keep their homes clean, which had become a sign of middle class American womanhood. Thus, Mexican women who were deemed intrinsically dirty and therefore unable to achieve the American feminine ideal, allowed white women to achieve that very ideal. The Anglo institutionalization of a "cleaner" and "healthier" culture in U.S. Texas shows that Anglos were able to realize their visions of a nation with more rigid racial boundaries, unlike their Spanish and Mexican predecessors. Looking at the ways that a similar set of cultural practices (healing, religious ritual, and land use) in the borderlands became markers of racial difference for Spaniards, Mexicans, and Anglos also shows that racial ideologies transcended nation-states and that we should think about racial formation and citizenship transnationally.

I have published articles and book chapters on the role of Native-Spanish relations in boundary mapping, Anglo-Mexican medical exchanges in south Texas, medicine and Mexican state formation, and the intersection of Indian slavery and black chattel slavery in mid-nineteenth-century Texas. Last summer, I began researching a second project that will look at how Latin Jews have constructed historical memory and community through everyday cultural practices and expressions, including music and foodways. I look forward to developing this project that explores cultural diversity within Latin and Jewish communities here at UH.

Life Through the Eyes of an Undocumented Child

Berenice Hernandez

My parents brought me, along with their dreams, to the U.S. when I was an infant. Growing up, I realized the limited opportunities, access, and even freedom that I had as an undocumented student. In school I followed classroom rules, recited the Pledge of Allegiance, faithfully fulfilled my classwork, and passed all the standardized tests. More importantly, I formed dreams that would guide my life.

In high school, my teachers instilled in me the belief that I could pursue any career, but I knew my lack of legal status precluded my being able to make the career choices that others had. I dreamed of going to college, but I could not get a social security number which meant I had no opportunity to acquire legal work to help pay for higher education. Even if I could find a way to go to college, I could not use my education without legal status. I considered going back to the country where I was born, but that country was unfamiliar to me. I had grown up as a Hispanic American but lacked the security of belonging. Out of this time of intensive reflection and worry came the formation of a resolve to go as far as my potential would take me.

With encouragement from school counselors, mentors, college recruiters, and my family, I was able to get full scholarships from Texas A&M University. I graduated with a Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies with a 4.0 GPA in 2014. The educational journey of many of my fellow undocumented students is not always as bright as mine. According to a Pew Research Center project there are 1.1 million undocumented children who will face the same myriad of challenges I have encountered. My personal experience has given me insights into the obstacles, injustices, and other social issues that immigrant students face. This has inspired me to focus my education and career on serving and supporting the Latino community, especially its children.

As an undergraduate student, I became a leader for an organization that prepared DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) informational forums and clinics for the community. I was also involved in local immigrant community organizations that served underrepresented children and families. I took part in research that advocated new policy changes on improving working conditions in the construction industry. Surveying construction workers in Houston and encouraging them to advocate for their rights gave me an understanding of the changes that needed to be brought into the community.

Additionally, through a research grant I was awarded, I was able to conduct a pilot study that analyzed in-depth interviews with Mexican foreign-born adolescents. The study hoped to provide the necessary elements to constitute the criteria that would enable institutions to understand exactly what factors and resources facilitate the transition from high school to college for undocumented students. For this service, I was awarded the 2014 Jane Stallings Student Service Award and was chosen as the Department of Educational Psychology's Distinguished Honor Graduate. The work I did there helped me



Berenice Hernandez

recognize the importance of the effort and the work that needed to be continued in this community.

Following graduation, I decided that as an educated Latina Woman I could bring vital insights into enabling our society to establish new ways of bringing social justice to the Latino community. As a graduate student at the Graduate College of Social Work and a Center for Mexican American Studies Fellow, I am currently pursuing a master's in social work to help me develop abilities to better serve the Latino community. I am primarily assisting Dr. Isabel Torres in a National Institutes of Health K01 research study, End of Life Treatment Preferences

of Latino Medicare Beneficiaries with Cancer. This position allows me to conduct structured telephone interviews with both Spanish and English speaking older Latinos. This has provided me with opportunities for establishing relationships with staff at MD Anderson Cancer Center and understanding the functioning of this agency in the Latino community.

