The third biennial Latina/Latino Studies Graduate Student Conference was held February 23-25, 2007 organized by the Graduate Student Committee (Aidé Acosta, Laura Autesta, Abel Correa, Judith Estrada, Alyssa Garcia, María del Mar González-González, Genevieve Tenoso, and Mirelsie Velázquez). The conference was held at the Levis Faculty Center, with an attendance of approximately 200 participants, not only from the University of Illinois, but from institutions across the nation, including the University of Texas; University of Minnesota; University of California; California State University; University of Indiana; Notre Dame; and George Washington University. A range of interdisciplinary topics were covered, including: community health and community practices; transnational sexualities; power and the intersections of race, gender, and class; redefining justice through social movements; reclaiming space and politicizing popular cultures; Latina/o participatory action in Illinois; developing a new Chicana/Chicano epistemology; and strategies for graduate student resistance in higher education.

The purpose of the conference was “to explore the historical and cultural processes that affect Latinas/os in the United States and to contribute to the understanding of Latina/o communities in the United States by promoting interdisciplinary analyses of shared social, political and cultural histories, and educational realities of Latinas/os.” The focus of the conference on activism and resistance through scholarship was proposed by the organizing committee as a way to commemorate and conclude the 10th Anniversary of the Latina/o Studies Program. During Spring 2006, the Latina/o Studies Program held an opening reception in celebration of the program’s 10th anniversary to reflect on the struggles that brought the program to its inception as well as the multiple accomplishments that the program has achieved in the past decade.

The keynote address was presented by Dr. Juanita Díaz-Cotto, Associate Professor of Sociology, Women’s Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the State University of New York at Binghamton. Dr. Díaz-Cotto obtained her PhD in Political Science from Columbia University. Her interests include social movements, feminism and sexuality, and the impact of the criminal justice system on women and men of color. Her edited publication under the pseudonym of Juanita Ramos, Compañeras: Latina Lesbians, continues to be a foundational text on Latinas and sexuality. Dr. Diaz-Cotto introduced the conference by bridging the gap between theory and practice and the intersections of gender and sexuality. Additionally, she shared with us her experiences as a Boricua activist and as an Afro-Latina lesbian. She encouraged participants to continue to produce and participate in events that address our necessities as Latinas/os in the United States.

During the Saturday luncheon, Michael Reyes was the invited “inspirational speaker.” Michael is an activist poet, and graduate student from Chicago. Michael focused on issues of racism, giving opportunities
Dr. Jonathan Xavier Inda is Associate Professor of Latinx/Latino Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Inda earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1997. His research areas include the anthropology of globalization, migrant and diasporic cultures, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, migration and development, and the body. Among his publications are Targeting Immigrants: Government, Technology, and New Migrant Mexican American Women (2004) and the edited volume Race, Memory, and Citizenship (Blackwell, 1999), Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics (Blackwell, 2003), and The Antithesis: The Forum of Basic Librarianship (Blackwell, 2008). In Fall 2007, Dr. Inda will teach the course “Body, Culture, and Power” (LLS 296). This seminar will explore the construction, imaging, and experience of the body in light of modern regimes of power/knowledge.

