Winter 2018

La Voz Winter 2018

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Winter 2018

Estimadxs colegas,

I look forward to starting a five-year term as El Instituto’s new director in August 2018. Among the interdisciplinary affiliations from which I have drawn support during my twenty years of teaching at UConn, none has been more fulfilling for me than those with LatinX and Latin American Studies. Just as when I took on a joint appointment with the newly-founded El Instituto, in 2013, accepting this appointment feels to me like a recognition of the importance of El Instituto’s mission to the wider UConn community. A glance at any given day’s news should, even so, make it clear why I look forward to this term as director with some trepidation. We at El Instituto, along with our sister social justice and intersectional inquiry institutes, occupy a unique niche in the UCONN environment. Promoting research on LatinX and Latin American and Caribbean lives is our main goal. Yet gathering reliable evidence on these topics looks as never before like political resistance. Seeking and speaking the truth cannot be the only way we stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters, with our students, staff and faculty of color, and with our non-heteronormative fellow Huskies. Yet we at El Instituto stand with our sister programs in rejecting the alt-right’s persistent and increasingly audacious attacks as acts rooted not just in hatred but in falsehoods. Uprooting lies takes work and doesn’t always succeed right away but the kinds of intellectual dynamism I see every day, among our Instituto core faculty and MA students, will make it easier. Excitement, then, joins with trepidation in my mind. Our doors stay open, and our “living room” in the Ryan Building is available for gathering to share the truths of our research and of our lives.

Samuel Martinez

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Faculty News

Eliana D Rojas, Associate professor in residence, retired January 31st after 16 years of service to UConn. Professor Rojas began teaching in the Mathematics Department while earning her second master's and PhD. She was hired as Grant Director for the Bilingual Project, which was initiated to fund the professional development of teachers and school professionals committed to working in school communities with large populations of Latinos and immigrant adolescents. Eliana taught a variety of courses on how to best teach children of diverse communities for Neag, including Shelter Pedagogy, Ethnomathematics, and International Education.

In her tenure at UConn, she secured more than 5.5 million dollars in grants for the Neag School of Education and was responsible for the training of hundreds of school professionals. Post-retirement, she plans to continue publishing on equity and mathematics, travel to Europe and Latin America, and consult for the Chilean government’s Program for Educational Equity regarding access to science and math for low-income immigrants of Chilean border communities. We wish her the best of luck in her new endeavors and adventures.

El Instituto’s Professor Marysol Asencio (joint appointment with Sociology) is a member of the Steering Committees (and co-chair of Program Committees) for two upcoming conferences on Race and Sexuality: (1) Race, Sex, and Power 2018 in Chicago on April 6 and 7, 2018 https://www.racesexpower2018.com/about.html and (2) Sexualities, Race, and Empire: Resistance in an Uncertain Time in Philadelphia, PA on August 9 and 10, 2018 https://asasexualitiespreconf.com/

Lewis Gordon, Professor of Philosophy and El Instituto affiliate faculty, was elected Honorary President of The Global Center for Advanced Studies https://thegcas.org/. In addition to numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, the book Geopolitics and Decolonization: Perspectives from the Global South, edited with an introduction by Fernanda Frizzo Bragato and Lewis R. Gordon. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International 2018 was released.

Professor Merrill Singer’s new book, Social Justice and Medical Practice, an examination of factors creating health inequality in the U.S. and the description of alternative medical systems, was published by Routledge. Singer is a Professor of Anthropology, inCHIP Senior Research Scientist and El Instituto affiliate faculty.

Scott Wallace, Associate Professor of Journalism and El Instituto Faculty Affiliate, published an Op-Ed article in the New York Times in September on an alleged massacre of an isolated tribe in Brazil. He was interviewed by PBS’s American Experience and RetroReport in a coproduction that appeared in January about isolated tribes in the Amazon. http://www.pbssoical.org/programs/american-experience/into-the-amazon-isolated-tribes-uvayel/
When El Instituto invited Mimi Sheller to speak on “Caribbean Futures: Surviving the Anthropocene,” there was no way to predict that her visit would coincide with two catastrophic hurricanes, Irma and Maria, threatening the survival of at least four Caribbean islands. When Sheller arrived at UConn to deliver the annual Robert G. Mead Jr. lecture on September 26, the entire island of Puerto Rico had no electric power. Nearly all Puerto Ricans had no access to roads, air travel, telephone communications, clean drinking water, fresh food, or a functioning medical system. The island of Barbuda was deserted and razed, with 90 percent of buildings destroyed, and all of the island’s inhabitants exiled.

While many North Americans were just awakening to the man-made catastrophes -- environmental, economic, and political -- threatening Caribbean survival, people in the Caribbean and scholars like Mimi Sheller have seen it developing for decades, if not centuries. Sheller is Professor of Sociology at Drexel University, where she has built a unique scholarly community as the Founding Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy. Much of Sheller's scholarship examines “uneven mobilities” in the Caribbean. While society is increasingly shaped by the mobility of people, goods, ideas and capital around the globe, social inequalities are increasingly shaped by militarized borders, forced migrations, and other “mobility injustices.”

Sheller encourages us to visualize the Caribbean as an archipelago of realms of exception and offshoring, where multiple entities exploit human and natural resources without any rule of law. Oil extraction and refining, as well as mineral extraction, have laid waste to Caribbean ecologies. Predatory Wall Street bankers have manufactured debt crises, imposed austerity measures, and turned the Caribbean into offshore tax havens. The international “humanitarian aid” apparatus takes no responsibility for creating a cholera epidemic that still plagues post-earthquake Haiti. Caribbean workers are exported to the United States and Europe, where they have no citizenship rights, and then they are deported back. The Dominican Republic strips Haitian-descended people of citizenship—a disheartening list.

The Caribbean is headed toward an “impossible future,” as Sheller says. Although the Caribbean has consumed far less fossil fuel than the United States and Europe, the very survival of the Caribbean is threatened by climate change. Increasingly destructive storms, rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and extreme drought are current reality.