My current social work internship with Texas Children's Pediatrics-Gulfton has provided opportunities to see the psychosocial factors that hinder the lives of children and families. The experiences and relationships that I form with the community are giving me an understanding of the obstacles that they encounter while obtaining primary care and mental health services. This knowledge has presented me with valuable perspectives into what the community needs to be able to provide children with a foundation for growth and health.

In an effort to give back to my community, I am a mentor for Collegiate Challenge at Northbrook High School where I graduated. Not only have I been able to contribute what I have gained from my experiences as an undocumented student, but I also have been given an opportunity to understand the current challenges that Latino students face as they pursue higher education.

Through my current experiences and the knowledge that I am gaining as a graduate student, I know that I am preparing myself to be able to bring social justice and equity and help individuals reach their fullest potential in life. It is my ultimate goal to develop an organization that creates healthy and productive Latino families by bringing parents and children together through education and support programs. This goal will be addressed through the creation of programs and resources that school districts can implement throughout their campuses and communities. Furthermore, I hope to strengthen families and encourage educational aspirations within the family unit.

I appreciate the setting the University of Houston provides to help me understand the anatomy of creating successful programs to help underrepresented students achieve their dreams. I have overcome various obstacles, but I know my journey is beginning.

The Ring

Russell Contreras

It was the fall of 1991, and I was in a Houston neighborhood we only visited when someone died. Deceased family members had services at nearby Crespo Funeral Home.

There at the Latino Learning Center, University of Houston Professor Lorenzo Cano told an enthusiastic crowd of potential UH students and their families that attending UH was not only a realistic option—it was a duty. Look around and see how we are living today, he said. Now think about how you want to live in ten years.

The crowd erupted.

As a 17-year-old high school baseball player, I had no idea how I wanted to live the next day. Little interested me beyond Major League Baseball homerun records and my booming stereo. I shunned most books because I didn't see myself. In sum, I felt I didn't belong in a classroom of thinkers.

Had I not attended that Center for Mexican American Studies information session, it's possible I would have dropped out a year later as a struggling undergraduate. But the excitement in the hall stuck. It kept pushing me.

Eventually, I took the Mexican-American Literature course taught by Maria Gonzalez. Then I signed up for Dr. Tatcho Mindiola's class on Mexican Americans and film. Dr. Nestor Rodriguez captivated me about his studies of Guatemalan migrants in his sociology course. My grades rose.

The Daily Cougar offered me a weekly column, and I wrote (or rather experimented writing) pieces about race, ethnicity, and campus politics. Just a few months before, I had been on the verge of failing out of freshman composition.

"Your columns," Dr. Mindiola said, "are provoking reaction."

I think he meant the angry letters to the editors were more entertaining than my pieces calling for the boycott of Frontier Fiesta over the event's Old West themes that might offend some American Indians.

Later I became president of the Hispanic Student Association, graduated, and took an internship at *The Nation Magazine* in New York. I got into a heated argument with a well-known columnist who said she didn't think "Hispanics face much discrimination back in Texas. But then again I don't know much about them."

No, you don't.

Back in Houston, I enrolled in the graduate history program, thanks to a CMAS fellowship. I continued my studies under historian Dr. Emilio Zamora and took to spending my evenings in the library closely studying the stories I never heard as a child.

By 2000, I found myself as a graduate writing student at Columbia University in New York. I no longer felt I didn't belong.

Before I was to give my thesis reading for graduation, my



Russell Contreras

father called. My grandfather, Carlos, died of complications from Alzheimer's. He was a WWII vet and a UH graduate. So was his brother Nick. So was his brother Ciprian. So was his brother Lencho. All Mexican-American UH engineering graduates.

I couldn't return for the funeral on such short notice. Just a few months after Sept. 11, getting emergency plane tickets were expensive and difficult to obtain. Instead, I walked alone in the streets of Harlem, feeling guilty that I had come so far on the backs of others.

I didn't even know if my grandfather's services would be held at Crespo like we had done for generations. I wouldn't be joining my family in the neighborhood where we had always held our funerals.

But out of that neighborhood also came a call to live. And there I found myself on the steps of Columbia's Low Memorial Library, looking up at a clear sky and recalling that plea for action I heard at the Latino Learning Center. I wondered what the call to action was for my grandfather. I never asked.

Back in my suite, I pulled out my dusty UH undergraduate class ring and put it on.

I've worn it everyday since.

