


Spring 2014

La Voz Spring 2014

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



LA VOZ

SPRING 2014

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Estimada/os colegas,

Many thanks to you all for your generous support and commitment this academic year. As El Instituto celebrates its second anniversary on July 1, it is exciting to reflect on all that we have accomplished in this short period of time. With outstanding new faculty, pre-doctoral fellows, and dynamic and growing student enrollment in our recently launched BA and MA programs in Latino and Latin American Studies, El Instituto has become a well-established and highly regarded intellectual space at UCONN. The innovative research of our joint and affiliate faculty continues to shape the broad, inter/trans-national and -disciplinary fields of Latino and Latin American studies. Building on these solid foundations, we look forward to the development of the Caribbean Interdisciplinary Research and Outreach Initiative; hosting the New England Consortium of Latino Studies in 2015-16; and inaugurating UConn's newest Learning Community, La Comunidad Intellectual, with our PRLACC partners. I wish you a restful and productive summer and look forward to returning to our collaborative work in the fall.

*Saludos cordiales,
Mark Overmyer-Velázquez
Director*

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ELIZABETH MAHAN FUND FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND LATINA/O STUDIES

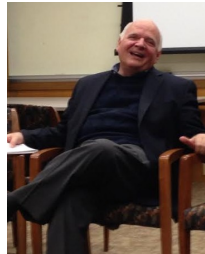


El Instituto hosted a fiesta celebrating 27 years of Elizabeth Mahan's service to UConn. Among her many contributions is the establishment of the Elizabeth Mahan Fund for Graduate Studies in Latin America and Latina/o Studies.

Dr. Mahan, who retired in December 2013, has been an integral part of the University's area studies, global programs, and Latin American studies. She has been a mentor to many students and faculty members including the Director of El Instituto, Mark Overmyer-Velázquez. This fund will honor her contributions by ensuring continuous scholarship and study of a region always close to her heart. Our fall 2014 newsletter will offer highlights of her career and interviews with those she most impacted.



PUERTO RICO ON THE GLOBAL SCENE



José Roberto Martínez spoke to students and faculty about "Puerto Rico on the Global Scene: 1952-1992," a discussion on Puerto Rican diplomacy and outreach. Pablo Delano, Studio Arts Professor at Trinity College, introduced his life-long friend. Among Martínez's many accomplishments, he completed his graduate studies and law degree at Yale and worked as a trustee and Executive Director at the Luis Muñoz Foundation, an organization that initiated a transformation of the island. Martínez began his presentation by highlighting his personal connection with Connecticut and the relationship he has maintained with the state. He explained how challenging it is to discuss Puerto Rico as it has a distinct

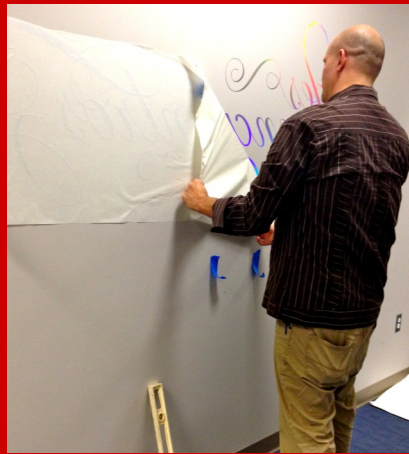
history for many reasons, one being its current political status with the United States. Martínez provided an extensive overview of the history of Puerto Rico and its interactions with different colonial powers. He also contextualized the United States' influence on the island and asserted that the United States has always had a problem acknowledging that it has a colonial empire. Martínez also discussed the on-going debate regarding what geographical locations should be considered Caribbean, mentioning places like Veracruz, Mexico and Cartagena, Colombia. In conclusion, José Roberto Martínez spoke of Puerto Rico's role in global organizations such as the United Nations and the future implications of this membership for Puerto Rico's sovereignty.

AFFILIATES ACHIEVEMENTS

Robin Chazdon, Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, has been named as one of the 2014 Women of Innovation by the CT Technology Council.

