

# Announcements

- ❖ El Mundo Zurdo: An International Conference on Anzaldúan Thought and Art and Performance, November 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2010
- ❖ Women's Studies Institute Scholarship, due February
- ❖ Women's History Month, March 2011
- ❖ Black and Brown Feminisms in Hip Hop Media Symposium and Concert, March 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 2011
- ❖ English Graduate Student Symposium, Spring 2011 (Date TBA)
- ❖ GLBTQ Scholarship, Spring 2011 - See Inclusion and Community Engagement (ICE) Office

## WSI Staff News:

❖ Congratulations to WSI Web Specialist Muthaheera Belgur Shamiullah on her upcoming December graduation! She is completing her Master's in Electrical Engineering.

## Interested in earning a major or minor in Women's Studies?

Sign up for the foundational course, WS 2013, and visit your advisor. Visit [www.utsa.edu/wsi](http://www.utsa.edu/wsi) for more information, drop by the WSI office at MS 3.01.14, or contact [carolyn.motley@utsa.edu](mailto:carolyn.motley@utsa.edu) (210) 458-6277

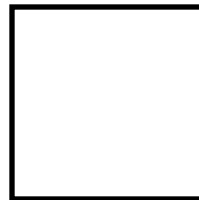


**UTSA**  
Women's Studies  
Institute Newsletter

One UTSA Circle

San Antonio, TX 78249-0700

Fall 2010 Newsletter



# WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



# STUDIES NEWS

Volume 6, Fall 2010

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## Director's Note

**Dr. Sonia Saldívar-Hull, WSI Executive Director**

The Women's Studies Institute welcomes you to the Fall 2010 newsletter. As you see in these pages, the WSI programming is diverse and far reaching. In addition to encouraging and supporting scholarship on women's issues, the WSI also engages in advocacy work and consciousness-raising. As the terror of violence against women continues with staggering statistics, we at UTSA continue to shatter the silences surrounding these abuses. The WSI will join thousands of women and men on university and college campuses throughout the US who march to speak up against sexual violence against women. While some groups march in April or during Women's History Month in March, at UTSA we schedule our Take Back the Night Campus March during October's Domestic Violence Awareness month. On October 19, 2010, we will gather at the Paseo to participate in this international initiative. We anticipate that several women's student organizations, including the UTSA chapter of the Association for Women in Communications, will join us. Next fall's newsletter will feature photos from our event.

As the institutional home of the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa and in collaboration with the SSGA, the WSI will sponsor *El Mundo Zurdo: An International Conference on Anzaldúan Thought, Art and Performance* on November 4-6, 2010. This year we will host over 100 scholars from the US, Mexico, and Europe at the UTSA Downtown campus. We continue our campus activities in the Spring semester as we open the 2011 Women's History month celebrations with a symposium on *Black and Brown Feminisms in Hip Hop Media*, March 4-5. We will host as our keynote speaker, Dr. Gwendolyn Pough, author of *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture and the Public Sphere*. Under the leadership of Drs. Kinitra Brooks and Marco Cervantes, the one day academic symposium is scheduled for March 4th and follows with hip hop performances from local and national hip hop artists on March 5th.

We continue to develop and expand the BA in Women's Studies, and in the Spring of 2011 Megan Sibbett will teach the first UTSA course on Queer Studies, which WS will cross-list with English. Another milestone for the WS program is our participation in the creation of the Consortium for Social Transformation (CST), to be formally launched in January 2011. Women's Studies and the WSI will be joining African American Studies (AAS) and Mexican American Studies (MAS) to strengthen and institutionalize these disciplines at UTSA. The planning for this academic unit has been ongoing for several years, and with the support of Provost John Fredrick, the CST will further the university's leadership efforts in preparing "culturally responsible citizens who actively collaborate as agents of positive change through scholarship, service and teaching to build equitable and just communities" (CST proposal). The Consortium will act as an "incubator" to support the growth of these three programs. Dr. Michael Jennings will serve as director of AAS, Dr. Marie Miranda will direct MAS, and I will continue as director of WS and the WSI. In the future, the CST will also develop areas of studies such as American Indian Studies, Asian and Pacific American Studies, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies. The CST will be an integral unit in the College of Education and Human Development.

*Continued on page 2*

## The Personal is Political and Academic Too: Teaching Intro to Women's Studies at UTSA

**Megan Sibbett, Doctoral Candidate**

Students often tell me that the Introduction to Women's Studies course is unlike any other. It seems that initially some students assume that WS 2013 is only for women, is exclusively about "feminism," and is perhaps taught by an antagonistic female professor similar to those portrayed in movies like *100 Girls* or *Sorority Boys*. WS 2013, which satisfies requirements for the core curriculum as well as the Women's Studies major and minor, is certainly far from this stereotype. While students engage in a myriad of feminist theories and issues, the course largely focuses on intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, age, and cross-cultural topics such as history, the body and health, media and popular culture, violence, the environment, and activism.

Because of the diversity of students who enroll in WS 2013, I am always eager to watch how the students teach and learn from one another. In class we talk about the notion that the personal is political and that the political is also personal. The diversity of students' individual perspectives on WS theories, histories, and ideas becomes profound through this personal/political lens. Their experiences and viewpoints play a big part in how they integrate and synthesize class material. For example, after reading an article by women's studies scholar, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who writes about "how one understands and defines home" is "profoundly political," our different ideas, experiences, and theories of "home" created a stimulating academic conversation. Another factor that adds to the unique diversity of the course is that the students are Women's Studies majors and minors as well as majors from all other disciplines. Because of the intersectional focus and the range of topics studied in the course, students often discuss how WS 2013 shapes the way they engage in their intellectual endeavors in their other courses and within differing majors. The cross-cultural approach interweaves not only personal views among peers but also their differing academic standpoints.

During the course we also read a relevant novel. Students have been fascinated with reading Alicia Gaspar de Alba's *Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders*, a fictional account of the femicide happening along the US/Mexico border. After reading the novel, many students tell me about the effect it had on them and ask about how they can become involved in various projects that raise awareness for violence against women. In my own teaching and studies, it is very important for me to make academic connections between my own experiences and the experiences of others and community involvement, so I am delighted when WS students organize various groups on campus, write letters to the newspaper, and participate in volunteer groups in San Antonio.