Yet Sheller insists that alternative futures are possible. Caribbean people have been surviving genocide, resource extraction, and labor exploitation for 500 years. We can look to the Caribbean philosophers, writers, artists, and creators who have been building and dreaming alternative futures. We must look to the escaped slaves who established maroon communities, the revolutionaries who overthrew slavery and colonialism, or the small farmers today who have been building sustainable local economies.

In Sheller’s first book *Democracy After Slavery* (2000), she examined how “black publics” in post-emancipation Haiti and Jamaica labored to build radical democratic societies before they were ultimately stunted by liberal and then authoritarian governments. Her book *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (2012) examined the “embodied” practices that black women and men used to resist the control of their labor, sexuality and fertility by the post-emancipation state. These are some of the histories that we can excavate to imagine alternative Caribbean futures, before it is too late.
HURRICANE MARIA

Contributed by Ashley Ortiz-Chico

On September 20, 2017 Hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico. This natural disaster, considered by many to be the worst natural disaster to hit the island in modern history, comes on the tail of a decade-long economic recession which culminated in the PROMESA bill. For residents of the island this has meant that government institutions had been in severe disrepair long before the hurricane. The passage of Maria put in stark relief the deep structural inequalities inherent to the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Four months after the hurricane more than 40% of the island lacks electricity and some communities still lack clean water.

Important groups have mobilized on the island; some of the most prominent include the Centros de Apoyo Mútuo that exist throughout the Island, as well as La Colectiva Feminista, La Brigada del Oeste and Taller Salud. These groups and others have worked continuously not only to bring relief to the island but also to challenge traditional forms of aid and the exploitative conditions that have brought this disaster to the island. The federal government’s response to the disaster was not only inadequate; it was also wholly inadequate: the image of Donald Trump tossing paper towels at humans residing in shelters is forever etched in our collective consciousness. Local government has not offered much support either. Thousands of people still live under roofs of blue FEMA tarps; thousands more lack even that. In the face of this inadequacy these groups have organized and mobilized in ways that redefine community action.

The suffering in the island is great and for many Puerto Ricans, both within and without the island, the wounds are still open. As the story fades from media attention, Puerto Ricans tread a fine line between keeping the needs of millions of people relevant and commercializing our pain. On the one hand the lack of mainstream attention facilitates the erasure of the island’s needs; on the other, we are humans with dignity and refuse to sell our hardships for pity. This is not a humanitarian disaster—it’s a political disaster, an economic disaster and a colonial disaster.

For information on what has happened, what is happening, and what can be done, the Puerto Rico Relief website provides a virtual space to coordinate information about initiatives to provide relief and support for Puerto Ricans affected by the catastrophic events of Hurricane Maria. The main goal of this site is to assist in the coordination of efforts. https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/events-news/puerto-rico-news

On the afternoon of October 6th, 2017, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT), spoke at a public forum in Willimantic about the situation in Puerto Rico following the passing of Hurricane Maria through the island on September 20. Willimantic has a large population of Puerto Ricans and people of Puerto Rican descent, and thus was an ideal place to hold the meeting.

Among the topics discussed with the group of largely Puerto Rican attendees were:

- the logistics of food and water distribution throughout the island—which at the time was a huge problem due to poor road conditions;
- the federal government’s response to the situation, which was deemed poor;
- the logistics of sending mail and care packages to the island;
- the problem of commercial shipping vessels containing provisions not being able to either arrive on the island or taking too much time to arrive.

On this subject, UConn Political Science Professor Charles Robert Venator Santiago discussed with the Senator the possibility of amending the Marine Merchant Act of 1920 (also known as The Jones Act of 1920) in order to make the shipment of goods to Puerto Rico faster and cheaper.

- the impact of the hurricane on the already dire economic and fiscal situation of the island, and what should be the adequate response by the Fiscal Control Board—imposed by Congress on the island—to the devastation left by the hurricane.

Senator Murphy spoke with citizens and local community leaders on how to move forward to help Puerto Rico, and what he could do from Congress in concert with local authorities. A major topic of discussion was the mass arrival of Puerto Rican migrants to Connecticut immediately after the hurricane hit the island. This mass migration is a consequence of people trying to flee the devastation, lack of resources, water and energy on the island. Senator Murphy informed the audience that his office and the Governor’s were in contact with federal authorities to make the migrant transition as smooth as possible. Murphy outlined some ways in which the transition can be made easier such as the automatic transferring of food stamps and section 8 housing eligibility from Puerto Rico to Connecticut, along with FEMA funding for emergency housing; waiving many of the requirements for enrolling children in local schools and other government services. Overall, the meeting successfully addressed questions and concerns of the attendees, and Senator Murphy promised to commit himself to help the island in his capacity as U.S. Senator.

Article and photo contributed by Felix Padilla Carbonell
Distinguished academics and community leaders will visit UConn throughout the Spring 2018 semester to address aspects of the crisis in Puerto Rico through a series of lectures and workshops sponsored by El Instituto, the Vice President for Global Affairs, the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Initiatives, and the Humanities Institute. Each visitor will place the post-Maria situation in the context of the island’s recent history, as seen from their particular disciplinary or practitioner perspective. Speakers will give public presentations open to a broad academic audience and also to speak at a faculty/grad reading workshop focusing on “theorizing catastrophe” during their visits.

The University of Connecticut Humanities Institute (UCHI) is joining with El Instituto to sponsor a reading group which focuses on the theorization of catastrophe. The goal of the reading group is to study critical theories of catastrophe in order to help us think about support projects for survivors in Puerto Rico and other localities that have endured devastations. The group will meet regularly during the spring 2018 semester. Faculty and students interested in joining this reading group should contact charles.venator@uconn.edu.

Guest speakers have committed to contributing a scholarly paper for review as part of a journal special issue on the Puerto Rican crisis, to be edited here at UConn.

