

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola

The Center for Mexican American Studies was established at the University of Houston in the fall of 1972, and we will be marking our 40th anniversary in 2012. We will celebrate our anniversary by having faculty presentations that discuss what has transpired within the last 40 plus years on UH's campus and also in the larger community (See page 9). We hope many of our community friends will join us for the festivities.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Centers of Mexican American Studies were established across the U.S. Not surprisingly, students often were instrumental in making the Centers a reality. At UH, students affiliated with the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) facilitated the Center's founding.

The Center's first years were devoted to establishing courses and recruiting faculty and students. The leadership of the Center, however, was unstable. During this time the Center only taught undergraduate courses because it lacked an

adequate budget to develop other services.

I became the Center's fourth director in 1980, and my objective was to seek funding to expand our services. The Center received a modest increase in the budget from the University to recruit students to campus. We began sponsoring visits to campus for high school student in 1981 and these College Career Days continue with the goal of bringing 1,000 students to campus each academic year. They attend workshops on admissions procedures, financial aid and selecting a major. Juniors and seniors are required to fill out an application for admission. Since its inception over 30, 000 students have visited the campus.

In 1983, with the assistance of then State Representative Roman Martinez, we began receiving funds from the state legislature. With this increase, we established the Visiting Scholars Program designed to recruit promising junior and distinguished senior scholars for a one-year residency at UH. The goal is to foster research about our community and to recruit scholars who have an interest in remaining at the University in a tenured or tenure-track position once their residency as

Continued on page 11

Cyndy Garza-Roberts: CMAS Supporter and Advocate for Education

Meet Cyndy Garza-Roberts, one of Houston's tireless, hardworking voices encouraging all of us to become all that we can become as Hispanics, as Texans, as potential leaders poised to go forward into the next era of civic greatness.

A native of San Antonio and a graduate of UT-Austin, Garza had an illustrious career as a media professional, rising from the rank of reporter to public affairs director to community relations manager. Then she hosted and produced her own weekly program. Her success ushered her into positions with large utility companies and later universities, where she developed partnerships and initiatives with community, business and political leaders, representatives of educational systems and nonprofit agencies. Then, Garza accepted the position of Director of Government Relations for UH, where she helped develop and manage key legislative issues pertaining to the University's Tier One accreditation. In 2005, H-E-B recruited



*Cyndy Garza-Roberts
Director, Public Affairs, H-E-B*

Ms. Garza to serve as Director of Public Affairs-Houston Division, where she currently is responsible for the company's public relations, community relations, media relations and governmental relations, and its corporate charitable giving.

Garza was exposed to the CMAS Academic Achievers Program (AAP) years ago while coordinating a segment of *Viva Houston* on the high dropout rate of Hispanic high school students. The effectiveness of CMAS' comprehensive approach to keeping Hispanic students in high

school was one of the very few beacons of hope that she found in the Houston community. Since then Garza has been a staunch CMAS supporter, applauding every graduate and every award or milestone the program has earned.

She says, "I went to a south side San Antonio high school much like Austin high school where

Continued on page 11

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

George T. Díaz: CMAS Visiting Scholar in History	3
Graduate School in Social Work by Eva E. Briones.....	4
Racializing Space in El Paso, Texas by Sandra Enriquez	5
Building Better Communication by Angela Leal.....	6
Brain Research Pertaining to Bilingual Skills by Aurora Isabel Ramos Nuñez	7
AAP-UH and AAP-Austin High School Fall Update.....	8
The Center for Mexican American Studies 40th Anniversary Speaker Series	9
15th Annual Noche Cultural Scholarship Banquet.....	10



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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.

George T. Díaz: CMAS Visiting Scholar in History

This academic year's visiting scholar is George T. Díaz, Ph.D. who brings to UH's History department over ten years of research on the South Texas border history of smuggling. Díaz' fascination with the topic stems in part from his close familial ties to the region. However, most importantly, when searching for a suitable master's thesis topic, Díaz discovered that a scholarly book of research documenting the region's history of smuggling did not exist. Thus, he found a topic that not only stirred his intellectual curiosity, but a topic to which he might contribute significant findings. His thesis topic was "When the River Ran Red: Prohibition on the Central South Texas Border, 1919-1933" and was completed in 2004. This critical year as a CMAS visiting scholar, with its reduced course load of teaching, will enable Díaz to bring to a conclusion his book-in-progress, entitled "*Contrabandista Communities: A History of Smuggling on the Lower Rio Grande Borderlands, 1848-1945*," which is under contract to the University of Texas Press.