Teaching the course has been very rewarding for me as I have the pleasure of learning, re-theorizing, thinking, and listening along with students. Allan Johnson, a sociologist who studies gender and inequality, wrote that too often we do not scrutinize the ways we think, learn, and participate in the world in order to "protect our sense of who we are and ensure our being accepted by other people, including family and friends. In the end, the default is to adopt the dominant version of reality and act as though it's the only one there is." To have a course like WS 2013 that encourages struggling against dominant ideas including the ways we internalize them is such a unique and invaluable opportunity—one I look forward to every semester.

**Director's Note Continued from page 1...**

As our mission statement asserts: "The CST will facilitate scholarship, teaching and learning about social constituencies that influence the success of individuals and communities locally, nationally, and internationally. This will be accomplished through an approach that engages multiple disciplines in the creation of knowledge and outcomes that promote increased equity among people throughout the state, nation and world."

I would like to thank Provost Fredrick and Dean Betty Merchant for their untiring support of Women's Studies and the other interdisciplinary and trans-college area and ethnic studies programs. As we wrote in our philosophy statement, the CST will indeed be a "model for creating social change through scholarship."



WSI Newsletter  
Volume 6, Fall 2010

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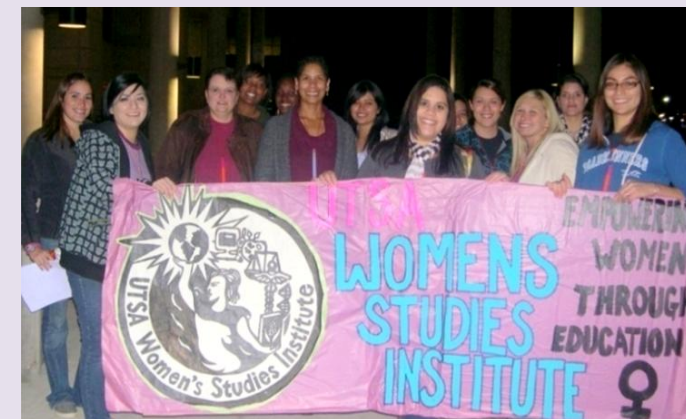
## "Women Unite! Take Back the Night!" The WSI Hosts Its First Annual Take Back the Night

**Myrriah Gomez, Doctoral Student**

October is the month dedicated nationwide to raising awareness about domestic violence, and the WSI co-sponsored several events with UTSA's Women's Resource Center that highlighted the dangers and celebrated the survivors of domestic violence throughout the month of October. The events included T-shirt decorating for the Clothesline Project; a dating violence and self-defense workshop; a brown bag lunch with Dr. Amy Chanmugam; a brown bag lunch with Dr. Linda Benavides; and "Words of Strength from Wounded Tongues: A Domestic Violence Awareness Poetry Reading," featuring poets Jodi Ierien, Josie Mixon, and Sarah Montoya. But domestic violence awareness raising is not and can never be limited to one month, and the WSI continued to host events into November.

Take Back the Night is an international initiative to help women take back the streets and stop sexual violence against women. On November 17th, a group of about 20 university women gathered in the Paseo on Main campus after the sun went down. Holding the WSI banner, we marched through campus. If people did not see us, despite the glow sticks we carried or wore around our necks, they definitely heard us. We alternated our chants that called for on-campus safety, not just at night, but at all times. When the march concluded, Jodi Ierien shared her own poems.

Our presence that night attracted the attention of students walking to and from class. Several stopped to listen as we talked about the history of Take Back the Night or as Jodi read her poetry. The event was a success, and the WSI hopes to make this a yearly tradition.



WSI Staff and students prepare to march the UTSA Main Campus.

## Student Perspective On Coursework: Latin(a) Third Space Feminisms as Tools For Revisioning a Movement

**Micah Garza, Undergraduate Research Assistant**

As an undergraduate student I am always looking for ways to challenge myself, particularly in my fields of interest. I have taken many classes that deal with border identities or look at the intricate ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality intertwine to form complex identities and subject positions that stand in opposition to history's master narrative. However, it is rare that we talk about the mistakes made within our own movements. We tend to ignore the sexism and racial policing that went on and how these became historical and material realities that oppressed our own peoples. So, when I was offered the opportunity to take an English graduate course called Latin(a) Third Space Feminisms that promised to address all of these things and more, I immediately jumped on it.

Latin(a) Third Space Feminisms, taught by Dr. Sonia Saldívar-Hull, was a course that examined the complex ways in which gender, sex, race, class, and national identity mix and present a challenge to normative feminist discourses that often do not address the existing liminal spaces of identity. As a class we used these Third Space articulations to theorize other literary texts, both fiction and non-fiction. By becoming acutely aware of the Third Space subject positions of the authors we read we were also able to question and complicate the arguments of the Chicano Movement as well as mainstream feminist thought. It became a theoretical tool to use in examining the realities and lived experiences of those whose identities have been marginalized, as well as to critique the dominant narrative.

What particularly interested me about this course was the opportunity to discuss and recontextualize traditional patriarchal constructions of la familia. Throughout the course we looked at how the Chicano Movement constructed itself through traditional sexual and gender roles as a means to forge a sense of community and political identity centered on the family. However, this articulation and expression of identity ignored the non-heteronormative identities and desires that exist. It is in response to these normative formations that we begin to see articulations of Third-Space feminist identities. It is through these ignored histories that new negations of race, class, gender, and sexuality are formed. Aside from allowing us to critique the movement, these Third Space feminist articulations also allow us to begin to imagine, address, and reconstruct a community that is non-oppressive and inclusive of all sexual and gender identities. Perhaps the most important thing I took away from this course was that all movements, especially those that aim at being non-hierarchical and non-oppressive, need constant analysis and critique if we are to move forward and do any true healing within our communities.

