

REGENERACIÓN

DECEMBER 2013

STEVE R. PEREIRA, EDITOR



A Note From the Director



Professor Camille Guérin-Gonzales

This is an exciting year for Chican@ & Latin@ Studies at UW-Madison. We've begun preliminary discussions about joining with other units on campus devoted to the study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity in the United States to form an academic department. Should we be successful, we will achieve a goal established by students, faculty, and community members thirty-seven years ago, when the Chicano Studies Program was established. Since that time, we have broadened our program so that it is now devoted to the interdisciplinary study not only of Mexican-origin and Mexican-descent people, cultures, and collectivities in the United States but also those of Latin American origin and descent. Our faculty, student body, and course offerings all reflect this expanded view. In the last year and a half, we have extended our reach within and across the university and now draw large numbers of students and community members to weekly community gatherings in the Program. Our staff is exceptional. We are blessed with a devoted and committed Program Administrator, Sylvia Garcia; Student Academic Advisor, Frieda Zuckerberg; Project Assistants, Steve Pereira and Sergio Gonzalez; and student workers, Mariana Rivera and MollyJo Bautch. And we continue to draw our strength from our stellar faculty and the larger Chican@ & Latin@ community. We call on you to join us in a recommitment to the mission of Chican@ & Latin@ Studies as we begin a new journey.

Día de los Muertos *Celebrando el Milagro de la Vida*

by Steve R. Pereira

The 3rd Annual *Día de los Muertos: Celebrando el Milagro de la Vida* celebration was held on October 31, 2013 at the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program offices. Student group organizations Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Incorporated: Gamma Theta Chapter, La Mujer Latina, ChiLaCSA, and Lambda Theta Alpha Latin, Sorority, Incorporated: Gamma Mu Chapter, co-sponsored this event to promote cultural awareness and honor passed loved ones. This year's *Día de los Muertos* celebration featured an *altar* (altar) display with many *ofrendas* (offerings). Throughout the month, University of Wisconsin-Madison students, faculty, staff, community members, and the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, visited the altar to embrace its deeply rooted indigenous cultural significance.

(Continued on page 6)



CHICAN@ &
LATIN@ STUDIES
PROGRAM AT
UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN-
MADISON

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Student Involvement
- Alumni Updates
- Achievements
- Activism
- Education
- Courses

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CLS *Adelante* Undergraduate Students A New Pathway of Inspiration

by Steve R. Pereira



Antonio Garcia

Chican@ & Latin@ Studies certificate student, Antonio Garcia, will be graduating on December 22, 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering. As he reflects on his accomplishment, Garcia recognizes that he would not have been able to reach this milestone without the help of his role models and community supporters. "During my freshman and sophomore years, I witnessed many student and community leaders promote cultural awareness, fight for equitable treatment on campus, and fearlessly test the boundaries of education. Learning from activism, I was able to critically think about my educational experiences and create new tools of self-empowerment to succeed in academia," stated Garcia.

Growing up in a multicultural family, Garcia appreciated learning about his cultural traditions and eating a mixture of collard greens and cornbread; *tacos* and *tamales*; *arroz con gandules* and *pastels*; Chinese fried rice and dumplings; *weinerschnitzel* and sauerkraut; and jamming to music that was just as mixed. As he began his academic journey at the UW-Madison, Garcia realized how difficult it was to adjust to his new life because his cultural practices were not readily available. In an effort to supplement his cultural cravings, Garcia took active steps toward making the UW-Madison a new home. In turn, the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program became an outlet to complement his cultural needs. As a result, Garcia was able to explore his upbringing through different academic perspectives and U.S. contemporary Chicana/o and Latina/o issues.

Also aiding Garcia's academic successes, was his involvement in student organizations and enrollment in Chican@ & Latin@ Studies courses; which provided a foundation for growth and opportunity in his educational career. "Being a first-generation college student, without the support of academic programs like CLS, I would not have been able to be in a position to graduate college nor be culturally competent to work toward promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to communities that do not have adequate resources to promote science," said Garcia.