Dr. Gilberto Rosas is Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Latinx/Latino Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. During the 2006-2007 academic year he was a postdoctoral fellow in Latinx/Latino Studies. He earned a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Texas, Austin in 2004. Dr. Rosas theoretical expertise includes globalization, the state, violence, gender, immigration, illegal immigration, race, as well as Chicana/o/Latina/o Studies. During his tenure as a postdoctoral fellow, he worked on his manuscript entitled Exceptionalism and “Immigrant Social Struggles during the “War on Terror” Cultural Dynamics, 18, no. 3 (2006): 335-49; “Los Tres Entierros De Melquíades Estrada.” Contratiempo, Julio (July), 27, 2006; “The Fragile Ends of War: Forging the US-Mexico Border and the Fragmentation of Latinidad in U.S. Advertising.” In book chapter, “Generating Hope, Creating Change, Searching for Community: Stories of Resistance at the U.S.-Mexico Border” (Blackwell, 2008), which explored how the mobility of people across transnational boundaries have generated a new political thinking, or new political subjects principally between the United States and Mexico. Dr. Rosas received a distinguished offer for a postdoctoral fellowship from the NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. He has accepted an offer as assistant professor for the Department of Ethnic Studies and the Latinx/Latino Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Edna A. Viruell-Fuentes is Assistant Professor of Latina/Latino Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Viruell-Fuentes’s research focuses on the intersections of race/ethnicity, immigration, class and gender, and their impact on health inequities. Using a transnational approach, she investigates the health impacts of migration for immigrant-sending and -receiving communities. Professor Viruell-Fuentes is the co-author of several publications on community-based participatory research. In addition, she published “My heart is always there”: The Transnational Praxis of First-generation Mexican Immigrant Women (2007). She received her doctoral fellowship from the NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. He has accepted a joint appointment at the School of Medicine. She received her doctorate in anthropology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Michelle Téllez is a post-doctoral research associate during the 2007-2008 academic year. She was an Assistant Professor in the Women’s Studies Program at Arizona State University’s West Campus where she teaches transnational feminist courses such as “Gender and International Development” and “Women, Culture, and Globalization.” She specializes in women of color feminist theory, globalization, Chicana/o Studies, social movements and border studies. Dr. Téllez received her doctorate from Claremont Graduate University in the School of Educational Studies with a focus on Critical Community Studies in Spring 2005. In 2004-2005 she was a dissertation fellow in the department of Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her publications include the article “Doing Research at the Bordertown: Notes on a Chicana Feminist Ethnographer,” published in Chicana/Latina Studies: the Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social in Spring 2005 and, the book chapter, “Generating Hope, Creating Change, Searching for Community: Stories of Resistance at the U.S.-Mexico Border” Re-inventing Critical Pedagogy: Widening the Circle of Anti-Oppression Education edited by Cesar Rosario, Ricky Lee Allen, Marc Pruyser published by-rowman and littlefield. As a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Latina/o Studies program she will be working on her book manuscript, Transnational Community: Maclovio Riosas and the Politics of Gender in the Struggle for Social Justice. In the Spring semester 2008 she will be teaching a border studies course for the program.
Harry Gamboa Jr. was the invited guest speaker for the Rolando Hinojosa-Smith Lecture Series. His presentation entitled “Neonuance: Contemporary Images/Text/Concepts/Works/Words” examined the complex interaction of the urban Chicano artist and network culture. Gamboa revealed how the utilization of various media (photography, video, performance, internet) can affect awareness regarding real-life/real-time and fictional/artificial events. He situated several of his works and the responses to these works within an overview of his career in a series of storied vignettes.

Harry Gamboa Jr. is a Los Angeles-based essayist, photographer, poet, director, and performance artist. Along with Gronk, Patssi Valdez, Willie Herрен, he was a founding member of influential Chicano performance art collective ASCO. The group is notoriously known for creations such as the “No Movie” (staged photos disseminated as film stills so as to “project the real by rejecting the reel”) and “Spraypaint LACMA” (the first piece of Chicano conceptual art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in which ASCO members signed their name on the museum’s entrance walls after a curator said Chicanos don’t make art hence its absence in its galleries). Gamboa’s solo work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including in major shows in New York, Paris, and Mexico City. Having taught at virtually every four-year institution and art school in the greater Los Angeles area, a permanent collection of his media works and papers was recently established and archived at Stanford University’s Green Library. Gamboa’s book, *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr.*, was edited by media studies scholar Chon Noriega and published by the University of Minnesota Press in 1998. Gamboa grew up in the often fetishized and misrepresented area of East Los Angeles, California that continues to be impacted by poverty and violence. Despite what could best be understood as his miseducation courtesy of the East L.A. public schools, Gamboa learned through alternative means. In many ways an autodidact, books, newspapers, and 1950s television generated the cultural currency that would boost his vocabulary and heighten his awareness of the world outside of East LA. As a teenager he was active in community organizing and politics. A student of Garfield High School, Gamboa was a key participant in the 1968 “East L.A. Blowouts” which were the subject of the recent film *Walkout*.

The following is a discussion between Harry Gamboa Jr. and Aidé Acosta, Ph.D. student in Anthropology at UC

**AA:** How is Chicano/a art situated within the United States and in the international scene? How is it received overseas?

**HG:** Up until quite recently, Chicano Art has simply been ignored and rendered invisible by the national and international art establishment. Several artists have been identified as suitable for the art market; however, most have been painters/sculptors. The view is changing with the scholarly examination of the late 20th Century. At this point, there is no market for Chicano art, i.e., whatever purchase prices that might be adopted are not enough to interest any gallery or auction houses and will not attract high profile buyers because Chicano art is completely undervalued.