As a journalist who has worked for The Associated Press and the Boston Globe, the ring serves as a reminder of how CMAS and my family shaped my intellectual growth and my professional and personal life.

I wore the ring during the New York blackout. I wore the ring when I interviewed former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix. The ring was on my hand when I covered the last election victory of Sen. Ted Kennedy in Boston and when I stood in line to talk to people who said goodbye during his memorial service.

I wore the ring when I asked my wife to marry me in Boulder, Colorado, and I wore the ring during the birth of my daughter in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I'm wearing it now as I type these words.

When Sen. Kennedy passed, I wrote a story on his legacy with immigrants. While in Albuquerque, I wrote a story about how New Mexico had no school named after civil rights scholar and home-grown George I. Sanchez. (That's about to change.) And, when I drive by the Sandia Pueblo everyday, I see the poverty and struggle of a community. That's not how we should be living, and I need to write about that.

I'm no longer a lost 17-year-old. I'm 40 and working on a book on JFK's last night with Mexican Americans in Houston. When the book is complete, I intend to return to the Latino Learning Center where I hope to find the next generation of 17-year-olds.

Look around, I want to say. And tell me where you want to be in 10 years.

I'll be wearing my ring.

The Road to Public Service

Sophia Gutierrez

I grew up in near Northside Houston during the 1970s and 1980s as the second youngest of five children in a working class Mexican American family. Statistically, my chances of going to college were pretty slim. Neither one of my parents finished high school, and like many others in their situation, they struggled financially because of their lack of education. High drop-out rates, teen pregnancies, drugs, and gangs were commonplace in my neighborhood. Nonetheless, I was proud of where I came from and was determined to overcome the adversities that came my way. Wanting a better life for my brother, my sisters, and me, my parents instilled in us at a very young age the importance of education and working hard. I truly believe that their confidence in our ability to achieve great things was fundamental to our success.

Although my mother passed away before seeing me graduate from high school, her words of love and support have remained with me and encouraged me throughout my life. I graduated from Waltrip Senior High School with highest honors, and a few years later I went on to graduate Magna Cum Laude from the University of Houston with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a minor in Spanish. After completing my Bachelor degree, I was fortunate to receive a Graduate Fellowship from the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) to pursue a Master's degree. If it wasn't for the CMAS Graduate Fellowship, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my Master's degree. The resources that CMAS made available to me, as well as the encouragement the CMAS staff provided, were key in obtaining the higher education that I had desired.

Although doing well in school was a priority for me, public service has always been a driving force in my life. While working towards my Bachelor degree and my Master's degree, I worked at the UH Admissions Office assisting prospective students on admission to the university as well as actively recruiting underrepresented minority graduate students. I truly enjoyed working with my peers to help them through the admissions process. Like myself, many of the students were first-generation college students. I knew that preparing to enter college could be a daunting task, so I was always eager to help.

The drive to give back to my community and to the University that had given me the opportunity to pursue my goals also shaped my college experience. During my junior year at UH, myself and nine other young women established the first Latina-based organization at the University of Houston, Kappa Delta Chi Sorority. We saw that there was a need for an organization



Sophia Gutierrez

that would reflect and represent the growing Latina population at UH. In the early 1990s, there wasn't an organization like that at UH, so we knew that we needed to do something to fill the void. Through a lot of determination and under the leadership of Gloria Jimenez, we were able to make our vision a reality. I'm proud to say that over 22 years later, the service-based organization continues to grow and thrive at UH.

During my senior year at UH, I was chosen to participate in the Mickey Leland Washington Congressional Internship. The internship in Washington D.C. had a lasting impression on me and proved to be a life-altering experience. I worked

in the office of Congressman Martin Frost and was able to see firsthand how public policy affected local issues. After the internship ended, I was offered a full-time position, but turned it down since I still hadn't finished my Bachelor's degree. At that time, little did I know that life would lead me back to a congressional office.

Shortly after finishing my Master's degree, my life changed dramatically. I married, moved overseas and had two daughters. I lived in Spain for 10 years before moving back to Houston in 2010. I was glad that I had the opportunity to focus on raising my daughters when I lived in Spain, but as can be expected, I missed home. The strong pull to return home to the U.S., inevitably led me and my family to relocate to Houston. Shortly after returning to the U.S., I was offered a position at the office of Congressman Gene Green, where I had worked at previously while studying for my Master's degree.