The series began on November 27, 2017 with a public presentation and workshop colloquium by Ariadna Godreau-Aubert (see below). The series continues throughout the Spring 2018 semester. Following is a partial list of speakers:

February 14: Antonio Vázquez Arroyo, Rutgers, Dept. of Political Science. Public lecture: “Hurricane Maria: An Unnatural Catastrophe”
February 15: Antonio Vázquez Arroyo, Rutgers, Department of Political Science. Faculty/graduate workshop.
March 1: Efrain O’Neill Carrillo, University of Puerto Rico. Faculty/graduate workshop.
April 5: Carlos Vargas-Ramos, Research Associate, Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO), Hunter College-CUNY. Public lecture: “An Overview of Available Data on Puerto Rican Migrations to the Mainland.”
April 6: Carlos Vargas-Ramos, CENTRO. Faculty/graduate workshop.

Puerto Rican Crisis Research Group: Ariadna Godreau-Aubert
Contribution by Stephanie Mercado-Irizarry


Godreau-Aubert also spoke about efforts that are currently being developed on the island to help the Puerto Rican population. As a professor at the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, Godreau-Aubert is the coordinator of one of those initiatives called “Ayuda Legal Huracán María,” a brigade which provides free legal advice, representation and education to Puerto Ricans whose properties were affected by the hurricane.

Both the public lecture and workshop are part of the Puerto Rican Crisis Research Group, an initiative that aims to channel information about the PROMESA/Hurricane Maria crisis. Godreau-Aubert is the first in a series of speakers who will visit UConn during the Spring 2018 semester.
Charles Venator-Santiago, a political science professor at the University of Connecticut, appeared at Eastern Connecticut State University on Sept. 20 to discuss the extension of U.S. citizenship to native Puerto Ricans.

The “University Hour” lecture covered the history of this complex extension, dating from 1898 to present day. Controversy over the citizenship status of Puerto Ricans has come to light in various contexts, explained Venator-Santiago, including the Tuana v. United States federal court case in 2015, which brought attention to the voting rights of U.S. nationals. “This word ‘extension’ is really important,” he stressed.

America gained military control over Puerto Rico in 1898, following the Treaty of Paris ratification. It was governed as an incorporated territory until 1900, when the Foraker Act was introduced to provide the territory a civil government. In 1901, the Doctrine of Territorial Incorporation was established, consisting of three basic elements to lay out the constitutional interpretation of Puerto Rico and other territories. Puerto Rico has been ruled as an unincorporated territory ever since.

The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization Act (BINA) of 1906 was the first law that enabled those born in Puerto Rico to naturalize as American citizens. By 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act to provide for the collective naturalization of Puerto Rico’s inhabitants.

The Jones Act called for people to choose between keeping their Puerto Rican citizenship or gaining United States citizenship. It did not, however, change Puerto Rico’s territorial status, so those born on the island could only obtain a derivative form of parental, or “jus sanguinis” – blood right – citizenship. Birth in Puerto Rico at this time was equivalent to birth outside of the United States.

Venator-Santiago went on to explain the corrective amendments made to Section 5 of the Jones Act from 1927-1940. In 1940, Congress created legislation granting “jus soli” – birthright – citizenship to those in Puerto Rico. The Nationality Act of 1940 thus established that Puerto Rico was part of the United States for citizenship purposes. Since 1941, birth in Puerto Rico is commensurate to birth in the United States.

That said, Venator-Santiago argued, “The Supreme Court has cherry-picked which rights to extend and withhold,” which is where many debates stem from. As of March 2017, Congress has deliberated 101 bills containing citizenship provisions for Puerto Rico. “There are different kinds of rights that apply differently,” he said. “Puerto Rico is considered to be a foreign place for constitutional purposes.”

According to Venator-Santiago, the arguments surrounding status have focused on two questions – how to simultaneously uphold the status of a person’s Puerto Rican citizenship, and what to do with the economy of Puerto Rico. Despite the ongoing societal discussion on the topic, he pointed out that one of the biggest issues is lack of awareness. “The average American doesn’t have a clue (that Puerto Rican natives are considered United States citizens),” he claimed. “There is no clear understanding among the public.”

On 2 March 2017, some Puerto Ricans commemorated the centennial of the collective naturalization of Puerto Ricans. Many commentators also incorrectly argued that the Jones Act of 1917 was the first and only law providing for the extension of United States citizenship to Puerto Ricans. In fact, since the United States annexed Puerto Rico in 1898, Congress has debated upwards of 101 bills and enacted 11 citizenship laws for Puerto Ricans. The Puerto Rico Citizenship Archives Project is a public digital repository documenting the legal history of the extension of United States citizenship to Puerto Rico since 1898. This archive contains federal citizenship laws, legislation, and related materials to contextualize the 119-year history of debates over the extension of citizenship to Puerto Rico and provides public access to key historical documents shaping this history. This project was sponsored by the University of Connecticut Library Scholars Collaborative and El Instituto. To learn more, go to: http://scholarscollaborative.org/PuertoRico/
In December 2015, El Instituto was awarded a three year Tinker Foundation Field Research grant which provides graduate students an opportunity to travel to Latin America and the Caribbean (go to: https://elin.uconn.edu/tinker-grants to learn more). Awards for 2018, the last year for this grant, were made to:

**Pauline Batista**, 1st year Phd in Educational Leadership, plans to travel to Colombia and Brazil to study cultural preservation in schools located in traditional communities in Latin America.

**Ashley Benitez Ou**, 1st year PhD in Geography, plans to travel to Brazil as she begins research on how major cities in Latin America respond to climate change through urban planning and design.

**Laura Bizzarri**, 1st year PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, plans to travel to Costa Rica to identify plant-hummingbird interactions.

**Elizabeth Clifton**, 2nd year Phd in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, plans to travel to Costa Rica where she will conduct research linking individual behavior to collective fighting in tropical social insects.

