



VOLUME 5
ISSUE 2
SPRING
2008

CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
Noticias



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola

FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue of Noticias features four graduate fellows currently pursuing advanced degrees at UH. To date, CMAS has supported thirty-one students, in addition to the ones featured here. Of these, seventy percent have completed their Master's or Ph.D. degrees. Hispanics who earn graduate degree enter the ranks of an elite group with only six percent of adult Hispanics completing advanced degrees nationwide.

Yolanda Godsey was born in Mission, Texas. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish from Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, and then taught high school for eight years. She stopped teaching to pursue a Masters of Arts degree in Latin American Literature from Texas A&M University at Kingsville. Upon completion, she taught for a year at the University in Kingsville and decided to pursue a Ph.D. at UH. She is now a third-year doctoral student in the department of Hispanic Studies. She focuses on the literature dealing with immigration and its portrayal of

women. She wants to compare this representation with how women are depicted in oral narratives.

Amalia Mena-Mora was born in Mexico City and grew up in Orizaba, Veracruz. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and International Relations at Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (Center for Economic Research and Teaching), a leading public university in Mexico City. Her area of specialization is political research. She worked for the Democracy, Human Rights and Public Safety Foundation and the Rafael Preciado Hernandez Foundation in Mexico on issues related to accountability and public safety within the Mexican government. She has published several academic and popular articles, and has won recognition for her work. One of her publications is "Mexico's Federal Accountability Office Institutional Framework and Performance: Auditing the Federal Secretary of Public Security Budget" which was awarded fifth place in Mexico in a national contest on Auditing and Accountability Essays. She is currently a first year Ph.D. student in Political Science. The

Continued on page 11

Endowment Board Member, Antonio R. Grijalva: Entrepreneur Devoted to Education

Antonio R. Grijalva, C.P.A. arrived in Houston in 1981 with a goal of starting his own business. Grijalva had worked for an international management consulting firm and as an executive in a large multinational corporation. He has extensive experience in international business, particularly in Latin American and the Far East. It speaks volumes to Grijalva's determination and skills that the company he began here just ahead of the region's economic downturn of the early 80's survived, grew, and prospered into one of the top twenty-five Hispanic-owned businesses in the U.S. In fact, G&A Partners has been recognized as one of the fastest growing, privately held companies in the U.S. by Inc Magazine, as well as one of the top ten emerging firms in southeast Texas and one of the largest Hispanic firms in the country. Currently, Grijalva is also Principal for G&A Partners' affiliated CPA firm, Grijalva & Allen, P.C. Together, the two companies maintain combined revenues of \$170 million.

Grijalva and the Director of CMAS met several years ago as participants in a leadership retreat sponsored by the Center for Houston's Future. Grijalva says, "Our friendship grew



Antonio R. Grijalva, CPA

because Tatcho's background in educating Hispanic young people, and due to my desire to help with education. I had been trying to get involved for years. When you look at the high drop-out rates in H.I.S.D. and the poor level of education of many Hispanics in Houston, it's an

Continued on page 11

**CENTER FOR MEXICAN
AMERICAN STUDIES
EXCELLENCE ENDOWMENT/
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

CHAIR

Rosanna Gomez Moreno, J.D.
*Executive Director
International Business Development
Memorial Hermann, Texas Medical Center*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- E. Fred Aguilar, M.D.**
Owner/Surgeon, Ermosa Centre for Aesthetic Surgery
- Carol Alvarado**
Former City Council Member, District I
- Minerva Campos, M.D.**
Family Practice Physician
- Musa Dakri**
President & CEO, Wallis State Bank
- Enrique “Rick” Dovalina**
Dovalina & Eureste, L.L.P.
- Lupe Fraga**
President & CEO, Tejas Office Products, Inc.
- Jorgina A. de Franzheim**
Community Activist
- Sylvia Garcia**
Commissioner, Harris County Precinct Two
- Antonio R. Grijalva**
President, Grijalva & Allen, P.C.
- E. Javier Loya**
President, CHOICE! Energy
- Graciela Martinez**
Community Activist
- Trinidad Mendenhall Sosa**
Founder, The Trini and O.C. Mendenhall Foundation
- Alex López Negrete**
President & CEO, Lopez Negrete Communications, Inc.
- Rick Noriega**
State Representative, District 145
- Carmen Orta**
Co-Founder & Vice President, American Communication Services
- Bob Perry**
President & CEO, Perry Homes
- Robert Rodriguez**
President & CEO, Southwestern Capital Markets, Inc.
- Rogelio A. Rodriguez**
*Senior Vice President and Department Head,
Capital Markets–Public Finance, Frost Bank*
- Gracie Saenz, J.D.**
Partner, Oppel, Goldberg & Saenz, P.L.L.C.
- Carlos Sharpless**
Senior Vice President, Popular Securities
- Massey Villarreal**
President & CEO, Precision Task Group
- Honorable Bill White**
Mayor, City of Houston

