



Center for Latino/a and  
Latin American Studies  
University of Oregon

# Clas Notes

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Spring 2010

## A Groundbreaking Pilot Study

CLLAS-funded research gleans valuable information about Latino students at UO

University of Oregon education professor Edward M. Olivos grew up in California speaking English. He learned Spanish in the classroom, where he encountered the assumption that he must already know Spanish because of his Latino heritage. It's one of the typical responses that Latinos in American classrooms run into every day, he said. Sometimes it comes with the suggestion that Latinos should not be allowed college credit for Spanish classes, because they have an unfair advantage.

Olivos—recently promoted to associate professor in the Department of Education Studies (effective July 1)—is one of three UO researchers who presented their findings on “Being Latino at the University of Oregon: A Survey.” Funded by the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies, this collaborative project focused on a university-wide survey of cultural and linguistic identities, ideas, and attitudes found among Latinos at the UO. The multidisciplinary research team also included associate professor Robert Davis and assistant professor Pedro García-Caro, both from the Department of Romance Languages.

“Since the year 2000, Latinos have accounted for more than half the overall population growth in the United States,” Olivos said. “Latinos are dispersed throughout the United States—they’re in society, they’re in public schools, they’re in higher university settings. For the sustainability of higher education, we really need to have access to Latino students. But what is the Latino path to the university? What does it mean to be Latino at the UO?”

Robert Davis, director of language instruction in the Spanish program at the UO, noted: “One of the things that really drove this survey is the current view that the Latino population at the University of Oregon is homogenized. In reality, it is complex and diverse. Students speak different languages, for example. They come from many different countries and regions.”

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## CLLAS Kickoff Celebration

The Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies celebrated its newly independent status as an official UO Research Center at a family-friendly event on Saturday, April 24. The CLLAS event piggy-backed with the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's Saturday celebration of its Amazonia exhibit of *National Geographic* photographs from the Amazon Rainforest. Guitar music, a demonstration of the Brazilian martial art Capoeira, delicious food, and speeches and toasts from CLLAS board members, community activists, students and CLLAS director Lynn Stephen all contributed to a rich and varied evening, culminating in a tour of the art museum.



Gerardo Fernell Lopez played guitar and other instruments and sang during the celebration. His daughter also performed.

But the celebration took on a somber note in light of the passage the previous day of Arizona Immigration Law SB1070. Board members and community and student activists condemned the new law while speaking passionately of the forward progress of the UO's newest research center. Speaker Lidiana Soto, a student intern with CLLAS who also works for the UO Multicultural Center, talked about the fear engendered in the lives of farm laborers and migrant workers and all people of color who may fall suspect under the new law.

“I remember working with my family to pick strawberries in the fields when I was a little girl,” Soto said, breaking down in tears. “This law targets people who work hard for very little pay, those who are going to put the food on the tables of all Arizonians. This work that organizations like PCUN [Oregon's Farmworker Union—Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste] do, has always been there. Now centers like CLLAS institutionalize and highlight this type of work. This is progress at a time we most need it, at a time when SB1070 is signed into law and where centers like these are coming under threat in Arizona and where teachers with accents are being fired. For those reasons, and because it will allow us to understand our complicated histories of often-violent interactions, CLLAS becomes infinitely more important.” ■



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Of the 138 students who participated in the survey (16 percent of the UO Latino student population), the majority first spoke Spanish at home or Spanish with a combination of English. Currently, 49 percent speak English at home, 23 percent speak Spanish, and 27 percent speak a combination of English and Spanish. Nine students said their parents speak indigenous languages, Davis reported.

The survey looked at attitudes about Spanish language, with 90 students saying that they are proud of their Spanish-speaking background. More than 50 were uncomfortable that their Spanish isn't proficient. More than 95 said knowing Spanish is an important skill. Like native English speakers who receive credit for university English classes, even those Latinos who speak fluent Spanish may wish to study Spanish grammar and Spanish literature, Davis said. "We are trying to change the model of deficiency. Our new focus is on developing as many areas of literacy as you can."

The researchers found that the majority of the Latino students attending UO were born in California but graduated from Oregon high schools.