For the past four and a half years, I've worked full-time in the office of Congressman Green as the District scheduler and as a caseworker. It's been such an honor and a privilege to work with such an influential leader in our community. On a daily basis, I see how hard he works to represent the interests of the predominately Latino district he represents, which I'm happy to say includes the near Northside. As a caseworker, I spend a lot of my day cutting through bureaucratic red tape, trying to get information for people—it's not easy—it can be trying even for the most patient person, but it is truly rewarding for me when I'm able to help someone.

I'm fortunate that CMAS was there when I needed assistance, and no amount of words can express my gratitude. Without them, I would not have had the experiences that have led me to where I am today. I value CMAS and am confident that the Center will continue helping new generations of students overcome challenges and adversities to achieve higher education.

Committed to Our Comunidades

Deborah L. Muñiz

“Your only job is to do well in school,” my mother, Minga Calderon-Salinas, would remind me. Her voice echoed in my head as I pursued my studies...

I was raised by a hard-working, single mother in the northeast of Houston and attended schools in the Aldine Independent School District. My mother never allowed me to get a job while I attended high school, even though I wanted to help with expenses. Although my mother never had the opportunity to attend college, it was always understood that my academic journey would take me beyond high school.

After taking an introduction to sociology course, I became interested in the study of social human behavior. I chose sociology as my major with a minor in Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston as a member of the class of 1997. The opportunity to minor in Mexican American Studies allowed me to gain greater insight into the contributions of Mexican Americans across the United States. A highlight of my undergraduate experience was participating in the March for Justice on October 12, 1996, in Washington, D.C. This experience sparked a lifelong commitment to our comunidades and propelled me in my research interests and community engagement. In May of 1997, when I earned my bachelor’s degree, my mother beamed with pride.

Drs. Nestor Rodríguez and Luis Salinas (my UH mentors throughout my academic career) encouraged me to apply to graduate school and continue my academic journey. In 1998, I was awarded the UH Center for Mexican American Studies Graduate Fellowship. During graduate school, my areas of interest were education, family, gender, and immigration. My master’s thesis was titled, “*Grupo para Mamas: An Ethnography of an Immigrant Women’s Group in Houston*” and focused on a women’s group referred to as *Grupo para Mamas* located in Southwest Houston. I traced how immigrant stay-at-home mothers developed social and support networks and how the network structure influenced gender roles from social expectations to individual and collective transformations. The study spanned one year, and data was collected by observing weekly meetings, interviewing members, and conducting focus groups. Some of the findings indicated that as women began to learn about the group and establish their membership, they were able to rebuild social networks. The group also formed a public voice when they organized in support of their children’s schooling by demanding improved learning conditions at a neighborhood elementary school. I presented my research at the Hispanics in Houston conference, which was organized and hosted by the UH Center for Mexican American Studies in April 2000. A month later, I earned my master’s degree. The graduate program, as well as the fellowship support, prepared me for a career in educational research.

Since 2000, I have put into practice my research acumen in the Department of Research and Accountability of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), which serves a majority-



Deborah L. Muñiz

Hispanic student population. As a research specialist, my responsibilities include designing research evaluations for school-based programs and reporting results. As a part of the evaluation process, I work closely with program staff to design and implement an evaluation plan. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to conduct program evaluations. The findings from the evaluation allow stakeholders to make informed decisions about programs with access to data such as statistics and demographics. My evaluations have focused on students with disabilities, English language learners, and students with dyslexia. Similarly, I have reported on bilingual and literacy programs within Houston ISD.

A career in educational research has allowed me to stay current on issues that affect our comunidades. For this reason, I serve as an active volunteer. From 2001–2006, I served on the Board of Directors for the East End Education Project in the greater East End communities of Houston. We advocated for the improvement of academic opportunities for youth and worked with families through programming to increase student learning and achievement. The organization held annual school readiness fairs, college visit days, literacy fairs, and college-bound workshops.

Furthermore, I was a mentor through a partnership between the Vineyard Church of Houston and a middle and high school located in the Heights area. With a caring, longitudinal approach, each mentor is partnered with a student; the mentor follows the mentee from middle to high school. As a mentor, I identified resources to help and advocate for my mentee, provided advice that would be helpful and encouraging, and supported the mentee to enhance educational and personal development. This spring I look forward to attending my mentee’s high school graduation.