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Yolanda Godsey: Studying Female Immigrants 3

Amalia Mena-Mora: Latino Representation in the Congress 4

Lourdes Aguinaco: Public Administrator 5

Jack Griffin-Garcia: Investigating Bias 6

Jeronimo Cortina: Political Scientist 7

Michael Olivas: The Generosity of Accomplishment 8

Academic Achievers Program–UH 9

Academic Achievers Program–High Schools 10

Kudos 16



CMAS Staff

<p>Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D. <i>Director & Associate Professor of Sociology tmindiola@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Lorenzo Cano, M.A. <i>Associate Director cano@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Mary Helen Meza <i>Department Business Administrator mmeza@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Rebeca Treviño <i>Academic Achievers–UH Program Manager rtrevino@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Maria Cobio <i>Special Programs Counselor Academic Achievers–High Schools mgonzalez6@uh.edu</i></p>	<p>Myra Torrez <i>Secretary II mtorrez@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Laura Adame <i>Office Assistant II ladame@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Monica Castro <i>Office Assistant II mcastro@uh.edu</i></p> <p>Jessica L. Garza <i>Financial Coordinator I jlgarza8@central.uh.edu</i></p> <p>Sarah Cortez <i>Editor</i></p>
---	--

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.

Yolanda Godsey: Studying Self-Narrative of Female Immigrants

Though never totally conscious of what I yearned to find in my childhood studies, I do remember my excitement in grade school as I read about the conquest of the New World because it included Spanish surnames. Today, after many years of academic growth, I can identify what was lacking from most of my textbooks. It was the printed validation that Hispanics shaped the history of this nation, along with many other groups.

My literary studies at the University of Houston have confirmed the place of Hispanics through the investigative work done by scholars at the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project under the guidance and direction of Dr. Nicolás Kanellos. In the Ph.D. program for Hispanic Studies, I have studied texts written in Spanish by numerous Hispanic authors, some of who were unknown until their works were recovered by the Project. These works are a written testament to early Hispanic scholarship and a literary contribution to the United States.

Dr. Kanellos has identified three major categories in the genre of U.S. Hispanic literature: *literatura de inmigración*, *nativista*, and *exilio*. Under the tutorship of my mentors, anthropologist Dr. Marie Theresa Hernández and Dr. Kanellos, I have chosen to concentrate my research on the literature of immigration. My research compares how the Hispanic female immigrant is portrayed in this literature versus her portrayal in oral narratives.

It is important to understand the historical portrayal of women in this genre of immigration. The earliest recovered novel of immigration written in Spanish was *Lucas Guevara* (1914) written by Alirio Díaz Guerra and set in New York City. A second novel of immigration is *Las aventuras de don Chipote*



Yolanda Godsey

o cuando los pericos mamen (1928) by Daniel Venegas is set in the American southwest. The Hispanic females in these two novels embody the virtues that can only be found in the homeland of Mexico: truth, beauty and purity. In the case of Lucas Guevara the protagonist is lost when he disregards the values inculcated in him by his mother. *Las aventuras de don Chipote...* is a novel where the male character strays from the path of righteousness. Fortunately, he has his female counterpart, doña Chipota, who arrives just in time to set him straight. These female characters' sole purpose is to protect the pure truths of the protagonist's native soil.

In more modern works such as *La Migra me hizo los mandados* (2002) by Alicia Alarcón and *Across a Hundred Mountains* (2006) by Reyna Grande, the female characters appear more multi-dimensional. In the Alarcón text the reader shares the emotions of the female characters, who are undocumented women. Reyna Grande allows her female characters to step out of the traditional "good girl" role for the sake of their own quest. Although these contemporary characters are more active, the idealization of the heroic Hispanic female is still detectable.

My research compares the image of the modern day female character to that of the female image circulated by oral narratives. To make this comparison, my research includes an ethnography where immigrant females of various social and educational backgrounds present their idea of self. My hypothesis is that the self-image of the actual person is less romanticized and reveals a woman of decisive agency. I believe that this research is important because it brings attention to a vacuum experienced by women that have found very little of themselves written into the history of the U. S. 