**Megan Fountain**, 1st year MA in Latino and Latin American Studies, plans to travel to Guatemela and Mexico to record histories of immigrants and their family members.

**Vivian Laurens**, 1st year Phd in Anthropology, plans to travel to Colombia to develop contacts with organizations that make up the Red SaludPaz team and learn more about their developing plan.

**Josué López**, 2nd year PhD in Education-Curriculum and Instruction, plans to travel to Guatemala to observe teaching practices and to the Dominican Republic to conduct archival research on educational policy.

**Valerie Milici**, 2nd year PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, plans to travel to Panama to look at how changes to precipitation influences the number of plant species a fungal pathogen can infect.

**Ari Romano-Vertheli**, 2nd year PhD in Clinical Psychology, plans to travel to Argentina to conduct research on Argentine experts’ conceptualization of behavioral disorders.

**Chriss Sneed**, 1st year PhD in Sociology, plans to travel to Brazil to develop contacts with future participants in her study on Blackness and to learn Portuguese.

**Ashley Walters**, 1st year PhD in Anthropology, plans to travel to the Dominican Republic to begin exploratory preliminary research on human rights and humanitarian work within Hispaniola, particularly regarding people of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic.

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**Pre-doctoral Fellowship**

In Fall 2017, El Instituto awarded eight pre-doctoral fellowships ranging from $1350-$2000 to support pre-doctoral graduate student research or creative projects related to Latina/o and/or Latin American Studies. Recipients may use funds for any purpose that furthers their academic progress including, but not limited to, direct research, publication costs, travel to archival or ethnographic research sites; supplies, services, and equipment; conference attendance or educational travel. Pauline Batista, Doctoral Student, Neag School of Education, Dept. of Educational Leadership, used her fellowship to subsize research in Brazil. Following is a report on her activities:

“Over the winter break I started collecting preliminary data for a research project in Brazil. I began some very exciting collaborative work thanks to El Instituto’s Pre Doctoral Award, which I will continue to develop over the Spring semester. A group of ten students who attend an underserved high school at a UNESCO World Heritage Site title candidate town called Paraty, located about 4 hours away from Rio de Janeiro, engaged in a week-long pedagogical film-making workshop with the objective of triggering discussion around patrimonial preservation and the meaning of heritage studies for youth in underserved populations.

This initial workshop will serve as a base to start designing a short-film screenplay in which students openly speak about how they feel when they think of their communities’ needs and how their needs are related to the UNESCO’s WHS title candidacy. At this preliminary phase, the participatory initiative’s focus was to provide students with an opportunity to choose a current issue and to artistically express it. Phase two of this project will be conducted during the Spring 2018 break, where students will be provided with an opportunity to discuss how they see themselves and how the UNESCO WHS search influences their learning experiences. The full short-film titled "A alma e a escola" (The Soul of The School) will be available then with English subtitles."
Contributed by Lauren M. Perez-Bonilla

On September 28, 2017 a group of undergraduate Spanish students got the opportunity to listen to the work of Costa Rican dramatist Ailyn Morera when she read from her 2007 play, “Folie a Deux” (“madness of two”). Morera was a visiting artist at UConn for 8 weeks in 2011, and is internationally known for her feminist playwriting and direction. She currently works with the United Nations developing radio plays on topics such as masculinity and child support. Although Professor Ana Maria Marcos’ course focused on the literature of Spain and not Latin America, topics such as gender violence, masculinities, and the arts as an instrument of healing, linked both. Morera also opened her heart to students to talk about her experiences as a Costa Rican woman, offering them anecdotes from family members and friends who are affected by the social reinforcement of gender binaries.

Medically, the term “Folie a Dex” is employed to describe a psychosis status that includes hallucinations and delusional beliefs that, in this particular case, are transmitted from one individual to another. Following this idea, Morera’s play tells the story of a couple (Natacha and Wolf) in an abusive relationship. Natacha cannot seem to leave it as she is being kept captive by Wolf, with the excuse that one day they will be able to go somewhere else. Nevertheless, Wolf’s character is constantly playing with words and their meanings; twisting them and confusing Natacha. As a result, she starts believing that she is beginning to lose her mind, seeing and hearing things that her partner refuses to acknowledge or plainly ignores.

In order to challenge the aforementioned, Natacha seeks refuge in books, some of which are not of Wolf’s liking as they give wrong ideas to people and make them think. Thus, in both cases, one can perceive how, by manipulating someone else’s ideas and dreams, violence takes place. This play—and Morera’s work broadly understood—can be interpreted as a deep examination of why gender inequalities remain in place. This play represents something bigger than the lives of two Latin American characters—the stories of millions of people involved and affected by gender violence.

For more on the topic, visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folie_%C3%A0_deux

Contributed by Lauren M. Perez-Bonilla

Sir Hilary Beckles on The Greatest Political Movement of the 21st century

On November 1, 2017, UConn had the honor of hosting Sir Hilary Beckles, historian and Vice Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, for a talk titled ‘The Greatest Political Movement of the 21st century: Global Reparations for African Enslavement, Native Genocide and Colonialism’. Navigating through personal anecdotes and historical ironies, Beckles made his case for the reparatory justice global movement. Although his work has focused on the Afro-Caribbean history and the enslavement of African peoples in this region, Beckles spoke about the wider movement of reparatory justice which includes the claims for the genocide of native peoples as well as the indenture of Asians. For the speaker, this shift towards claims of reparatory justice is ‘the next stage’ of a long and slow historical process that has followed the uprooting of the system of chattel slavery along with its devastating legacies. He places it in the continuum of the history of human and civil rights movements.