Most recently, I assisted staff at an elementary school to develop culturally responsive approaches to engage Latino families in their children’s schooling and education. One of the school programs launched in 2014 was the family literacy initiative *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* (Children’s Day/Book Day).

Upon reflection, my journey to UH began with my mother’s words and actions, which placed my learning and well-being in the highest regard. My educational experience at UH has provided me with many opportunities to engage in the communities that nurtured my early learning and professional growth over the years. Today, my husband (a UH alumnus and high school teacher) and I are active parents and citizens in comunidades that mirror the determination and zest we learned at UH and now practice in our personal and civic lives. Soon my daughter will be a fourth-grade student, while my youngest son will begin his schooling as a kindergartener. My resolve to improve the educational outcomes of students is steadfast and is a reminder of the work to be done across comunidades in support of the greatest investment we can make, and that’s in education.

New CMAS Employees

CMAS has succeeded with its programs due to its leaders and dedicated staff. The most recent staff members that have joined CMAS are: Jessica Thiam, Events Assistant, Flor Montelongo, Financial Coordinator, and Eddie Gonzalez, Academic Achievers Program Coordinator.



Flor Montelongo

Jessica Thiam

Eddie Gonzalez

Jessica Thiam joined CMAS in June of last year. Originally from Bakersfield, California, she studied hospitality management at the UH's Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management. Ms. Thiam came to CMAS with a wealth of experience in the hospitality and entertainment industries. She has been a suites manager with Toyota Center and the BBVA Compass Stadium. She also worked as a cashier at Hotel Granduca in Houston. She was the campus representative at UH to Disney Worldwide Services, Inc. where she represented the Disney College Program. Her other employers include the Omni Galleria Hotel and Starbucks. As an event's assistant, Ms. Thiam helps Associate Director Lorenzo Cano in organizing the College Career Days. Her experience in the hospitality and hotel industries has been invaluable, because she reserves the facilities for the CMAS College Career Days and other events such as the CMAS Speaker's Series. Ms. Thiam also processes the paperwork to pay for these and other events and ensures that all of the logistics are in order. Ms. Thiam often offers excellent ideas on the programming that CMAS sponsors and provides valuable feedback concerning room arrangements and logistics. Ms. Thiam's bilingual abilities in English and Spanish are important in speaking to the public about the services and programs offered by CMAS. Her experience as a UH graduate are important in answering questions concerning the core curriculum, financial aid, and other questions often asked by high school and community college students inquiring about attending our campus.

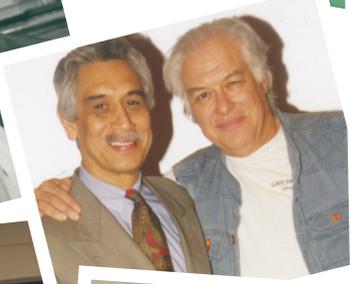
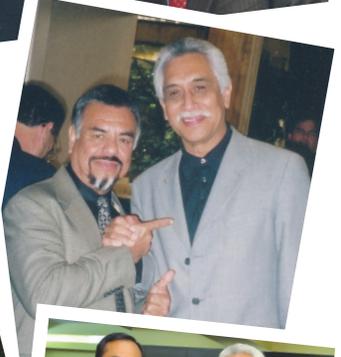
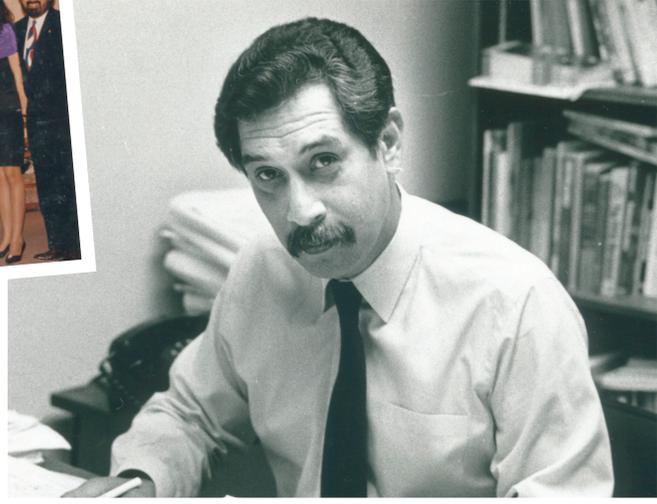
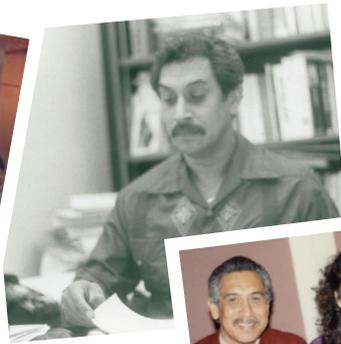
Flor Montelongo, who grew up in Houston, joined CMAS in October 2014. As financial coordinator, Ms. Montelongo assists business manager, Ms. Helen Meza, with the financial operations of CMAS. She reconciles account balances on all accounts in revenues and expenditures, including reconciling the payroll and time on leave for monthly and bi-weekly staff. She also coordinates the property inventory. Ms. Montelongo received her Bachelor of Science degree from the UH College