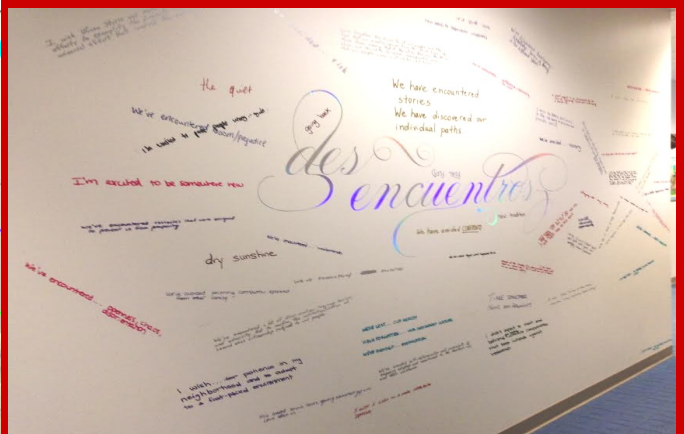
Claudio Benzecry, Associate Professor of Sociology, won honorable mention for the 2014 American Sociological Association Distinguished Scholarly Book Award for his book *The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession*.

ART INSTALLATION BY PATRICK "PATO" HEBERT



In February, El Instituto hosted Patrick "Pato" Hebert, an intermedia artist, educator and cultural worker in Los Angeles and New York City who focuses on cultural identity and human interaction. Hebert, Associate Arts Professor at New York University, worked with UConn students on the subject of 'encuentro' and 'desencuentro' for an art installation in El Instituto's office space. His work explores "the aesthetics, ethics and poetics of interconnectedness." Moreover, Hebert is interested in the relations of art and public space. Prior to Pato's visit, he asked students to reflect on prompts concerning migration, identity, space, 'encuentro,' 'desencuentro,' and culture. When he arrived at UConn, Pato handpicked many of the responses to be placed on vinyl stickers to create a textual installation negotiating these themes. As Pato declared, "the written voice is an extension of an individual." Pato conducted a workshop in an intimate setting with the same group of students who answered the original prompts to understand

their responses and ideally create a product which reflected student involvement. Pato explained that he wanted the process of the installation to be as democratic as possible, seeking out student input. He encouraged the collaborative effort of students in the process of installing the piece on a wall, and preferred that the students dictate the result of the piece. One by one, the students placed phrases and expressions on the wall in front of El Instituto's conference room reflecting on the responses and the aesthetic display. The arrangement of decals organically blossomed. The installation highlights insecurities about identity, belonging, as well as sentiments of the encounter between spaces, concepts, and people. In addition to the installation project, Pato was interested in learning about the students and their work and used the time of the workshop to do so. While visiting UConn, Pato also gave a talk titled "Where There's Querer: Knowledge Production & The Praxis of HIV," dealing with Latino populations with HIV.



"PERFORMING THE THING: TEATRO VERTIGIM'S PERFORMANCE OF "BOM RETIRO" BY DIANA TAYLOR



commodities in a dehumanizing way. As part of the audience, Professor Taylor walked through the city streets of Sao Paulo confused as to what scenes were meant to be included in the performance since the city was utilized as a stage. As part of the experience, she visited different sites such as a mall and an old theatre. She described the sights in vivid detail and presented the provocative images of the performance. She asserted throughout her own performance that things do not disappear, but are saved in an archive. The role of the audience

intentional piece of the performance and what was not, as the piece included scenes in the public streets of Sao Paulo. She also explained that she felt the element of dread was crucial to the success of the performance. The performance was funded by PetroBras, the Brazilian national oil company, which Taylor explained was interesting since the it was interpreted as a blatant critique of capitalism. Professor Taylor is the author of *Theatre of Crisis: Drama and Politics in Latin America* (1991), which won the Best Book Award by New England Council on Latin American Studies and Honorable Mention in the Joe E. Callaway Prize for the Best Book on Drama, of *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'*, Duke U.P., 1997, and *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke U.P., 2003) which won the ATHE Research Award in Theatre Practice and Pedagogy and the Modern Language Association Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize for the best book in Latin American and Spanish Literatures and Culture (2004). She has been honored extensively for her various work and achievements.

**"We are connected in
our smallness, our
vulnerability."**

was critical in the performance and each member was aware of each other's presence, while the performance itself was pulling the audience everywhere. As the spectacle was extremely visual and did not follow a linear schema, Taylor continued to anticipate how the show would end, but could not predict when the ending would occur. This was a performance that never seemed to end, and this was interpreted by Taylor as a message to how capitalism never ends. She considered that the message was that eventually everything in the world becomes a "thing." Nothing has importance and nothing can maintain its identity or integrity as long as capitalism thrives. As she ended her presentation, the audience was extremely interested in her experience and the details of the performance. She dealt with issues of comprehending what was an