The time afforded to Díaz through his position as visiting scholar to finish his own scholarship and writing of his book has made a tremendous difference to Díaz. In his own words, "I love teaching, but it's difficult to write when you teach a lot of courses. At my previous university, I taught five courses per semester. Here, the one semester with no course load, and the second semester with teaching only one course has enabled me to produce a better book on a poorly understood subject with deep relevance."

Díaz came to the UH after years of appreciation for the proactive work done for scholars by CMAS through the Visiting Scholar program. Another critical factor in bringing Díaz to CMAS was the request by Arnoldo De León, Ph.D. for Díaz' participation in a volume edited by De León and entitled "War along the Border: The Mexican Revolution and its Impact upon Tejano Communities." This volume was published by CMAS in 2012 has already won the Calvert Prize.

The course that Díaz is teaching at UH is entitled "Smugglers, Saints, and 'Aliens' in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands." Its description says that the course will examine how the U.S. and Mexico regulate and prohibit trade and movement across their shared border and how border people respond to these forces. Additionally, the course examines smuggling, unauthorized immigration, and the embrace of certain groups of smugglers



George T. Díaz, Ph.D., Visiting Scholar

as folk heroes through song, and the popular devotion to narco-saints.

In responding to the UH student community, Díaz has nothing but praise for the energy and enthusiasm that his students bring into the classroom. The diversity and range of experiences of the student population gives excitement to the discussion and examination of historical information due to the differences in lived experiences. Díaz is particularly grateful for these eclectic backgrounds in his students since he likes to talk with people whose perspectives are varied from his own.

Another beneficial aspect of the visiting scholar position is the time and opportunity to capitalize on the many intellectual assets of the UH and greater Houston communities. For instance, Díaz has enjoyed attending the Latino Faculty Council meetings. Díaz says that it's "wonderful to work with and alongside the experts in their respective fields. It enables so many more facets to emerge: economic, gender, class, plus financial, cultural, and anthropological aspects."

While in Houston, Díaz has made presentations on aspects of his research to organizations as diverse as The Houston Seminar, the Hispanic Law Students Association, and the Texas State Hispanic Genealogical and Historical Conference. Later this spring, Díaz will present to Houston's Art League.

Díaz' own awards range through his time at Southern Methodist University. One award that is particularly important to his career as a scholar is the Bill Clements Dissertation Fellowship, awarded in 2009 from the Clements Center for Southwest Studies at Southern Methodist University. This award was made to Díaz after he had completed his five years of funding through a Ph.D. fellowship also awarded through the Clements Center. Díaz explained that as he was nearing completion of his five years as a fellow, he approached the head of the Clements Center, David Weber, and requested one additional year of funding in order to bring his research to a more complete level and produce a more noteworthy project. The head of the Center then approached the council members who decided to award Díaz the sixth year of funding. The results were as Díaz had promised: a more comprehensive project with greater relevance.

An additional sequence of events triggered by the Clements

Continued on page 12



Graduate School in Social Work

by Eva E. Briones



This is my first year in graduate school, and I have been fortunate enough to have been awarded a graduate fellowship by CMAS. Continuing my association with CMAS which began when I was in high school and chosen to be a member of the Academic Achievers program is my greatest joy. This relationship with the program continued during my undergraduate years at UH when I was working on my degree in psychology and was also a participant in the university-level component of Academic Achievers.

Completing my psychology undergraduate degree and working with other Austin High School students gave me the idea of becoming a social worker. In order to achieve this goal, I have to complete graduate school. There is no room for “playing” at going to grad school. You have to be focused and professional, good at managing your time, and serious about your studies. I absolutely love the challenge of graduate school and I love delving deeper into my chosen field of study.

As a social worker, I know I will be able to touch many lives and lighten burdens that may feel overwhelming to others. Most importantly, as a social worker I will be able to offer my Spanish-speaking skills to help the Hispanic population in several ways. For example, I may help connect families to valuable and essential resources in the community, or provide supportive counseling for issues to individuals and families, or bridge the communication barrier by simply translating information on a job application or other legal document. Seeing positive changes, whether small or large, will be rewarding enough for me.