Amalia Mena-Mora: Researching Latino Representation in the U.S. Congress

After decades of low political participation and slow growth in voter registration and turnout, the Latino population is coming out of the shadows. Two major events have increased Latino visibility: the massive rallies of Latinos calling for immigration reform and the issue becoming part of the 2008 Presidential campaigns, and the role of the Latino vote in the upcoming presidential election. Although Congress has yet to reform immigration law, the issue has influenced both public opinion and policy agendas. That the issue manifested during the presidential campaign is an example of the growing importance of Latinos in the political arena. However, Latino representation in the U.S. Congress still does not correspond to its population size. Even though Latinos account for 14 % of the total U.S. population (positioned as the first minority), its representation in the U.S. Congress is still low. With twenty-three Representatives and three Senators, Hispanics have acquired scarcely 6 % of the seats.

Despite the low numbers of Congressional representation, few empirical studies in political science have analyzed the responsiveness of Latino representatives in the U.S. Congress. The few that do exist have tried to shed light on the ideology of Latino representatives' vote by comparison to the votes of non-Latinos representatives. Specifically, these studies have attempted to determine whether Latinos tend to vote more liberally than non-Hispanics. They have not focused on policy issues, or on whether Latino Congressional representatives vote according to the Latino's community's interests.

In this regard, a challenge arises when trying to define "Latino interests". It is difficult to establish a cohesive ideological trend among Latinos because they are made up of diverse groups such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and different groups from Central and South America. Some political scientists believe



Amalia Mena-Mora

that if Cuban Americans are excluded from the Latinos mix the rest would tend to favor liberal policies.

Another challenge is that not all Latinos of voting age are citizens. Some questions that arise are if the interests of citizens are the same as non-citizens, and/or do Latinos representatives feel compelled to represent non-citizens as well as citizens?

These questions inform my research. I plan to investigate representatives' voting behavior for the last two decades. I will examine whether Latinos serving in Congress have voted according to their constituencies' interests or with their political party's interests. Specifically, I will study how they have voted in regards to issues surrounding immigration, education, and health. In addition, I will compare and contrast the behavior of the Latino representatives compared to the non-Latino representatives who also represent Latinos.

I will also study the perceptions of the Latino constituency. By surveying this group in those states with a large Latino population, I will determine whether the community feels it is properly represented in Congress. Do Latinos vote for Latino candidates? Do they expect certain behavior from those candidates? Do they believe that Latino candidates have behaved according to their expectations? Who has represented them better: Latinos or non-Latino representatives?

With this empirical research I expect to contribute to the Latino political debate in three areas. Firstly, this study will provide an alternative exploration of the dynamics of Latino politics in the U.S. Congress. Secondly, it will make information available to Latinos and different organizations in order to hold officials accountable. Finally, it will make politicians aware of how to better represent their constituents' interests regarding specific public policies. ❌



Lourdes Aguinaco: Public Administrator in the Making

I am a first-year student in the Master's program in Public Administration. Already, I have formed a completely different view of how organizations work. My focus is governmental agencies and departments better known as "the bureaucracy." "The bureaucracy" is perceived negatively by the public due the fact that performance and accountability are not easily measured in quantitative terms. Also, since bureaucrats are appointed rather than elected, they do not easily find favor with the public. Nevertheless, almost everything that the public encounters on a daily basis is the result of decisions or actions by the governmental bureaucracy. Governmental agencies are run by public administrators, sometimes called "bureaucrats," who implement laws passed by the legislature. For instance, the U.S. Department of Transportation deals with airline issues, as well as motor safety regulations order to keep the sky and highways peaceful, hazard- free, and clean. Other governmental agencies deal with the national defense, environmental issues, education, even adoption and childcare.

Some of the most important laws and policies that have come about with the help of public administrators have been those dealing with equality and fairness for ethnic minorities and women, such as the Civil Rights Act, which includes Equal Employment Opportunity laws. *The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* was formed from those policies in the 1960s. This agency enforces laws prohibiting job discrimination. It is important for each citizen to become aware of the important job of each agency not only become a close overseer of its actions, but also to reward those agencies successfully achieving their goals ethically.



Lourdes Aguinaco

Bureaucrats work closely with targeted groups, e.g. minorities, as well as with policymakers, e.g. legislators. From this unique vantage point, "the bureaucracy" can help in reaching a stated goal, because it is situated in the middle of the process. Public administrators facilitate the collaboration by different entities to achieve a common goal by forming networks with many other groups and organizations outside of the governmental sphere, such as nonprofit and private organizations. At times, this collaboration makes the lobbying for a policy less expensive due to the sharing in resources, such as technology and capital.

The knowledge that public administrators have facilitates the process because they understand the different steps and resources needed in order to attain interest from policymakers in issues aimed toward equality in society. Once the law is passed, it is their duty to implement it in the most efficient and reasonable style.