## Domestic Violence Awareness Month: “Words of Strength from Wounded Tongues” Poetry Reading at UTSA Downtown

**Larissa M. Mercado-López, Doctoral Candidate in English/Latina Literature**

For many women who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence, creative expression is a powerful means of healing and raising consciousness about domestic violence and the hegemony of patriarchy that perpetuates it. On October 29, 2009, the Women’s Studies Institute hosted “Words of Strength from Wounded Tongues: A Domestic Violence Awareness Poetry Reading” at UTSA Downtown, an event co-sponsored by the Women’s Resource Center and supported by UTSA Downtown Student Activities. The poets included both current students and a published poet-activist who shared their original work against the backdrop of the Dia de los Muertos altars that were on display, including the altar constructed by the WSI and WRC in remembrance of victims of domestic violence.

Taking the microphone were UTSA students and poets, Jodi Ierien and Sarah Montoya, and published poet/playwright and domestic violence activist Josie Mixon. Jodi received a BA in Criminal Justice from UTSA in 1993 and returned in 2007 to work on a BA in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She has twice placed third in the COLFA Conference, once with a creative nonfiction piece (2008) and once with a poetry entry (2009). Two of her poems appear in the December 2009 issue of *The Chaffin Journal*, published by Eastern Kentucky University. Jodi initiated the creation of an intimate space by lacing her reading with more detailed explanations of her experiences and with candid admissions about her continuous process of healing. As the amplifier projected her voice through the small space of the Durango Building, her descriptive poems, such as “Hands,” allowed the audience to momentarily experience the dis-ease the poet detailed in her poems and to move closer to an understanding of how children can be victimized by their own families.

Next in the program was Josie Mixon, a native of Mission, Texas. Josie is a survivor of sexual abuse and domestic violence and is currently a highly sought-after voice during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Her publication credits include the screenplay “Can You Believe It,” which premiered at the Carver Community Cultural Center, and three collections of poetry, *Reflections of My Battered Life*, *Of Flesh and Bone I Am Woman: Surviving Abuse*, and *Off the Beaten Path*; in addition, several of her poems have been anthologized. Josie is also the recipient of the prestigious Phoenix Award from the PEACE Initiative for the work that she has done to promote awareness of domestic violence. Between her pieces, Josie spoke candidly about the physical violence she endured and about the emotional, physical, and financial toll the violence took on her and her children. Josie ended her reading with words that signaled hope and the possibility of healing and renewal.

The final poet, Sarah Montoya, a Corpus Christi native, is a local activist, writer, and poet. Sarah made UTSA history by becoming the first recipient of a degree in Women’s Studies, which she earned in addition to a BA in English. Through her scholarship, her work as an undergraduate research assistant at the WSI, and her activism, she has proven her commitment to promoting strong feminist ideologies in her community and school. Sarah describes herself as “a firm believer in the healing power of writing,” and as her program biography states, “it has been through her work with domestic violence that she has been able to come to terms with growing up in a violent household.” The last reader of the program, Sarah’s emotional performance allowed the audience to bear witness to the power of creative expression. The words, images, and enflashed performance of Sarah’s poetry that centered primarily on the experiences of her abused mother revealed not only the pain of having witnessed violence, but of having become more conscientized about that experience.

The event concluded with pan dulce and coffee, generously donated by Student Activities-Downtown, and successfully drew Domestic Violence Awareness Month to an end. For more information about the Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2010 calendar, please check our website at [www.utsa.edu/wsi](http://www.utsa.edu/wsi) or contact [carolyn.motley@utsa.edu](mailto:carolyn.motley@utsa.edu).



Brittany Biley & Rosie Gutierrez of the Women’s Resource Center stand with the Purple Ribbon Memorial.



Left to right: Josie Mixon, Sarah Montoya, Dr. Sonia Saldivar - Hull, and Jodi Ierien pose for a picture after the poetry reading.

## “Hands” By Jodi Ierien

Huge hands are everywhere,  
Touching, grasping, hurting.  
Tiny child, unable to escape.  
Wherever she moves, hands are there.  
How can he have so many hands?

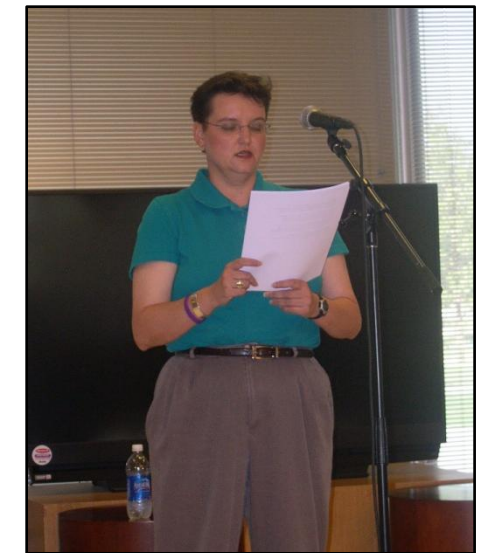
Tiny child starts to cry,  
Whimpering softly.  
His hand clamps across her face.  
Lips smash against teeth, nose flattens.  
She can’t make a sound, can’t even breathe.

His voice hisses in her ear  
“I will kill you.”  
Huge hands clamp down tighter,  
Making stars dance before her eyes.  
She knows he can do it, would do it.

His hands touching, exploring,  
Reminding her she is his,  
A toy to be played with and cast aside,  
Broken, discarded, worthless.

She lies there, hardly daring to breathe.  
His voice, snarling curses,  
Scares her even more.  
Child-size pajama buttons have defeated  
Huge, clumsy hands.

Huge hand grips a tiny throat.  
The child lies silent, still, waiting, fearing.  
His voice in her ear orders her to unbutton,  
Tells her what will happen if she doesn’t.  
Tiny child lies petrified, silently begging  
Her arms to move, her hands to work.



Huge hand squeezes tighter, pinches painfully.  
Tiny hands reach to do the unthinkable.  
Leaden fingers work buttons through holes.  
Child’s hands drift down to her waist.  
Her eyes meet his, mutely offering to do anything,  
Give anything, anything but that.  
Panic flares as he forces her hands to the drawstring.

His hand forces her head back, twists her neck.  
His thumb traces her jaw, his broken nail scraping.  
Her tears trace fiery courses from the corners  
Of her eyes to her hair, her ears.

His voice comes again, soft, silky, scary.  
“You better hurry, little girl.”  
Two tiny hands fight the knot.  
Sick relief takes hold when it gives way.