Being a mentor for high school students for more than four years for CMAS has helped me develop a passion to work with children and adolescents. I plan to work with the youth in the Hispanic population and, most recently, have become interested in the area of childhood trauma. I plan to work with families whose children (ranging in age from four to eighteen years old) are dealing with many different types of trauma, such as, sexual abuse, the loss of a loved one, facing a natural disaster, or the effects of gang violence. I have chosen to work with children and adolescents with trauma because there is a great need for social workers with experience in this arena.

Hispanics experience significant incidents of domestic violence, impaired care-giving, and community violence. These experiences may have a serious impact on children and their

families. I hope that my chosen career path will give me the opportunity to assist with some of the after-effects of this type of unfortunate circumstance.

Lack of adequate resources, fear, and the stigma associated with asking for help outside of the family circle for mental health issues, to my mind, only signal the importance of reaching out to the Hispanic community. When a family is ready to seek help, I will be able to communicate in their language and understand the cultural values that might make it challenging to seek help for their children and family. For instance, cultural values that might affect the

child from recovering from a traumatic event, such as sexual abuse, is the feeling that he/she is *danada* (damaged goods) and no one will want him/her because he/she is not “pure”. A father who is considered to be *machismo* (the provider and protector of the family) might feel responsible and guilty for not preventing or not being able to stop the family member from experiencing pain and emotional anguish. The father might have trouble dealing with the trauma that has been brought upon the family and will need someone who understands him. As a Hispanic woman who is aware and appreciative of these cultural values, I hope to be able to provide social work skills and help the children and families overcome traumatic events.

By currently pursuing my master’s degree in social work and using these life experiences, I will be able to serve all people, but particularly the Hispanic population and assist families find resources for their needs. I feel that the profession of social work will be rewarding and will enable more than just financial success; it means that I will have the opportunity of fulfilling a lifelong dream of helping the Hispanic community. I hope to be able to provide comfort, relief, and genuine understanding to others who are struggling with life. Given the fact that I grew up in a poor neighborhood, was raised by a single mother who worked more than one job, and watched our little family struggle from paycheck to paycheck, I feel that I understand from firsthand experience those obstacles and challenges that face some of our community. Now, I can look back at my struggles growing up in the barrio and see that all of those experiences were blessings. Those personal experiences of helping my mother with daily chores and necessary activities after my father abandoned us gave me a strong desire to

Continued on page 12



Racializing Space in El Paso, Texas

by Sandra Enriquez

I am currently a first year Ph.D. student in the Department of History and have received a graduate fellowship from CMAS. My area of interest is U.S. History, specifically Mexican American/Chicano and Urban History. As I began my studies in history at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), I developed an interest not only for the history of the region where I grew up, but also about how racial politics and interactions between the diverse groups in the city of El Paso could fit into the larger histories of both the United States and México.

Living in Houston has helped me see my hometown as an outsider, thus allowing me to develop research questions for what will become my dissertation. In an effort to fill the voids in the academic literature about El Paso, race, and Chicano history, I hope to explore the ways in which the local Chamber of Commerce and the city planners of El Paso (primarily directed by the Anglo population of the city), either intentionally or inadvertently constructed physical boundaries that racialized space throughout the twentieth century. In addition, I would like to analyze how these barriers obstructed the possibility of minorities acquiring access to better social, cultural, and economic resources in the Sun City.

The railroad's arrival to the city in 1881 created a population boom in the region, which increased the Anglo population to the small town. This new technology also marked El Paso as a significant ranching, smelting, railroad, and commercial center. The advancement of these industries needed cheap labor. The emergence of El Paso as a regional metropolis developed in tandem with the civil turmoil faced by México at the turn of the twentieth century. The combination of growing industries and mass immigration from México caused a shift in El Paso, wherein the ethnic Mexican population became the majority.

As the border city with the largest population of Mexican descent, El Paso has been characterized for having some of the oldest, historic Mexican barrios in the Southwest. Because of the concentration of ethnic Mexicans who settled close to the banks of the Rio Grande, a process of *de facto* segregation began. Though it proved beneficial for Mexicans to remain culturally attached to the area, it promoted the racial division within the city. As El Paso expanded drastically beginning from the 1910s, the elite white power structure was able to keep Mexicans from joining their social and public spheres. Over the years, Anglo American leadership devised ways to set boundaries between the



Sandra Enriquez, Graduate Fellow

Mexican population and themselves, hindering the notions of upward mobility for ethnic Mexicans. Railroad tracks, highways, freeways served to alienate a large percentage of people of Mexican descent in the city. With geographical theories, ideas of race, and citizenship, I hope to investigate how space is racialized in order to exclude the majority of the population, as well as how geography constructed housing patterns, labor opportunities, and ultimately the identities of ethnic Mexicans in El Paso.

