

National Latino Research Center

California State University San Marcos



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A Semi-annual Newsletter

This newsletter summarizes our recent research and educational activities as well as community and campus events and collaborations.

In this Issue

- ♦ The Passing of a Legend: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales
- ♦ Director's Message
- ♦ Border Health Report Reaches State Senate
- ♦ National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month
- ♦ Researcher Spotlight: Dr. Maribel García
- ♦ Announcements
- ♦ Educational Disparities Fact Sheet
- ♦ Women of Ciudad Juárez
- ♦ Upcoming Events

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The Passing of a Legend: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales

By Dr. Jorge Mariscal, Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California San Diego

When in the summer of 1968 President Lyndon Johnson's Attorney General stood up before an audience of Chicano, African American, Puerto Rican, American Indian, and poor White activists, he had no idea he was about to receive a knockout punch delivered by a former Mexican American flyweight contender. When the stocky man with a moustache rose to ask his question, Attorney General Ramsey Clark dismissed him by saying he would not take questions until after his statement. Refusing to be silenced, the man stood again and forced Clark to listen to what he had to say.



That man was Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. He had come to Washington, D.C. as part of the Southwest delegation of the Poor People's Campaign, the project planned by Martin Luther King, Jr. to force the issues of poverty and economic injustice on to the national agenda. Gonzales did not mince words, telling Clark that if he would not admit that there was racial discrimination in housing he was either naïve or blind. Although this was the first time the national media had seen Gonzales, in the Southwestern states especially among young Chicanos he was already a legend.

Corky Gonzales was born in Denver in 1928, the son of farm workers. His family continued to move constantly in order to follow the crops and yet miraculously Gonzales graduated high school at age sixteen. His boxing career included Golden Glove championships and an impressive professional record as a bantamweight. In 1988 he was inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame.

Throughout the 1950s, Gonzales owned a popular eatery and a bail bond company in Denver. His real passion, however, was community activism and he participated in numerous grass-roots organizations and electoral politics, directing the Colorado Democratic Party's "Viva Kennedy" campaign in 1960. By the mid 1960s, however, his confidence that Democrats had a better understanding of the plight of working people of Mexican descent was shaken. Police brutality, institutional racism, and an escalating war in Southeast Asia moved Gonzales towards a new identity and a new vision. "Chicanas" and "Chicanos" were being born across the Southwest-Mexican Americans with an attitude, no fear, and a hunger for social justice. Corky Gonzales would become one of their most courageous leaders.

Continue on page 5

Greetings from the NLRC Director



Dr. González
NLRC Director

This semester has been very productive for the NLRC. The NLRC has been awarded a \$430,000 renewal grant by The California Endowment for the Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA) project. During the new three-year project, the NLRC will expand technical assistance and research efforts on asthma throughout communities in Southern California. In addition, the NLRC collaborated on several grant proposals to examine health disparities, environmental practices, and community development in Latino communities. If funded, these grants will total over \$1,500,000. The NLRC also collaborated on several successful events including a CSUSM faculty panel in recognition of Women's International Day, co-sponsored with the Women's Studies department. The panelists included professors Dr. Cynthia Chavez-Metoyer, Dr. Maribel García, Dr. Jule Gómez de García, and Dr. Vasanthi Shenoy who presented their research findings on issues affecting women. The NLRC also co-sponsored two events with CSUSM M.E.Ch.A. First, the "Disappeared Women of Juárez" presentation by Nancy Martínez-Molano on March 22, 2005 discussed the status of investigations into the disappearances and murders of young women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Second, we organized a public tribute to the late Chicano community activist "Corky" Gonzalez from Denver, Colorado on May 3, 2005.

I bid farewell to Sonia Taddy, NLRC Associate Director, who is leaving the NLRC after four years of dedicated service. Please join in wishing Sonia the best of luck with her new endeavors. I look forward to returning from sabbatical leave to my regular duties as NLRC director. There are many opportunities for faculty, students, and community members to collaborate with the NLRC on various research projects. Have a great summer!

NLRC Border Health Report Reaches the State Senate

In March, NLRC coordinator Konane Martínez was asked to testify at a California State Senate budget committee hearing regarding the proposal to cut funding to the California Office of Binational Border Health (COBBH). The NLRC's report "The Border that Divides and Unites: Addressing Border Health in California," was used by state legislators as they deliberated the issue and made recommendations to the governor.

