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Pluma Fronteriza: Newsletter of Latino/ Chicano(a) Writers of the El Paso and Cd. Juárez Border Region

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Pluma Fronteriza

Newsletter of Latino/Chicano(a) Writers of the El Paso and Cd. Juárez Border Region



Ricardo Melantzón Aguilar
1947 — 2004

NEWS

Writers Unite

The Leaping Lizards Literary Alliance launched its new Website at www.leapinglizardsliterary.com. The alliance was founded in September 2004 by representatives of Meta4 Organization for Poetic Expression, Vergin' Press, and unlikelystories.org. Its purpose is to allow writers and literary administrators working in the greater El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico area to pool non-monetary resources, most especially time, in order to further the visibility and quality of the area's growing literary movements. More information is available on the site.

Getting Acclaim

Award-winning author **Benjamin Alire Sáenz'** latest novel is garnering high praise around the country. *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* is a young adult novel Latino-style. The year is 1969. America is at war, *Hollywood* is a dirt-poor Chicano barrio in small town America, and *Sammy and Juliana*, about to head into their senior year, are in love. Denise Chávez says, "*Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* is our American Graffiti...No, that's not right. It's

(Continued "News" on page 9)

Did You Know?

Lalo's Colorado Goodbye

EducARte of Colorado sponsored El Tercer Festival de Poesía Latinoamericana this past October honoring Abelardo (Lalo) Delgado. It was held in Boulder, Colorado. Also that month, Lalo was honored at the National Latino Law Student Association conference in Denver. Lalo was scheduled to participate. Our editor, Raymundo Elí Rojas read Lalo's biography and described Lalo's performance style. Ramon Del Castillo read his poem "Lalo's Velorio" which we include in this issue. In Denver, the Office of Art, Culture and Film and the Pan African Arts Society honored Denver Poet Laureate Lalo Delgado and celebrated *El Día de los Muertos* as part of the month's independent art and spoken word set. The event took place in October at Blackberries Espresso & Ice Cream Salon. Local poets and artists **Dr. Ramon Del Castillo, Vanessa Delgado** (upcoming poet and granddaughter of Lalo Delgado), **Marie Domingo, Nick Vigil** (Santero and Kachina doll maker), **Jay Paul Apodaca** (painter), **Ebony "Isis" Booth**

(Continued in "Did You Know?" on page 12)

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AT EL PASO



OVER 30 YEARS OF MOVIMIENTO

Published and distributed with generous assistance from UTEP Chicano Studies

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Dear Friends,

I was sad to hear that Ricardo Aguilar left us in September. We had just lost Lalo Delgado in July. As I was writing this letter, I heard the Wobblie Carlos Cortez also passed. The passing of these great writers leaves us with a void, especially in El Paso. However, Lalo and Ricardo gave the tri-state region a growing literary renaissance. New writers groups are springing up every day, and I hear Denise Chávez is doing good work up the river in Mesilla. Now with the Clinica Salud de La Fe's new arts center and the continued good work by UTEP Chicano Studies, El Paso is on the move.

It seems to me that the young adult and children's book trend in Chicano Literature has hit a plateau. But what a tour it had! That is not to say it's over. It simply seems from the 1990s to just a few years ago, every writer was putting out a children's book or a young-adult reader. The presses were crazy for them and many classics were published including *The Circuit*, *Parrot in the Oven*, *Tommy Stands Alone*, *Chato's Kitchen* among others. This is where the money was, at least for some presses. Who knows about the authors?

However, I think it is safe to say there are some writers who had no business going into these genres. Looking back, and of course taking an adult perspective, and not one of a child or young adult, there were a host of bad children's and YA books. Some of them came from the champions of our literature, some of them came from unknowns. I'm not saying there are any good books coming out in this genre any more. Our own Benjamin Alire Saenz' *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* is gaining notoriety.

Some writers learned their lesson. It is not that easy to write one of these books. Which ones of the many will be read in high schools and elementary schools years from now? In addition, I think some writers found their niche in the genre and maybe should stay there for a while. They became masters at writing children's books and YA books.

Writers should not be limited to simply being novelists, poets, children's book writers, and journalists. Traditionally novelists and short story writers have been comfortable to cross genres, many short story writers starting in that genre before moving to novels. Writers like Gary Soto have been able to move through children's lit, poetry, and prose. Same for Sandra Cisneros and Luis J. Rodríguez. Ray González has been able to do essays and poetry. Some writers elevated themselves to novels and forgot they were good short story writers. I can name a few writers who are dedicating themselves to novels now, yet I would still buy a short story collection from many of them. I would love to see another short-story anthology from Chávez and Alicia Gaspar de Alba. I'm always ready for another one from Dagoberto Gilb. Then again, all this may be just a sign of the times in what presses are looking for.

On the other hand, writers should know what they are good at and be able to admit defeat in a genre. Sometimes a writer's experimentation into another genre meets with horrifying consequences.

It seems that the agents and non-university presses are really looking for ChikLit (also spelled ChicLit, Chic lit, Chik lit) these days. One press solicitation read: "Are you the next Terry McMillan?" "Have you written the Latina Bridget Jones Diary or the next Dirty Girls Social Club?" Good luck in finding what the definition of this genre is and do your homework before sending your book to the publisher asking for such a work.


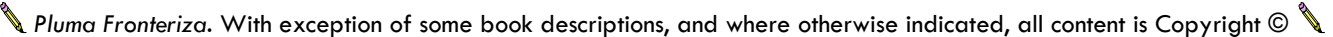
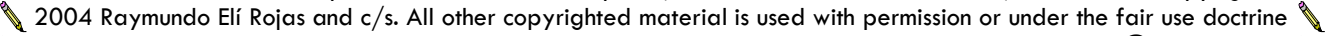

The Website www.chicletbooks.com says,

"chick lit is a genre comprised of books that are mainly written by women for women. The books range from having main characters in their early 20s to their late 60s. There is usually a personal, light, and humorous tone to the books. Sometimes they are written in first-person narrative; other times they are written from multiple viewpoints. The plots usually consist of women experiencing usual life issues, such as love, marriage, dating, relationships, friendships, roommates, corporate environments, weight issues, addiction, and much more. (sic) How does this differentiate from? (sic): Well, it's all in the tone. Chick lit is told in a more confiding, personal tone. It's like having a best friend tell you about her life. Or watching various characters go through things that you have gone through yourself, or witnessed others going through. Humor is a strong point in chick lit, too. Nearly every chick lit book I have read has had some type of humor in it. THAT is what really separates chick lit from regular women's fiction." (sic)

I do not know if this description helps or not. One thing we know is the presses are looking for novels only. Nevertheless, I wonder how this sits with all the wonderful literature that came from Chicanas in the 1990s. I do not dare call one of my Chicana *carnal*s work "chiklit," but if you think there is a Chicana's work that fits that genre (maybe it's your own?), send us an email and let us know.

Back to our crossing genres discussion. What are writers to do with genre metamorphosis? I guess one should change with the times, and not change with the times, remembering there's always a *pinchi pajaro* ready to snap you up right out of your cocoon. Use your judgment. Maybe writers should delve into different genres, trying them on for size. But keep your day jobs.

Raymundo Elí Rojas

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Time & Place



Barrio Viejo

Viejo barrio, barrio viejo
Solo hay lugares parejos
Donde un día hubo casas
Donde vivió nuestra Raza.

Solo quedan los escombros
De los hogares falices
De las alegres familias
De esa gente que yo quise.

Por las tardes se sentaba
Afuera a tomar el fresco
Yo pasaba y saludaba
Ya parece que oigo el eco.

Como está Doña Juanita.
Buenas tardes Isabel.
Hola que dices Chalita,
Como está Arturo y Manuel.

Viejo barrio, barrio viejo
Que em infancia te goce
Y con todos mis amigos
Iba descalzo al a pie.

De Iay Mayer hasta "El Hoyo"
Desde "El Hoyo" hasta la hacequia,
De la hacequia hasta el rio,
Ese era el mundo mio.