The survey also looked at the finances of a college education, asking questions about how students are paying for their education and what factors might prevent them from graduating. Sixty-three of 75 respondents said that financial hardship could keep them from obtaining their degree.

The survey also asked questions about discrimination—32 percent mention that they had felt discriminated against at UO. The question, "Have you ever had a Latino instructor at UO?" got a 56 percent "yes" response. About 88 percent spoke positively about recommending the UO to their Latino friends.

Among the questions and comments that arose from the audience were these:

- Let's assemble a group of administrators to look at this in a conversational way.
- We hope that the university financially supports more research of this kind.
- This should be systematically administered to all Latino students, with surveys carried out both on entrance and exit from the UO. ■



The Latino Roots Exhibit was on display at the Lane County Historical Museum in Eugene for more than a year but now needs a new home.



CLLAS NEWSLETTER

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**Mailing address:**

Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies  
6201 University of Oregon  
Eugene OR 97403-6201

**Main office:**

337 Hendricks Hall  
(541) 346-5286  
e-mail: [cllas@uoregon.edu](mailto:cllas@uoregon.edu)  
website: [cllas.uoregon.edu](http://cllas.uoregon.edu)

**Director:**

Dr. Lynn Stephen  
[stephenl@uoregon.edu](mailto:stephenl@uoregon.edu)

**OUR MISSION**

Putting Latino/a and Latin American Studies in Conversation

**OUR VISION**

The Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies promotes collaborative research of relevance to Latin America and U.S. Latino Populations. CLLAS aims to be the premier research center in the Northwest for fresh knowledge and information about the region, peoples and shared history and culture.

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**LATINO ROOTS EXHIBIT FINISHES RUN AT LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM: NEEDS A NEW HOME**

After being on display for more than a year at the Lane County Historical Museum, these 17 panels are looking for a new home. Part of the exhibit "Changing Demographics: The People of Lane County," the Latino Roots panels were put together by a research team that includes Lynn Stephen (Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, CSWS, CLLAS), Gabriel Martínez (School of Journalism and Communication), Patricia Cortez (Amigos Multicultural Services, Juventud FACETA), Guadalupe Quinn (CAUSA), Mauricio Magaña (Anthropology), Sonia Cruz (School of Journalism and Communication), Kate Williams (Anthropology), Lukacs Nguyen (Anthropology), and Magali Morales (independent translator). Latino Roots features the stories of nine families who came at different times to Lane County from California, Texas, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Chile.



A troop of musician athletes demonstrated the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira during the celebratory inauguration of the UO's newest research center at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.

**UO FUNDS NEW CLASSES**

Three CLLAS board members were awarded grants from the University of Oregon's Tom and Carol Williams Fund for Undergraduate Education.

Edward M. Olivos received a \$15,000 grant for his project, "From the Mexican Border to Oregon: Immigration, Education, and Citizenship in the 21st Century." Students will study the way social institutions have responded to human migration in general, and immigrant students in particular.

Gabriela Martínez and Lynn Stephen received \$17,000 for their course sequence "Latino Roots I, Latino Roots II," to be taught during Winter and Spring 2011

through Anthropology and Journalism and cross-listed with Ethnic Studies and Latin American Studies. Latino Roots I will focus on giving a theoretical, documentary, and ethnographic understanding of the processes of Latino immigration and settlement in Oregon during the past 150 years. Latino Roots II will teach students how to produce a short video documentary from oral history interviews.

Paso del Norte Region of the U.S./Mexico Border."

Sonia De La Cruz: "The Effects of Collaborative Media on Lived Experiences: the Case of the Women of Trama Textiles in Guatemala."

Anna Cruz: "After the Uprising: Gender Roles Among Oaxacan Teachers Post-2006 Uprising."

**Faculty/ Collaborators:**

Gerardo Sandoval (PPPM) and Megan Smith (Community Service Center, CSC): "Sustaining Latino Businesses in Springfield, Oregon."

Bob Bussel (Labor Education and Research Center, LERC), Marcela Mendoza (Centro Latinoamericano), Edward Olivos (Education Studies), and Daniel Tichenor (Political Science): "Assessment of Community Leaders' Views on Immigrant-Community Relations." ■

**CLLAS GRANTEES ANNOUNCED**

**Graduate Students:**

Julia Ridgeway-Díaz: "Ecosystem Change, Westernization, and Women's Health in Amazonian Ecuador."