The COBBH was created in 2000 by California Assembly Bill 63. Its mission is to protect and improve the health of California communities affected by border or binational conditions and activities through facilitating cooperation between California and Mexico health officials. The office is charged to create a strategic plan for border health, to work closely with the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission, and to prepare and submit an annual border health status report to the director of the Department of Health Services, the Legislator, and the Governor. The office plays an important role in fostering binational partnerships in the border region, assessing the public health status of border and binational communities, promoting health policy and program development, and in serving as a clearinghouse of information about border and binational health.

In spite of its important role in binational and border health issues, COBBH is currently slated for elimination by the state. At the request of The California Endowment, who funded the border health research, the NLRC was requested to testify at the state Senate budget committee regarding the proposal to close the office. Konane Martínez, author of the report, joined others in providing testimony to the committee. At the end of the meeting, the committee unanimously recommended to continue funding for COBBH. While this decision was a positive and encouraging one, the matter is now in the hands of the State Assembly and finally the Governor. For more information, please contact Konane Martínez at kmartine@csusm.edu or (760) 750-3505.

May is National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

By Carolyn Kitzmann

Nationwide and locally, teen pregnancy is a serious societal problem. Teen mothers and their babies are at higher risk for pregnancy complications and health problems. In addition, teen mothers complete less education than their peers and are more likely to depend on public assistance programs as adults. Teen childbearing costs U.S. taxpayers over \$7 billion annually in direct health care costs, foster care, public assistance, and lost tax revenues. The encouraging news is that teen pregnancy prevention programs are effective.

Observed each May since 1980 by states and communities throughout the country, National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month (NTPPM) is sponsored by Advocates for Youth. NTPPM aims to educate communities about the far-reaching effects of teen pregnancy, and to increase the public's awareness of teen pregnancy and prevention efforts.

Coinciding with NTPPM, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy hosted its fourth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on May 4, 2005. The purpose of this event was to focus teens' attention on the importance of avoiding teen pregnancy and parenthood. Teens nationwide participated by visiting www.teenpregnancy.org to take a brief quiz, available in English or Spanish, that asked what they would do in a variety of sexual situations. A survey of 2004 quiz takers revealed that the quiz had the intended impact. Most teens said that the quiz made them think about their own behavior in similar situations and that the quiz made the risks of sex and teen pregnancy seem more real to them.

Nationally, 1 in 2 Latinas become pregnant before age 20. Among all teen girls, 1 in 3 become pregnant before age 20.

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In San Diego County, Latinas account for 3 out of every 4 births to teens 15-17.

While teen pregnancy rates have been gradually declining since the early 1990s, rates among Latinas have seen only small declines. Nationally, one in three teen girls become pregnant before age 20; among Latinas, it is one in two teen girls (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; www.teenpregnancy.org). In San Diego County, Latinas account for 76% of births to teens between the ages of 15 and 17. In fact, among San Diego County's teen girls between 15 and 17, Latinas' pregnancy rates are more than seven times higher than pregnancy rates among white teens (Community Health Improvement Partners; Charting the Course IV 2004: A San Diego County Health Needs Assessment).

The NLRC has active collaboration with a number of teen pregnancy prevention programs in San Diego County. Prior to joining the NLRC staff, Health Projects Coordinator Konane Martinez was instrumental in obtaining funding for some of VCC's programs, including REACH and Junior REACH. The Vista Community Clinic (VCC) now runs four teen pregnancy prevention programs in the North County region of San Diego County.

On February 11, 2005, the National Latino Research Center facilitated a cultural competency training at Foothills High School South Campus in San Marcos, a California School Age Families Education (Cal-Safe) school designed for pregnant and parenting teens. The training consisted of an introduction to cultural competency guidelines and how these can be adopted to better improve the model of service delivery, the future direction of the program, and how to delineate procedures in a culturally appropriate manner for students and their families.

The NLRC is currently developing a new fact sheet about teenage pregnancy among San Diego County's Latinas to be released soon. For more information, please visit the NLRC website at www.csusm.edu/nlrc/publications/.

Researcher Spotlight ~ Dr. Maribel García

Dr. Maribel García received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in December of 2002. She has an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Anthropology and is currently an Assistant Professor in the department of Women's Studies at Cal State San Marcos. Most of her coursework has involved the study of feminist approaches to Border Studies, Chicano/a Culture Studies, Feminist Political Theory, Critical Race Theory, U.S. Third World Feminist Theory and Cultural Anthropology.