Dicen que eramos pobres,
Pues yo nunca lo note.
Yo era feliz en mi mundo,
Ese aquel barrio que adore.

Bonitas las serenatas

A las tres de la manana
Que le cantaba a mi chata
Pegandito a su ventana.

Por la calle de el convento,
Una casa destruida,
Quedó como monumento
Al gran amor de mi vida.

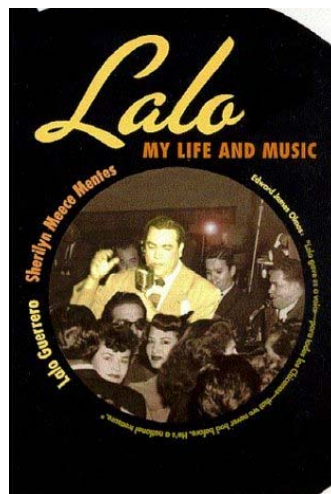
Pobrecito viejo barrio,
Como te debe doler.
Cuando en nombre del progresso
Durrumban otra pared.

Viejo barrio, barrio viejo,
Yo tambien ya envejeci
Y cuando uno se hace viejo
Nadie se acuerda de ti.

Vamanos muriendo juntos,
Que me entierren en tu suelo
Y seremos dos difuntos
Rodeados de mil recuerdos.

Letra y musica de Lalo Guerrero
© Barrio Libre Music, BMI

Lalo Guerrero is the grandfather of Chicano music. He is our other favorite "Lalo." Raised in Tucson's Barrio Viejo, as the song says, Lalo has entertained our people at times writing boleros in the 1930s, swing in the 1940s, *mambos* and *pachuco* boogie in the 1950s, *rancheras* and *corridos* in the 1960s and 70s, always keeping one step ahead of our music well into the late decades of the 21st century. He lives in Palm Springs, California. His autobiography/biography was published by the University of Arizona Press.



HERO: Lalo Delgado

LALO

King the poetic Chicano sea from,
El Paso to the universities of Glasgow.

LALO

Draw me in with your versoemas
you gentle veteranoÉwith poemas like

THUNDER!

You wrote with your pencil and paper and you, our
beloved flor y canto you did just thatÉ

ExplodeÉ

LALO

As you passed the baton
to the young vatos locos
de la calle you said
que hubole with respect
and love and never seeing
us below you,
we read next and in front
of you É
hearing your silent
approval by saying as our
teacher and brotherÉ

SI SE PUEDE

Palabras that made us
respect our mujeres and
our mothers.

From that loud booming sound
That voz, that incredible Chicano voiceÉ.to the movida, the
movement
How did that big Chicano flow? Asi nomasÉ

LALO

I saw that older Chicano with words like a knife steady
from his lips,
he didn't want to put you down
Solo for you to rise up with CORAJE!!!

With his heart in el cielo as he wore and read

HUELGA

And having meaning from that that old t-shirt. He was
Chicano Spunk!!!
Arriba el valor, la fuerza de ese maestro, poeta of
nosotrosÉ

los seres humanos, human kind.

But like all our teachers, abuelos and amigos and now
muertos he had to goÉ

LALO

So he hijacked that heavenly ranfla with that big smile on
his face and that
big brown Chicano fist in the air as those thunderous words
shook fronteras
and the boarder crossers even los montanasÉ

The cold to the calienteÉas you once
wrote when perfumed flowers bloom poetry fills the air as
we empty our despair.



All so perhaps one day,
more chicanitos
will learn to bloom and
say with their corajeÉ

LALO!

©2004
by Azul Mares-Del
Grasso

To Lalo

Goodbyes are hard
Harder to admit
Than to utter

I haven't said it yet
But I was there
I accompanied your body

I walked behind
Someone said,
"Careful not to step on graves."

And I watched my feet
Hopscotching between graves
And said sorry

To the land, to the grass
To the wide open
Ancient grave.

(Continued in "Hero" on page 5)

(Continued from "Hero" page 4)

When they lowered your body
I refused to look, and
When they showered you with flowers

I tried, I tried hard to follow suit
Out of respect
Not out of acceptance

But again I could not
I just threw my flower at you
I was mad and took it on you

I know you would understand
You know I have enough
My memory is full of the dead

I don't want you there

I will never say goodbye
Because you're not gone
And I have your words to prove it.

Ghada Kanafani
October 2004

Para Lalo

Las despedidas son duras
Más duras de admitir
Que de pronunciar

No lo he dicho aún
Pero yo estaba allí
Yo acompañaba tu cuerpo

Yo caminaba detrás
Alguien dijo:
"cuidado, no piséis las tumbas"

Miré mis pies,
Sorteando las tumbas
Y dije "lo siento"

A la tierra, a la yerba
A todo el amplio
Y antiguo cementerio

Cuando bajaron tu cuerpo
No quise mirar, y
Tampoco cuando te pusieron flores

Lo intenté, intenté con fuerzas hacer lo mismo
Por respeto
No por resignación

Pero de nuevo no pude
Tan solo te lancé mi flor
Estaba furiosa y la pagué contigo
Yo sé que tú lo entenderías

Tú sabes que yo tengo bastante
Mi memoria está repleta de muerte

No te quiero allí

Nunca te diré adios
Porque tú no te has ido
Y tengo tus palabras que lo demuestran.

Ghada Kanafani
October 2004

Like many from my generation, I came out of the cotton fields out in West Texas, *cerca de El Paso* and became a "college boy" as *camaradas* would call me to try to put me down, as if what the system tried to do to us was not enough. El Upward Bound at UTEP became *la entrada* to college. Yale University opened its doors to some of us as they tried to sift through "La Creme de La Mud" as they made us feel by defining us as deprived because our



Left to right: Lorna Dee Cervantes, Ramon Del Castillo, Gloria Velasquez, and Lalo Delgado

culture and language. I almost fell victim to the trappings. *Gracias a Dios que el poeta orador, Abelardo, helped me find the new identity que sigo protegiendo - Chicano.* Our challenge to honor his work, life and memory is to challenge the persisting anguish caused by "Stupid America." *Descansa en Paz y gracias for por la esperansa que con trabajo y obras nos dio esperansa.*

- Alfonso López-Vásquez, Tornillo, Texas to
Pacific University, Oregon

Lalo wrote instructional modules for teachers, especially for UTEP's Teacher Core, designed to teach concept of neighborhoods and *barríos*. Now it's a new field, segments of communities, interface, identify. Lalo was dealing with those same concepts ahead of his time. He was very

(Continued in "Hero" on page 7)

Una Despedida to Lalo Delgado

By Ramon Del Castillo



A rosary for Abelardo “Lalo” Barrientos Delgado was held on Tuesday, July 27th at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church located in North Denver, a church whose historical limelight showed brightly with activism during the height of the Chicano Movement. It was also the place where the Delgado family attended mass faithfully for years. They had a special place where they sat every Sunday, a space that they will continue to use, but where *el gran abuelito* will be missing.

Fr. Marshall Gourley, long-time activist, *sacerdote* and personal friend of the Delgado’s, led the community in reciting the rosary. Lalo Delgado was a very spiritual and religious man who recited the rosary on a daily basis. Marshall masterfully tied in the 5 mysteries of the rosary into how Lalo lived his life in communion with the community.

Although everyone knew Lalo and could have shared a story or two about him, five persons were selected to speak about

la vida de Lalo Delgado. Tep Falcon, long-time activist shared un *cuento* about Lalo and his inability to navigate on the road without getting lost because he believed that “all roads led to Denver and perhaps to Heaven.” Tep had everyone in tears, both from humor and from the pain of loss, as she shared her experiences with Lalo reminding us of his gregarious personality.