Lindsay Naylor: "Harnessing Multiple Movements: The Intersection of Fair Trade and the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas, Mexico."

Rene Kladyk: "Pathways and Fences: Gender, Violence, and Mobility in the

**CLLAS Collaborates with the Latin American Studies Program\***

Recent Symposia: Put Latino/a and Latin American Studies in Conversation

- **Latin American Philosophy and Colonial/Modern Gender Systems in the Americas**  
Thursday, April 1, 2010 3:30- 5:30 p.m., Browsing Room, Knight Library  
María Lugones (Comparative Literature and Philosophy, Interpretation and Culture, Binghamton University)  
Pedro J. J. Di Pietro (Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture, Binghamton University)
- **Puerto Rico's Political and Cultural History through Documentary Filmmaking**  
Thursday, May 6, 2010, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Browsing Room, Knight Library  
Juan Carlos García Padilla (Independent Puerto Rican Filmmaker)—Films shown included: "¿Hasta cuándo?" (Best Documentary Short Film Award San Juan Cinema Festival) and "Remembering Carlos" (biographic documentary on political murder of young Cuban exile Carlos Muñoz Varela).
- **Dominican Feminist Engagements with National Anti-Haitianisms: Ideological Collusion, Strategic Reliance, and Persistent Resistance, 1880-1960**  
Thursday, May 27, 2010, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Walnut Room, Erb Memorial Union  
Ginetta E.B. Candelario (Sociology, Latina/o and Latin American Studies, Smith College)

\*Symposia are co-sponsored with the College of Arts and Sciences, Latin American Studies, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies Department, Department of English, Department of Philosophy, and Department of Romance Languages.



(Above) Associate professor María Lugones, and (right) Pedro J.J. DiPietro, a Ph.D. student, both from Binghamton University, SUNY.



Pedro J.J. DiPietro



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CENTER FOR LATINO/A AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

6201 University of Oregon

Eugene OR 97403-6201

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## Latino Roots in Oregon: A Documentary Film Project

Some came driving cattle with early ranch pioneers along the Siskiyou Trail, some came as mule packers for the U.S. Army, some were Basque shepherders from the Spanish Pyrenees, and some joined the Bracero Program during WWII and worked the fields and orchards providing manual labor.

The ways and times Latinos made their way to Oregon are many and varied and provide for rich story-telling as well as a databank for historical purposes. Gabriela Martínez, an assistant professor in the

University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, has been working with Sonia De La Cruz, a doctoral student in SOJC, and Guadalupe Quinn, of the Amigos Multicultural Services Center, to develop a documentary film that shows the diverse stories of Latino/a Oregonians. The documentary is one of several grant-winning projects supported this year by the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies. The Center for the Study of Women in Society also provided backing.

Martínez and her team shared the working version of their documentary at a Faculty Grantee presentation the end of April, allowing time for a lively discussion about the content. Filmed as ethnographies, with two to four hours for each person reduced to about nine minutes each of film time, *Latino Roots in Oregon* can be used for teaching students the process of constructing a history seldom told and for theorizing about building it, said Martínez. Challenges and questions from the audience were meant to be a part of the presentation, and people were invited to make constructive comments about the content. One professor said that in the so-called "First Wave," when Mexicans accompanied early cattle ranchers and pioneer settlers, the Mexicans themselves were also settlers in their own right. The concept of "wave," he said, still keeps the concept of outsider. Another mentioned that such place names along the Oregon Coast as "Heceta" and "Manzanita" indicate the influence of Spanish sea-going explorers that could be worked into the film. Some discussion focused on the role that children of Spanish-speaking immigrants often fall into—that of translator, as was the case in the story of a man who had translated for his parents when he was not much older than a toddler.

The film is a work in progress that will eventually be 52-minutes in running time, suitable for public television viewing and DVD and Web-streaming distribution. ■



## Giving to CLLAS

Support of alumni and friends helps CLLAS achieve and exceed its mission. Gifts of any amount enable us to support critical research on Latin America and U.S. Latino populations.

For more information about giving to support CLLAS, please contact Kathrin Walsch at (541) 346-0607.