As a woman, and immigrant from Mexico, I am extremely proud of studying a field in which public servants have the feasibility of becoming involved in the formulation of policies that may help those in need. More than half of the members in this field are women, so I will be part of the majority in the profession. My future goal is to be part of a nonprofit or private organization that, with my help, will be able to influence policy-making in passing legislation that will work in favor of protecting the interests of ethnic minorities and women. My preparation in the graduate program for public administration will help me obtain that knowledge necessary to become an efficient professional in a governmental bureaucracy. 



Jack Griffin-Garcia: Investigating Bias

The Doctoral program in Social Work at the University of Houston has given me a chance to develop research interests and skills, and prepared me for a future in academic or institutional work. My areas of interest are multiculturalism and diversity. Specifically, my goal is to conduct studies that attempt to measure people's attitudes towards those different from them, and investigate approaches that are effective in modifying biased attitudes.

I am currently in the process of conducting a research study that looks at decision-making in the justice system. My review of the literature has found that many researchers have documented the existence of unequal treatment of minorities within the justice system. In a 2002 study by Villarruel and Walker that looked at Hispanic youth in the juvenile justice system in nine states, the researchers found that Latino/a youth were significantly overrepresented in the justice system, and received harsher treatment compared to White youth, even when charged for the same offenses. Another study in 1998 by Bridges and Steen looked at probation officers' perceptions of juvenile offenders and demonstrated unequal treatment towards minority youths. This study analyzed the probation officers' written accounts of juvenile offenders and found marked differences in the officers' attributions about the causes of crime for the White and African American juveniles. The White youth's offenses were consistently attributed to environmental pressures, while the African American youths were attributed to negative individual and personality traits. The researchers concluded that these attributions were a mechanism by which the race of the youth influenced the officers' judgments of dangerousness and sentencing recommendations.

Generally, there are two types of studies assessing sentencing decisions. The first type is a population study that uses statistical analysis to see if there is differential sentencing among different populations. A second type is the post-trial interview with jurors in order to assess their sentencing decisions. The weakness of population studies is that in such studies one cannot control for every variable when comparing different populations treatment in sentencing decisions. The weakness of studies



Jack Griffin-Garcia

incorporating post-trial interviews is that there are problems with direct questioning, since people might respond with socially desirable answers or might not be aware of subtle biases that they might have towards others as documented in a 2003 study by Brown and Gaertner.

My research attempts to overcome some of these limitations in assessing if bias is present in sentencing decisions by using an indirect survey method. I chose this methodology due to a 1980 study by Burstin, Doughtie and Rapaheli which used an indirect measure of group attitudes called a contrastive vignette technique which assessed attitudes within a specific context by presenting groups of respondents with questions

about identical situations in which one variable was manipulated, i.e. the ethnicity of the defendant. The study's vignette was about a youth who had committed armed robbery, and respondents were asked to give an appropriate sentencing punishment. Participants randomly received one of three vignettes which had the same scenario with the only difference being that the defendant was either a White, Hispanic or African American youth. The research participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds (White, Hispanic, African American, and Asian). The preliminary results of the study showed that White participants gave harsher sentencing to the minority defendants in the vignettes and the Minority participants gave harsher sentencing to the White defendant. This study was consistent with a series of studies done by Sommers and Ellsworth in 2000 & 2001 that used similar methodology to measure attitudes of White and Black participants in regards to sentencing. This study added a Hispanic defendant to the vignettes since the researchers had suggested that future research should look at other minorities when conducting sentencing studies. While this type of study does have its limitations since it uses a fictitious trial, it is a useful way to measure current societal attitudes in specific situations. These types of studies can be used to track trends in attitudes towards different populations. This type of research can also be used in creating programs for cultural competence training by using the measurement of attitudes as a basis for effective strategic change. ❏



Jeronimo Cortina: Visiting Scholar and Political Scientist

This academic year's Visiting Scholar is Jeronimo Cortina, Ph.D. The position of visiting scholar was offered to Cortina as part of his forthcoming faculty appointment in the fall of 2008 in the Political Science Department. Cortina originally hales from Mexico City where he was awarded his first three degrees: a diploma in Religions of the World from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónoma de México (ITAM) in 1995, a diploma in Government and Public Policy from the Universidad Iberoamericana in 1996, and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from ITAM in 1997 with honors. His subsequent degrees were awarded by Columbia University: a M.A. in Public Administration in 2003, a M. Phil. in Political Science in 2006, and a Ph.D. in Political Science in 2007.

In interviewing for faculty positions, Cortina was attracted to UH for a number of reasons. He felt that the quality of professional colleagues in his department furnished an exciting array of top-notch researchers. He was also impressed by the diversity of the students on-campus which would be able to provide built-in external validity for his research projects. In addition, Houston's proximity to Mexico, Cortina's home, would afford accessibility for trips related to research and to family.