Ramon Del Castillo, fellow poet and activist who traveled the poetry road with Lalo for 24 years, likened Lalo to a mentor. Ramon shared a story where he had been invited to read poetry at a Hispanic Republican meeting. Confused and needing *consejos*, Ramon called Lalo. Lalo told Ramon, “to go and read and make sure that they never invite you back.” Incidentally, he was never invited back to read for the confused *carnales*. But Ramon was also given advice that when he read at the pulpit to read with honor and humility. He ended his presentation with a poem entitled, “Lalo’s Velorio.”

Jim Allen, co-founder of the Colorado Migrant Council, spoke of the many years he and Lalo visited the migrants in the fields and the continued support of the many boycotts that were characteristic of Cesar Chavez’ tactics in achieving social justice. Lalo was always there with a poem for the struggling *campesinos*.

Magdaleno “Len” Avila, *compadre* to Lalo in his usual prophetic voice, led the crowd in the Chicano ovation that is, clapping in unison. He paid deep respect to Lola Delgado and thanked her for sharing Lalo with the community for decades. He dedicated a poem “Chicana,” to Lola and the women who had come to say goodbye to Lalo.

Another *compadre* and minister in his own right, Mike Garcia, shared his history with Lalo at the University of Colorado at Boulder in the 1960s and 70s. His poem, “Just Lalo,” was a tribute to a renaissance man. He shared a prayer at the end of his presentation, stating the Lalo would continue to write poetry in Heaven.

As community members entered the church for the funeral mass they were given a tribute to Lalo from *Here Lies Lalo*, with “Stupid America,” his signature poem on it. During the mass, five family members including Alicia, Raymundo and Vanessa shared personal stories and poems about their father and grandfather. The message was loud and clear. Lalo shared his wisdom and *consejos* with his offspring, writing poems for all of his 19 grandchildren for special occasions. It was apparent that writing and oratory are in the genes as each family member articulated their love and respect for their loved one. Granddaughter Vanessa Delgado, young upcoming poet and student at Metro State College, shared a poem about her grandfather.

The 90-car solemn procession to *el pantion* was greeted with *mariachis* that opened the ceremony with Lalo’s favorite *Mexicano* music. On behalf of the Colorado legislature, Dr. Estevan Flores presented the family with a Colorado flag. Estevan closed with a poem on “Who will be reading Lalo’s poems now? Sadness permeated the *pantion*, *lagrimas* flowed freely and flowers were thrown into the casket as a termination ritual. Adios Lalo.

(Continued from "Hero" page 5)

insightful. As a UTEP alumnus, he contributed his one literature. He gave back to his *alma matter* and to the community. He had cultural continuity. Eras, times pass by. I am certainly one of his fans, reading and rereading *Letters to Louise*. He was one of our literary ambassadors. Much of his production thematically includes El Paso. When they hear Delgado, they are hearing El Paso.

Denise Bixler-Marquez, UTEP director of Chicano Studies

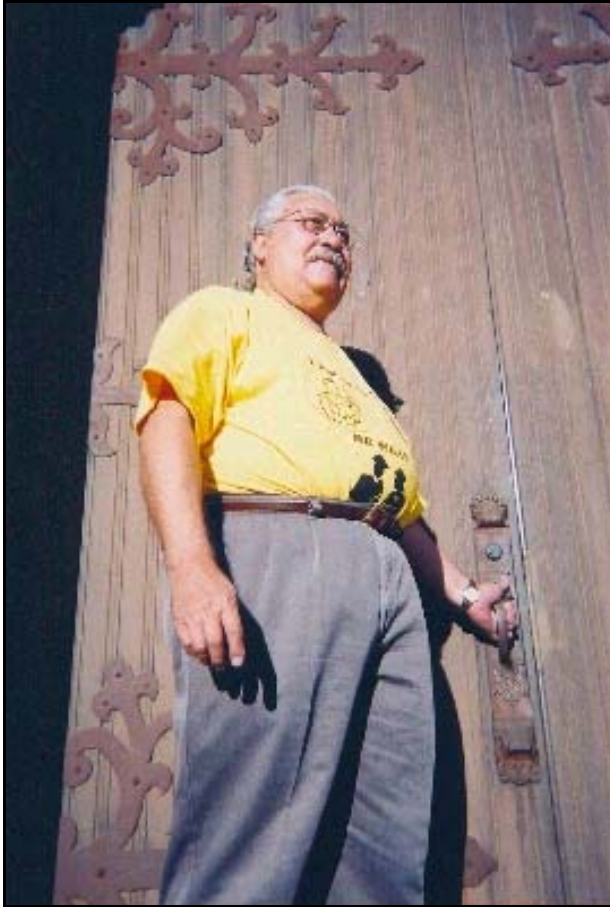


Photo: Michael Evans Smith

"The narrator of Delgado's novel is a middle-aged Chicano poet/social worker/administrator named Santiago Flores. His job as an expert on the problems of migrant workers takes him across the Southwest, and his 'search for myself' carries him back into the world of his childhood. In the warm, slightly wacky letters that he writes to an unknown correspondent – possibly you? Possibly me? – there's a touch of Whitman and also a swatch of Cantinflas, and finally a great and appealing personality, a new and attractive voice. By peering over Abelardo's shoulder you may catch a glimpse of yourself in his highly polished Chicano mirror."

- Alan Cheuse, *The New York Times*, 1977

"I'm very proud of him for what he has accomplished, and I hope that some day he can just stop everything and write. That's what he wants to do."

- Lola Delgado, wife

Lalo's Velorio

Here lies Don Abelardo,
humble poet laureate de Aztlan
hero to those who till the soil
freedom fighter for los de abajo
grandfather to the generations
of Chicano poets who dared to pick up
the pen crafting images de una vida dura
pero tambien llena de esperanza,
reading poetry at the pulpit
in community centers and barrio streets.

Here lies Lalo
resting in a coffin
hecho de las letras
of two alphabets made of wood
nailed together, never to disunite
telling cuentos con compasion about the two worlds
he loved so much, shaped into hard brittle words
sprinkled con polvo fina turning into dust
becoming part of the earth again, creating images
never to be forgotten
dichos y conceptos
de una humanidad
que ha sufrido mucho. His
poetry spread onto a shroud
con la tinta de nuestra sangre
is painted on many castles
made of human flesh. His words
have been chiseled
onto the calaveras of many fragile minds
never to be forgotten. His images
are both blessings and nightmares
about what humanity can be and what it is.
His spirit has left to be with his Master
to write the last verse, the last poem
the last cuento, knowing that poets
cannot write their own epitaphs
leaving it the tlamatimies
of the modern day world.

Here lies Lalo
knowing that
the souls of the poets
would emerge
coming to say goodbye
in the only way they know how;
through the written word.
Gracias por sus palabras, the time
to fly into the night and disappear
into the Heavens has arrived.
Vaya con Dios!

© 2004 Ramon Del Castillo

(Continued in "Without Reservation" on page 14)

Ricardo Aguilar Melantzon

1947-2004



On Sept. 24, 2004 in El Paso, Texas, Ricardo Aguilar Melantzon passed away. At the time of this passing, he was a professor at New Mexico State University. He had been hospitalized for about a week after a heart attack. Ricardo Aguilar Melantzon was born in El Paso in 1947. He had lived in Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico most of his life.

He received his B.A. from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 1971 and his M.A. in 1972. He received his Ph.D. in 1976 from the University of New Mexico.

He taught as an instructor in Spanish from 1974 to 1975 at UTEP; served as a lecturer in Chicano Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle; and as director of the UTEP Chicano Studies Program (1977-79). Aguilar also served as assistant vice president for Academic Affairs at UTEP, Acting associate director of Border Studies (1982), and interim director of UTEP Chicano Studies (1987-88). He also lectured at the Escuela de Administración Pública y Ciencia Política de la Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua en Cd. Juárez (UACJ).