As a student in engineering, Garcia has gained much knowledge on water treatment in society. Through taking CLS courses, he has been able to apply social justice topics in his research to increase awareness of critical water challenges around the world, particularly in Latin America. Looking ahead, Garcia plans to pursue a doctorate degree in hopes of connecting his research to biological wastewater treatment to audiences that historically have been underrepresented in the sciences.

Garcia's motivation in earning a degree stemmed from seeing other students spend long nights studying at the library. Although he understands that opportunities in higher education were not always readily available to students of color, women, low-income families, and first-generation students; he advises future students to fearlessly continue their pursuit of education by letting them know that, "every time you put in your best effort, you honor the legacy and continue the fight toward advancing higher education opportunities for all people," expressed Garcia.

Todo se puede, poco a poco

by Steve R. Pereira



Marianna Rivera

Our Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Certificate student and student hourly employee, Marianna Rivera, has played an important role in helping the CLS program run effectively by updating all of our informational bulletin boards, library catalog system, and community gathering initiatives. Rivera, currently a junior, is double majoring in Communicative Sciences & Disorders and Italian. She serves as the chair of La Mujer Latina, student organization, and is a Powers-Knapp Scholar.

Rivera is very interested in studying and learning foreign languages. "I took Italian all four years in high school and continued with it once I got to college. I also took an intensive Mandarin Chinese course between my freshman and

sophomore year in high school, where I learned the equivalent of one year high school study in one month. Furthermore, I try to teach myself Portuguese whenever I have free time or on vacation," stated Rivera. In addition to learning new languages, Rivera's research interests include learning how language impacts the human brain. "I am intrigued by learning more about the incredible language learning mechanisms humans have at birth through typical and atypical language development and how bilingual children grow up speaking both languages," stated Rivera.

Furthermore, being in higher education has been an interesting experience for Rivera. "I have a very you got to do what you got to do perspective on everything. I am kind of taking one for the team, and by the team, I mean my family. I am the first person on both sides of my family to go to college, so it started off very intimidating. When I took my first CLS class, I remember feeling passionate about the contemporary Chicana/o and Latina/o topics being taught in class. I became more conscious of my surroundings whenever I learned about the injustices that Chicana/os and Latina/os in the U.S. have faced in order to become to lead empowering movements and advocate for political rights," stated Rivera.

As an active student on campus, Rivera takes the time to recognize that CLS has been foundational to her studies and professional development. "CLS is here to build a community! Whether you are coming from an area with a huge Latina/o population or whether you are coming from a small town where you were the only Latina/o, and now you're wanting to meet more people like you, CLS will make you feel at home. The program is full of great resources such as the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program's Library, Academic Resource Center, weekly CLS Community Gatherings, and an amazing and caring advisor, Frieda Zuckerberg," said Rivera. Furthermore, Rivera encourages everyone to take at least one CLS course because it allows for others to become familiar with current issues facing the Chicana/o and Latina/o community in the U.S.

In the future, Rivera plans to pursue a Master's Degree in Communicative Sciences & Disorders. Her goal is to be a step closer toward working with professionals in her field so that she can become licensed by ASHA (The American Speech-Language Hearing Association) to practice speech/language pathology in her home state of Illinois.

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Faculty News & Achievements



Karma Chavez:

Best Edited Book
(for Standing in
the Intersection),
Organization for
the Study of
Communication,
Language, and
Gender, 2013

Karl R. Wallace Memorial Award, Na-
tional Communication Association, 2013

Outstanding Woman of Color Award,
University of Wisconsin, 2013

Top Faculty Paper, GLBTQ Studies Divi-
sion of the International Communication
Association (ICA), 2013

Book: Queer Migration Politics: Activist
Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities.
University of Illinois Press, 2013



Alfonso Morales:

**Produced the
Following
grants and
publications:**

Grant: 2013
Camp, et al Esti-
mating the Fu-
ture Demands on

Agricultural Freight Transport in the
Upper
Mid-West US due to Climate Change
using Remote Sensing and Regional
Climate Models. Co-Investigator,
160,000.