Diana Taylor, Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish at NYU, was the Spring 2014 Luis B. Eyzaguirre guest lecturer. Carla Silva-Muhammad, leader of the Performance Studies Working Group and El Instituto graduate student, invited Dr. Taylor to UConn to speak. El Instituto hosts this lecture annually to honor the memory of Professor Luis B. Eyzaguirre, who taught Latin American literature and Spanish at UConn for 32 years. The purpose of the lecture is to provide UConn students and the larger community of scholars an opportunity to experience the excitement and humanism of Latin America and the Caribbean's literature and culture. Professor Taylor, a pioneer of performance studies, titled her lecture "Performing the Thing: Teatro Vertigims's Bom Retiro." Taylor's reading recalled her experience as a spectator/participant of the Brazilian group Teatro Vertigim's performance "Bom Retiro." In a vivid manner, Professor Taylor took the lecture's audience through Teatro Vertigim's performance spaces which offered a critique of capitalism. In Taylor's explanation of the performance, things were constantly compared to people, emphasizing how capitalism transforms humans into



EL INSTITUTO AWARDS

In Spring 2014 El Instituto provided Pre-doctoral Fellowship funds to support research and travel to:

Orlando Cesar Deavila Pertuz – archival research on the plans of urban clearance of the slums in Cartagena, Colombia, 1950-70

Timothy Bussey – research on inequalities within the US military with specific focus on race, class, gender, and sexuality

Karen D'Angelo – research on US Latina/o health inequities, community-based participatory research, community practice social work

Ruth Hernandez – data collection on how and why transnational ties develop among NGOs in the US and in Mexico

Jorell Melendez Badillo – archival research on “Conceptualizing Defiance, Imagining Resistance: The Politics of Knowledge and the Origins of the Collective Puerto Rican Labor Identity”

Ronnie Shepard – ethnographic investigation on male sexualities and gender categories in Ecuador

Katelyn Sileo – translations of interviews related to “Prevalence, Distribution, and Correlates of Soil-Transmitted Helminthes (STH) among Zapotec Children in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico”

Gabriela Tafoya – paper presentation for panel on “Decentralization and Subnational Governance: Social policy at the Subnational Level,” Latin American Studies Association Conference

Zareen Thomas – anthropological research, “The Politics of Identity in Bolivia and Colombia: Young People, the State and Youth Organizations”

Claudio Luis Quaresma Daflon – research in Brazil on the transformation of Samba and its representation of the New State in Brazil (1937-1945)

In Spring 2014, the following received Whetten Awards:

Jennifer A. Cook – paper presentation, “Migrant Farmworker Social Networks and Agency,” on the panel “The Network Doesn’t Stop at the Door,” Society for Applied Anthropology 2014 Annual Meeting, Albuquerque, NM

Carlos Gardeazabal Bravo – paper presentation, “Environment and Conflict in Evelio Rosero’s *The Armies*,” NeMLA 2014 Conference

Matthew Perse – research on the mythological legitimization of rock and roll in Buenos Aires

The following received a combination of Whetten and Pre-doctoral Fellowship funding:

Devon Goss – transracial adoptions

Caryl Nuñez – conference participation, Negritud: International Conference of AfroLatin American Studies

Dina Rivera – paper presentation, “Octavio Paz: Laberintos del poeta,” International Colloquium, University of Ottawa

DIEGO LUNA, DIRECTOR AND ACTOR

The Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC) invited El Instituto core faculty and graduate students to have an intimate dinner with Mexican actor, director and producer, Diego Luna. Luna visited UConn to promote his new film “Cesar Chavez,” based on the life of the legendary Mexican-American farm worker and union leader. Prior to his



public talk hosted by PRLACC, Luna dined with individuals from El Instituto conversing about a range of topics including U.S. immigration reform, his work with Latinos in the United States, his inspiration for the film and interest in UConn and Connecticut. El Instituto students and faculty enjoyed his company and his humble persona.

LASA OUTSTANDING ARTICLE AWARD

Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, Director of El Instituto and Associate Professor of History, is the recipient of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Latino Studies Section Outstanding Article Award, the principal national article prize in Latina/o Studies. This award recognizes his article “Good Neighbors and White Mexicans: Constructing Race and Nation on the Mexico-US Border,” published in the *Journal of American Ethnic History* in Fall 2013. The committee noted that the article “makes a number of significant and exciting interventions in

the field of Latina/o studies and beyond.” Professor Overmyer-Velázquez is also lauded by LASA for “intervening in long-standing debates in the fields of American and Latin American studies by refusing a kind of academic ‘imperialism’ that places the U.S. at the center of transnational and hemispheric studies. Moreover, he practices border studies that takes heed of transnational currents while remaining vigilant about the local specificities of such processes as they played out in Mexican American communities.”