of Technology in Organization Leadership and Supervision. Before coming to CMAS, Ms. Montelongo spent several years in the banking industry. She was a personal banker for Woodforest National Bank where she balanced transactions and opened new accounts. She was also responsible for

customer background checks and banking history. She prepared documents for all accounts and assisted in minimizing risks. Her banking experience has been an invaluable asset in working with the CMAS budget, and Ms. Montelongo has been particularly effective in learning the new financial systems at the university.

The latest CMAS employee is Mr. Eddie Gonzalez who grew up in Houston's East End. Mr. Gonzalez is the Academic Achievers Program Coordinator and works closely with Ms. Rebeca Trevino, AAP Program Manager. Mr. Gonzalez is currently an accounting major at the University of Houston and is a graduate of Austin High School and Houston Community College where he obtained his associates of arts degree. Before coming to CMAS, Mr. Gonzalez was employed at UH as a Customer Service Representative with the Office of Student Business Services, where he regularly assisted visitors and students with questions pertaining to financial aid. He also investigated complaints and participated in negotiating solutions to any holds and financial charges that students encountered. Mr. Gonzalez was also a sales representative with the International Bank of Commerce where he was involved with customer services including the sale of products to small businesses. As Program Coordinator of AAP, Mr. Gonzalez is in charge of maintaining the academic records of AAP participants and reviewing their respective grades and academic progress. He communicates with the students and informs them about future meetings and events. He also meets with them about their academic reports from professors. Mr. Gonzalez' importance to AAP is that he works to rectify any problems students may have concerning their financial aid. His knowledge of the UH financial aid process is crucial when students have questions. He also supports many of the other AAP activities and events such as the Leadership Retreat held at Camp Allen. Mr. Gonzalez is bilingual in English and Spanish and has contributed greatly to AAP during his short time with CMAS.

Through the Years



From the Director *continued from page 1*

through the UH Series in Mexican American Studies. An example is *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston*. One Visiting Scholar, a muralist, painted a mural at Austin High School with the assistance of Austin and UH students. Supported faculty research has led to articles published in academic journals.

My own research has dealt with race relations with particular attention paid to Mexican Americans. Most recently I have written a biography of Leonel Castillo for the Tejano Handbook. Leonel was the first Mexican American City Controller of Houston and the first to win a city wide election. I also completed a bibliography on Latinos in Houston for Oxford bibliographies on line and finished a draft of a manuscript entitled *Race Talk in a Mexican American Cantina*. At some point I hope to write a book about my experiences as the CMAS Director.

During the early 1990's I was invited to write regular commentary for *Viva Magazine*, an insert in the Houston Post and to serve as a political commentator for KTRK television. I likewise wrote editorials for the *Houston Chronicle*. These ventures brought the Center to the attention of a wider audience and helped us garner support.

Teaching, of course, has been integral to my life at the University of Houston and I have enjoyed and gained something from all of my classes. The classes that are dearest to my heart, however, are those that dealt with various aspects of Mexican American Studies. Courses in Mexican American Studies are relatively new to the University and have been in existence since 1972. In the late 1960s, Mexican American students began campus in unprecedented numbers demanding that their history, culture, literature, and other topics be included in the curriculum via a Mexican

American Studies initiative. CMAS met the challenge and has developed a wide range of courses not only in the topics mentioned but also in immigration, intergroup relations, music, urban studies, film, family, and social issues (also offered at the graduate level). CMAS has also facilitated the establishment of courses in other disciplines like history, anthropology, political science, English, sociology, education and the health sciences. Graduate level classes are special to me for two reasons. Foremost is the class format. The students and I sit around a table and discuss the reading assignments, which in my case meant books. Secondly, graduate students are less inhibited in stating their opinions and thus the discussions tend to be lively. Sitting around a table and discussing ideas captures the essence of the intellectual endeavor and I will miss this type of interaction.