While Beckles is rather optimistic about the acquired momentum of this now global movement for justice, he also pointed out the multiple challenges that it faces and which it must overcome. Perhaps an initial challenge would be developing and conveying successfully the idea of reparations: what they are/could be and what things they could entail. Referring to the ten-point action plan developed through the CARICOM Reparations Commission, Sir Hilary discussed how reparatory justice can take multiple forms and assess very different aspects of these systemic injustices. Whether it’s being able to learn one’s own history, having access to healthcare and nutrition programs that cater specifically to a populations’ inherited needs, or even undertaking ambitious legal processes for a monetary compensation, the actions of this umbrella movement must be localized in more than one sense. Not only should the acts of reparation be considered through the prism of the ongoing effects of colonization in a specific place, but they should also be considered through the aspirations and desires of the people for whom reparatory justice is being sought. Furthermore, this movement’s success will also depend on other people understanding their privilege in a historical perspective. It will need an attitude beyond the acknowledgement of privilege, one that becomes a radical disposition to give back what was taken away. That implies thinking of reparations not only as something desirable or even necessary, but also as long overdue. To move forward with this, the role of universities remains for Beckles a critical one. As a historical site of power and world-making, Beckles conceives the university as a “midwife” in the deconstruction and construction of a better world.

Contributed by: Katherine A. Perez Quiñones
This Metanoia activity was designed for high school students and those who work, or are interested in working with, high school students. The purpose was to highlight the importance of positive self-awareness, self-identity, and self-confidence, especially in the face of adversity. Organizers also wanted to raise students’ awareness of subtle forms of racism so that students could use this experience and apply a proper course of action when dealing with racism.

The “Where I’m From” poem activity created by George Ella Lyon served as an icebreaker to get participants to open up and share things which formed a part of their memories, and thus, a part of their identities. Throughout the activity, organizers handed out small water bottles to those sitting in the middle, and larger water bottles to those sitting to the left to see if anyone noticed how one side of the room was treated better than the other. Although not every participant was willing to share their poems, a handful opened up and created a space for dialogue on how certain memories and things define identity and what is held most dear to our hearts. When the time came to discuss racism, not many had noticed the water bottles, and, according to a follow-up survey, didn’t feel uncomfortable that one group had been favored over another.

Organizers received funds to hire a bus service to bring approximately 20 students to and from Windham High School and an announcement on the UConn webpage attracted college students and administrators. Following the activity at Neag, high school students attended a lunch at PRLACC provided by El Instituto, and listened to a presentation on the history of PRLACC and the resources available to students who self-identify as Latin@ and Latin@ allies. This provided an opportunity for the high school students to interact with Latin@ college students and raise questions about college, the application process, and how Latin@ can succeed in the face of racism.

Panel: “Confronting Citizenship’s Exclusions: Boricua and unDACAmented visions”
PR/LACC Common Room, 5:00-6:30PM
Organizers: Fany Hannon (PR/LACC) and Samuel Martínez (El Instituto).

Student panelists Ashley Ortiz-Chico, Joseline Tlacomulco, and Pedro Rodríguez spoke about the common threads of anti-racist mobilization which unite DACA students and other undocumented migrants with Puerto Ricans who are now struggling to right the citizenship exclusions behind the island’s twin crises of sovereign debt and Hurricane Maria reconstruction. Panelists highlighted the need to augment liberal concepts of rights in both crises with a program of reparatory justice that acknowledges the hand played by U.S. government and corporate interests in worsening vulnerabilities and extracting profits from the nations of the Caribbean and Central America, including Puerto Rico, over a span of generations. The panelists and audience members passionately rejected racialized “Us/Them” identity constructs, which call on LatinXs to reject or forget their ancestral heritages and places of origin as a condition for acceptance into the “American.”

A short video of Senator Chris Murphy’s Senate floor plea for not just post-disaster rebuilding but also dialogue around island Puerto Ricans’ unjust exclusion from the full benefits of American citizenship was screened. Faculty panelist Charles Robert Venator then led a thought-provoking debate about prospects for justice, which underscored the need for community-based mobilization to keep the issues in the public eye and seek local and state governmental alternatives to the prevailing federal impasse on immigration reform and justice for Puerto Rico. Student panelists concluded by letting audience members know they can help by keeping up with news and attending rallies and informational events organized by Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D).

Metanoia served as the launch for Professor Charles Venator’s Digital Scholarship project titled the Puerto Rican Citizenship Archives Project (PRCAP) which looks at the many complexities regarding United States citizenship as applied to its territories, specifically, Puerto Rico.

To learn more, go to: http://scholarscollaborative.org/PuertoRico/
University of Connecticut anthropology professor Dr. Chrystal Smith has been granted $174,000 from the National Science Foundation to study the effects of academic climate and social networks on sexual and gender minority undergraduates who are in STEM fields. This grant is a collaboration with researchers at the University of South Florida led by Dr. Michelle Hughes Miller. The total grant is approximately $300,000.

The research team led by Smith will explore how critical facets of a student’s academic experience affect sexual and gender minority students’ persistence in STEM undergraduate programs, meaning what strategic academic choices these students make in pursuit of their goals in their education and career.

The population Smith and her team is studying are identified as sexual and gender minority students, i.e. LGBTQIA+-identifying individuals, who are classically underrepresented in STEM fields.

Traditionally, the STEM academic climate of universities and social networks benefit students who are members of the predominant race/ethnic and gender groups. Though LGBTQIA+ students often face discrimination, harassment and abuse due to their sexual and gender identities in college, little is known about their experiences in STEM. The study will assess LGBTQIA+ students’ perceptions of others’ attitudes and behaviors toward them as well as the social networks they rely on to persist and cope with negative experiences.

Social networks can serve as effective sources for students to discover useful knowledge, resources, and emotional support. Smith’s team will study how LGBTQIA+ students establish and benefit from these networks as well as manage any barriers they might encounter in their efforts to form these networks.

As part of the study, Smith and her team will interview STEM undergraduates who self-identify as sexual and gender minorities. Using qualitative analysis, the researchers will identify themes and patterns in the transcripts of their interviews and develop a series of survey questions based on these themes to gather data nationally and across disciplines.