PEACEJAM LECTURE BY OSCAR ARIAS “TRUE HUMAN SECURITY: THE RIGHT TO FOOD, SHELTER AND SECURITY”

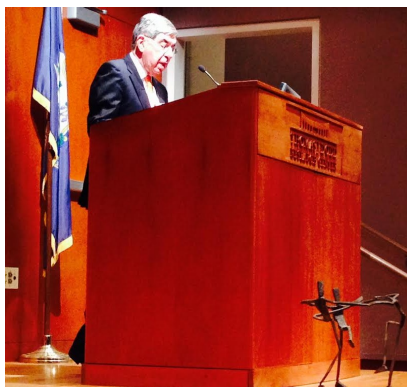
Former two-time president of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Oscar Arias was invited to UConn to give a keynote lecture titled “True Human Security: The Right to Food, Shelter and Security” which focused on advancing global peace and human development for the Peacejam New England Spring Conference. Arias spoke of his own involvement with creating a plan for Central America that prioritized peace and had significant influence on ending long-standing violence in the region. He also made recommendations for the United States regarding its long-standing history with weapons as a central part of the nation’s culture.

President Arias asserted that the U.S. celebrates war heroes rather than peacemakers, as demonstrated by the monuments in Washington D.C., and would do well

to follow Costa Rica’s lead and work toward constructing a culture of peace.

After the talk, Mr. Arias met with ECE teachers from across the state to discuss issues pertinent to Central America today, including Costa Rica’s recent elections. The conversation was part of a larger workshop on the teaching of Latin American Studies sponsored by El Instituto and led by Dr. Gebelein, Associate Director and ECE coordinator.

President Arias’ visit was hosted by the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, UNESCO Chair & Institute of Comparative Human Rights, Office of Global Affairs, El Instituto, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center, Community Outreach, Office of Public Engagement, and the Department of Political Science.



DISPARATE LESSONS: HOW COLLEGE CAMPUSES SHAPE LATINO STUDENTS' IDENTITIES BY DAISY REYES

Daisy Reyes, Assistant Professor of Sociology, presented “Nested Latino Politics: How Campuses Shape Latino Students’ Identities” at a March 26th Tertulia. Professor Reyes’ research relates to the dynamics of college/university contexts and how this affects the students’ own process of forming racial identities. She compared three institutions which she named “Teaching University,” “Research University,” and “Liberal Arts School” and the racial climates existing at these schools. She has conducted significant fieldwork in Los Angeles where she worked with students at these three different institutions. Students and faculty were extremely engaged in her research and encouraged Professor Reyes to continue this research in the Northeast where the racial demographic is quite different.

FAREWELL TO OUR THREE GRADUATES



Andrea Chunga-Celis, Carla Silva-Muhammad, and Yesha Doshi successfully completed their Master of Arts in International Studies with a concentration in Latin American Studies in May 2014. In addition to excelling in their academic pursuits, they attended, promoted, and facilitated departmental events, served as teaching and graduate assistants, represented El Instituto throughout the university, and built relationships with faculty, staff and graduate students across disciplines. They produced original, interdisciplinary and meaningful research for their final Plan B projects and presented on the following topics: "Photography in Conflict: The Depictions of Andean Indigenous Peoples inside the CVR's 'Image Bank,'" "Onde Esta o Amarildo?" Alternative Media, Performance of Resistance, and Human

Rights in Brazil," and "Pyramids of Consumption, Contracts and Corruption: Wal-Mart's entrance in Teotihuacan, Mexico." Andrea, Carla and Yesha appreciate El Instituto's support and will carry the skills they have acquired from this program to their future careers. Their collegiality, warmth, and enthusiasm will be missed.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE



Yara Zoccarato received El Instituto's 2014 Award for Excellence in Latin American Studies in recognition of her scholarly merit. Criteria for this award includes a high GPA in the major; contributions to the Latin American Studies program, including service to the department and leadership in the classroom; the quality of the thesis project; and overall scholarly promise.

"BRAZIL IN THE WORLD ECONOMY"

Paulo Roberto de Almeida, Brazilian adjunct consulate, examined current economic and social obstacles hindering the economic expansion of Brazil in a February talk at UConn. Almeida noted that Brazil's current place in world trade is far behind in comparison to the rapid growth of China and other emerging Asian economies. According to Almeida, Brazil is in need of technological innovation, educational reform, and improvement in infrastructure. Despite abundance of natural resources capable of meeting international demand, political corruption and unwillingness to implement better economic policy deter Brazil's ability to become a serious player in the world market.

Contributed by Inara Fernandez

GRADUATE STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENTS 2013-2014

Andrea Chunga-Celis, Carla Silva-Muhammad, and Yesha Doshi were honored at the annual Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC) Recognition Banquet for their active involvement in PRLACC.

Carla Silva-Muhammad formed and led the "Performance Studies Working Group." She organized lectures with scholars including Diana Taylor, Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish, NYU; Dr. John Bell, Director of the UConn Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry; and Dr. Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, Associate Professor of Spanish.

Yesha Doshi served as a Teaching Assistant for the Migration Studies Seminar in Oaxaca, Mexico led by Professor Mark Overmyer-Velázquez.

Matthew Perse presented his paper "Urban Folk: 'Tanguito' and The Mythological Legitimation of the Rock in Buenos Aires" at the ¡Calma Pueblo! Order and Chaos in Latin America Conference in Bloomington, IN in March 2014.

Tyra Lewis was a judge in UCONN's inaugural 3MT international competition; was selected to attend the Compact for Diversity Faculty Institute on Teaching and Mentoring in Arlington, VA; and co-organized and participated in the first Annual Afro-Latino Week at UConn.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PRE-DOCTORAL FELLOW MELISSA HUERTA



Pre-Doctoral Fellow and PhD candidate Melissa Huerta officially completed her fellowship with UConn and defended at the University of Illinois. Melissa was one of four students chosen to receive the Vice Provost for Diversity Pre-doctoral and Post-MFA In-Residence Fellowship, offered at UConn for the first time during the 2013-14 academic year through the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity. While completing her dissertation, Melissa taught PRLS 3230/WGSS 3258-Latina Narrative and brought Teatro Luna, Chicago's only all-Latina theatre ensemble, to UConn. Melissa's dissertation examined the role of Latina feminism and Latinidad in the development, evolution, and practice of Teatro Luna. Melissa has accepted a tenure-track appointment as Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Denison University beginning in August 2014.

GENERATION SEX: TEATRO LUNA



In Generation Sex, Teatro Luna bared all without blushing as they explored how technology has changed how we engage in sex, relationships, and each other while challenging the audience to identify whether their addiction to social media has impacted the 24 hour broadcast of their online personas. Can we Instagram loneliness? Has Facebook expanded how we define family? What is the art of seduction in a digital world that leaves little to the imagination? From sexting to inventive uses of Skype to musical numbers about match.com, the Ladies of Luna explode hollow soundbytes of mainstream advice about today's search for love, satisfaction, and the new rules of feminism in 140 characters or less. Generation Sex development began in March 2013 with a performance workshop at Instituto Cervantes Chicago, continued with story-collecting workshops in Los Angeles, Phoenix, Berkeley, Seattle, and a five performance workshop at the Chicago Fringe Festival. Generation Sex is Luna's newest

play-in-progress and the company's tenth original devised piece in thirteen years (teatroluna.org). Generation Sex will premiere in June in Chicago at Instituto Cervantes after several months of touring the show in the U.S. at theatre festivals, universities, and community centers. Teatro Luna is America's only all-Latina theatre company writing, producing, and directing collective and single-author original work. The company will celebrate fourteen years this summer. Their aesthetic hinges on ensemble and collaborative work, not only in performance but also in the creation and development of play-texts. Teatro Luna's new venture seeks to create a West Coast satellite company in Los Angeles starting this summer for Latina/Women of Color artists interested in the development of autobiographical and ethnographic devised work and programs.

Contributed by Melissa Huerta

UPCOMING EVENTS 2014-2015

September

Sep. 15-Dec. 15 — "I Have No Right to Be Silent" Meyer traveling exhibit, Dodd Center

Sep. 15-Oct. 15 — Latino Heritage Month, Magdalena Gomez — reading of new play "Perfectamenta Loca", Book Signing: Shameless Woman

October

Oct. 23 — Marshall Meyer Exhibit, Dodd Center

February

Feb 10. — Cristina Beltran, Associate Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis and Director of Latina Studies, NYU

March

TBD — Cristina Ibarra, Chicana filmmaker, producer and director