Grant: 2013 SARE

Grant: 2013 AFRI

Publication: Alfonso Morales, Andres
Manuel García, Wim Timmermans,
Rafael Crecente, and Ad Woudstra. 2013.
Scenario Planning for the Food System: A
Plan for Lugo, Spain.
Interplan, Summer.

Publication: Nelson, David A., Alfonso
Morales and Michelle Miller, 2013.
Maximizing Freight Movements In Local
Food Markets Phase II. National Center
for Freight & Infrastructure Research &
Education

Publication: Alfonso Morales, Andres
Manuel García, Wim Timmermans,
Rafael Crecente, and Ad Woudstra. 2013.
Scenario Planning for the Food System: A
Plan for Lugo, Spain. Interplan, Summer.

**Professor Morales has also been
interviewed for the following media
outlet:**

Interview: by ORION magazine guy

Interview: by Brian Standing, WORT,
for the Morning Buzz, September 15,
2013.

Interview: by Lynn Horsley, on urban
agriculture, for the Kansas City Star,
September, 2013.

**Professor Morales will also be lecturing
on theoretical approaches in the
sociology of law for two weeks in Onati,
Spain.**



Carmen Valdez:

Outstanding Woman of Color Award,
University of Wisconsin, 2013

Spotlighted in the journal, Family Process

Congratulations and many thanks to our CLS faculty for their work and service!

Concientización's New Editor

by Sergio Gonzalez



Sergio Gonzalez

As a transplant from the Milwaukee area, I have lived in Madison since 2005, when I first came to UW as an undergraduate majoring in secondary education, history and Spanish. My family is originally from Jalisco, Mexico, and their story of migration and settlement in Wisconsin was deeply influential in my decision to study education and history at the UW.

As a second year graduate student in the Department of History, my areas of study include labor, working-class and Mexican-American history in the twentieth century. More specifically, I focus on the development of Mexican immigrant communities in urban areas in the American Midwest, and look to uncover how these immigrants developed resilient communities in the face of workplace discrimination, neighborhood segregation, and repatriation efforts.

Before returning to the UW to continue my graduate studies, I was a dual language immersion teacher at Senett Middle School, where I helped create the curriculum and programming for Madison Metropolitan School District's first secondary-level dual language immersion program. I have also served as the president of Nuestro Mundo Incorporated, the governing community board of Nuestro Mundo Community School, Madison's first dual language immersion school.

Beyond my current position with the CLS Program, I also serve as the project assistant for a new public humanities endeavor called *The History of Wisconsin in 100 Objects*. The project will create a website, radio spots, and curriculum that exhibit Wisconsin's diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and economic history using different material objects from around the state.

As one of two project assistants working in the CLS Program, I have a variety of roles that ultimately serve the goal of developing connections between CLS students, faculty and staff and the greater UW community. First, I serve as the primary editor for *Concientización*, a student journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chican@ and Latin@ experience and thought. I am also responsible for the development of a new website for the CLS Program, and I will work to keep the website up to date and accessible to the CLS community throughout the academic year.

My main goal for this academic year is to make connections with CLS students, faculty and staff. I feel honored to be able to join the community every week in the Community Gatherings. I also hope to spread the CLS message throughout the greater UW community, and bring more students and faculty into the program. In terms of professional development, I hope to hone my editorial skills during my time as primary editor of *Concientización*.

Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Undergraduate Certificate

Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Certificate Students play a pivotal role in the development of the scholarly study of the Chican@ and Latin@ population, which is now the largest minority group and the fastest growing population in the United States. CLSP Certificate students produce scholarship and expressive culture that exemplifies the Wisconsin Idea: academic excellence, civic engagement, and diversity.

One of the benefits of a Certificate in the Program is that all Certificate students who complete the requirements for a Certificate in Chican@ & Latin@ Studies will graduate with a portfolio that showcases the best examples of their academic work in the Program. The portfolio is intended to demonstrate to future employers CLSP Certificate students' ability to think analytically, critically, and creatively.