His scholarly publications included *Efraín Huerta* (Mexico City: Saínz Luiselli, 1984) and *Glosario del caló de Ciudad Juárez* (Joint Border Research Institute, 1989). His creative work included *Carvana enlutada* (poetry; Mexico City: Pájaro Cascabel, 1975), *En son de lluvia* co-editor (poetry)(Mexico City: Inba/Transterra, 1980), *Madreselvas en flor* (autobiographic narrative)(Universidad Veracruzana, 1987), *Aurelia* (Gobierno del Estado de Querétaro, 1990), and *A Barlovento*. He also co-edited *Palabra nueva: Cuentos chicanos* (Texas Western Press, 1984), *Palabra nueva: Poesía chicana* (Dos Pasos, 1985), and *Palabra nueva: Cuentos chicanos II* (Dos Pasos, 1987). He also published *José Fuentes Mares* (UACJ 1990), *A barlovento*, (Torreón: Universidad Iberoamericana y Nimbus Ediciones, 1999), and *Lo que el viento a Juárez* (Torreón: Universidad Iberoamericana y Nimbus Ediciones, 2000 entrevistas). Aguilar also published *Traven para jóvenes* (antología, México: INBA), *La frontera: Letra y risa* (ensayo, UACJ), *Cuento chicano del Siglo XX*, (antología, México: UNAM).

A true fronterizo, Aguilar's *A Barlovento* sought to find answers to questions about the meaning of border life, death and love. Aguilar said. "It's about what El Paso and Juarez have become over the last 35-40 years." It was the last of his border trilogy, *Madreselvas en Flor*, *Aurelia* being the first two parts.

In his last years, Aguilar had taken on the task of translating major works in Chicano Literature including *Always — La vida loca/Siempre corriendo*, (New York: Simon & Schuster/México: Planeta), Ron Arias' *Road to Tamazunchale* (Bilingual Press 2002 ISBN 1931010064), and Denise Chávez' *Living Pedro Infante*.

Aguilar was published in many publications over the decades on both sides of the border including the *Americas Review*, *Caracol*, *Revista Chicano-Riquena*, *Entorno*, *Siempre!*, *Vista*, *La Jornada*, and more. Many of his books were published by Mexican universities. A recipient of many awards, grants, and fellowships, Aguilar's *Palabra nueva: cuento chicanos* won the 1984 Book of the Year Award from the Southwest Regional Library Association. In 1988, he received the Prentice Cultural Award from the H. Consejo Universitario de la UACJ for his aid in launching and sustaining the quality of a publishing program and for aid in establishing links with foreign universities. Aguilar received the UTEP Literary Award for Fiction Written in Spanish for *Palabra nueva* in 1995. In 1988, he received the Premio Nacional de Literatura José Fuentes Mares from the UACJ for *Madreselvas en flor*. In 1989, he received the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship Grant for Fiction.

In 2003, Aguilar was named New Mexico Professor of the Year and an NMSU Regents Professor. At the time of his death, he had been a faculty member in the Languages and Linguistics department for more than 10 years. Aguilar served as department head and as member of the board of directors of the New Mexico Hispanic Cultural Center from 1994 to 1997. He also was acting director of the Center for Latin American and Border Studies in 2002-03

He has also written scholarly work: *La intervencion sobrenatural en el destino de los caracteres de los cuentos de Francisco Monterde García Icazbalceta* and *La poesia de Efraín Huerta*.

Ricardo Aguilar was one of a handful of scholars who wrote about the cultural expressions of Chicanos in Mexican literary magazines and major newspapers like *Excelsior* and *Plural*.

Ricardo made many friends in life. Many of them have commented to us their sadness in his passing.

By Raymundo Eli Rojas

SIGN MY BOOK
PERFORMANCES, CONFERENCES,
BOOK SIGNINGS, READINGS &
OTHER NEWS

Novelist Duarte pay visits

Stella Pope Duarte, author of *Let their Spirits Dance*, was in El Paso to read at the "A River of Voices Rising" reading in October at the Remedios Hair and Art Studio at 2501 N. Stanton. The event was sponsored by the Women Writers Collective of El Paso. Website: www.womenwriterscollective.org. The event benefited Amigos de las Mujeres de Juarez (\$5 admission).

Dirty Girls Social Club author visits

Latina ChikLit author **Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez** visited the Sun City in early November reading at the Camino Real Hotel. Valdes-Rodríguez is the author of *The Dirty Girls Social Club* and *Playing With Boys*. The event included a silent auction, and proceeds benefited the El Paso Public Library. The event was sponsored by the El Paso Public Library Association.

Los Desarraigados

The play "Los Desarraigados" was performed at the El Paso Playhouse in early November. El Paso's Spanish-language theater company, in association with El Paso Community College Drama Department and El Paso Playhouse presented the classic play that explores Chicano identity. The play was written by Mexican playwright J. Humberto Robles.

Mesilla is the place to be

The Cultural Center of Mesilla, Mesilla, NM, hosted several events. In November, they held "¡Gracias a la vida/Thank You To Life! An Intensive Writing Workshop with author **Denise Chávez** celebrating the power and gratitude of the family story. In gratitude to the community for its ongoing and encouraging support, Chávez offered the workshop free to the public. In December, **Benjamin Alire Sáenz** hosted a reading and book signing of his young adult novel, *Sammy and Juliana In Hollywood*. Also in December, there was a special book signing with world renowned writer **Rudolfo Anaya**. He signed his new books, *Serafina's Stories* and *The Santero's Miracle: A Bilingual Story*, and a new 25th anniversary edition of *Tortuga*, the classic coming of age novel set at The Carrie Tingley Children's Hospital.

Meléndez in the Big Apple

Rafael Meléndez informs us that after almost 30 years of writing plays, he's finally made it to New York City to the Spanish Repertory of New York City. His play "Don Mahin, el primero" was recently selected as one of the finalists for the Nuestra Voces MetLife Playreading Series. From the finalists, the first prize winner is going to receive a full production, literally off Broadway. The play focuses attention on the plight of the children of non-documented Mexican nationals who have become the target of institutionalized racism in the United States. "It happened in the 1930s and history has come full circle. This time we will not be rounded-up like cattle and returned to Mexico. Arizona voters past a bill this Nov. 4, 2004 denying the children of Mexican workers medical health and I hope that nonsense winds up in the Supreme Court. Forty percent of the fatalities from Texas in Iraq son raza, so que chingen a sus..... " - Rafael Melendez. The play was performed in November. It deals with life in a small Southwestern town during The Depression, which leaves its occupants struggling to define themselves according to the American system in which they live.

(Continued from "News" page 1)

our Mexican Graffiti." Sáenz read in October at the Shine Gallery at 1220 Texas Avenue, in the heart of El Paso's resurgent cultural district.

Tumblewords Presents Armando Soto & Teatro Bienestar

Tumblewords hosted **Armando Soto** who has been acting and dancing for 13 years, including as a performer in *Viva! El Paso* and *Shakespeare on the Rocks*. As a student of the Triana School of Spanish Dance, Soto has performed at the Abraham Chávez Theater in the opera production of "Carmen" and in many other productions in Texas, New Mexico, Florida, and Chihuahua. He has also been a featured guest artist with Flamenco Duende. Soto enjoyed a rewarding internship with the Globe Theater in San Diego, going into inner-city schools to use theater to build at-risk youths' self-esteem. After two years he decided to counter the trend of talented people leaving El Paso, and so he returned to head an effort to develop a theater program for students at the Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe. Part of his job includes writing original plays involving health issues. He is also working with an adult theater group, which recently performed at a national conference on AIDs at the La Fe's Culture and Technology. His goal is to become "an artist of the soul, creating at every level and at all times with the best intentions in mind and with great love."

The Newspaper Tree

The Newspaper Tree, one of El Paso's online news magazines, is calling for poems to be published. Their poetry editor is El Paso's own Donna Snyder. www.newspapertree.com.

Continued in "Sign my Book" on P. 16

New books with an El Paso, Las Cruces, Cd. Juárez connection

Pat Mora edits Mother's books

Love to Mamí: A Tribute to Mothers by Pat Mora, Paula Barragan was released by Lee & Low Books (ISBN 1584302356; 2004). It includes thirteen Latino poets who celebrate their bonds with their mothers and grandmothers.