Huge hands push aside a tiny pajama shirt.  
Harsh hands push down tiny pajama pants.  
She feels vomit rising, swallows it down,  
Knows she has no choice.  
Lies unmoving, defeated,  
Waiting for what is to come.

Prays he’ll finish quickly,  
Knows he’ll take an eternity.  
She can’t bear to look at him.  
Knows it’s her fault, it’s all her fault.  
She untied the knot, put herself in  
His huge, hateful hands.



## UTSA Women's Resource Center Honors RAINN Day

Submitted by **Melissa Hernandez, LCSW**  
**Assistant Director of UTSA Counseling Services , Coordinator of the Women's Resource Center**

College age women are 4 times more likely to be victims of sexual assault, compared to the assault rates of all women (Humphrey and Kahn, 2000). By the time women reach college 25% have already been the victims of rape or attempted rape (Fisher, Cullen, Turner, 2000). Men are victims too, 1 in 33 men have been of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (National Institute of Justice, 1998). While crime statistics at UTSA report only 0-2 sexual offenses per year in the last three years (data inclusive of several sexual offenses and not limited to sexual assault/rape), it is widely accepted that sexual assault is severely under-reported. Survivors of sexual assault do not report or seek support for many reasons including: fear of retaliation, embarrassment/shame, the perpetrator is someone they know, hope to forget, fear of other consequences such as losing job or being deported, or because they think the assault was somehow their fault. The reality is that even if it is not reported UTSA women and men are effected by sexual assault and no one deserves it.

To encourage students to get involved in the prevention of sexual assault, UTSA Women's Resource Center (WRC) partnered with RAINN to honor RAINN Day 2010. RAINN is the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network. RAINN maintains a well-regarded and trusted website and phone and online hotlines. Each year RAINN leads an annual campaign to stop sexual assault on college campuses. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row that UTSA has honored RAINN Day.

The WRC hosted several activities for RAINN Day 2010 on Thursday, September 23.

- Information Table, 10am-2pm, University Center II, 1<sup>st</sup> floor
- Workshop, Student Activism and Sexual Assault, 4pm-5:30pm, UC 2.214 Hidalgo Room
- Hand-decorated umbrellas throughout campus
- For more information or to get involved contact the WRC at 458-6829

While sexual assault is never the victim's fault, there are some steps you can take to reduce your risk. RAINN's Back-to-School tips for women and men include:

- Trust your instincts. If you feel unsafe in any situation, go with your gut. If you see something suspicious contact UTSA police at 458-4911 or 458-4242.
- Be careful what you post on social networking sites. Avoid leaving specific information on your whereabouts, activities or address where it is accessible to anyone.
- Watch out for your friends. Form a buddy system when you go out, check-in with each other throughout the night and leave together.

For full list of Back-to-School tips visit [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).

To get involved, volunteer, or learn more about RAINN Day activities at UTSA contact Melissa Hernandez at [melissa.hernandez@utsa.edu](mailto:melissa.hernandez@utsa.edu). Learn more about the Women's Resource Center at [www.utsa.edu/wrc/wrc](http://www.utsa.edu/wrc/wrc).



Students stand with umbrellas decorated with sexual assault statistics and help hotlines in honor of RAINN Day 2010.

Sources:  
 Humphrey, S., and A. Kahn (2000). "Fraternalities, Athletic Teams and Rape: Importance of Identification With a Risky Group." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 15(12):1313-1322.  
 Fisher, B., F. Cullen and M. Turner (2000). *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics.  
 National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey*. 1998. Rape Abuse and Incest National Network.

## Women's History Month 2010: A Reading with Emma Pérez and Maria Cotera

Magda Garcia, WSI Staff

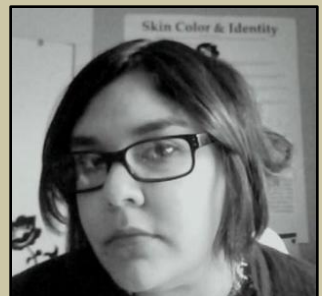
*Telling Lives: Tejana Narratives*, a plática featuring scholars and authors Emma Pérez and María Cotera, took place at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center on Sunday, March 28. The two hour plática consisted of readings by Pérez and Cotera. Pérez read from her latest novel, *Forgetting the Alamo, Or, Blood Memory* (2009), and Cotera from her book, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González and the Poetics of Culture* (2008). Pérez and Cotera then held a Q & A, during which questions, ranging from children to activism, were posed. Among the several ones posed was David Zamora Casa's question to Pérez, regarding her decision to become a mother and how important the freedom to choose to be a parent is to the GLBTQ community. Indeed, prior to her reading, Pérez shared her experience as a mother to a pre-school age girl. She discussed the challenges of negotiating between her child's desire for Disney products and Pérez's own desire to raise her to be conscious of such capitalist marketing. In addition, she touched on the reactions she received for deciding to be a mother to the daughter of her white former partner. Regardless of any criticism Pérez may have encountered, it is clear she is proud of her choice. Another audience member also directed her question about the role of scholars in activism to Pérez. Pérez answered by stating she does not draw a division between her roles as scholar and activist and, indeed, views them as intertwined in the work she produces. Pérez also reminded the audience of the dangers facing the careers of professors perceived as "radical," especially in the increasingly conservative climate. Indeed, she stated that she herself has felt such threat to her academic position at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Part of the discussion also touched on the tension in academic spaces between Chicana feminist scholars and Native American scholars, such as the view held by some Native American scholars that Chicana lesbian feminist theorist Gloria E. Anzaldúa appropriates Native American cultural symbols in her work. Cotera shared her experience of taking part in *Chicana/o-Native Dialogues, A National Symposium on the Uses of Indigeneity*, which was held May 12-14, 2006 at the University of Michigan. The symposium revealed that a middle ground between the groups had yet to be found, though such ground is vital for critical discussion. Cotera also briefly talked about her latest project, titled *Chicana Por Mi Raza: Uncovering the Hidden History of Chicana Feminism (1965-1985)*, which seeks to digitize Chicana history and establish an internet archive of such history with the goal of making it readily accessible to the academic and non-academic community. The hope is that such archive would also allow for people to upload oral histories, thereby expanding the archive. The website is projected to feature an interactive timeline, an oral history "toolbox" linked to a curriculum plan for schools, and an interactive wiki tool which would enable the uploading of oral histories. According to Cotera, the Chicana por Mi Raza Advisory Board consists of nationally recognized scholars Vicki Ruiz, Maylei Blackwell, Alma Garcia, Marisela Chavez, and Linda Garcia Merchant as of Fall 2009. Cotera and the board are preparing to apply for the NEH Digital Humanities Start-up Grant in September of this year.