“Our aim is to create a survey that will gather data that can have broad implications in understanding the experiences of sexual and gender minorities across STEM and across the nation,” said Smith. “We hope that this research will help STEM educators and policymakers understand the hurdles specific to this group so that they develop and implement strategies to promote these students’ success in STEM fields in a more informed way.”

The research team will also disseminate the results to the six STEM national professional organizations participating in the study to increase awareness of these issues to the organizations’ approximately 70,000 members.

Chrystal Smith received her Ph.D. in applied anthropology from the University of South Florida, Tampa. Her research specializes in the field of cultural anthropology. Smith’s research in STEM education uses anthropological and sociological theories and methodologies to broaden our understanding of the challenges that women, ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, and other underrepresented groups encounter in K-12 STEM education, STEM higher education, and the STEM workplace. She is a member of UConn’s Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy (InCHIP). The title of this NSF-funded project is “EAGER: Collaborative Research: Measuring the Effects of Academic Climate and Social Networks on Persistence of STEM Undergraduates”.

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**SHARE Awards—Spring 2018**

**SHARE Awards** support undergraduate research apprenticeships in the social sciences, humanities, and arts, offering students majoring in these fields opportunities to develop inquiry skills and explore research interests early in their college careers. El Instituto faculty affiliates serve as faculty mentors for two of the Spring 2018 awards:

- **Project Title:** Executive Approval Analyses in Latin America and Recent Political Developments  
  **Student Apprentice:** Shankara Narayanan, Political Science & International Relations  
  **Faculty Mentor:** Matthew Singer, Political Science

- **Project Title:** Social Policy and the Political Lives of American Teenagers  
  **Student Apprentice:** Olivia Sykes, Urban and Community Studies & Human Rights  
  **Faculty Mentor:** Edith Barrett, Urban and Community Studies
On October 30, 2017, Professor Osvaldo Pardo passed away unexpectedly at his home. He had been a faculty member at UCONN for the past 20 years. He leaves behind his only direct family member, his mother Adelma, who lives in Argentina.

On November 16 friends and colleagues gathered to share memories of Osvaldo, celebrate his life and accomplishments and pay him tribute.

Osvaldo received his Ph.D. in Spanish Literature from the University of Michigan in 1995. His areas of expertise were Colonial Spanish American literature and culture. During the course of his career he taught at UConn, Wesleyan University, the University of Vermont and Trinity College. He was author of *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico.*

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**Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1949**

*Contributed by: Lauren M. Perez-Bonilla*


*Chino* -Spanish for “Chinese”- tells the story of Mexico’s revolutionary state establishment. This story is very different from others that have been published, as it is told through a racial lens from the point of view of the oppressed, the ignored, the Other...The Chinese. While talking about the reasons why it took him five years to complete the book, Chang expressed that it was mainly because of the lack of Chinese inclusion in historical records. In addition to that, as his book is very specific, it took time to find a publishing house that not only saw the book’s potential, but also understood the importance of making the story known to the public.

With its publication, *Chino* serves as a contesting tool to de-colonize Mexico’s history, in addition to making its reader question how many other nation-building stories have left out the ‘Other,' in order to present themselves as powerful and homogeneous territories. The book creates links between and within disciplines, as it adds visibility to issues that still need to be examined. *Chino* accompanies books like Guevarra’s *Becoming Mexipino* and Lee’s *The Making of Asian America*, as a way to expand Mexican and Asian American identities.

Jason O. Chang is a professor of History at the University of Connecticut. His areas of specialty primarily include Asian American History, Modern Mexico, and Comparative Ethnic Studies. Chang is affiliated with both the Asian and Asian American Studies Institute and El Instituto.

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**Racismo y lenguaje [Racism and language]**

On November 8, 2017 Michele Back discussed her book, *“Racismo y lenguaje [Racism and language]”* (Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial PUCP) at El Instituto, to an audience of students, faculty, and others from the UConn community. The talk was also part of UConn’s ‘Together: Confronting Racism’ day of reflection, learning, sharing and transformation.

This is Back’s second book and was co-edited with Professor Virginia Zavala of Peru’s Catholic University. It is a multi-authored work analyzing discursive practices of racism in Peru from educational, political and social media perspectives. Although this work is in Spanish, an English version will be available in the near future. *Racismo y lenguaje* can be accessed at [http://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=facpubworks](http://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=facpubworks)

Michele Back is an assistant professor of World Languages Education in the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. Her areas of expertise are Spanish, Quechua varieties, Portuguese, Second Language Acquisition, Discourse Analysis, and Identity. Her research focuses on how educators and learners negotiate identity and pedagogy in transcultural, translingual contexts. Back is an affiliate of El Instituto.
Priscilla Carvalho is a Brazilian graduate student attending the Federal University of Minas Gerais. She spent the Fall 2017 semester at UMass Amherst completing her dissertation on peasant movements in Brazil. On November 15, she visited El Instituto as part of the Tertulia Speaker’s Series to discuss her research.

Carvalho’s work focuses on how organized peasants and small farmers (men and women) have managed to influence transnational debates about models of agriculture, seed production, and intellectual property, among others. They also exchange experiences translocally—working with allies from several countries for strengthening their practices and beliefs. Carvalho’s on-going study will focus on how two Brazilian organizations engage in these debates, looking at (1) their efforts translating ideas from international forums into everyday practices and (2) how they currently contribute to produce the transnational itself by presenting demands and proposing practices and concepts.