In fulfilling the visiting scholar position's teaching requirement of one undergraduate course for one semester of the academic year's appointment, Cortina taught "Latino Politics." This course analyzed the Latino political experience in the U.S. from the 1800s to the present, focusing on the political behavior, participation, impact, and other factors of three principal groups: Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. Cortina has taught in his positions prior to this year at Columbia University and was a Faculty Fellow from 2003-07 at Columbia. Cortina says that he has combined all that he learned watching other professors in the classroom to create a "best practices" synthesis.

Cortina's current research focuses on several main projects. He is completing a paper on Mexican immigration to the U.S. and those who use public assistance funds from Mexico to come to the U.S. He is also working on a paper which examines the international phenomena of how immigrants who remit money become people who save money. Cortina is a co-author along with David Park, Boris Shor, and Joseph Bafumi on a book for



Jeronimo Cortina, Ph.D.

Princeton University Press about the impact of income on voting, examining Asia, Europe, and Latin America, as well as the U.S. Cortina is also the co-editor of a book for Cambridge University Press entitled "A Quantitative Tour of the Social Sciences," which examines how various disciplines use methodologies to do research.

During his time on campus, Cortina has attended meetings of the Latino Faculty Council (LFC) and also made a presentation on his own research to the group. He praises the collegiality of the group and cites the example of being assisted by a Latina colleague in the Psychology department to find the right person as a contact

for a project. He notes how good it is to present one's research to peers in other fields who can offer feedback about the accessibility of the material to persons in other fields of expertise than the author. He says, "I'm a scientist, not a person in the humanities. It is good to learn from people not versed in your own field, so that you can make your writing more understandable to a wider circle."

Cortina was particularly impressed by the LFC presentation on the Recovery Project by Nicolás Kanellos, Ph.D., Director of Arte Público Press and Brown Foundation Professor in Spanish. This monumental project, whose full title is "Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage," is dedicated to locating, recovering, and publishing primary literary sources written by Hispanics in the U.S. from the colonial period to 1960. Says Cortina, "What they are doing is fantastic. It is an example of the creation of a 'public good' by an academician. The commitment is to make the titles widely available. It is a project that will create much research and dialogue."

Cortina ends by emphasizing how excited he is to be at UH at this particular point in time. The energy and enthusiasm he sees generated by the new president and new goals is contagious. He praises the collegiality of his departmental colleagues and his LFC peers as he looks forward to a productive time at UH. In particular, he thanks CMAS for awarding him the Visiting Scholar position which is affording him the time to work on so many of the writing and editing projects, along with his research, which he would otherwise not have the dedicated time to complete. 



Michael A. Olivas: The Generosity of Accomplishment

To review the professional accomplishments of Michael A. Olivas, the William B. Bates Distinguished Chair in Law and the Director of the Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance at UH, is to admire a career of a brilliant scholar.

Olivas came to UH after acquiring both a Ph.D. in Higher Education Organizational Theory from Ohio State University in 1977 and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 1981. In addition to his academic accomplishments, such as serving as the Mason Ladd Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law and Special Counsel to Chancellor Donna Shalala at the University of Wisconsin in Madison from 1989-1990, Olivas has served in strategic posts for important community-based organizations. For instance, he also was the Director of Research for the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Educational Service Centers from 1979-1982. He served as Senior Fellow and Assistant Director for Research at the Institute for the Study of Educational Policy at Howard University in Washington, D.C. from 1977-1979.

Olivas' career presents an overwhelmingly successful publication record. He is the author or co-author of eight books, including "The Dilemma of Access" (Howard University Press, 1979), "Latino College Students" (Teachers College Press, 1986), "Prepaid College Tuition Programs" (College Board, 1993), and "The Law and Higher Education" (Carolina Academic Press, 2006). In 2006, "Colored Men and Hombres Aqui" was published by Arte Público Press, and in 2007, "Education Law Stories" was published by Foundation Press. Olivas' publication record also includes an impressive array of book chapters, articles, monographs, law reviews, and essays published mostly in higher education journals and law reviews. He has also served on the editorial board of more than twenty scholarly journals, including *The Review of Higher Education*, *The Journal of College and University Law*, and *The Journal of Higher Education*.

Olivas is a member of the Pennsylvania Bar. He has served as General Counsel to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) from 1994-98. In 1993, he was chosen as Division J's Distinguished Scholar by the American Educational Research Association, and in 1994, he was awarded the Research Achievement Award by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). He has also been designated as a NACUA Fellow by the National Association of Colleges and University Attorneys. To date, he is the only person to have been selected to membership in both the American Law Institute and the National Academy of Education.



