


Spring 5-2013

## La Voz Spring 2013 issue two

El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies

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**El Instituto**

Institute of Latino/a, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies

**MAY 2013**



**LA VOZ**



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we conclude the inaugural year at El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean and Latin American Studies, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all who have supported our endeavors and ensured a successful transition within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Please take a minute to read about some of the activities that El Instituto was a part of during the Spring 2013 semester.

I wish you all a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you in the fall for what is shaping up to be an exciting and productive 2013-14 academic year.

*Mark Overmyer-Velázquez*

## FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ—VISITING ARTIST



*Photo by Yesha Doshi*

Favianna Rodriguez, Oakland CA visiting artist of Peruvian descent, who has spent a significant amount of time in Mexico, educated UConn students about her work as a transnational interdisciplinary artist and cultural organizer. During her February visit students participated in printmaking and poster workshops, an interactive experience in the studio; created artistic works with Favianna as their guide, and utilized an experienced artist's feedback. Favianna performed a specialized tutorial of her process of creating prints, her artistic visions, and her unique utilization of resources to produce provocative work.

While at UConn, Favianna met with a small cohort of students for an informal lunch gathering, Cara-a-Cara, where she spoke of her own academic career which was influenced by Latino culture. She encouraged students to pursue the arts despite existing cultural

barriers, and suggested the small Latino population on campus could utilize the medium of art to augment their unique voice.

Favianna also gave a guest lecture where she explained that art is an element of culture—something that everyone is influenced by and has unsurmountable power—and that “cultural change always precedes political change.” Because of the strong impact that art has, Favianna creates prints and artwork that

“Migration should be  
seen as both normal  
and beautiful.”

relay messages that are most important to her and to the Latino community. Her artwork is meant to make people aware of the issues that Latinos, women, immigrants and many marginalized groups face. Her anger and frustrations concerning these issues are what motivate her artwork, and she explained that she uses the computer as a critical tool in her artistic development process.

The butterfly, a symbol that Favianna is interested in popularizing with her artwork, signifies the key issue of migration. This symbol is repeated throughout her artwork



and the audience was curious as to why she selected it. She explained that the Monarch butterfly, a natural beauty, annually migrates between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Favianna wanted to portray through this symbol that “Migration should be seen as both normal and beautiful. It is inevitable and should be embraced rather than quashed.”

To gain a greater sense of Favianna's involvement with migration issues and the marginalization of undocumented peoples in the United States, she presented clips of her documentary “Voice of Art: Migration is Beautiful.” In the documentary, Favianna participated in different political rallies, interviewed undocumented immigrants, and worked to empower these people through cultural solidarity activities.



## PIA BARROS LEADS MICRO-STORY WORKSHOP

Pia Barros, renowned Chilean writer, led a workshop in Spanish for graduate and undergraduate students instructing them on the dynamics of writing a micro-story. Freely engaging in literary workshops or even discussing writing and literature were life-threatening activities for Barros under the oppressive and brutal regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. During his lengthy dictatorship, Chileans were unable to speak freely and were constantly vigilant of the government. Many were jailed, murdered and tortured. To overcome the pervasive fear this instilled, Barros turned to writing and literature as tools to fight back. She became an activist by discretely leading workshops in Chile, and encouraging solidarity among the people to resist the government through writing about their experiences, which was prohibited. Barros has received many awards and honors for her activism as well as for her successful publication of more than 30 works of literature which are distributed worldwide.

## EL INSTITUTO AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

### El Instituto 2013 Pre-doctoral Awards

El Instituto awarded support ranging from \$70 to \$2,000 to graduate students for research or creative projects related to Latina/o and/or Latin American Studies at UConn:

**Jennifer A. Cook:** Transcription equipment

**Yesha Doshi:** Attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology Latin America conference

**Deanna L. Gagne:** Research in Nicaragua on the implications of a lack of education on deaf children born to families who hear and do not know sign language.

**Yazmin Garcia-Trejo:** Software for analyzing contextual data for inclusion in two journal articles; conference registration fee to present paper, "The Representation of Women's Interests in the Puerto Rican Legislature 1992-2012."

**Carlos Gardeazábal Bravo:** Paper presentation, "Mujer y violencia estructural en Los papeles del infierno de Enrique Buenaventura," 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of La Asociación de Colombianistas conference.

**Shawn M. Higgins:** Continued research on the earliest history of Texas-Mexican corrido ballads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Shir Lerman:** Research on depression, diabetes, obesity and ataque de nervios in a San Juan Puerto Rico clinic.

**Orlando Pertuz:** Research in national archives in Bogotá, Colombia on how public housing policies reshaped urban life and remade citizenship in Cartagena.