This is not to say that ethnic Mexicans could not cross the geographic boundaries, but these borders served as obstructions to the growth of people of Mexican descent and, I believe, as an assertion of Anglo American minority power in the city for almost a century. My research will show that controlling the Mexican population in El Paso was a major objective in the early years of the twentieth century. The geographic containment of ethnic Mexicans in south El Paso limited their lives by impairing choices of education, labor, and housing, which in turn kept them marginalized to a lower socio-economic status. By confining the low-class Mexican population to the south of Paisano Drive a major highway in the city, and later south of Interstate 10, the Anglo power structure controlled the social, cultural, and economic aspects through the politics of space.

Though the largest group in the Sun City was marginalized, this geographic confinement encouraged activists to fight for better opportunities during the years of the Chicano Movement. In the course of this period, El Paso bore witness to protests for better housing, questioned the sites for urban development, and most importantly an education desegregation case that would bring to the forefront the inequalities the minority population faced in the city.

Despite the fact that ethnic Mexicans now live in all areas of the city, a large percentage still remain in southern neighborhoods. After the activism of leaders in El Paso and around the country, the negative image of southern barrios haunts the city today. Though efforts for better housing, jobs, and education have taken place during the last decades of the twentieth century, discrimination continues to be institutionalized the areas. In my theory, the racialization of space allowed the city's leadership to keep the Mexican population of El Paso devoid of social mobility, thus adding to the current racial tensions in the borderlands. 



Building Better Communication by Angela Leal

In 2004 when I moved from my hometown of Houston to Seattle, Washington, I had no intention of returning to college. While in Houston, I had tried attending the University of Houston, but I felt as though I couldn't really find my place there. Looking back, however, I can see that finding my dream job of working for a radio station at the same time that I started classes at University of Houston didn't help my attentiveness with classes.

However, between my first radio job in 1999 and leaving for Seattle in 2004, some realities set in. The communications industry went through various types of restructuring, and I began to see how shaky jobs in that arena could be. I managed to keep working and a media job actually moved me to Seattle, but as a new mother I knew I was no longer the type of person who could undergo the possibility of constant location changes in order to follow radio jobs or weather the ups and downs of cyclic media hirings.

As soon as I settled into my new job in Seattle, I enrolled in North Seattle Community College. I intended to get an Associate's degree and not continue further. But then I realized I really liked school. Other than being a mother to my then two-year-old daughter, being in college was my absolute favorite thing to do. So, when I was about to finish up at North Seattle, I applied to the University of Washington (UW). My love of learning about people led me to major in Anthropology. Although some people might see the degree as impractical, I knew a little creativity would make it worthwhile.

About two months before the start of my final quarter at UW, I used my Anthropology training to obtain a position as a research assistant intern with the Children's Health Institute at Seattle Children's Hospital. My deliverables were simple: organize the data, make sure the date was accurate and updated, and help the research assistants during participant appointments. The deliverables are the core of what happens, but what makes research so captivating is what happens around those daily responsibilities. I saw research in action. I got the chance to step out of the classroom, out of the textbooks and journal articles and into innovative research learning about the day-to-day realities of human behavior. I loved seeing the way the relatively simple procedure of keeping diet and activity journals influenced real families. I enjoyed being affected by their responses and learning from the information I put in the database. I also enjoyed constructing



Angela Leal, Graduate Fellow

profiles in my mind of typical families in our research population. However, as I worked with the data I noticed a disconnect between the demographics of our research participant population and the population of our immediate surrounding area. While the median income of King County (where Seattle is located) was about \$67,000 per year, half of our participants reported earning over \$90K annually. Only 25% of the participants in our study earned below the median income of King County. This is important because there are major disparities in health outcomes between low and high-income families. I had recognized the positive influence

research participation had on people and wanted to develop strategies to get the most diverse group involvement possible. My final internship report addressed this directly.