Michael A. Olivas, Ph.D., J.D., William B. Bates Distinguished Chair in Law and Director of the Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance

When questioned about the extraordinary volume of written work generated despite his teaching load and other commitments, Olivas shared his observations and philosophy about writing. "I have learned to harness and record the ideas I come across. I am lucky to have so many conduits of information come through me. One of the tricks is to always have a next project. For instance, sometimes I want to write; sometimes I want to edit. I have several projects always working, and usually at different stages. These projects serve my desire to write. Plus, it is a great time to be a scholar. Due to the Internet and resources that are now available, every topic has materials, in some cases archives, available."

When asked about the reasons which has spurred his interests in publishing in so many topics, Olivas said, "Every one of my articles or books has to contribute a fresh insight. When

someone picks up one of my books, he/she is seeing the world the way I see it. Writing by itself is too narrow to be fulfilling. I feel like I'm a translator when I look at the topics I chose for research and writing. I think to myself how is this going to affect the poor, the disenfranchised."

As the oldest of ten children in a New Mexico family, Olivas is well-acquainted with duties and responsibilities. In speaking to the topic of Latinos' duty as scholars, he reminds us that Latino scholars have what he calls "exceptional obligations" to follow the paths opened up by opportunity. Olivas says, "Our sensibilities bring us to contribute in ways that are unique to us. Those of us who have been given opportunities have an obligation to speak out when there is an injustice. We have to put our analytical skills and life experiences to work for good purposes. The need is greater and the obligations are greater."

Among the UH honors he has received, Olivas was elected in 2001 for the Esther Farfel Award, as the Outstanding Professor at UH. His remarks upon receiving it highlight Olivas' tremendous delight in the successful careers of many of his ex-students. He stated, "I am at the stage of my career where I am more delighted at my students' achievements than I am at my own. When they publish, get elected to judicial or legislative office, start a law firm, start a family, win an important case, I feel very fulfilled. I delight in their returning to see me, their attending UHLC functions, their calls, their emails." Olivas' great generosity carries through to his mentoring of young professors. He says, "As satisfying as a recent book or article or testimony is – and there is almost nothing better than laboring at the keyboard and bringing forth a piece into print – I really believe that nurturing young professionals, especially young professors, is the highest

AAP-University of Houston

The AAP-UH program component finished the fall 2007 semester with an overall GPA of 2.9. The December 2007 graduates were: Carlos Fernandez, Ruben Morales, Carlos Restrepo, Edith Guerra, Elizabeth Perez, Magdaleno Contreras, Marisol Gonzalez, Iris Chapa, Vanessa Guerrero, and Efigenia Morales.

The 2008 Student Leadership Retreat took place February 15-17, 2008 at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas. Seven different seminars were presented highlighting a wide array of skills and leadership goals. The first seminar presented was entitled “Latinos in Politics Today” by Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia, Harris County, Precinct Two. The second was a panel entitled “From College Life to the Professional Workforce.” The panelists were: Oliver Fasterling, UH-AAP alumni in Engineering; Jorge Sanchez, UH-AAP alumni in Communications, and Erica Zavala, UH-AAP alumna in Business. The Merrill Lynch Hispanic Professional Network presented the next seminar entitled “The Real World.” The speakers were Luis Molina, Managing Director of Commodity Index Trading, Jose Rodriguez, Assistant Vice President of Compliance, and Shirley Glover, Assistant Vice President of Document Imaging. Mr. Richard Vallasana presented “Leadership in the Global

Economy for College Students.” Mr. Alfred Castillo, Jr., a senior Project Management Specialist for the Union Carbide Corporation presented “Motivation + Action = Results”. Dr. Jose Angel Gutierrez, a professor of political Science at the University of Texas at Arlington presented “We Are the Future! The New Americanos.” The students attending the Leadership Retreat also planned their mandatory community service project for spring 2008.

There have been several visits to job sites and art collections. In December 2007, twelve AAP-UH students visited the home of noted philanthropist and art collector Carolyn Farb in order to see her art collection. In the first week of March, eight students visited Lopez Negrete Communications to tour this firm. Also in March, sixteen AAP-UH students visited Page Southerland Page, LLP, an architecture, engineering, interiors and consulting firm.

In February 2008, Freddy Rodriguez, an AAP student was sponsored to attend the 2008 International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) National Conference in Baltimore, MD.

The most recent community event in which AAP-UH students participated was the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Annual Luncheon. 



Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia speaking at the Annual 2008 Leadership Retreat.



AAP students attending the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Annual Luncheon.



Incoming AAP freshman participating in a challenge course in Camp Allen.



AAP students attending the Annual Leadership Retreat.