**AA:** What are your expectations for the future of Chicano/a art?

**HG:** Most Chicana/os in the media are concerned with breaking into mainstream industry standards and therefore seek a path that leads to the maximum potential paycheck. This path does not usually lead to artistic expression nor to enhanced creativity or excellence. I feel that the “No Movie” has more potential in affecting the general public who now has access to personal digital technology as a means of reaching a global audience.
Individual Plan of Study Majors In Latina/Latino Studies

Dr. Richard T. Rodríguez was awarded the "Latina/o Congratulatory Committee Faculty Award" during the 2007 Latina/o Congratulatory Ceremony for his diligent dedication to mentoring Latina/o students across disciplines. The profound impact he has had on a cohort of students was exemplified in the speech prepared by the student committee: "He truly goes above and beyond the role of faculty by advising our research and studies and taking an interest in our lives. Literally, he is always there for us."" (Sonia Rodriguez)

Professor Rodriguez quickly gained a reputation as an available mentor, proficient teacher, and active member of the community. This has only been possible because of his genuine passion for the education of our communities. He is a model professor and through example, provides the motivation and encouragement that the Latina/o Studies program continues to grow.

Dr. Rodriguez initiated his tenure as Assistant Professor of Latina/Latino Studies and English at the University of Illinois during Fall 2005. He earned his Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has taught courses on Latina/o literature, film and cultural studies. In Fall 2007 he will be teaching the courses: "Latinas/os on the Bronze Screen" (LLS 296) and "The Poetics of Healing: William Carlos Williams and Rafael Campo" (LLS 496).

Dr. Rodríguez was awarded the "Latina/o Congratulatory Committee Faculty Award" during the 2007 Latina/o Congratulatory Ceremony for his diligent dedication to mentoring Latina/o students across disciplines. The profound impact he has had on a cohort of students was exemplified in the speech prepared by the student committee: "He truly goes above and beyond the role of faculty by advising our research and studies and taking an interest in our lives. Literally, he is always there for us.”

"He truly exemplifies what a student/professor relationship should be. He would always be available for every student when they needed anything.” (Jesse Palencia)

"He has cared and been concerned with my well being and career. I have not encountered another professor that cares about his students like Professor Rodriguez does.” (Sania Rodriguez)

"Professor Rodriguez quickly gained a reputation as an available mentor, proficient teacher, and active member of the community. This has only been possible because of his genuine passion for the education of our communities. He is a model professor and through example, provides the motivation sought out by many of his students.” (Will Garcia)
freedom and activism. He exalted the audience with his activist poetry and made a poetic composition using words selected by the audience including freedom, queer, participation and peasants. During Friday and Saturday evening, conference participants continued to engage in a social setting. During the Friday night reception, the local group “Sandunga” performed traditional Cuban popular music. On Saturday night, the Chicago-based group “Fandanguero” performed Son Jarocho music. DJ NELAztlan closed the night with a mix of salsa, reggaeton and bachata as well as freestyle and norteñas.

The success of the conference is best expressed with the comments of participants:

This (the conference) is an excellent way of introducing graduate students with diverse backgrounds and specialties with other students, in order to create a collective mentorship body... It was helpful to meet other graduate students, both in Illinois and throughout the U.S. that rooted their scholarship in academic resistance. It was a great way of knowing that we are not alone in the work that we do and a reminder as to why this work is important.

The conference was acknowledged by the University of Illinois’ administration. The organizing committee received an official letter from Chancellor Herman dated March 2, 2007. In this letter, Chancellor Herman commended the committee for their success in organizing this conference, and acknowledged the importance of an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary engagement. He stated, “...this was my third time participating in the conference and once again I was very impressed with the breadth and depth of scholarly papers you assembled.” He continued to mention that Provost Katehi and Associate Chancellor Berry reported that they were “...most pleased with the caliber of the papers in terms of both the rigor of the scholarship and the innovative approaches used to theoretically examine these topics.”

The participation of faculty, staff, and students within Latina/o Studies and associated programs has helped our academic community to build a visible and vibrant presence. It is important to note that the personal investments we all make in our daily works on campus help to promote the goals of our communities and generate an appreciation for the contribution of Latina/o Studies generally. On behalf of this year’s conference committee, we appreciate the honor of working for the Latina/o Studies Program and look forward to an equally dynamic conference in 2009.