### The UTSA Women's Studies Institute Proudly Announces the 2010 Women's Studies Scholarship Recipient

Sandra Garza

"Histories Buried in Flesh:  
 Skin Color and Women of Mexican Descent in South Texas"



In the United States, the history of racialization is also a history of skin color stratification wherein darker skin represents savagery and inferiority, and idealized notions of whiteness represent civility and superiority. Texas, however, emerges as a cultural borderland reflecting the tensions between the vestiges of a sometimes-flexible Spanish colonial racial hierarchy and the rigid rules of hypodescent that characterize the larger U.S black-white paradigm. Because variations in skin color are often understood in terms of "racial mixing," women of Mexican descent carry the memory of conquest in our flesh, a memory that can be traced across the spectrum of skin tones. Placing women of Mexican descent at the center, this essay offers a discussion of skin color that privileges the complexities of lived experience while recognizing the sociohistorical contexts in which the experiences are situated. This approach serves to produce a critique of the racial project in an effort to discuss how gendered systems of racialization are embodied and expressed thereby uncovering the stories of cultural tyranny and creative survival that are buried in our flesh, beneath the colors of our skin.

## Women's History Month 2010 at UTSA: A Reflection from the Co-Chairs

**Women's History Month Co-Chairs,  
Dr. Kathleen Arnold, Political Science and Women's Studies  
Larissa M. Mercado-López, Doctoral Candidate in English/Latina  
Literature and Women's Studies**

This year, the Women's Studies Institute celebrated 25 years of Women's History Month at UTSA! As co-chairs of WHM 2010, we were honored to have been part of the process of organizing one of the most dynamic Women's History Month calendars in the country. The diversity of events and speakers on our calendar reflected the wide range of academic interests and the collaborative spirit of women scholars at UTSA, and put into action the national WHM theme of "Writing Women Back into History," as well as our local annual theme, "Testimonios: Telling Our Stories."

The WSI kicked off the month with the WHM Opening Reception. The featured keynote speaker was Dr. Elena Gutiérrez, an expert on reproductive justice and woman of color feminisms, who spoke on her work investigating cases of forced sterilization of Mexican women. The Women's Advocate of the Year Award went to Senator Leticia Van de Putte for her legislative efforts to improve the lives of women in Texas, including the implementation of legislation that has increased affordable health care for women and that has addressed the problem of human trafficking through, specifically, the creation of a statewide human trafficking prevention task force.

The events for the month included screenings of films such as "Good Hair" and "Sisters of '77," and lectures and panels on topics such as Chicana history, photography, sexual health, black feminist philosophy, and Muslim women. The WSI collaborated with the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center to organize "Telling Lives," a reading and book signing by authors and scholars Emma Pérez, who read from her historical novel, *Forgetting the Alamo, or, Blood Memory*, and María Cotera, who read from her scholarly work, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González, and the Poetics of Culture*. During the month, the WSI also collaborated with the McNay Art Museum, the Martinez St. Women's Center, the Carver Cultural Center, and the Women's Global Connection.

WHM 2010 also featured our annual Women's Festival, which drew in woman-centered community organizations and student organizations from Austin, San Antonio, and UTSA. The event was organized by a dynamic team of student volunteers who coordinated everything from organization invitations to the entertainment, which included a capoeira performance and readings by local poets and writers.

It was an honor to have co-chaired WHM at UTSA and to be affiliated with the Women's Studies Institute and the growing Women's Studies program. As instructors in Political Science, Women's Studies, and English, we have witnessed first-hand the ways in which Women's History Month has awakened the consciousness of our students and enriched their learning experiences and cultural understandings. We especially extend our gratitude to the faculty who invited speakers; to the staff at the WSI, including Executive Director Sonia Saldivar-Hull, Senior Administrative Associate Carolyn Motley, Graduate RA Muthaheera Belgur-Shamiullah, and Undergraduate RA Sarah Montoya; and to the UTSA administration, whose financial and administrative support has enabled us to produce another successful Women's History Month.

Once again, we are proud to have been a part of the production of one of the most dynamic and academically and culturally diverse Women's History Month calendars in the nation. We invite the UTSA community to volunteer to help coordinate next year's Women's History Month, which the National Women's History Month Project has themed "Our History is Our Strength." Thanks to all for your continued support.

## Women's History Month Opening Reception Highlights Women's Health as it Kicks off Women's History Month 2010

**Larissa M. Mercado-López, Doctoral Candidate in English/Latina Literature and Women's Studies**

On March 1, 2010, the Women's Studies Institute kicked off Women's History Month with the annual Women's History Month Opening Reception, which featured a keynote address and the announcement of the WSI's Women Advocate of the Year. The event was opened with introductions and welcomes by WSI Executive Director Dr. Sonia Saldivar-Hull, UTSA's President Ricardo Romo, PhD., and WHM co-chairs Dr. Kathleen Arnold and Larissa Mercado-Lopez. Over 100 students, staff, faculty, and community members were in attendance to help kick off the month.

This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Elena Gutiérrez, a professor in the departments of Latina/o Studies, Sociology, and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois – Chicago. Dr. Gutiérrez is a sociologist with expertise in women of color reproductive and sexual health politics, feminism and social activism and Chicana/o Studies. Dr. Gutiérrez is the principal investigator of the Sterilization Policy Project, which assesses informed consent protocols for female sterilization. She is also a highly sought-after expert on Latina Health and has served as a consultant with the National Latina Health Organization, SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, and Mujeres Latinas en Acción. In her keynote address, "Storytelling for Social Justice in Hostile Time: Necessary Reflections for the Future of Women's Health," Dr. Gutiérrez shared the narratives of women she interviewed for her research on reproductive justice for women of color, much of which appeared in her case study, *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction*, published by UT Press in 2008. Her historicization of policies on women's reproduction contextualized the women's narratives of forced sterilization and failed abortions, and spoke to the national theme of writing women back into history and UTSA's annual theme "Testimonios: Telling Our Stories."