In addition to our supporters, the staff, and students who have worked at CMAS over the years are a major part of our story. CMAS have been very fortunate in employing people who feel that they are part of a larger cause that is furthering our community's educational ambitions. Three long time CMAS patriots who deserve special mention are Mr. Lorenzo Cano, the Associate Director, Ms. Helen Meza, our Budget Manager, and Ms. Rebeca Trevino, Manager of our Academic Achievers Program. They have been with CMAS the longest. Their hard work and commitment to furthering our goals is as strong if indeed not stronger than mine. They are not only a significant part of CMAS's history but of my personal history as well. They have my upmost respect and gratitude. Being the Director of the University of Houston Center for Mexican American Studies has been the one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences of my life. It has truly been an honor and a privilege. Adios.

Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D.

Paula Mendoza *continued from page 1*

Mendoza believes that her previous positions, such as those above, have prepared her for her appointment as regent. In addition, the tremendous success of her own company, Possible Missions, Inc., which she founded in 2001 to specialize in project management solutions throughout the U.S., has further honed the skills required to fulfill the fiduciary responsibilities of a regent.

In addition to her business acumen, Mendoza feels that her particular focus, as regent, is on student success. Her constant question is: "Are we graduating students?" The more she is exposed to the myriad UH programs, types of degrees, possibilities for career counseling and advice, the more she is impressed with how many options and services are offered to students. One of Mendoza's gifts is to keep asking questions to the students she meets. Questions such as: Where will you go to graduate school? Where can you get an internship? What is your next step after graduation?

Last year Mendoza served as Honorary Chair of the Annual CMAS Banquet. In fact, she is still on the Banquet Committee for next year and says she is happy to serve in this capacity again. Her favorite part of the banquet is the sharing of the students' success stories. She mentions how crucial it is that CMAS supporters and friends listen to the stirring tales of triumph in the face of disaster that these students share. In fact, these stories so touched her, that she asked one of the students to come to a meeting of the UH Academic Success Committee, which Mendoza chairs, so that the committee members could hear the student's tale of overcoming the odds.

In speaking about her relationship to the larger issue of obtaining a college education, Mendoza reflects on her own life: "I wasn't headed to college, and I thought I didn't need it. But in my first job, I soon realized I needed a college degree. Obtaining my degree took a long time, but I did it. I tell students it doesn't matter how long it takes you to graduate. Persistence is the key."

Mendoza continues: "I can't stress enough how important it is to get a college education. I even ask small children where they'll go to college. We have a fabulous resource in our younger children, but it must be developed through education."

When asked for advice that she might give to college students, Mendoza reflects: "It is so tough right now with social media for students. They need to remember that they are representing their families, their colleges, and themselves in what they post. Once items are posted, they are there forever. Increasingly, employers look at the social media of potential employees. Know that what you are doing today can affect you tomorrow. Be careful. Use social media for positive outcomes."

Other excellent professional advice from Mendoza encourages students not to "second guess" themselves. She says that if a person is prepared and thinks that he/she can do a job, then go forward and do the job. "If you make a mistake, then so be it. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from the mistake and keep moving forward."

Mendoza is thankful for the many good mentors she has had throughout her professional life—both men and women. She encourages students to "ask for help, if you need it." In fact, she feels that everyone needs mentors throughout their career, not just at the beginning. She encourages students to bounce ideas off their mentors. She says, "You will always need someone you trust to tell you the truth about something you're considering."

One of the most important and heartfelt pieces of advice that Mendoza wished to share was this: "Stay true to what you believe. Life's path is difficult—for everyone. But if you know what is important to you—in my case, education for others and giving back to the community—and you live by what is important to you, then you will have stayed true to what you believe."

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19TH ANNUAL NOCHE CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP BANQUET

Thursday, October 29, 2015

6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

University of Houston Hilton Hotel-Conrad Hilton Ballroom

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