Dr. García's professional goal is to become an established scholar in the field of Women's Studies specializing in Chicana/o/Latina and Critical Race Studies. As a feminist anthropologist, she plans to contribute to the discipline by examining the ways that Chicana/o scholars have documented and analyzed the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas. Her work aims toward contributing to the current dialogues in Feminist research and Critical Race Studies—with its principle aim of locating Chicana/Latina scholarship and its conception of "gender."

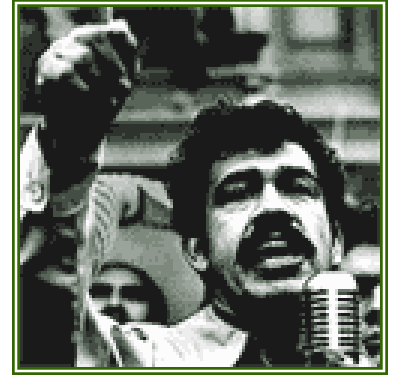
Her experiences as a Chicana feminist ethnographer as well as her coursework in Women's Studies have provided her with the inspiration for her current work. Her manuscript, *100 Mexican American Women Said: Listening to Transnational Mexicanas*, is a combination of many of her research interests. Her particular concern is in better understanding Mexican American women's structural inequality as well as their perception of sexism and material inequities. By drawing attention to and documenting the complications and intersections of multiple systems of exploitation, she incorporates women's experiences and perceptions of the intersections of class, sexism, and racism in a rural Mexican American community in South Texas. In the end, this manuscript will contribute to Women's Studies in general by articulating a particular kind of feminism, a transfronterista feminism. For more information, please contact Dr. Maribel García at magarcia@csusm.edu.

Announcements

- ◆ Konane Martínez, NLRC Health Projects Coordinator, completed her doctoral dissertation at the University of California, Riverside. Her dissertation, titled "Health Across Borders: Mixtec Transnational Communities and Health Care Systems," focuses on the relationship between a Mixtec transnational community and clinical health care systems in both the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, Mexico and in north county San Diego.
- ◆ Carolyn Kitzmann, NLRC Research Analyst, successfully defended her MA thesis, "Responses of Geoffroy's Marmosets (*Callithrix geoffroyi*) to Playbacks of Conspecific Food Calls" on Tuesday, February 1, 2005. She represented CSUSM at the CSU Statewide Student Research Competition held at CSU Sacramento on April 29-30, 2005.
- ◆ Dr. Arcela Núñez-Álvarez, NLRC Education Projects Coordinator, was a contributor to the newly released *Encyclopedia Latina: History, Society and Culture* (New York: Grolier Academic Reference, 2005). Edited by Ilan Stavans, the encyclopedia is a multidisciplinary, one-million-word, four-volume reference work on Latinos in America, covering history, literature, art, popular and folk cultures, science, politics, religion, business, demographics and law.
- ◆ Nancy Martínez-Molano, CSUSM student, was awarded the Student Leadership Award for her efforts to organize, "The Disappeared" Women of Ciudad Juárez, in collaboration with the NLRC, Women's Studies Dept., MEChA, and other organizations on campus and in the community. NLRC staff, Dr. Arcela Núñez-Álvarez and Ana Ardón, were also honored by the Women's Studies Department with a certificate for their collaboration with students on campus.

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales Continued

According to historian Ernesto Vigil, a founding member of Gonzales' organization, Crusade for Justice, the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata was the historical figure Gonzales admired most. Like Zapata before him, Gonzales would help to transform a community that had been exploited and treated as inferior for over a century into a proud and spirited people who demanded their rights as U.S. citizens and citizens of the world. In his influential poem "I am Joaquin," Gonzales wrote: "Clamoring voices / Mariachi strains / Fiery tequila explosions / The smell of chile verde and / Soft brown eyes of expectation for a better life."



In 1966, a full year before Dr. King made public his position against the U.S. war in Vietnam, Gonzales offered his own analysis. "Would it not be more noble," he asked, "to portray our great country as a humanitarian nation with the honest intentions of aiding and advising the weak rather than to be recognized as a military power and hostile enforcer of our political aims?" If we who are privileged to live in the United States enjoy a prosperity built on the backs of poor nations, he asked, are we not living the good life at the expense of the blood and bones of our fellow human beings?"

When Corky Gonzales passed away on April 12, the world in which his heroic acts took place seemed far away. Images of mass movements seeking to end unjust wars, police brutality, racism, militarism, and economic inequality are hazy and out of focus. Revisionists would like to dismiss the entire Vietnam war period--the Sixties--as a time of chaos and mayhem.

But the deeds of Corky Gonzales can never be dismissed or erased and his spirit will live on in young people who are selflessly working for a more just society and a world governed by international cooperation. And in Spanish-speaking homes across the nation, Chicano parents will teach their children that they owe a great debt of gratitude to Corky Gonzales, for he was a man who taught us to be proud of who we are and to demand the equality our families have earned.

Examining Educational Disparities in North County San Diego



Jesús Lopez ~ Bilingual Student at Rosa Parks Elementary School in Mid City Heights, being recognized for his academic achievements on May 20, 2005.

The NLRC has published a profile of educational disparities experienced by Latinos in North County San Diego. This profile highlights demographics of the region and its students as well as disparities in academic performance, high school graduation, college preparation, and college enrollment. A clear pattern emerges, showing that at each level of the educational process, Latino students fall further behind their non-Latino peers.

This profile is part of a series of fact sheets and profiles published by the NLRC to address topics of interest to our community partners. Previously published fact sheets profiled health disparities in San Diego and Imperial Counties. Another new fact sheet addresses the problem of teen pregnancy among Latinas nationwide and in San Diego County. To view our fact sheets and profiles, visit the NLRC website at www.csusm.edu/nlrc/publications.

Women of Ciudad Juárez

An evening of education and remembrance was held on Tuesday, March 22, 2005 at Cal State San Marcos to raise awareness about the femicides of working-class women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The purpose of the event was to educate people about the social issues affecting our neighbors and to become more active about supporting social justice and human rights. The program provided different perspectives about the situation in Ciudad Juárez. First, the keynote speaker, Señora Patricia Cervantes Pertenece of Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas, the mother of Neyra Azucena Cervantes, who disappeared May 13, 2003 in the City of Chihuahua shared her personal story of the struggle to find justice for the murder of her daughter. Also, Jessica Marques, a representative of Mexico Solidarity Network discussed the economic and social context in which the femicides of Juárez and Chihuahua impact the well-being of their residents. In addition, Sandra Bello, a San Diego-Tijuana human rights activist, discussed her project "Reacciona Mujer con Furia" in which she used photography to document people's reactions to the problem. The event promoted community unity and togetherness by bringing an issue that impacts all of our human rights to the public sphere of this community. In doing so, it informed and educated students and the community at large about the need for all individuals to be vigilant of human rights issues.



Crosses stand on the side of the road in Ciudad Juárez to remember murdered women

Since 1993, more than 400 women have been tortured and killed in the border town of Ciudad Juárez, located in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. Hundreds more have disappeared. The reasons are unknown. National and international investigative units have worked to apprehend the perpetrators and find solutions to this issue, but to this day there have been no resolutions. Instead, investigations have unraveled the layers of complicity that have allowed for the brutal murders of working-class women. In addition, little has been done to create a secure environment for women living in Juárez. Victims and their families deserve justice, yet their demands are ignored while the abductions and murders continue. For more information on how you can become involved, please contact Nancy Martínez-Molano at marti195@csusm.edu.

Upcoming Events

◆ Promotora Training to be held in Imperial County

The NLRC is working with the Imperial Valley Asthma Coalition (IVAC), and Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA) to schedule a promotora training in September 2005 with the goal to provide environmental health education and support to promotoras currently working in Imperial County. For more information, contact Dr. Arcela Núñez-Álvarez at anunez@csusm.edu or by phone at (760) 750-3503.

◆ Arts and Lectures Events

The CSUSM Arts and Lectures Series has funded two events which will be organized by the NLRC. First, the NLRC plans to bring to campus Vanessa Bauche, a Mexican activist for women's rights, to talk about the femicides in Ciudad Juárez. Second, in collaboration with the NLRC, Fredi García, a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Sociological Practice will bring Dolores Huerta, co-founder and First Vice President Emeritus of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO ("UFW"). Both events will take place during Latino Heritage Month.