Following the keynote address, the WSI staff and WHM co-chairs honored Senator Leticia Van de Putte with the prestigious WSI Women's Advocate of the Year Award. This annual recognition is bestowed upon a local woman who has dedicated her efforts to the improvement of the lives of women in the San Antonio community. A long-time resident of San Antonio and mother of six children, Senator Van de Putte has served five terms as a Texas Senator. In her almost 30 years as a pharmacist, the Senator has become intimate with the needs of women in Texas, and has been an advocate for improved access for all women to quality health care. Senator Van de Putte's most recent legislative session in 2009 provides just a snapshot of her commitment to women's health and reproductive rights. Challenging fellow legislators to work toward more effective approaches to teen pregnancy prevention, she increased legislative efforts to develop more comprehensive sex education programs that hold schools accountable for the information they provide to their students. In one of the boldest moves this past session regarding efforts to prevent unplanned pregnancies, Senator Van de Putte sponsored a bill that would have expanded the Children's Health Insurance program to allow minors who already had one child to have access to family planning resources. In an equally important bill, the Senator called for increased funding to more effectively and more widely market the Women's Health Program, which provides family planning services as well as necessary screening for the detection of breast and cervical cancer. Throughout her terms, Van de Putte's legislative efforts have consistently sought to return to women autonomy over their bodies, their choices, and their lives.

The WHM Opening Reception 2010 commenced yet another successful month of what has become one of the largest university Women's History Month programs in the country and was made possible thanks to the WSI, the UC staff, the staff of Senator Leticia Van de Putte, and the Office of the President. The entire UTSA community once again is invited to the WHM Opening Reception in March 2011.



Left to right: UTSA President Ricardo Romo, Senator Leticia Van de Putte, Larissa Mercado, and Dr. Sonia Saldivar-Hull pose after the opening ceremony.

Right: The 2010 Women's Advocate of the Year, Senator Leticia Van de Putte, speaks at the opening reception.



Keynote speaker Dr. Elena Gutiérrez delivers her speech at the opening reception.



Senator Leticia Van De Putte and UTSA President Dr. Ricardo Romo await the festivities.



Women's Studies Executive Director Dr. Sonia Saldivar-Hull introduces the keynote speaker and 2010 Women's Advocate of the Year.



Co-Chairs Larissa Mercado-López and Dr. Kathleen Arnold welcome guests.

## Photo Intervention: Students work with Visiting Artists to bring awareness to UTSA community

**Libby Rowe, Assistant Professor of Art and Art History**

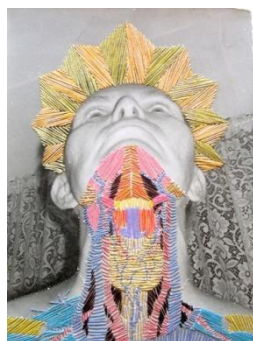
The end of Women's History Month found UTSA photography students working with visiting artists, Lupita Murillo Tinnen and Pinky Bass, on an intervention art project that tackled the subject of women's health. Tinnen and Bass were brought to the UTSA campus along with artist Ruth Adams, to present their artwork on a panel entitled "Working from Experience." After attending the lectures and panel discussion, the participating students were challenged with the task of developing an interventionist art project that would bring the topic of women's health to the UTSA community.

The goal of artistic interventions is to jar people out of their normal lives and routines by taking artwork outside of the gallery setting and bringing it into the public. Often, this artwork includes some form of politically minded message. Working with Tinnen and Bass, who both make artwork with intensely personal subject matter, allowed the students to draw from the artists' experience in finding palatable ways to present information that might otherwise be difficult for a viewer to appreciate.

Pulling from experiences of their families and friends, the students decided that too many diseases were misdiagnosed or caught too late, simply due to a lack of knowledge of their early symptoms. The students made a goal of bringing awareness of these diseases and sources of reliable information to people who might otherwise be unaware of their potential dangers. To do so, they took portraits of the participants and paired their images with the acronyms of a lesser known or under acknowledged diseases. These images were placed in bathroom stalls to illicit a sense of wonder in the viewers held as a captive audience. Upon leaving the stalls, the viewer encountered text on the mirrors that defined the acronym, highlighted a common symptom of the disease, and provided a website for researching the disease further. The students used their self-portraits to bring a level of commonplace to the project, driving home the message that anyone can be affected by the highlighted diseases and that contracting these diseases should not be seen as a stigma.

As with much challenging and political artwork, the intervention was met with mixed reviews. In some bathrooms, the images were removed immediately; the text wiped from the mirrors. Other viewers were witnessed thoughtfully reading the provided information, dutifully noting the websites. All in all, the students felt that the project was a success and that they would be interested to install it elsewhere in the San Antonio community to bring awareness to a wider audience.

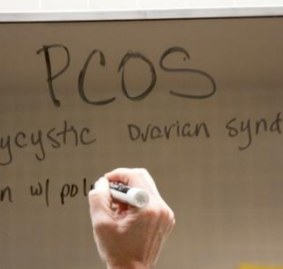
We would like to thank the Women's Studies Institute for bringing all three artists to campus and to the Department of Art and Art History for providing the opportunity for the UTSA photography students to work with Tinnen and Bass on this project.



Pinky Bass' "Contemplating My Internal Organs"



Above & Below: Student-created interventionist pieces in UTSA bathrooms  
Photocredit: Jenelle Esparza



## El Mundo Zurdo: An International Conference on Anzaldúa Thought and Art and Performance

November 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, UTSA Downtown Campus

**Megan Wallace, Graduate Research Assistant**

The Women's Studies Institute, the home for The Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa (SSGA), and UTSA faculty and students from across the disciplines are currently preparing for the second international conference on the work of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa. Held every 18 months, the SSGA conference is scheduled for November 4-6, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas. The 2010 conference theme is Art and Performance. El Mundo Zurdo seeks to provide a place for scholars, students, and community to come together with the intention of engaging in the continued study of Anzaldúa's intellectual and spiritual work. Included in this year's conference is a Noche De Cultura at the Gallista Gallery on Friday, November 5, from 7:30-9:30p.m. If you would like to become involved in the SSGA, email us at [Gloria.anzaldua.society@gmail.com](mailto:Gloria.anzaldua.society@gmail.com).