Requirements for a Certificate in Chican@ & Latin@ Studies. ([Link to catalog – http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/ls_chicla.htm#cert](http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/ls_chicla.htm#cert))

Adelante CLS Alumni

May 2012 CLS Graduate, Yesenia Saavedra

by Steve R. Pereira



Yesenia Saavedra

Yesenia Saavedra graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Certificate Program in May 2012. She currently lives and works in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as an 8th grade bilingual teacher at *Escuela Vieau School*.

According to Saavedra, the most rewarding thing about being an educator is that she is able to educate students who look and speak like her.

"Because of our similar cultures, we are able to connect in ways that make for a more fun and positive environment. Thus far, the biggest rewards I have received are the 'thank yous' from parents who tell me they are proud of the work I am doing to help their children grow academically," stated Saavedra.

During grammar school, Saavedra did not have a Chicana/o or Latina/o teacher until she was a freshman in high school. She always felt like her teachers were strangers; they did not understand her language or her cultural background. As a result, she decided to become a teacher because she wanted to bridge that cultural gap. "I want my Chicana/o and Latina/o 8th grade students to realize that they belong in school because the curriculum and the environment are relevant to them. To me, nothing is more important than giving our Chicana/o students a sense of belonging, I am also

working at a school that is 95% Hispanic; where at least 41% of the student population has an English as a Second Language need. When I go in to work, I am not just teaching the core subjects, I am also teaching students how to thrive in a society that is currently not meeting their needs. Our public school system is undergoing many changes and my hope is to ensure that our Chicana/o and Latina/o students are beneficiaries," said Saavedra.

As a former Chican@ & Latin@ Studies certificate student, Saavedra feels that her undergraduate experience was fulfilling because it helped her understand the issues that many Chicana/os and Latina/os are facing in the U.S. As a result, Saavedra incorporates CLS curriculum in her instruction as a way to expand her students' awareness of social justice issues. Saavedra definitely encourages other students to take advantage of earning a certificate in CLS, especially because her school principal was very impressed with her educational background upon hiring.

(Continued from page 1) This year's *Dia de los Muertos* celebration also honored and remembered Chicana/o and Latina/o LGBT activists and artists. Over sixty students and community members learned from Dr. Karma Chavez's insightful presentation which gave us all an opportunity to become more aware of how Chicana/o & Latina/o LGBT activists have contributed to historical U.S. movements.

On the eve of celebrating our loved ones lives and history, the eventful evening ended with a cultural food celebration. All present members enjoyed eating *pan de muerto*, *mole*, *arroz*, *frijoles*, *taquitos*, *arroz con leche*, *pan dulce*, *tamales*, and plantains. The CLSP is thankful for those who were involved with this celebration and hopes to keep this mystical tradition at the forefront of multiculturalism and diversity at the UW-Madison.



Dr. Karma Chavez (LGBT Presentation)

December 2010 CLS Graduate, Diana Slivensky

by Steve R. Pereira

Diana Slivensky is a December 2012 graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Certificate Program. After her undergraduate career at UW-Madison, Slivensky attended Marquette University and earned her Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology. Her current profession, is a first year Doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology at the University of North Dakota.

Slivensky believes that the most rewarding thing about earning a Ph. D. is being able to share her life experiences as a Latina with others in higher education. As a result, she knows that one day she will be able to become a positive mentor to other Latinos who have aspirations to obtain a Ph.D. "The motto I live by everyday is *atrévete por lo que mas quieras y vencerás fronteras que nunca creías*," says Slivensky. Living by this motto, Slivensky is motivated to pursue her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology because she wants to become a resourceful advocate for Latina/os who struggle to find culturally competent health care services. "I had constantly pondered ways in which I could play an active role in helping diverse populations seek mental health services. In addition, I wanted to find a way to reduce the stigma associated with seeking services and reduce the blatant mental health disparities and subsequent lack of culturally appropriate care for diverse populations," stated Slivensky. Her research interests include positive racial/ethnic identity development for minority youth, mental health awareness for Chicana/os and Latina/os in rural areas and how to effectively treat youth with depression.

Slivensky knows that her work will impact the field of Counseling Psychology in the future because she has aspires to become an advocate for diverse populations in the mental health arena through clinical settings and research.

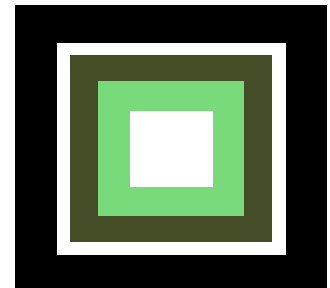
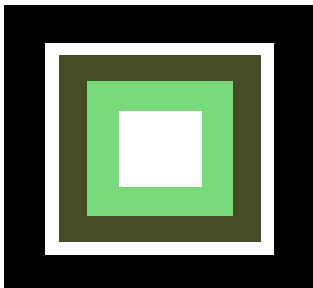
Looking back at her undergraduate experience as a CLS certificate student, Slivensky expressed appreciation toward the academic research opportunities and support she received from the CLS faculty. "I had the opportunity to learn about my own identity by connecting with other students and professors while learning about their experiences in higher education. I am grateful to have been supported by many professionals as an undergraduate," stated Slivensky.



Diana Slivensky

Are you a CLS student or CLS Alumnus?

Tell us what you're up to!
Contact: Steve R. Pereira at
cls_journal@mailplus.wisc.edu



Congratulations to our CLS Certificate Graduates!

May 2013 Graduates

Bianca Francesca Bello
Sociology

Rebekah Lynne Blocker
Communication Arts

Valeria Fidela Cerda
LACIS

Jessica Diaz-Hurtado
LACIS

Lisa Marie Diaz
Psychology
Spanish

Cydney Edwards
Political Science
Legal Studies

Michelle Johnson
History
Spanish

Rene Kissell
LACIS
Spanish

Maxwell John Love
Political Science

Johnathan Martinez
Communication Arts

Daniela Granados Moody
Gender & Women Studies

Carolina Ortega
Gender & Women Studies
History
Political Science

Caresse Janel Rios
Environmental Studies
Zoology

Isaac Salomon Solano
Political Science

Nicholas Villegas
History

December 2013 Graduates

Antonio Garcia
Civil Engineering

Santalucia Hernandez
International Studies

**Congratulations &
Good Luck to all of
our CLS
Graduates!**



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Mollyjo Bautch

Marianna Rivera

CLS Spring 2014 Courses

Course	Topic	Time	Professor	Brief Description (see timetable for more info)
CLS 102	Intro to Comparative Ethnic Studies	MWF	TBA	Introduces students to a multicultural history of the US, focusing on each of the major ethnic groups.
CLS 231	Politics in Multicultural Society	MWF 9:55-10:45	Ben Marquez	Examines race, ethnicity, & religion as political phenomena, along with cultural identities as dynamic orientations and will focus on the U.S. as a multi-cultural polity.
CLS 347	Race, Ethnicity, and the Media	T & TH 11:00-12:15 M (Lab) 4:00-6:00	Lori Lopez	Provides students with critical tools and understanding of the main topics of concern and debate in the study of race and ethnicity in US films, entertainment, television and popular culture.
CLS 462	America West since 1850	T & TH 9:30-10:5	Susan Johnson	This course explores the era after U.S.-Mexico War, as the U.S. colonized and incorporated new territory, and as residents embraced and resisted these processes. Considers how West emerged as region with distinctive economic features, ties to federal government, patterns of race relations, and grounding in cultural memory. Examines how some aspects of regional distinctiveness faded over time while others persisted and new ones arose. Interrogates impact of global migrations; world wars, Cold War, and Vietnam War; civil rights and environmental movements; metropolitanization and rise of New Right. Employs perspectives of political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural historians, highlighting racial/ethnic formations, class relations, and gender/sexuality. Attends to aspirations of American Indians, Anglo Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans. Explores how these aspirations clashed and coalesced, producing dissension and division but also new social movements, new cultural forms, new spaces of hope and possibility.
CLS 510	Advanced Cultural Studies Integrative Seminar	M 2:30-5:30	Andrea Tess Arenas	This interdisciplinary course will include a deep examination of unique cultural aspects of CL cultures including GBLTQ, rites of passage, tradition of Chicanas in the military and more. The course will introduce postmodern theorists which will be used to analyze the role of hegemony in maintaining an unequal playing field for CL people. This course will include the Community Based Research Project, Somos Latinas Digital History Project in which students conduct field interviews and collect archives of Latina activists across Wisconsin. The course content is shaped by input from CLSP student representatives in 2011.
CLS 530	Psychology Research & Theory	T 2:25-5:25	Alberta Gloria	Explores the salient psychological and psycho-educational research with Chicana/os & Latina/os in the U.S., taking a psycho-sociocultural approach, topics of cultural values, acculturation, identity development, and environment and social climate exploration.
CLS 530	<i>Espiritualidad y lenguaje</i> : Dimensions of Latina/o mental health services	TH 2:25-5:25 L 159 Education	Steve Quintana	This is a service learning course where students will work with Spanish-speaking Latinos in the community. The course reviews the cultural, spiritual, linguistic and historical components of working with Latin@s, with a focus on their mental health and well-being. The service learning component provides training for those interested in helping/social services careers for working with the Latin@ Spanish-speaking populations by combining community service and course-based learning and discussion."
CLS 699	Directed Study			Open to those with consent of Chair and Instructor
C&I 375 CLS Equivalency	Youth Community—Based Learning	W 11:00-1:30pm	Mariana Pacheco	This service-learning courses focuses on working with middle and high school youth who participate at La Prensa Libre de Simpson Street (SSFP), a teen, Bilingual newspaper in Madison.
History 408 CLS Equivalency	American Labor History	4:00-5:15 T & TH 1651 Humanities	Camille Guerin-Gonzales	This course surveys the history of working people in the United States in the 20th and 21st century, focusing on the historical meanings of work and working-class culture. We will look at the ways in which a variety of scholars and "organic intellectuals" have drawn upon the methods and practices of labor history, social history, economic history, and cultural studies to examine the lives of working women and men. Throughout the course, we will be examining relations of power by looking closely at ideas about race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Questions about American Exceptionalism and the American Dream; community and solidarity; class formation and social identity; and the relationship between working-class strategies of resistance and the everyday lives of working people will be the focus of our course readings, films, discussions, and research projects during the semester.

CLS Highlights

The Undocumented

by Karma Chavez



Kathryn Rodriguez

Human rights and anti-border-militarization activist Kathryn Rodriguez visited the UW-Madison as a Brittingham Visiting Scholar on September 16-18, 2013. Rodriguez worked for many years for *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* in Tucson, Arizona, challenging the militarization of the US-Mexico border and border communities, organizing communities against law enforcement and employer abuse, and drawing attention to the horrific deaths on the border as a result of US immigration policies. Recently, Rodriguez has focused specifically on the issue of migrant deaths by joining the newly founded Colibri Foundation in attempt to pair human remains found in the desert kept in the custody of the Tucson Medical Examiner with families who are searching for a missing loved one.

At the UW-Madison, Rodriguez spent significant time with Chican@ & Latin@ Studies students, as she had two lunches with them to talk about issues on the US-Mexico border, immigration politics, and other relevant themes. She also participated in a talk after the showing of NAVE Visiting Scholar Marco Williams' film, *The Undocumented*, which was screened for more than 60 UW community members on the evening of September 16th. Rodri-

guez is featured in Williams' film and has collaborated with him on getting the message out about migrant deaths through his film. Both Williams and Rodriguez visited with students in Dr. Karma Chávez's CA 667 – Rhetoric of US Immigration and Naturalization class before the film.

The main event for Rodriguez's visit was her campus wide lecture, delivered on September 18th to more than 40 people. In this talk, Rodriguez laid out the US government's militarization policies for the US-Mexico border since the early 1990s and the impacts its had on border communities and border crossers. Rodriguez made a convincing argument that there is a direct correlation between the increase of so-called "border security" and the number of deaths on the US-Mexico border.

She also showed how militarization continues to creep inward to locations far away from the border in the forms of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids around the country, collaborations between police and ICE through programs like "Secure Communities," the increase in detention and deportation of people including US citizens, and an onslaught of anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation nationwide. As one CLS student put it in an email to Dr. Chávez, "I wanted to let you know how incredible the lecture was tonight and how intelligent, charismatic, and engaging the speaker was. I learned so much tonight about things I never would have known."

Students interested in learning more about the themes Rodriguez spoke about can check out the Derechos Humanos website at www.derechoshumanosaz.net, the site for the group No More Deaths at <http://www.nomoredeaths.org/>, or email Rodriguez directly at activista@gmail.com.

Why I decided to go to Law School

by Jessica Rajtar

After receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, CLS Alumni, Jessica Rajtar, did some soul searching and decided that there were two things that she could see herself doing as a career, college professor or attorney. Both careers required more schooling and after comparing and contrasting both career choices, she ultimately decided that a law degree would provide her more than just a means to be able to articulate herself in court; it would teach her other tools, like critical reasoning and exemplary writing skills that are also highly valued in other careers as well.

To me, being a Latina attorney means that I get to provide a different perspective to my colleagues. To explain this a little more completely, let me start by stating that law school is an interesting place. In law school, students are taught to take a fact pattern, and apply it to the law. Under this set of rules, a complete, and well-written legal analysis is often written in a vacuum. It does not take into account the personal experiences and/or biases of any party involved. In my opinion, while the law and its applications have existed for years, our society is changing. While the doctrines that are taught in law school may exist in a vacuum, in practice, they cannot be applied as such. As practitioners, how we apply a law or see a particular set of facts can be influenced by our experiences and/or biases.

In theory, this should mean that because each legal practitioner has a different set of experiences and/or biases, and each one is utilizing those differences in practice, that there should be a wealth of differing perspectives that are being brought to the legal profession. In practice, sometimes the lack of a different perspective is daunting as many practitioners come from similar backgrounds because as a profession, we have been trained to omit experiences and/or biases from application, and much of the profession comes from a similar background, providing a different perspective is an important exercise in the application of justice.

Law school is one of the most challenging and rigorous academic environments that I have ever experienced. There were times that I was sure I was not cut out for it. The two things that got me through those moments of uncertainty were: (1) a strong support system, and (2) volunteering. The support system is completely necessary. For me, I had the support of my family, non-law school friends, and friends that I made in law school. Each group provided me with different kinds of encouragement. Volunteering at some sort of law related organization provided me the opportunity to apply what I was learning in the classroom. Not only did volunteering make me feel good, but also, it helped solidify the material that I was learning in the classroom. This additional method of 'learning' is extremely important because you are expected to read, recall, and apply large amounts of information.

Finally, aside from the support system and volunteering, there was one other thing that helped me overcome the challenges and experiences; it was having confidence in myself as a student. Whether in graduate school or professional school, it is important to remember that we came from four years of undergraduate school. After four years of undergrad, and graduating, we should have the basic tools to succeed as a graduate student. I would encourage CLS students to continue on to graduate school or professional school because education and knowledge is something that once you gain it, no one can ever take it away from you. It is something that can transcend socio-economic status, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age.

If you are thinking of applying to graduate or professional schools, make sure you take the time to talk to a current student or recent graduate. They will be able to give you the most accurate picture of what the school may be looking for in an applicant, as well as give you a candid report on what the job market is like post-graduation. The other person or office I would talk to is the financial aid office. Because the cost of graduate school in the United States is quite high, it is beneficial to have a realistic idea of how much it will cost to attend a particular school, as well other monetary aid.



Jessica Rajtar (Middle Left)

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