By the time I moved back home to Houston my interest in getting helpful information to people that need it fueled my job search. When I saw that the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) here at the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) was hiring, I knew I would be a perfect fit. Basically, the Academic Achievers Program recruits college-bound students and then helps them to be their absolute best. I knew I wanted to be a part of it and felt lucky to be offered the job. The students in the program inspired me and after two years of working with them I decided to continue my education as well. Upon admission to the master's program in Sociology, I received a graduate fellowship.

I chose Sociology because I knew I could use it to pull together my background in communications, my interest in human behavior, and my desire to learn quantitative analysis. As a graduate student, I hope to sharpen my analytical skills to enable me to judge the effectiveness of various types of communication efforts especially with under-served communities. When I see a message that can benefit people, I want to make sure it is shared in a way that reaches audiences that need it. Sociology sees the world through culturally sensitive eyes and that is paramount in training for this particular endeavor. When programs reach out to the public they can only achieve their fullest possible potential by taking into consideration the needs and lifestyles of their target audience. Upon graduation from the Sociology master's program, I want to have evolved into someone that can create, implement, and analyze communication strategies to get the clearest and most helpful information to the people that will benefit from it the most. ❌



Brain Research Pertaining to Bilingual Skills

by Aurora Isabel Ramos Nuñez

I am currently working towards my Master's Degree in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychology at the University of Houston. As a member of the Laboratory for the Neural Bases of Bilingualism and under the mentorship of Dr. Arturo E. Hernandez, I am investigating the mechanisms by which bilingualism shapes brain development. Receiving a graduate fellowship from CMAS will enable me to continue my research.

In order to examine how bilingualism shapes brain development, I use tools such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). fMRI is an imaging technique that measures blood flow in the brain, which allows us to track activation of different areas of the brain during cognitive tasks. TMS functions by safely sending electromagnetic pulses through the skull and into the cortex of the brain. These electromagnetic pulses temporarily disrupt cognitive functioning, allowing us to examine the involvement of cortical areas in cognitive processes. Using imaging techniques such as fMRI and TMS permits us to study the healthy bilingual brain *in vivo* and to make direct connections between cognitive processes such as language and brain regions.

Research has shown that the brain matures differently depending on the age at which the second language is learned. For example, neuroimaging studies have shown that bilinguals who learned a second language before the age of 10 exhibit less brain activity in areas related to attention and cognitive control compared to those who learned the second language after the age of 10. This means that the later a second language is learned, the more cognitive resources are needed to process it. However, recent bilingual research has focused not only on age of acquisition but also on proficiency in the second language. Bilinguals who are less proficient in a second language exhibit more brain activity in attention and cognitive control areas than bilinguals who are more proficient. This suggests that while the brain may develop differently depending on the age at which the second language was acquired, becoming proficient in a second language, regardless of the age of acquisition, has many life advantages as well. These advantages include the ability to communicate in more than one language, greater cognitive flexibility in attending to important information while ignoring irrelevant information, the ability to manage two languages, greater ability



Aurora Isabel Ramos Nuñez,
Graduate Fellow

to learn yet a third language, and the possibility of delaying the onset of dementia disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, the earlier or more proficiently the second language is learned or spoken, the greater the advantages. The goals of my research are to learn how bilingualism shapes brain development, to discover the brain areas that are involved in this process and examine how they interact with each other, and to understand the important implications that learning more than one language can have on an individual's development in general.

My research focuses on studying Mexican Americans who are fluent in the Spanish and English languages. I am specifically interested in studying two types of bilinguals. The first group includes bilinguals that first learned Spanish at home from birth until the age of about six, and then began to learn English once they started school. The second group of bilinguals I study learned Spanish in their country of birth, and then began to learn English once they arrived at the United States, usually in later childhood or adolescence.