One of the first UConn majors in Latin American Studies, Mr. Bruce Lane remembers how traveling in Argentina impacted and transformed his life. To assist new students in having similar opportunities, Mr. Lane has generously established the Dr. Paul B. Goodwin, Jr. Endowed Study Abroad Scholarship in honor of his mentor, Emeritus Professor of History, Paul Goodwin, Jr. The purpose of the Fund is to support University students participating in Study Abroad programs to Latin American and the Caribbean. To apply go to: https://abroad.uconn.edu/goodwin-scholarship-application/

The Crystal Molina Memorial Scholarship is for continuing CLAS undergraduates who have an interest in and/or participate in social justice, environment, and/or advocacy outreach programs assisting disadvantaged populations including migrant workers. Candidates must demonstrate financial need, and preference will be given to those who have overcome obstacles such as socioeconomic or education disadvantage of disabilities, first generation college students, members of underrepresented groups at UConn, or have experience living/working in diverse environments. This award is renewable. To apply go to: https://clas.uconn.edu/scholarships/

The UConn Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Fellowship is a competitive award that allows students with an interest in migration studies and/or medicine to participate part-time in working with a team of UConn medical professionals to provide services to migrant farmworkers during the growing season. Honors students whose career trajectory would be enhanced by such an opportunity will be given preference. Spanish-speaking skills a plus. This fellowship is complemented by an internship that allows the fellow to train for the clinic in the late spring and contribute to the fall course LLAS/HIST 1570 Migrant Workers. The fellowship during the summer comes with a stipend of $1,000 to cover travel expenses. For more information go to: https://elin.uconn.edu/undergraduate-scholarships-and-funding/

Professor Alexis Lorenzo Ruiz was a short-term scholar with UConn’s PostDoc inCHIP (Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention and Policy) during the Fall 2017 semester. On Wednesday, October 25, 2017 he discussed his research in the field of psychology as it relates to emergency and disaster situations in Latin America.

Lorenzo is a Professor at Havana University, as well as a Clinical and Health Psychologist and President of the Cuban Society of Psychology and Convention HOMINUS 2018.

On September 13, 2017, Ambassador Sacha Llorenti spoke candidly about his experiences in the United Nations, followed by discussions. Llorenti represents the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the U.N. He as worked extensively on human rights issues and was Minister of Government of President Evo Morales. Since joining the U.N. Security Council, Ambassador Llorenti has been participating actively in crucial global challenges, such as the talks on North Korea’s nuclear program and the status of ongoing peacekeeping and political missions.

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Joseline Tlacomulco (19’), double major in Political Science and Human Rights, was awarded the “Undergraduate Social Action Award” by Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS), a national nonprofit professional organization dedicated to efforts related to feminist action, including promoting social justice through local, national, and international activism. This recognition is awarded to a student making a substantial contribution to improving the lives of women in society through their activism.

Joseline’s personal experience as a baby carried across borders and deserts inspired her to become involved in immigration issues which affect her livelihood as an undocumented woman of color. In her personal essay Joseline wrote, “many times I felt I was the only undocumented student on campus. I didn’t know anyone at UConn who was undocumented, making it hard for me to trust those in my social environment. It was through this difficult experience that my own identity as an undocumented student pushed me to realize the lack of resources for undocumented students. Then, there were no scholarships offered by the university for undocumented students, the schools website did not include any information about matriculating as an undocumented student, and finally, there were no steps or an action plan to fix these institutional issues. I asked myself, how could a leading institution and New England’s ‘flagship university’ have zero resources to help their undocumented students?”

To address these and other issues Joseline became a community organizer for Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D) and her work has significantly improved the lives of undocumented students at UConn. To enact social change Joseline leads workshops for faculty and staff concerning undocumented student populations, works with administration on various protocols, and facilitates legal aid services for undocumented students. Her efforts have amounted to protocols and transparent resources for undocumented students such as a web page on the financial aid website. The testimonial from Eleanor JB Daugherty, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students stated, “Joseline’s work for CT Students for A Dream is deeply compelling and has motivated University leaders such as myself to come forward and seek changes that would enable undocumented students to have a safe, accessible, and affordable college experience.”

Following the presidential inauguration of 2016, Joseline spearheaded efforts that facilitated open and much needed discussions about how immigration reform and other laws would affect UConn students. Following a campus-wide march, Joseline attended meetings to ensure that undocumented students would be safe at UConn. These efforts resulted in UConn examining its policies and protocols for the protection of undocumented students.

In addition to her grassroots work, Joseline is committed to student growth and is a frequent guest lecturer for many departments. Joseline’s lectures are complex and critical, and she offers students the opportunity to think through issues of diversity, as well as access to resources. Through her work, Joseline has become a mentor to many undergraduate students, such as Malachi Bridges who wrote the following testimony: “Joseline is an activist that is always willing to learn, work, help and teach. Among all these roles, she allocates the same 110% effort.” Another student, Laura Bedoya stated, “I admire Joseline’s fearlessness and ability to advocate for herself and many others. She inspires me stand firm in my beliefs.” It is clear that Joseline is a gifted speaker and is able to use her lived experiences to communicate issues often left out of curriculum about the diverse problems students of color at our university face today.

I’ve known Joseline for 3 years, and she has profoundly changed my life. My interactions with her in my classroom, at grassroots events, and other activities persuaded me to nominate her. When I saw the call for the award, I immediately thought of her and I felt in my heart that there was no one else more deserving of this award. At the award reception held on Saturday January 27, 2018 in Atlanta, Georgia Joseline gave a moving speech that was met with a standing ovation and her recognition was referred to as the “highlight of the event.” Her story and efforts are a legacy that will live on in the history of our nation. During this contentious and politically divisive time activists like Joseline give us hope, faith, and courage.
Borderlands Conference—March 30-31, 2018

Borderlands is a critical graduate symposium. This year’s conference will look at pressing inequalities which remain a central fixture of social theory, research, activism, and everyday living. Climatological distress; racialized terror; criminal [in]justice system expansion; techniques of extractive labor practices and production; militarized borders; right-wing populist resurgence; anti-trans and –queer violence; gendered stratification; and neocolonial formations are only broad hints to the varying oppressive regimes and inequities occurring throughout the Americas and the world. Influenced by theorists, activists, and artists who, in different ways, have asked us to consider the importance of bodies, identity, and their residues on our mapping of the social world, the theme of the third annual Borderlands conference is “Cartographies of the Body: Subversion. Surveillance. Crossings. Borderlands 2018 will function as a space in which the body is centered, re-posed and re-illuminated within discussion of these pheno- me. For more information visit https://borderlandsgraduatesymposium.wordpress.com