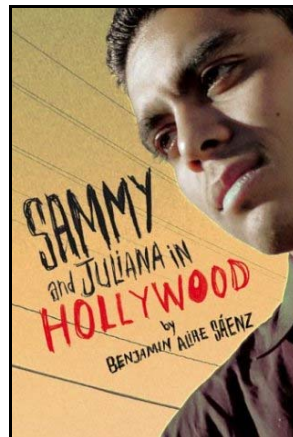
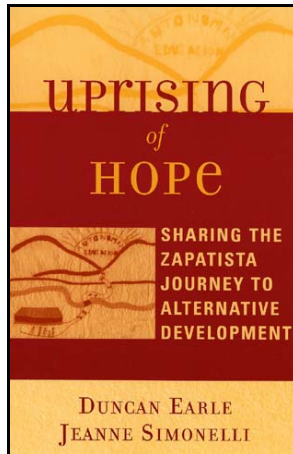
Earle and the Zapatistas

Anthropologist, **Duncan Earle**, one of our favorite professors, is doing well. We bumped into him and UTEP Chicano Studies professor **José Acosta** in Denver in October at the National Latino Law Student Association Conference. He just released *Uprising of Hope: Sharing The Zapatista Journey To Alternative Development*, with **Jeanne Simonelli** of Wake Forest University. The Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, have often been portrayed in reductive, polarized terms; either as saintly activists or dangerous rebels. Cultural anthropologists Earle and Simonelli, drawing on decades-long relationships and fieldwork, attained a collegiality with the Zapatistas that reveals a more complex portrait of a people struggling with self-determination on every level. Seeking a new kind of experimental ethnography, Earle and Simonelli have chronicled a social experiment characterized by resistance, autonomy and communality. Combining their own compelling narrative as participant-observers, and those of their Chiapas *compadres*, the authors effectively call for an activist approach to research. The result is a unique ethnography that is at once analytical and deeply personal. *Uprising of Hope* will be compelling reading for scholars and general readers of anthropology, social justice, ethnography, Latin American history and ethnic studies.

www.altamirapress.com/ISBN/0759105413.

Forthcoming by Benjamine Alire Sáenz

Sáenz will have a new novel coming out called *In Perfect Light* this summer on Rayo/HarperCollins. Rayo/HarperCollins will also re-issue *Carry Me Like Water* and *The House of Forgetting* in the fall of 2005. Sáenz' new



book of poems, *Dreaming the End of War* will be published by Copper Canyon Press due out in spring 2006. Also, see Rigoberto González' review of *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* at www.borderlandnews.com/stories/living/20040919-171019.shtml

Islas Biography

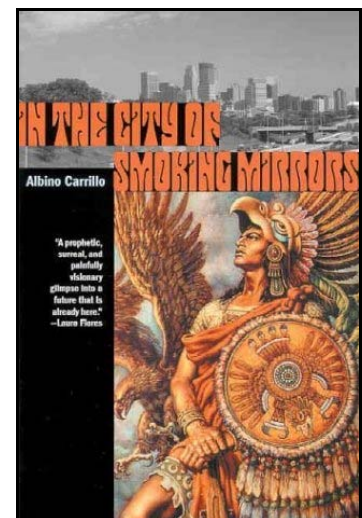
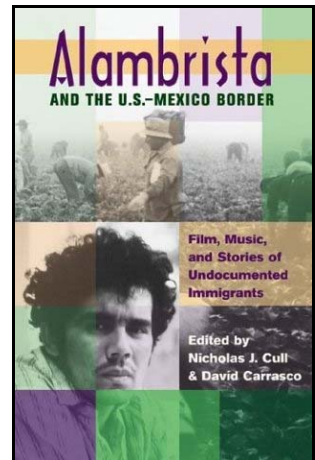
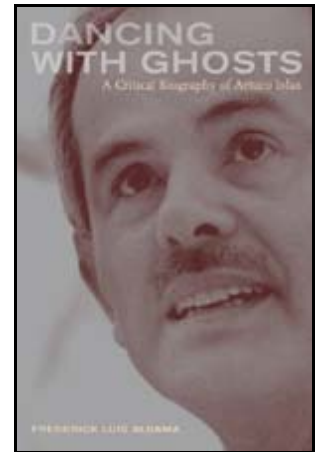
Dances with Ghost: Arturo Islas by **Frederick Luis Aldama** has been released. It is a biography of the late El Paso Chicano author. Aldama is also issuing *Arturo Islas: Locating Chicano/a Narrative Production*. *Dancing with Ghosts* (UofCA Press ISBN 0520231880) is the first critical biography of Arturo Islas (1938-1991). www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/9580.html

Music of the Mill on Rodríguez

Luis J. Rodríguez novel *Music of the Mill* is set to come out in April 2005. It will come out on Rayo/HarperCollins. www.luisjrodriguez.com.

Huitzilopochtli returns

Albino Carrillo has released *In the City of Smoking Mirrors* (Univ of Arizona Press, 2004 ISBN 0816523258). Carrillo was born in El Paso and raised in Gallup and Albuquerque. He later attended the University of New Mexico and University of Arizona. He is currently at the University of Dayton in Ohio. The Mesoamerican god is reborn in the sprawling suburbs of an American metroplex. This is a lyrical exploration of a quest for hope in a universe overshadowed



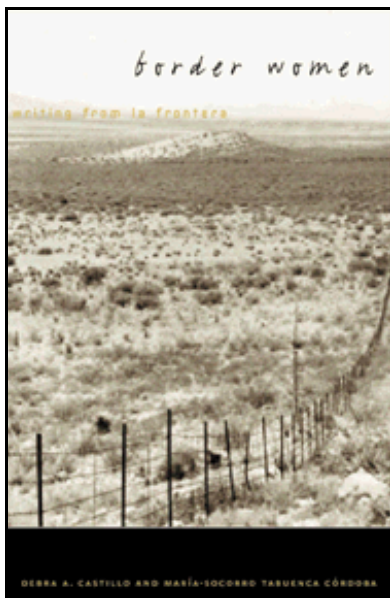
(Continued in "New Books" on page 11)

New Books with an El Paso Connection, continued from P. 10

by impending doom.

Film and Letters

David Carrasco, the anthropologist who teaches at Harvard co-edited *Alambrista and the US-Mexico Border* (UNM Press 2004/www.unmpress.com). Carrasco has a good connection to El Paso. The David Carrasco Job Corp is named in honor of his father. The book focuses on the critically acclaimed Robert M. Young film "Alambrista" which was the winner of the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in the 1970s. Young later directed *Ballad of Gregorio Cortez*. The film depicted the harsh realities of Mexican life on both sides of the border. Following the birth of his first child, a young Mexican crosses the border for work. He finds heartbreak, exploitation, and disappointment. It has essays by a distinguished group of scholars. It includes a DVD of the director's cut.



See Raymundo Elí Rojas' review at www.borderlandnews.com/stories/living/20041017-182312.shtml

One We Missed

It is a peculiar fact that U.S.-Mexico border theory is dominated by those who write about, not from, the border. By looking at the work of women writers from both sides of the border, **Debra A. Castillo** and **María-Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba** open border studies to a truly transnational analysis while bringing questions of gender to the fore.

Border Women: Writing from La Frontera (Univ of Minnesota Press 2002 ISBN 0816639574) is the first study of writing by women who live at the U.S.-Mexico border. Tabuenca Córdoba is a researcher at Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Cd. Juárez, where she also works as the regional director. She also lectures at UTEP's Chicano Studies department. In 2000, she published *Lo que el viento a Juárez* (Torreón: Universidad Iberoamericana y Nimbus Ediciones) with Ricardo Aguilar.