Within these two populations, I am particularly interested in studying brain areas associated with the management and proper selection of two languages. An example of managing and selecting the correct language can be seen when a bilingual is confronted with the task of translating. In this situation, bilinguals have to be receptive to both languages and consequently, switch back and forth between the two languages. A particular individual has to speak Spanish to the Spanish speaker and English to the English speaker. He or she cannot mix the two languages because then the task of translating will be unsuccessful. Bilingualism research, using imaging techniques and data from brain lesion studies has identified areas of the prefrontal cortex as important in the process of language switching. Specifically, previous studies have used picture-naming paradigms where bilinguals alternately name pictures of objects first in one language and then in their other language, or translate paradigms which a bilingual is required to translate the presented word into the other language. These studies have found prefrontal activation during performance of such tasks that require switching between languages. Also, brain lesion studies have shown that bilingual patients who have

Continued on page 12



AAP-UH Fall Update

The fall 2011 semester ended on a high note with the following AAP students graduating from UH: Jamie Alvizar in English, Pedro Cervantes in Mechanical Engineering, Luis Garcia in Computer Engineering Technology, Sara Mendoza in Communications and Public Relations, Karen Perez in Bio-Technology, and Maricela Villanueva in Spanish.

The following AAP students attained a place on the Honor Roll for the fall semester:

Maria Alfaro, Jaime Alvizar, Homero Benavidez, Hadill Calderon, Johann Casella, Hannah Do, Tzaddi Garcia, Myrna Garcia, Melissa Gil, Jeannette Martinez, Sara Mendoza, Roberto Paulin, Karen Perez, Melvin Rodriguez, Bryan Salazar, Karen Saldana, Taher Tayaballi, and Cynthia Vasquez. The overall average semester GPA for all AAP-UH students was 3.1.



UH AAP new member orientation for spring 2012

Back Row, left to right: Omar Rodriguez, Jose Razo, Alvaro Montañón, Osvaldo Rocha, Alberto Peña, Isidro Melendez and Euler Reyes - **Front Row, left to right:** Liannet Madrazo, Minelya De Leon, Yelineth Bradburn, Lilian Rodriguez, Michelle Cardenas, Maria Alza

During the fall semester, AAP students attended the Houston East End Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Exchange, the Latin Women Initiative's Membership Drive, and the Annual Noche Cultural Scholarship Banquet. In addition, AAP student Myrna Garcia was sponsored to attend the MAES (Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists) Symposium in Oakland, California.

To begin the spring 2012 semester, AAP-UH accepted thirteen additional students into the program after an exhaustive selection process. Included in these thirteen

new students are five incoming freshmen. These five freshman and their parents participated in the New Member Orientation on January 13, 2012 as an introduction to the program's requirements. With these additional thirteen students, the UH component of AAP now serves sixty-five students. ❌

AAP-Austin High School Fall Update

The fall semester for AAP-High School students began in a flurry of activities organized to help the students be productive for the school year. At the first student meeting, the CMAS staff reviewed semester objectives for the students, explained the program rules and guidelines, and discussed upcoming events. In addition, the students heard a presentation on the importance of their following the High School Recommended Program in academics. The second student meeting occurred in October and its topic was the importance of taking both Pre-Advanced Placement classes and Advanced Placement classes in high school. The third student meeting in November alerted the students of upcoming scholarship deadlines.

Each of the three months of fall semester brought a workshop specifically coordinated to acquaint the students with necessary skills and/or paperwork for their academic success. In September, the students listened to a presentation aimed



Austin AAP students at a Financial Literacy program given by Mr. Gregory Mangum

at familiarization with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Texas Application for State Financial Aid. In October, the students were presented a workshop on relaxation techniques. In November, the students attended a Financial Literacy Workshop given by Mr. Gregory Mangum, a Community Relations Manager with Capital One.

With all their hard work at school, the students also took the time to

help with three events in the community. The first was assisting with sorting food and making food boxes at the Houston Food Bank in September. The AAP students sorted 4,587 pounds of food and made 210 food boxes. The second community service event was at Ripley House in October at the Harvest Fest. Here, the AAP students assisted the event organizer by managing a coloring station and a bowling station. At the third community service event, the students assisted with a flag football tournament benefiting the American Cancer Society. ❌





The Center for Mexican American Studies 40th Anniversary Speaker Series

presents

Chicano Revisited: Politicizing the Practices of Everyday Life

Jose Limon, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN LITERATURE, NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2012

10 A.M.-12 NOON, ROCKWELL PAVILION, M.D. ANDERSON LIBRARY

The Mexican-origin population in the U.S. has been called by terms such as Latin American, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latino, and Chicano. The most controversial is Chicano. Professor Jose Limon published a seminal essay in 1979 dealing with such issues as the lower-class origins of the word and its association with the student militancy in the Sixties and Seventies. In the CMAS presentation, he will revisit the term and reflect upon its origins, usage, ideology, and influence.

MAYO and Mexican American Studies at UH in 1972

Jaime De La Isla, Mario Garza, Maria Jimenez, Eliot Navarro, Cynthia Perez

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2012,

UNIVERSITY CENTER, 1 P.M. – 2:30 PM

The Center for Mexican American Studies was established in 1972 at the behest of the students who were members of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). They lobbied the administration, sat on the committee that wrote the proposal, helped secure funding from the legislature, and assisted in developing courses and recruiting students for the classes. The former MAYO members listed above will reflect upon their experiences at UH, the temper of the times, and their efforts to establish CMAS.



15th Annual Noche Cultural Scholarship Banquet

University of Houston, Hilton Hotel

November 3, 2011



Ashley Lara (left), AAP Junior, Mistress of Ceremony and Maria Fernanda Alfaro (right), AAP Junior, Banquet Speaker



Steve Harter, Honorary Chair of Banquet Committee, President, Notre Capital Associates, Inc.



Cristian Gonzalez, AAP Student, Austin High School



Gilbert A. Garcia, Chairman of the Board, METRO



*Back row, left to right: Jossue Alonso, Licensee Department, John Bouloubasis, President of San Antonio Yellow Cab, Floyd Kaminski, President of Houston Yellow Cab, Susie Kaminski, Wife
Front row, left to right: Marlise Skinner, former CFO for Texas Taxi, Roman Martinez, President and CEO for Texas Taxi*



Allan Watkins, Wells Fargo, Community Development Officer, Glenn Godkin, Wells Fargo, President, Laura Jaramillo, Wells Fargo, Vice President, Manager of Community Development, Suzanne Colmenero, Wells Fargo, Senior Business Relationship Manager

From The Director continued from page 1

our Visiting Scholar is completed. To date, 34 scholars have participated in the program and 44% have been employed by the University. Also in conjunction with the Visiting Scholars Program, we began publishing monographs called the University of Houston series in Mexican American Studies. Seven monographs have been published including *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, the first history of Mexican Americans in Houston, written by Professor Arnoldo DeLeon, our first Visiting Scholar.

We also established the Hispanic Family College Project (now the Academic Achievers Program) in 1986 at Austin High School. We select a cohort of students as they enter the tenth grade and provide them with tutoring, mentoring, and skills workshops until they graduate. Then we select another cohort. The goal is to prepare them for admission to UH. Currently, we are working with our sixth cohort.

In 1993, we began offering Graduate Fellowships to students who are pursuing masters and doctorate degrees. To date, forty-four students have been awarded fellowships and 80% have completed their degrees. In 1995, we created the Academic Achievers Program for students who are the first in their family to attend college and who come from low-income families. The students receive scholarships and in return must attend mandatory tutoring sessions, skills workshops, leadership retreats, and monthly meetings. To date, 185 students have participated in program, and their graduation rate ranges from 70 to 76%. The funds that we use to support the students come from the community through our annual fund raising efforts.

The Center attempts to address every issue that we encounter at the level of higher education. We continue to offer courses in the Mexican American experience and offer a minor in Mexican American Studies. This brings diversity to the University of Houston's curriculum. The Visiting Scholars Program and the Graduate Fellowship Program are designed to both generate more students in the field and more Latino professors at UH. We also need more publications that document our history and experiences, and our monograph series addresses this issue. Our dropout rate in high school and college is too high and we attempt to solve these issues through our Academic Achievers Program.

We have made significant strides during our first 40 years, and this would have not been possible without the support of our students, faculty, staff and the community. We have reached out to our friends within the larger Houston community, and they have always responded with great generosity. But to ensure the long term viability of the Center we have undertaken an endowment drive. Our goal is to have each component of the Center as outlined above endowed with a million dollars. We also need more physical space for administrative offices and a larger student lounge and have a request pending with the University. Our journey is not over, but at this point in our history, we feel that our best times lie ahead. With your help we know we will succeed.

Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D.
Director

Cyndy Garza-Roberts continued from page 1

AAP begins working with tenth graders. When I told my parents that I wanted to go to UT-Austin, my mom said, 'But you'll have to move away.' Fortunately, my dad supported me in my dream. Then neighbors and relatives assisted by talking to my parents. This is part of the genius of Dr. Mindiola's program—it reaches out to the parents and enlists their support in their children's education. Especially in families without a history of college attendance, you have to educate the entire family about what the college experience entails. Those in the family have to buy into the fact that education is really important and support the student's efforts."