AAP-High Schools

Since so much important work is done by the mentors hired by Ms. Maria Cobio, the Special Programs Counselor in charge of this program component, this article will provide a brief insight into the five mentors assigned to help the students in the AAP-High School program. These five mentors are: Eva Briones, Cruz Carrasco, Luis Orozco, Alice Valdez, and Jesus Vigil.

To apply for a job as a mentor, a student must have 9-12 college credit hours, a minimum GPA of 2.5, and previous tutoring experience. In addition, the applicant must enjoy helping others and working in an educational environment. Most of the applicants are members of the AAP-UH program, and often have attended Austin High School themselves. Preference is given to those applicants who were formerly members of the AAP-High Schools program since they will be able to relate to the current cohort members through similar school experiences, and a similar neighborhood background and culture. While becoming a good role model is important to the mentor's job, his/her primary duties are to tutor in academic subjects, while also conveying the messages of the importance of going to college, and of not giving up when the going is tough. Each mentor is in charge of a group of six to eight students.

Eva Briones



Eva was a member of AAP-High Schools at Austin High School from April 2004 to May 2007. During those years, she was also a member of the National Honor Society, the Science Club, and the Empowering Teen Leaders Program. While she was in high school, she also worked 30 hours/week at a local grocery store to assist her mother in supporting the family.

She graduated in the top ten percent of her high school class with a scholarship from the Houston Livestock and Rodeo, and from the Barbara Jean Hoffman Scholarship Foundation. Eva is the first in her family to graduate from high school and enroll in college. Eva says, "The AAP helped me with my class work and my personal problems. It also motivated me to continue to my education to better my lifestyle. I became a mentor so that I can motivate students and make a difference in their lives."

Cruz Carrasco

Cruz graduated magna cum laude from Northbrook Senior High School in the top ten percent of his class despite overwhelming personal tragedies in his freshman and junior years. Cruz was a member of the National Honor Society, the Spanish Club, and an organization called "Senior Men." Cruz won scholarships from the Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation and the UH Office of Admissions. Cruz is the first in his family to graduate from high school and attend college. He is currently a senior at UH



majoring in industrial engineering. He is also a member of Sigma Lambda Beta, and the Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists. Cruz says, "Even though I am an engineering major, I enjoy helping other people. By being a mentor for AAP at Austin I am helping make a difference in the students' lives. I feel great sharing my knowledge with them to help them succeed in school and in life."

Luis Orozco

Luis was a member of AAP-High Schools from June 2001 to May 2004. While also participating in AAP during high school, Luis was an active member of the National Honor Society, the Math Club, the Science Club, the baseball team, and he served as senior class vice-president. Luis graduated in the top ten percent of his high school class winning scholarships from the Magic Johnson Scholarship Foundation and the Sembradores de Amistad Scholarship Foundation. Currently, Luis is a UH junior in communications. Luis says, "I have been in the same situations that many of the students are in. I hope that by giving advice and leading them in the right direction due to my experience, I can help them reach their full potential."



Alice Valdez

Alice was a member of AAP-High Schools from 2004 to 2007. During this time, she participated in the Empowering Team Leaders Program, the National Honor Society, the Science Club, and the Robotics Team. Alice is an avid reader, and graduated in the top twenty percent of her class with a scholarship from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Alice is the first in her family to gain admission to a four-year institution of higher learning. She is currently a freshman in electrical engineering at UH. She says, "This program provided me with the tools I needed to succeed in my academic career. I am glad that I am now given the opportunity to impart what I know to other students."



Jesus Vigil

Jesus was a member of AAP-High Schools from 2001-2003. When he first came to the program, he was searching for a way to recover from having had to repeat the ninth grade. With the program's help, he was able to graduate on time, becoming the first in his immediate family to earn a high school diploma. A few months later, he



Continued on next page

became the first in his family to go to college. Currently, Jesus is a senior majoring in communications at UH with his graduation scheduled for this summer. He always tells the students that they cannot let their past or their problems determine what path to take in life. He tells them to believe in themselves and keep striving for their goals. He adds, "The program has offered the knowledge, skills, and opportunities necessary to make positive changes in my life and in the lives of many others. Ultimately, it is our community that will benefit from the efforts made by CMAS and its programs."

Kudos to these five hard-working young students who are all members of AAP-UH and who give of themselves to mentor the younger AAP students. 

Endowment *continued from page 1*

easy choice to embrace the cause."

Grijalva was inspired from his earliest years by his family in Ecuador to love learning. He points out that he could not have been able to reach such a respected position in the business world without his level of education. Grijalva says, "Education gives each one of us information so that we know how to relate to the world. Especially in today's world, each of us has to know how to exist in relationship to the rest of the world and to other cultures."