Performance: Mariposa Viajera—March 29, 2:00pm
Soame Citlalime (Nahuatl translation: Precious Women of the Stars) is a group of activist performers from Tetlanohcan, Mexico dedicated to aiding projects for and by transnational families. Their latest work, Mariposa Viajera, is a 35-minutes play on migration which will be presented in Spanish with subtitles projected in English. There will be an opportunity post-play to visit with the performers, learn more about the migratory lives their families live, how they have become activists around migration in Mexico and the United States, and how they have worked to preserve their indigenous heritage in the face of mass migration out of their region in Mexico.

Eyzaguirre Lecture—March 27, 2018, 4:00pm, Student Union 304A

The Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies (now El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean and Latin American Studies) and the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at UConn created the Luis B. Eyzaguirre Lecture to honor the memory of Professor Luis Eyzaguirre, who taught Latin American literature and Spanish at UConn for 32 years. The purpose of the lecture series is to provide students at UConn and the larger community of scholars an opportunity to experience the excitement and humanism of Latin America and the Caribbean's literature and culture. It allows the University community to know the human side of Latin American and Caribbean Studies by bringing distinguished literary and cultural figures to the Center to share ideas and discourse.

The 2018 guest speaker will be Fernando J. Rosenberg, Professor of Hispanic Studies and Comparative Literature, Brandeis. A native of Argentina, Rosenberg is the author of The Avant-Garde and Geopolitics in Latin America (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006) and is a member of the editorial board of the Hispanic Poetry Review. His research interests include critical and post-colonial theory, modernism and modernity, visual art and performance, and legal topics in the arts.

La Comunidad Intelectual (LCI) is a residential learning community dedicated to emerging intellectuals and community leaders. It is located in Eddy Hall, a dorm in the Alumni Quadrangle. LCI pedagogical innovation supports underrepresented students, students who are first generation to attend higher education, and those interested in Latino, Latin American and Caribbean issues. Students are diverse in their majors: business, math, pre-teaching, pre-med, engineering, communication, and more.

2017-18 marks LCI’s fourth successful year! Developer and creator is Professor Diana Rios, a joint appointment with El Instituto and Communication. Professor Rios and Ms. Graciela Quiñones-Rodriguez (photo right, front row center) are co-directors.
SPRING 2018—EVENTS

February 7, 12:15pm – 2:15pm
El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor
HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines.

February 14, 12:00-2:00pm
PRLACC, Student Union, 4th floor
LLAS it up! Job information for students of Latino and Latin American Studies. Lunch with corporate representatives.

February 14, 2:30pm
PRLACC, Student Union, 4th floor
Puerto Rico Crisis: Antonio Vázquez Arroyo, Rutgers, Political Science, Public Presentation: “Hurricane Maria: An Unnatural Catastrophe”

February 15
TBA
Puerto Rico Crisis: Antonio Vázquez Arroyo, Rutgers Dept. of Political Science, Faculty/Graduate Workshop.

February 21, 7:00pm
Babbidge Library, Video Theater 2
Film Screening: Embargo followed by discussion with filmmaker Jeri Rice.

February 27, 2:00-3:30pm
UCONN-Hartford, Hartford Times Bldg 142
Todd Miller, author and journalist: “Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration and National Security.”

February 28, 2:30-4:00pm
PRLACC, Student Union, 4th floor

March 1, 12:30-2:00pm
TBA
Puerto Rico Crisis: Efrain O’Neill Carrillo, University of Puerto Rico. Faculty/Graduate Workshop.

March 7, 12:15pm – 2:15pm
El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor
HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines

March 7, 1:00pm – 5:00pm
UCONN-Hartford, Infinity Music Hall
Latino Health Summit. For more information contact SSWEvents@uconn.edu or go to http://events.uconn.edu/event/58578/2018-03-07

March 22, 9:00am-5:00pm
Hartford Club UCONN-Hartford
Conference: Forms of Authoritarianism. To learn more go to: https://americanstudies.uconn.edu/2017/12/07/forms-of-authoritarianism-conference/

March 27, 4:00pm
Student Union, Room 304A

March 29, 2:00pm
Babbidge Library, Class of 1947 Room
Performance: Mariposa Viajera by Soame Citlalime (in Spanish w/English translation).

March 29, 3:30pm
John N. Plank Cuban Lecture Series: Professor Rafael Rojas, Cuban historian.

March 30-31

April 5
Puerto Rico Crisis: Carlos Vargas-Ramos, Research Associate, Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO), Hunter College-CUNY. Public lecture: “An Overview of Available Data on Puerto Rican Migrations to the Mainland.”

April 5
Puerto Rico Crisis: Carlos Vargas-Ramos, Research Associate, Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO), Hunter College-CUNY. Faculty/Graduate Workshop.

April 11, 12:15pm – 2:15pm
El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor
HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines.

April 19, 12:30pm
PRLACC, Student Union, 4th floor
In the interdisciplinary M.A. program at UConn’s El Instituto, our students explore Latina/o, Caribbean and Latin American worlds.

Program highlights

- Wide range of courses that examine local, hemispheric, or global dimensions of Latina/o, Caribbean, or Latin American realities
- Advisors from over 70 core and affiliated faculty scholars from departments throughout the university
- Original research in an academic disciplines of student’s choosing, in countries of Latin America or the Caribbean, and among the diverse Latina/o population along the New York to Boston corridor
- Research travel support, tuition remission and graduate stipend opportunities for both domestic and international students
- Graduates work in education, administration, business, government, and not-for-profit organizations and earn Ph.Ds. or other advanced degrees

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