Garza proudly points to H-E-B's longstanding support of education in general and of CMAS specifically. In fact, H-E-B has been committed to giving back to its communities for over a hundred years. The company has contributed five percent of pre-tax earnings to public and charitable programs since the 1930s. This valuable impetus has come directly from the top, in the person of Charles Butt, CEO and President, a Texas-born businessman who has brought the hometown values of his family into the corporation's commitment to help the communities it serves. One of the programs the corporation established is the Excellence in Education Awards which celebrate public school professionals whose leadership and dedication inspire a love of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities. With more than \$600,000 in cash prizes awarded to deserving teachers, principals, and school districts, the H-E-B Excellence

in Education Award is the largest monetary recognition program for educators in Texas and one of the largest in the nation.

This involvement with communities echoes Garza's own belief in each person's responsibility to do the best possible but to also help others achieve their potential. This confluence of values around the issue of helping to educate young people makes for a valuable partnership between H-E-B and CMAS. Garza says, "We at H-E-B look for opportunities to present scholarships to young people through excellent and effective organizations like CMAS. We also provide scholarships directly with our own funds. We are so happy to be a small part of supporting CMAS through annual giving. We learn from them."

Garza offers further food for thought as she looks forward to the future: "We in Texas will see a future population that is largely Hispanic. We will need leaders. Yet, we Hispanics have the highest high school dropout rate. We must ask ourselves, are our children educated enough to be the top decision-makers in our state? Are our children educated enough to assume the top executive positions in corporations and non-profits? If not, then what can we do now to help educate them now. We have to change the dynamic about education in the Hispanic community. We all have to take on the leadership role to accomplish this now."

Summing up her thoughts about education and its ties to both the past and the future, Garza shared three *consejos* given to her by her beloved father: "There are three things that are your most valuable possessions. Your name—don't tarnish it. Your word—stand by it. Your education—no one can ever take it away from you." 

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George T. Díaz continued from page 3

Center's newsletter article of the sixth year of funding for Díaz was the request from Dr. Arnoldo De León for the essay that Díaz contributed to the CMAS volume, which, in turn, brought Díaz into the arena of applicants for the visiting scholar position. And while at UH, Díaz is taking advantage of as many opportunities as are afforded him to write, to publish, to make presentations, and to make connections.

Reflecting upon his visiting scholar position, Díaz says, "Being a historian, you look for the 'first instance.' This time as visiting scholar will allow me to write and finish the first history of smuggling on the border. This is a poorly understood issue and understanding it has wide implications. Being honored by CMAS with the visiting scholar position is a huge accomplishment, but having the opportunity to produce work that is relevant to national scholarship and the Chicano community is an incredible honor. CMAS is furthering work which combines scholarship and service, which accomplishes the best of what Chicano/a scholarship is about, i.e. research with national relevance but which also has relevance to one's own community." ❌

Eva Briones continued from page 4

stand up for communities and those within them who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised. I am determined to make a difference, no matter how small. Receiving a graduate fellowship from CMAS is helping me receive the education I need to fulfill my dream of helping all within the greater Houston community. ❌

Aurora Isabel Ramos Nuñez continued from page 7

suffered from damage to prefrontal brain areas exhibit involuntary language switching. While these types of studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex is important in language control, the exact brain mechanisms behind the process of managing two or more languages are not well understood.

My research attempts to uncover such mechanisms by investigating how the brain areas involved in the management and proper selection of two languages interact with each other. Specifically, I am currently examining the following questions: How does learning a second language earlier versus later in life influence brain development? How is language proficiency implicated in such development? How do brain areas associated with the management of two languages function with each other? What types of influence do they exert on each other and, do they all play a similar role in language switching?

The results of this research carry major implications for the understanding of bilingualism and brain development. Additionally, these results could impact bilingual education in the Mexican American population, as well as education of the general population. Educating children in two languages has the potential for life benefits such as greater ability to attend to important information while ignoring irrelevant information, the ability to manage and to proficiently learn two languages, greater cognitive flexibility in learning a third language, and the possibility of delaying the onset of dementia disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. My research will potentially show that the sooner children learn a second language and the more proficient they become, the greater the benefits in the long run. ❌