Border Women rethinks border theory by emphasizing women writers whose work in Spanish, English, or a

(Continued from "Did You Know" page 12)

Women of Raza Unida

"Women and the Raza Unida Party," a roundtable discussion was held in late October at UTEP. Panelists included **Toni Herrera** UT Austin, **Carmen Rodríguez** attorney, **Dr. Sally Andrade**, Womens Studies and President Andrade and Associates, **Ruth Mojica-Hammer**, Executive Director for El Paso International Visitors Council.

Drink your Gordo Lobo

Ever wonder how safe are medicinal herbs? UTEP has given us what our *abueitas* never knew. Researchers with the UTEP/UT Austin Cooperative Pharmacy Program are providing patients and medical providers answers to these kinds of questions with its Herbal Safety Web site at www.herbalsafety.utep.edu. The research is coordinated by **Armando González-Stuart** and is said to be unique because it is "one of few non-commercial sources of information about medicinal herbs presented in English and Spanish" on the Web. The pharmacy program's Herbal Safety Initiative is funded by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation. Recent studies by the UTEP researchers have found that herbal product use on the border is much higher than national rates. About 70 percent of patients interviewed used some kind of herbal product. Only about a third of the patients said they told their doctors about their use of herbal remedies.

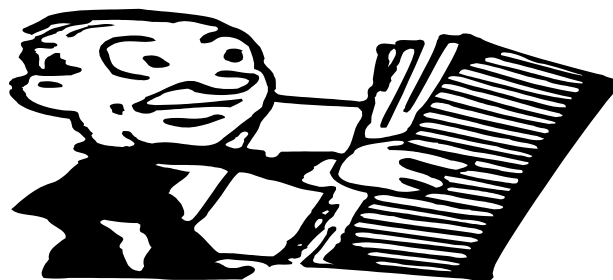
Tamame journal folds, but new stuff on the way

C.M. Mayo informed us that Tamame, Inc., the nonprofit foundation, will no longer be publishing *Tamame*, the bilingual literary journal, in order to focus on publishing bilingual chapbooks. We will be making a formal announcement soon about forthcoming titles. She is currently editing *Mexico*, an anthology of Mexican fiction in translation for Whereabouts Press.

www.cmmayo.com & www.tamame.org

Moving down and on up

Not so good news, *Newsweek College Report* shows that UTEP has fallen from the Third Tier to the Fourth Tier. But stay tuned for "Glory Road" the film about the 1966 NCAA Championship. Also, keep track of UTEP's basketball and lets see if they repeat their spot in the NCAA tournament this year.



Publishings

C.M. Mayo

C.M. Mayo has some prose published in the newest issue *Beltway: A Poetry Quarterly*. In the fall 2004 issue, several poet/prose writers are celebrated including C.M. Mayo, author of *Miraculous Air: Journey of a Thousand Miles Through Baja California, The Other Mexico* and a book of short stories, *Sky Over El Nido*, and founding editor of the bilingual literary journal. *Beltway* serves as a resource bank for information on literary activity in the area, with extensive links to presses, journals, libraries, writing retreats, workshops, and more. The links to individual web pages by area authors has recently been updated. *Beltway* features authors who live or work in the greater DC metro region. Every issue includes a dynamic mix of poets, from different traditions (academic, spoken word, experimental—and those whose work defies categorization) and with different levels of experience (from internationally recognized authors such as Pulitzer-Prize-winners Henry Taylor and Anthony Hecht to authors who have not yet published books). For more information, see: <http://washingtonart.com/beltway.html>. C.M. Mayo had an article in the recent *Writers Carousel* posted as "Viva la Vida Literaria" at www.cmmayo.com/spanish.html.

Want to be published?

Ventana Abierta at University of California-Santa Barbara issued a call for poems, essays and short stories dedicated to the diverse aspects of today's Latino literature, to be published in August 2005. Submission should be double spaced and there is a 6-page limitation. The deadline for submitting a piece to this issues June 30:

Center for Chicano Studies
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
FAX (805) 893-4446

KUDOS

Ben Saézn' *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* has been nominated as one of the BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR by the Center for Children's Books and has also been nominated for a BBYA BEST BOOK FOR YOUNG ADULTS as well as a PRINTZ AWARD. **Pat Mora** was named DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI by UTEP. **Pete Flores** was chosen as the **Bowie High School** OUTSTANDING EX for 2004. Flores, a writer and illustrator, his bilingual cartoons appear weekly in the *El Paso Times*. He is a 1950 "La Bowie" graduate.

(Continued from "DID YOU KNOW" page 1)

participated. Mayor John Hickenlooper read one of Lalo's poems and explained the post of Denver Poet Laureate. El Centro Su Teatro presented a monologue from "Madre Bravo"; Tony García of El Centro Su Teatro spoke on "El Día de los Muertos" and connected with Lalo's work, and cultural historians spoke on the

significance of the altar on display outside of Blackberries in relation to African and Chicano heritage. Plus, Chicano poets presented Lalo's work.



Abelardo "Lalo" Delgado has been selected for the *Lifetime Achievement Award* by the Dr. Martin Luther King Humanitarian Awards Committee (Colorado). The award was presented during a program in January, followed by a free concert performed by the Colorado Symphony Orchestra in honor of Dr. King and the award recipients.

Lalo's hometown says goodbye

On Nov. 20, El Paso had its own *homenaje* for Lalo. Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe, home of many of Lalo protégées, hosted a Flor y Canto at their Technology Center. It included Aztec dancers and poetry. Fellow poets and friends of Lalo read their works in honor of him. Included were **Juan Contreras**, **Joe Olvera**, Lalo's granddaughter **Vanessa Delgado**, and **Salvador Balcorta**.

Goodbye at UTEP

A memorial was held at UTEP in honor of our departed friends, **Henry Trueba**, **Lalo Delgado**, **Robbie Myrick-Villalobos**, and **Gloria Anzaldua** in November 2004. Hosted by UTEP Chicano Studies.

Goodbye at Xispas

See Xispas' Magazine at www.xispas.com/poetry/delgado.htm for **Luis J. Rodríguez** homenaje to Lalo called: "Abelardo 'Lalo' Delgado: A Pioneering Chicano Poet Passes on to the Ancestors."

(Continued in "Did You Know" on page 11)

Libros, Libros: MesoAmerica

Ancient Maya Commoners (Univ of Texas Press 2004 ISBN 0292705719), Jon C. Lohse and Fred Vázquez, Jr., ed. This path-finding book marshals a wide array of archaeological, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic evidence to offer the fullest understanding to date of the way of life of ancient Maya commoners.

www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/lohanc.html

The Cult of Jaguar (Florissant Press Nov 2003 ISBN 0915745585), Bonnie Hayman. Set in the sultry and mysterious jungles of Mexico, with a backdrop of Mayan calendar, pyramids, Maya prophecies, the story revolves around several interesting characters that are after the same thing, each for a different reason. What happened to the ancient native civilizations of Mexico and Central America, which disappeared without a trace? The Mayan and Aztec cultures left important archaeological sites in Middle America before their civilizations vanished.

www.florissantpress.com/

In Search of Maya Sea Traders (Texas A&M Press Consortium Texas Anthropology Series #11 Jan 2005 ISBN 1585443891), Heather McKillop. McKillop focuses upon the sea trade that helped move salt, obsidian, coral, and other goods around the interior of the empire. In 1982, she began bringing volunteers and students to the islands off the coast of Port Honduras, Belize. *In Search of Maya Sea Traders* describes the trading port of Wild Cane Cay, where exotic obsidian, jade, gold, and other goods — including highly crafted pots — were traded from distant lands. McKillop models both the research design and the fieldwork that are required to interpret the civilizations of the past. The reader will get to know some of the local residents of Port Honduras and Wild Cane Cay, descendants of the ancient Maya.

www.tamu.edu/upress/BOOKS/2005/mckillop.htm

In The Maw of The Earth Monster: Studies of Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use (Univ of Texas Feb 2005 ISBN 0292705867), James Brady. This volume gathers papers from 20 prominent Mesoamerican archaeologists, linguists, and ethnographers to present a state-of-the-art survey of ritual cave use in Mesoamerica from Pre-Columbian times to the present.

www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/bramaw.html

Maya Political Science: Time, Astronomy, and the Cosmos (Univ of Texas Press Nov 2004 ISBN 0292705697), Rice. Rice builds a new model of classic lowland Maya (AD 179-948) political organization and political geography. www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/ricmay.html

Understanding The Chiapas Rebellion: Modernist Visions and the Invisible Indian (Univ of Texas Press 2004 ISBN 0292702949), Nicolas P. Higgins. This book offers a new way of understanding the Zapatista conflict as a counteraction to the forces of modernity and globalization that have rendered indigenous peoples virtually invisible throughout the world.

www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/gund.html

El Paso Connection Continued

mixture of the two languages, calls into question accepted notions of border identities.

These writers include those who are already well recognized internationally (Helena María Viramontes, Sheila and Sandra Ortiz Taylor, and María Novaro); those who have become part of the Chicano canon (Norma Cantú, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, and Demetria Martínez); along with some of the lesser-known, yet most exciting, women's voices from the Mexican border (Rosario Sanmiguel, Rosina Conde, and Regina Swain).

www.upress.umn.edu/Books/C/castillo_border.html

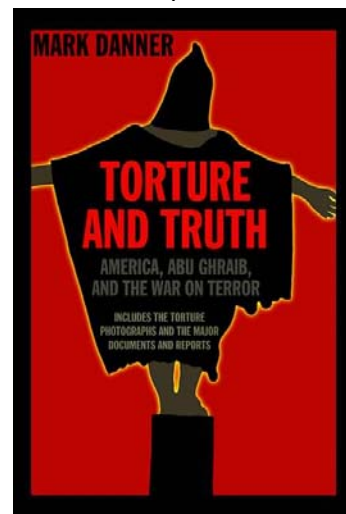
Room 101: Out with the Old, In with the New Same old s#*†

Books for Ashcroftian Times

- *1984*, George Orwell
- *We* (*Mbl*, 1920), Yevgeny Zamyatin
- "Imposter," short story by Philip K. Dick
- *The Shockwave Rider*, John Brunner
- *The Trial*, Fraz Kafka
- *Darkness at Noon*, Arthur Koestler.

Books for Gonzalesian Times

- *The Iron Heel*, Jack London
- *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis
- *Torture: A Collection*, Sanford Levinson
- *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture*, John Conroy
- *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth*, Dianna Ortiz, Patricia Davis
- *Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn
- *Torture and Truth: America and the War on Terror* — Mark Danner



(Continued from "Without Reservation" page 7)

Lalo was hospitable. He was a refuge. He always told us if we were passing through to "Stay with one of us." "He was always wanting to share and was eager to get from other people. He had such a unique sense of humor. His humor had a message to it. He is the most peaceful person I've ever known. That was his ammunition. The unique humor was his message. It was just loaded, always full of life. It didn't matter what he was in, even if severe, he would take it and slam back with words. With such force and such commitment, you couldn't help but get wrapped into him. It's a big lesson. He was ahead of his time. Physical clashes. Message along. Power of the word. Ricardo wrote anger. Lalo wrote from love. Ricardo saw Lalo was going to be somewhere Ricardo saw it as competition and he would show up. Sanchez would always ask who was going to be at an even because he would not go if he was threatened. If not, he would go. You can always go and open the refrigerator. He was always smiling."

- Patricia Roybal

"The real key to Lalo is his spiritual nature. He is truly compassionate. He always sees the good in people. At Utah, when faculty members were disgusted because students were smoking pot on campus, Lalo said, "I like the way they share the joint in a circle."

- Juan Salazar

Lalo has been in touch with the child inside himself all his life. He lets that child be sensual, poetic, and laugh aloud.

- José Lara

"Certainly he has the boyishness, the honesty, humor capacity for adventure and zest for life of Sawyer...He is the man — power the strength of the King of the Huns."

- Lalo Delgado's mother

"Whereas, Abelardo B. Delgado has been writing and reciting his works for over half a century, is one of the pioneers of Chicano poetry, and has used his literary skills to become a powerful advocate for his people; Now, therefore, I Roy Romer, Governor of Colorado cite Abelardo B. Delgado for excellence in the arts."

- Roy Romer, Governor of Colorado, March 1997

For his entire life, and at considerable self-sacrifice, Lalo Delgado has championed *los de abajo* — the

underdogs — through his wonderful writing, his hard work, his valued leadership, and the legacy he has crated in his large and loving family.

- Mayor of Denver on the Proclamation of "Abelardo 'Lalo' Delgado Day," Oct. 29, 1998

Delgado sees himself, like his cultural forefathers Quetzalcóatl and Don Quixote, as one of the redeemer who can right wrongs, radiate hope and goodness, and bring new life to the world. Despite his prolific literary output...Delgado still remains one of the least acclaimed of Chicano writers. Acknowledging that much of his literary production is raw and unpolished, he stated, "los poemas son como los hijos, no se debe esconder a los feos." He recognized himself as a people's poet rather than a poet for literary critics."

- Donaldo W. Urioste

Whereas, His early experience inspired him to dedicate his life to human rights, and through his poems, essays, and short stories, he has been a strong advocate for the underprivileged and a leading proponent of bilingual education...The Senate of the State of Texas hereby commend Abelardo Delgado for his outstanding contributions to the arts and his fellowman as a activist and educator...

- Elliot Shapleigh, Texas state senator

"He gives a great sense of activism and actually gives something back to the community. He is a social activist, and is considered the godfather of Chicano poetry."

- Manuel Vélez, *The Eastside Reporter*, Oct. 24-30

"You see, Abelardo was a true pioneer...always a cool, mentally tough and charismatic writer and person, was able to transcend that anger as no other poet had before him. His poetry, although angry and tough, also reflected the human condition of that era. He was angry, but he didn't allow his anger to cloud his vision or his judgment.

- Joe Olvera, *The Eastside Reporter*, Oct. 24-30

(Continued in "Hero" on page 15)

Authors and publishers — Please send books for review to the address on page 2. Some books may be reviewed for national publications. **We do not review self-help books.**

Editor and layout — Raymundo Elí Rojas

Copyediting — Noemí Herrera

Mistakes and Errors— Benjamin Dejo

(Continued from "Hero" page 14)

Anyway, we spent around 40 minutes rapping chicano movement during lunch...It was at this same lunch that I suggested he come to Utah to finish his degree. It was a sincere consideration for a carnal, but it turned out that I robbed him from the *carnales* of the northwest. However, my "con safo" in this situation is that he doesn't belong to Utah either but to all Aztlán. He, like the migrant workers, birds, or butterflies has the same freedom.

- Hector S. Cuéllar, P.h.D.

"Denver-area Abelardo "Lalo" Delgado, a pioneer performance poet and self-publishing master who used a typewriter, photocopier, and stapler to print his instant barrio collectibles."

- Carlos Cumpian

Dear Sr. Rojas:

As part of a presentation on Chicano poetry, I asked Lalo Delgado to read his 1969 poem, "Stupid America" to our Chicano Studies 101 class at Metropolitan State College of Denver. When he read that poem, only a few lines of gorgeous simmering anger, I knew that I wouldn't ever forget the moment. His voice grew louder as he spoke each line, like thunder rumbling across the Colorado plains. Like Walt Whitman, he was speaking the language of freedom. I am still listening. I graduated from Metropolitan State College of Denver in 2001. I am now a student at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

Cristian Salazar

"Hey Vato!"

I was a colleague of Lalo in the Chicano Studies Department since its re-inception in 1995.

Several words summarize the life of this man for me: passionate, humility, sincerity, bravery and humorous.

Lalo was always happy coming into the Rectory building at 7 a.m., frequently singing. He loved being an educator. He began every morning in the same fashion. Lalo walked in with his cup of coffee from McDonald's, then turned on the copy machine and the radio to a jazz station, followed by reading the daily newspapers. Next, Lalo began cutting out newspaper articles and taped them to plain bond paper to be reproduced as handouts for students. He always did a poor job cutting out the article, but he was very happy doing this. Lalo left the building 30 minutes early to his 8 a.m. class! One of the last things Lalo expressed to Luis Torres, the department chair, was his concern for students enrolled in his classes in the fall

term! Lalo's passion for teaching was truly extraordinary.

I was Cold War specialist from San Antonio with little appreciation of Lalo Delgado, much less his literary contributions. However, for several years, I did have the benefit of Michael Evans Smith, Lalo's longtime friend, who periodically educated me on who Lalo was. Michael was instrumental in moving me to document the political aspects of his life. Specifically, a small piece of Lalo's life was videotaped as part of the "Beyond Chicanismo Oral History Project" at Metropolitan State College of Denver. Lalo gave a "Power Surge" lecture on his life, took part in a panel discussion on the Colorado Migrant Council and was interviewed twice by students. Viewing and listening to videotaped talks and interviews by Lalo, I learned about his pedagogical style. Lalo was always praxis-oriented and a man of tremendous faith in God.

The "Kodak moment" in my understanding of Lalo's literary contributions occurred when I listened to a political memory presentation on him. A student in my Chicano Studies class took out a map of the United States and labeled it "Lalo's Stupid America" with "Hot Wheels" cars all over the map symbolizing his constant travels, as well as various photos and scratched out lotto cards, along with an envelope entitled "Letters to Louise."

Reflecting on Lalo's poetry was akin to listening to the Gospel that was preached to people who yearned for hope, exemplified by a man of hope. Lalo was a true servant of the people who carried his cross daily singing praises to God and La Virgen.

I did not know Lalo was dying of cancer. I saw him every day during the summer 2004. He joked about "cancer" being a "monster," but I had no clue what he was talking about. I thought he was being silly. The only thing I noticed was Lalo's weight loss and him carrying a rosary in his right hand. Lalo came in on a Wednesday with two middle-aged females.

I never saw Lalo again.

These women, I later learned taught the last two days of classes for Lalo. Lalo knew he was dying, but never deviated from his routine and kept the deterioration of his health to himself. I told Lalo I was completing my doctorate and graduating in August 2004. He put his arm around me and said, "I am very happy for you" and his eyes became very watery. I was blown away by his sincerity.

Today, it feels strange coming into the Rectory building in the morning. I keep expecting to hear "hey Vato!" However, in the silence of the morning, I can always reflect on the memory of how to live and die. I miss you Lalo.

- Nick Morales, Assistant Professor, Chicano Studies Department, Metro State College Denver

(Continued from "Sign My Book" page 9)

Mexican consul in Detroit speaks

Miguel Antonio Meza Estrada, the Mexican consul in Detroit, gave a talk at UTEP about his new book, *Política Exterior De Facto*. The book deals with Mexican-U.S. relations on the border.

Sáenz hits the road

Also in October, Sáenz read at the Shine Gallery at 1220 Texas Ave, in the heart of El Paso's resurgent cultural district. In December at the Cultural Center in Mesilla, Benjamin Alire Sáenz offered a reading from *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* which deals with the adventures of Sammy Santos, student at Las Cruces High School. Based on the Sáenz' own Las Cruces neighborhood of Beverly Hills, the book is a wonderful and powerful look at hometown roots. Sáenz was born in his grandmother's house in Picacho, New Mexico, a farming village 40 miles north of the border between México and the United States. He is the fourth of seven children and was brought up in a traditional Mexican-American Catholic family. Sáenz earned an M.A. in theology from the University of Louvain in Belgium. He completed his Ph.D. at Stanford University, which awarded him a Wallace E. Stegner Fellowship. He teaches creative writing in UTEP's bilingual M.F.A. program. He was awarded a Lannan Poetry Prize in 1993 and Stanford's Patricia Smith Poetry Award in 1990. He lives in El Paso with his wife, Judge Patricia Macías.

Lo Que Paso en El Paso

In July, they play "Lo Que Paso en El Paso" was performed in El Paso at Bel Air High School in El Paso's Lower Valley. The play is an educational tale about Chicano culture in the city. It was directed by Ashley Lucas, a Chicano culture scholar, and Guillermo Aviles-Rodríguez, an actor.

Chávez returns to UTEP

Denise Chávez of Las Cruces, performed at UTEP in November. Denise Chávez is an author and creative writing teacher who grew up and still lives in Las Cruces. Ms Chávez writes sensitive and perceptive tales, most often pertaining to family life. Among her most popular books are a novel, *Face of an Angel*, and a collection of short stories, *The Last of the Menu Girls*. She has also written several dramas and performs one of them entitled, "Novenas Narrativas."

Salazar's Lost Novel

El Pasoan **Dr. Mario García** gave a lecture at UTEP in mid-November on "The Mexican American Search for Identity: Rubén Salazar's Unfinished Novel 'A Stranger's House.'" García is a Professor of History and Chicano Studies at University of California at Santa Barbara.

He has written extensively on the U.S.-Mexico border region and its historical personalities. Among his several publications are biographies on **Rubén Salazar**, **Bert Corona**, Raymond Telles and *Desert Immigrants, Mexican Americans of El Paso*.

Vatos Read

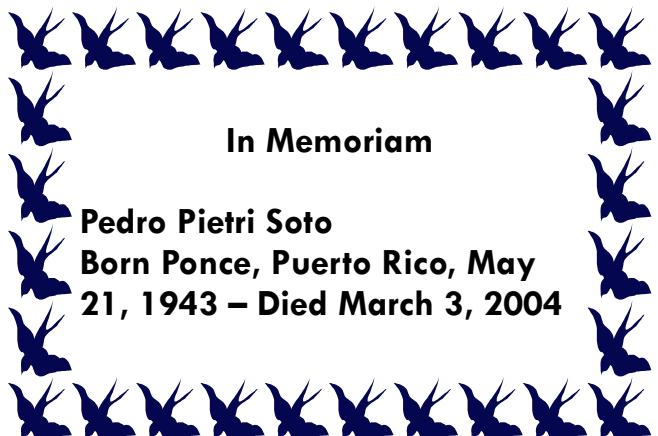
A Reading Celebration was held for the participants of the VATOS workshop in August. The event was at the Cultural Center of Mesilla/El Centro Cultural de Mesilla. Members of the workshop shared original poetry and prose. Their collective voice celebrates a Vato as a man, a creative spirit, a dude, a strong energy, a friend. Workshop director, **Rich Yañez**, is the author of *El Paso del Norte: Stories on the Border*. The Border Book Foundation sponsored the workshop VATOS, a writing workshop exploring the stories of men's lives. Rich Yañez (a vato-writer from the Border) lead the workshop. The workshops were held at the Cultural Center of Mesilla/El Centro Cultural de Mesilla, 2231 Calle de Parian, Mesilla, NM (two blocks west of the plaza next to the post office.)

Ruth Peña gives workshops

Ruth Peña gave a Tumblewords workshop in November "On Secrets and Secretos." Peña is a native Paseña but was reared in Los Angeles until middle school. Some of her poetry deals with the dual nature of being a Paseña and Angelena. She writes about family and general observations on life. Each year she reads at the annual crime victims memorial services and the Carly Martínez Race for Awareness. She teaches English at EPCC. Her work has been published in *Chrysalis*, *BorderSenses*, and *Sin Fronteras*. She has presented readings and workshops for Tumblewords Project and performed her work at EPCC's Springs Arts Festival and Poetry Jam. She recently presented a reading entitled "Our Heroes, Ourselves" at the VOLAR Center for Independent Living disability conference and ADA anniversary celebration.

Dolores Huerta returns to her homeland

United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO co-founder Dolores Huerta was in Sunland Park, NM to help get out the vote in November.



In Memoriam

Pedro Pietri Soto
Born Ponce, Puerto Rico, May
21, 1943 – Died March 3, 2004

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