**Marisol Ramos:** Attend SALALM (Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials) conference.

**William Stark:** Present research paper *Coro de voces, caras múltiples: la sinergia pedagógica de Border Brujo (1988)*, de Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Céfiro Conference, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

### 2013 Award for Excellence in Latin American Studies

**Bethany D. Sullivan:** May 2013 graduate with a major in Latin American Studies and minor in Latino Studies.

### American Fellowship from the American Association of University Women

**Yazmín A. García Trejo:** a Political Science PhD candidate. She has also been accepted as a Research Fellow at American University's Center for Latin America and Latino Studies. Both programs are for the 2013-2014 academic year.

### Institute for Teaching and Learning's 2013-14 Outstanding Teaching Award

**Jorge Castillo:** a doctoral student in the Literatures, Culture and Languages Department who teaches El Instituto classes.

### EASTCONN Leadership Award

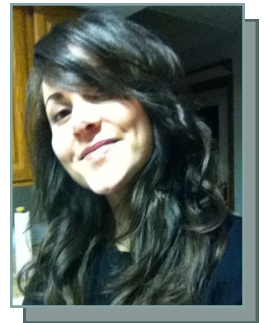
**Xaé Alicia Reyes:** Community recognition for "Education Matters" cable TV show with a focus on adult education in the Hispanic community.

## TERTULIA: "FOCUS ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICT: THE UNINTENDED HISTORY OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS"

On February 6, 2013, Dr. Luis van Isschot, Assistant Professor of History and Human Rights, presented research on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which questions how human rights in Latin America have impacted the Inter-American court. His presentation focused on Colombia and Peru as his two case studies. His new research project, *"When the Courts Make History: the Impact of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Latin America's Conflict Zones,"* will study the historical changes of the court and how it crosses borders.

## 2013 MASTERS DEGREE RECIPIENTS

El Instituto, my academic safe haven. Dr. Anne Gebelein made this opportunity possible, as she encouraged me to apply for the Outstanding Multicultural Scholarship. Her consistent encouragement along with several other faculty members kept me afloat during the initial transition to grad school. Through Mark's encouragement I joined the Puerto Rican Studies Association, and am now a graduate student executive committee member. El Instituto's support made it possible for me to secure a job in the Women's Gender and Sexuality program, where I am currently the graduate representative. I love the work, research and faculty. As a Latin@ first generation college graduate student, El Instituto allowed me to explore my interests, strengthen my academic foundation and find my voice. I am applying to the UConn PhD program in History for Fall 2014 because of my experience and network at El Instituto.



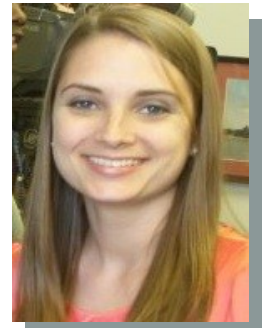
Jenniann Colón



Maria Berger

My two years at El Instituto are and have been an incredible fast track of learning with the most amazing faculty—meeting guest speakers, sharing classes, stress over finals, papers and deadlines with fellow students. The faculty members that are part of the body that makes El Instituto an incredible and interdisciplinary place for Latina/o Studies, provided me with the necessary curriculum to finish with the rounded plan of study I was hoping to get. I was offered fellowships, grants and teaching assistantships to help pay for my degree. One last and important aspect of being part of la familia at El Instituto is the relaxed and good atmosphere of fellow graduate students. I met a very motivated group of students that made every seminar I took a learning experience. Their energy and enthusiasm for learning about each other and the desire to make every class session interesting was very helpful. I will miss everyone and every minute at El Instituto.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Latin American Studies Master's program has given me a broad education and widened my interests. At the same time, it has helped me to find a disciplinary focus and allowed me to conduct my own research project with migrant farmworkers in Connecticut. The program and its' students, professors, and staff have rekindled my passion for school and research, and have inspired me to pursue my PhD in Anthropology, which I will begin at UConn next Fall. I truly value my experience at El Instituto. I have truly enjoyed my experience at El Instituto.



Jennifer Cook

### ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARCHIVES IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Dr. Joel A. Blanco-Rivera, assistant professor at Simmons College's Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences, spoke on "**Access to Information and Accountability for Past Human Rights Abuses: The Roles of Archives in Latin America's Transitions.**" He discussed how archival sciences theories are applied to Latin American and Human Rights issues, specifically transitional justice and the role that archives and archivists played in bringing justice to victims of human rights violations in Latin America. He also discussed the impact of discovering, arranging, describing and accessing different types of archives both in Latin America (military, police, and state archives) and in the United States and their use in human rights trials in Argentina, Chile and currently, Guatemala. Thousands of documents from the U.S. State Department—some voluntarily released during the Clinton Administration, others acquired through the Freedom of Information Act by the National Security Archives—played a role in truth commissions in El Salvador and Guatemala and, later, on convictions and trials occurring in Argentina, Chile and Guatemala.

Dr. Blanco-Rivera emphasized how U.S. archivists changed their perceptions and attitudes regarding their roles as archivists—from neutral custodians of "inherited legacy" to active shapers of "collective (or social) memory." This shift is due in part to the experience of archivists in South Africa after the end of Apartheid. Dr. Blanco-Rivera concluded with a discussion of his next research project, which is to study the spread of FOIA laws in Latin America, specifically Mexico.

*By Marisol Ramos, Subject Librarian and Curator for Latina/o, Latin American and Caribbean Collections*



## HACHA WITH JAVIER DIAZ



Javier Diaz, Afro-Cuban percussion specialist, was the guest of honor in January, providing HACHA attendees with an interactive musical and cultural experience. Mr. Diaz performed ceremonial Afro-Cuban music and explained the role of Bata drums as encoders of religious traditions, prayers and chants of the Yoruba diaspora.

*Photos by Yesha Doshi*



To engage scholars socially, El Instituto hosts HACHA (Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-crossing Academics), an informal graduate student and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines. HACHAs are held several times over the course of each semester.

## TINKER GRANT PRESENTATIONS AT HACHA



Recipients of the Tinker Field Research Grants gathered with advisors and faculty at the April HACHA to discuss their research activities. The Tinker awards allowed students to acquire comprehensive knowledge of language and culture, to familiarize themselves with information sources relevant to their studies, to conduct pilot studies and preliminary investigations, and to develop contacts with scholars in their fields in Latin America and the Caribbean.



## THE UNCLE'S REQUEST: A CUBAN'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

On March 14, 2013 students and faculty viewed a raw screening of Ricardo Bacallao's first feature film, *The Uncle's Request: A Cuban's Unfinished Business*. Fany Hannon, director of PRLACC, introduced Bacallao, who graduated with an Master's in Fine Arts from New York University. This drama/thriller, both in English and Spanish, follows a young Cuban-American in New York City who is petitioned by his uncle to kidnap an ex-official of the Cuban government who harmed their family. Bacallao depicts the moral dilemma this young man faces between helping or turning his uncle in. The film addresses questions of justice, cultural identity and sexuality within the context of the Cuban-U.S. relationship.

Furthermore, it taps into the legacy of war and migration that younger generation Cuban-Americans confront with older generation Cubans. Bacallao's documentary style was inspired by interview accounts from older and younger generations of Cubans, which is portrayed in his filmography. He hopes viewers will question how society can overcome the terrible events of its past and move forward.



Photo by Carla Silva-Muhammad

By Andrea Chunga-Celis

### TAULA WITH ROSANA PINHEIRO MACHADO

On March 26, Professors Mark Healey (History) and Claudio Benzecry (Sociology) coordinated TAULA—Urban Workshop of the Americas/Taller Urbano de las Américas. Brazilian scholar Rosana Pinheiro-Machado spoke about her ethnography research and current book on the Brazil-Paraguay-China global trade of commodities. Her presentation “China-Paraguay-Brazil: doing an ethnography in a global commodity chain,” tracked a commodity chain of goods from China (made in China), then exported to Paraguay and finally smuggled into Brazil by Brazilian street vendors. She explained how this chain was formed, how it actually worked and how and why this chain is disappearing. She examined how diplomatic relations between Paraguay and Taiwan have influenced many Taiwanese to situate in Ciudad del Este. She documented and tracked this globalization backwards by starting in Brazil, conducting ethnographic research through interviews and structured observations. She traveled with Brazilians to Paraguay and experienced crackdowns by local authorities. She noted kinship relations vendors formed and how they were necessary for success. This well documented research demonstrated a glimpse into globalization of the 21st century. In addition, her talk highlighted the emergent countries of Brazil and China, which are the focus of her upcoming book *Fabricado em China (Made in China in Portuguese)*.

Rosana Pinheiro Machado is a Professor of Anthropology at the International Relations Department of the Superior School of Advertising and Marketing (ESPM-Brazil). Currently she is a visiting scholar at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. In 2008, she was a Honorary Research Associate at University College London. She specializes in China and Latin American societies, where she has been carrying out multi-sited ethnographic research for the last ten years. Her thesis recently won the Ruth Cardoso Prize, for the best dissertation in the social sciences in Brazil, awarded by the Ministry of Education.

By Andrea Chunga-Celis

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