## Chumash/Esselen Testimonios: Stories of Survival

**Annette Portillo, Assistant Professor of English**

On March 11, 2010, WSI hosted Deborah Miranda for Women's History Month. Miranda, a self-described mixedblood woman, states that her tribal experience emerged out of the missionized histories of southern California coastal Indians and their subsequent resilience and exhilarating resurgence. With the help of her mother's genealogical expertise, she was able to assist her immediate family re-connect and re-establish their tribal ties. Miranda's scholarly work brings together personal and communal stories of survival and resurgence. During her visit to UTSA, she presented a talk "unruly and discordant texts": Ethnographic Field Notes as Transitional Native American Literature" where she discussed her most current research on Chumash/Esselen testimonios of family members (Vicenta Gutierrez and Estefana Real) whose stories form the basis of her larger historical project.

Her presentation was primarily focused on her research of the John Peabody Harrington Collection of field notes, where she argued that, "the voices of Harrington's Native women informants began to obscure their designation as 'field notes' and take on authorial presence of their own." In her discussion, she complicated the notion of "native informant" by re-reading these ethnographic notes through alternative lenses. For example, she states that beneath the surface of four field notes from Isabel Meadows, Harrington's primary "informant," are actually "an indigenous woman's subversive and ingenious method of chronicling Native women's wisdom and survival techniques for future Native women." That is, Meadows knew she was a valuable resource and made sure that the stories she was telling found their way into the archives. According to Miranda, it is her stories that allow us "a window into the devastated world of gendered violence that a few thousand (out of a precontact population of one million) Native women survived." As with any testimonio on the genocide and genocide of native peoples, Miranda's talk unearthed histories that are often neglected or forgotten.

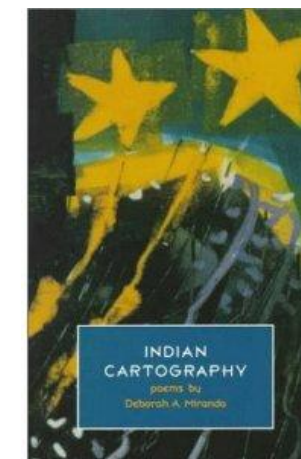
Miranda's historical projects are not unlike her creative works that all resonate with themes of survival and the need to not only reclaim, but also reinvent one's Indigenous female self. Before her visit, my students read her book of poetry, *Indian Cartography* and various essays. One student, Allegra Castro, felt Miranda's visit was an "invaluable experience" and was most interested in hearing her discuss the challenges of doing archival research. In Miranda's essay, "Like Melody or Witchcraft: Empowerment through Literature" she states:

That is how literature and all arts written or visual, serve to empower us: by sharing a vision, an experience, a resonance, that communicates and teaches us understanding—of each other, our connections with the planet, our flaws and beauty as alive beings, in ways that nothing else can.

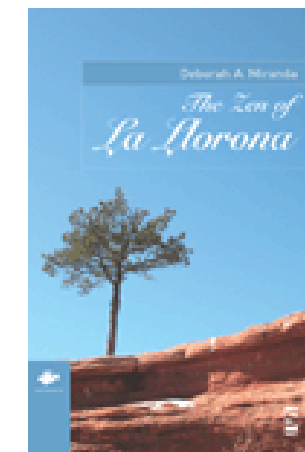
Upon reflecting on Miranda's work, Allegra stated that her words "really hit home with me" and "echo my own beliefs about the purpose for writing and studying literature." Another student, Margaret Cantú, was also appreciative that Miranda shared her personal experiences with teaching resistant students. Cantú stated, "I was glad we were able to speak informally with Deborah Miranda regarding the difficulties that we encounter teaching our students about the injustices that continue to plague our education system, her advice is something that inspires me especially when I encounter resistance in the classroom." Overall, Miranda's visit was a huge success and resonated with this year's Women's History Month theme of testimonios and "writing women back into history." As Miranda states, "We are all indigenous to this place; that is the knowledge that I feel I have learned the hard way. Writing is an expression of this knowledge, and a way of communicating this voice. It is how I can best honor this world, the planet -- truly, our Mother."



Left: Author Deborah Miranda  
Photo credit: Louise Ramirez



Right: Two of her publications, "Indian Cartography" and "The Zen of La Llorona"



# Student Organization Working Toward Awareness, Knowledge, and Inclusion

## Michael Lee Gardin, Doctoral Student

The GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) Student Organization of UTSA, also known simply as the GLBTQ, is a relatively new student-run organization on campus, started in Fall of 2008. This group has made an impact on campus by not only providing a place for the students who identify as part the glbtq community to meet, but by increasing the community's presence and visibility on campus.

The organization's mission is to create a safe space for the glbtq student population, which includes, but is not limited to, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transpeople, and those questioning their sexuality and/or gender. The organization is committed to the well-being of this community as well as its allies.

Charles Miles, a History and Education Junior, is the co-founder and president of the organization. Miles says the group strives "to provide awareness, education, and support for glbtq students on campus." The group meets weekly and holds regular social events. All students are welcome to participate.

Many of the organization's members are dedicated to social activism - something vital - as homophobia, hate, and heterosexism are very real and present on campus and beyond. The vice president of the organization, Political Science Junior, Lauren Bishop hits on this real threat when discussing who can participate in the organization. Bishop says the group is open to all students "so long as they refrain from acting in an abusive or offensive manner." Significantly, outreach outside of the glbtq population is a key element of the organization. Bishop stresses the importance of the involvement of allies. She says, "[We] are actively making known the importance of having support 'outside' the community."

The organization's dedication to increasing knowledge and inclusion is evident in the plans for this year. Bishop explains, "I intend for our group to be more mindful of the community as a whole." Bishop says this includes recognizing issues that the less represented members of the gltbq community face.

This organization's important and commendable progress is exciting for the glbtq student population. Miles believes the organization has changed the campus, specifically by changing perceptions and stereotypes of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transpeople. Yet, Miles says, "We are a fourth of the way there, and I would like us to continue." Indeed, the organization's efforts show a step towards a larger, needed, and continuing discussion of identity, marginalization, and oppression. It shows promise of future activism.