Grijalva has watched the CMAS success stories at events such as the Noche Cultural Banquets with great pleasure and has come away from each event feeling "very inspired." He says, "Cultural ties are very important to all of us. In fact, cultural diversity has created a great American society. The current waves of immigration now are no different from previous waves of immigrants, like the Irish or the Italians, in that the waves of people are uneducated. All of us have a responsibility to help educate the immigrants. It is critical to lure students into the schools by being culturally-sensitive. The CMAS programs are culturally-sensitive and effective in terms of education and vital leadership skills."

Grijalva has served with many local groups within Houston's Hispanic community in addition to his work on the CMAS Excellence Endowment Board. He is the former Chairman of the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and currently serves as a Director with the Center for Houston's Future, the International Board of Amigos de las Americas, and Sister Cities of Houston. For many years, Grijalva has also been involved in raising scholarship funds for college-bound Hispanic students.

Grijalva's advice for students focuses on the difference between long-term and short-term goals. He says, "It is hard in our society to not be focused on the short-term. But we have to think beyond the next week or the next month. We have to get the students to remember that the quality of their lives is intimately related to their level of education. This is tough to grasp, but it's true." 

From the Director *continued from page 1*

research that she reports here deals with how well Hispanic legislators in the U.S. Congress respond to the issues expressed by their constituents.

CMAS has had a long and rewarding association with Lourdes Aguinaco, the first graduate fellow featured. She is a first-year graduate student in political science studying for her Master's degree in Public Administration. She was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and came with her parents to the U.S. She was a member of our Academic Achievers Program at Austin High School. Upon graduation she was admitted to our AAP-UH. Now, she is a CMAS graduate fellow. In her article, she outlines her view of government agencies and their functioning. Her stated goal after graduation is employment with a non-profit or private organization working to influence public policies affecting the needy.

Jack Griffin-Garcia was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela and came to the U.S. with his parents at age ten. His higher education career began at the Houston Community College and continued at the University of Houston-Downtown where he earned a degree in Humanities. He was accepted into the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston-Central and received his Master's degree in 2005. He is now in his last year of Ph.D. study. His area of interest is the juvenile criminal justice system. His research deals with the complex issue of bias against minorities in the sentencing process. It indicates that people, in general, will not admit their racial prejudices, and that even among the fair and open-minded prejudices may operate unconsciously.

After reading the summaries of these graduate fellows' research, you will be impressed with their vision for helping create a stronger and more responsive American society. We are proud of these fellows and their academic work. On the last page of this issue you will see an announcement for our fall Noche Cultural Banquet. Please consider coming together with the CMAS family to celebrate all of our students, faculty, and staff, and also, most importantly, to help us raise the funds to continue the successful programs you will read about in this issue. 

Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D., *Director*

Olivas *continued from page 8*

calling, the most rewarding vocation." As Olivas has participated in the Latino Faculty Council meetings and presentations by members, he has derived great satisfaction from hearing about research, grants awarded, and publications. He speaks of feeling "exhilarated" by the success of his fellow Latino scholars, both at UH and at other institutions. He says, "I have such a rich set of intersections with many colleagues. This professional solidarity and friendship is very important here at UH where there are only two Latino department heads and no senior Latino leadership in Administration. I take such satisfaction in all my colleagues' successes, but particularly that of my Latino colleagues." 

KUDOS

Congratulations to the following students who made the Honor Roll in the Fall AAP-High Schools program:

- **Homero Benavides**
- **Joseph Cervantes**
- **Nancy Contreras**
- **Nery Gamez**
- **María Lugo**

Congratulations also to **Melissa Jimenez**, an AAP-High Schools student, who has been awarded a \$500 scholarship from the Sallie Mae Fund.

Congratulations to the AAP-UH program students who made the Fall 2007 Honor Roll:

- **Iris Chapa**
- **Carlos Fernandez**
- **Marisol Gonzalez**
- **Viridiana Hernandez**
- **Rosalinda Martinez**
- **Claudia Paez**
- **Karen Perez**
- **Carlos Restrepo**
- **Yury Solis**
- **Alice Valdez**
- **Claudia Vasquez**
- **Guillermo Velasco**
- **Celia Zamarripa**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

For the 13th Annual

“Noche Cultural”

Scholarship Banquet



Sponsored by

THE CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Renu Khator

Chancellor and President
University of Houston

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

UH Hilton Hotel

Waldorf Astoria Room

**University Drive – Entrance One
Houston, Texas 77204-3028**

Transforming Lives through Education... One Person At A Time

0073011059

University of Houston

Center for Mexican American Studies

323 Agnes Arnold Hall

Houston, TX 77204-3001

Visit us at www.class.uh.edu/cmas