For upcoming events and more information, please contact the organization at [glbtq1604@gmail.com](mailto:glbtq1604@gmail.com).

## New Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Laura Rendón



### Larissa M. Mercado-López, Doctoral Candidate in English/Latina Literature

Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Dr. Laura Rendón, is one of UTSA's newest faculty members. A native of Laredo, Texas, Dr. Rendón obtained her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, after earning degrees from the University of Houston and Texas A&M-Kingsville.

Dr. Rendón explains that her academic identity was shaped by her desire to escape poverty and become a community leader; she ultimately focused her research on students who faced similar economic challenges and is now a leading expert in studies of access, retention and graduation of low-income first-generation students in higher education. In her book *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation*, she has "developed a holistic teaching and learning model that focuses on the sentir of intuition and emotions and the pensar of intellectual activity." Dr. Marie Miranda, chair of Mexican American Studies, explains that in her text Dr. Rendón "insists on a critical self-reflexive process pushing us beyond the idea of 'critical thinking' as an instrumentalist tool of learning."

Dr. Rendón's decision to come to UTSA after 25 years of teaching outside Texas was fueled by UTSA's growth as a research institution, as well as by the developing program in higher education. Dr. Rendón recognizes that as a senior professor in the academy she is a role model for other women, and has facilitated the scholarly growth of many women by co-authoring with them and exposing them to influential scholars. Though she is now a highly respected expert in her field, and an Iowa Academy of Education inductee, Dr. Rendón reveals that initially she was very concerned about others' perceptions of the credibility of her scholarly work. However, her hard work paid off as she came to hold faculty positions at several major universities. We are honored to have Dr. Laura Rendón at UTSA!

## Women's Festival 2010



Photos by Terry Alaniz

An annual Women's History Month event, Women's Festival has become a much-anticipated tradition at UTSA. The Women's Festival 2010 was themed "Living the Legacy: 25 Years of Women's History Month at UTSA" and took place March 9, 2010, in the Sombrilla. The festival would not have been possible without the organizing efforts of a student committee that spent nearly six months inviting women-centered organizations, and arranging the entertainment that included a capoeira demonstration and a poetry reading. We look forward to more successful Women's Festivals in the future!

## Women's Studies Student Spotlight

Why did you become a Women's Studies major or minor?  
How do you apply it to your life outside of academia?

### Meet Lauren and Lucina, two of our fabulous Women's Studies Students!



**Lauren Bishop, Junior:** I became a Women's Studies minor because I am a feminist and wanted to study as much in feminist and women-and-gender studies as possible in my college career. Also, I am planning to become a lawyer with an emphasis on civil liberties issues pertaining to women and lgbtq rights, so having an undergrad background in Women's Studies will be helpful in my future endeavors. I apply feminism in every aspect of my life, with everyone and everything that surrounds me by engaging in critical thinking from a feminist standpoint. I also try participate in events that have to do with further anti-patriarchal sentiment, and try to engage others in feminist dialogue at every opportunity.



**Lucina Martinez, Sophomore:** I am a chicana/mexicana feminist. I am involved in many social and gender justice movements in Texas and San Antonio. I feel like we can't just study women's issues and then not do anything about it when there's so much to do. I am one of the founders of Dream Act Now! at UTSA, which is an organization pushing for the Dream Act to Pass; it advocates for the rights of undocumented youth who were brought to this country without having a say and are now tangled up in our broken immigration system. I'm also very involved with the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, since they tackle many social justice issues all at once. I feel like being a student activist is something that really makes Women's Studies a great major for me. It just fits. I want to learn about how to organize, grow, and heal when everything is against you, so that's why Women's studies is such a great major. I feel that a lot of us have internalized a lot of things and Women's Studies can really help you get an understanding of why things are the way they are. Women's Studies keeps me on track and pushing for equality and fighting for human rights.

## WSI Staff Member is Awarded Ford Dissertation Fellowship



The Women's Studies Institute is proud to announce that project coordinator and English doctoral candidate, Larissa Mercado-López, is a 2010 recipient of a Ford Foundation/National Research Council Dissertation Fellowship for her dissertation project "A revolution in my womb': Toward a Mestiza Maternal Facultad." In this project, Larissa asserts that the socially and corporeally "messy" experience of mestiza maternity enable mestiza mothers to generate unique, bodily-mediated knowledges about social power and its shifting dynamics; further, reading these enmeshed experiences of brown maternity complicates traditional frameworks of race/ethnicity and gender, as well as challenges hegemonic academic works on maternity.

The Dissertation Fellowship includes a one-year stipend of \$21,000 as well as an all expenses-paid trip to the annual Conference of Ford Fellows. In addition, it includes membership into a national network of Ford Fellows, which is comprised of some of the nation's top scholars and administrators. Because of significant budget cuts, the number of Dissertation fellowships was reduced from 35 to 20 national awards to be awarded to students from across the disciplines. Larissa was one of only 3 awardees in the Literature and Language Division, which includes applications from all areas of English and Ethnic Literatures. Larissa's award follows on the heels of Ford Fellowships granted to English department graduates Patricia Trujillo, Lori Beth Rodriguez, and Marco Cervantes, bringing the total numbers of awards to four, an astounding amount for a program less than 10 years old. This does not include Honorable Mentions earned by Patricia, Lori, and Christina Gutierrez, another doctoral student in English.

Larissa explains that "This award would not have been possible without the expert guidance of my mentors, Drs. Ben Olguín, Norma Cantú and Sonia Saldivar-Hull. All Ford Fellows, these scholars' influence went beyond their superior academic support; through their presence and immense successes in academia, they have continuously reminded me that it is possible for scholars of color to not only survive in the academy, but to flourish." Larissa credits the professors and mentors she had as an undergraduate student in the Mexican American Studies program for her decision to pursue graduate school, and is greatly appreciative of her colleagues in the Ph.D. program who gave her critical feedback on her ideas and application. Larissa also wishes to thank her husband, Johnny Lopez, for his tireless support, and her three daughters, Yuriana, Yamila, and Yoltzin, for always reminding her that her work matters.

## The Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa WSI News 15 Presents:

