

## Editor's Note

As I reflect on my Yale career and my past and present involvement with La Casa, I can't help but marvel at the progress the Latina/o community has made in making its presence known on campus. Indeed, over the past several years, the Latina/o community at Yale has experienced an incredible increase in size. Not surprisingly, this growth has led to the formation of several new La Casa student organizations and, consequently, to many events spearheaded by the members of these groups.

Before we get caught up with planning study breaks, panels, trips, conferences, etc., it's important to step back and remember our history and where we come from, so that we can better understand our present and future struggles. The historical figures on the cover of this issue of *La Fuerza* represent hundreds of years of a past that continues to resonate in our daily lives. Though we continue to struggle in many different ways, we also make considerable progress to overcome these challenges.

For example, in the Opinions section, Irma Mejía (JE '07) reacts to the YDN's lack of coverage of major Latina/o events. Mejía urges members of YDN and La Casa to get involved in each other's activities in order to bridge the gap between them.

In the La Casa Briefs section (pages 4-5), learn about the progress that the newer La Casa organizations have made in bringing together the Latino community.

On the following page, read Robert Sánchez's (SY '08) article on La Casa's history and how the abovementioned organizations came to be. As Sánchez points out, it took

major struggles between past Latina/o students and the Yale administration to establish what is now La Casa Cultural.

In the Campus section (pages 9-12), Elizabeth Gonzalez (TC '10) discusses the lack of tenured Latino faculty at Yale. To address the issue, a minority faculty recruitment committee has been formed.

On page 9, Li Yun Alvarado (JE '02) talks about the formation of the Latino Alumni Association for the Tri-State area. The formation of this association addresses the long-standing issue of uniting the increasing pool of Yale Latino alumni.

Finally, in the New Haven section (page 13), read Melissa Campos' (BR '08) article about Unidad Latina en Accion (ULA), an organization that focuses on improving the conditions for undocumented immigrants in the New Haven area—people who have struggled tremendously to make a living in this country.

Even though all of the aforementioned issues have been addressed, many others exist and require our attention. Nevertheless, understanding our history will help guide our decisions about whatever future struggles we face. I know that the progress I've witnessed over the past three years will continue for many years to come, and I hope that this publication remains a testament to that very progress.



*La Fuerza* welcomes readers and writers of all nationalities, ethnicities and backgrounds; it invites outside submissions, as well as letters to the editor. Please feel free to send submissions, questions, and/or comments to [elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu](mailto:elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu).

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# Latina/o Events Go Unreported

Disconnect between cultural organizations and the YDN Underlies lack of coverage

by Irma Mejía

This year proved to be a very busy one at La Casa Cultural, with several of its member organizations hosting significant conferences. A great deal of time and hard work went into the careful planning of these events, with each one featuring politicians, activists, scholars, and writers of international renown and drawing students from schools all along the east coast. The month of February was particularly busy, with MEChA hosting the Winter East Coast Chicano Student Forum and YMSO hosting its first ever *Convergencias* the following week. The size and scope of both events were newsworthy, at least *Yale Daily News*-worthy. So it was much of a shock to the student organizers when the YDN did not report on the events. It might have been brushed aside as a simple mistake had it not been for the email communication with the YDN announcing the events and the fact that the oversight was committed two weeks in a row. An indignant letter to the YDN ("News should expand coverage of Latino groups, conferences" Feb. 27) and a meeting with the editor-in-chief brought up many key issues behind the paper's negligence.

There has always been a severe disconnect between the YDN and the cultural centers. It took a major mistake for a dialogue to even occur between the paper and La Casa students. While the paper now touts that the cultural centers and religious organizations have been assigned a new "beat" of their own, one that covers institutionalized student life, it foolishly has assigned only one reporter to it. Anyone involved with any of the cultural centers is aware that the calendar of events of any one center alone is hectic, not to mention the calendars of its member organizations. To expect one reporter to join numerous email lists and be able to discern which of the hundreds of events are newsworthy is wholly unreasonable. It's not like covering the YCC or the Provost's Office and labor organizations, which have a small and constant group of individuals dealing with the

**"There has always been a severe disconnect between the YDN and the cultural centers..."**

press. This beat is unlike the others in that the size, scope and diversity of the groups involved is too large for any one person to properly keep track of. However, the paper claims it currently cannot assign another reporter to the beat because it is understaffed. Whether this is true or not, the YDN needs to find a way to add a second reporter and subdivide that beat if it expects to adequately cover events at all the cultural centers, the Women's Center, the Queer Resource Center, and the religious organiza-



*During the East Coast Chicano Student Forum, a panel of distinguished Chicanos discussed the past of the Chicano movement. Though the conference was a huge success, it was never covered by the YDN.*

While on the topic of increasing the number of staff reporters, I should mention that the YDN would stand to gain a lot if it were to attempt to diversify its staff. Not only would it bring a greater spectrum of perspectives and experiences to enrich the paper's contents, it would also make the paper as a whole better in tune with the large and diverse University community. By no means does this mean to imply that students of color should be recruited to report on issues pertaining to communi-

**"When was the last time a Latino or Latina became editor of the YDN?"**

ties of color on campus. Rather, from MEChA's recent experience of contacting the paper for coverage of its event, it seems that the staff hardly knew anything about La Casa groups, their mission, their history and their events. It seemed as if the paper could not reach beyond the interests or knowledge held by its own staff. Its single recruitment effort occurs at the activities bazaar early in the school year, but it would not take much more effort to deliver flyers (maybe even the actual newspaper, too!) to the cultural centers or send announcements to groups in an effort to, at least, make itself appear more open. Before MEChA and YMSO's conferences, the paper published an editorial claiming that the cultural centers promote self-segregation ("Self-segregation thwarts campus unity" Feb 9). Yet, even when invited, it chose not to become involved with La Casa. It's no surprise to receive such an opinion from a YDN board so disconnected with the cultural centers.

However, it must be admitted that the culture fright flows both ways. While the YDN's staff remains mostly white (an admission made by the editor herself), many of La Casa's members aren't running to join the ranks of reporters and editors either. This can stem from a variety of reasons: insecurity, intimidation, lack of awareness, general distrust of the paper. Yes, it's true. Some students don't trust the paper to even quote

**Latino Events** continued on page 8

## Yale Mexican Student Organization

The goal of the Yale Mexican Student Organization (YMSO) is to promote the presence of Mexico at Yale and the presence of Yale in Mexico by organizing social events, cultural activities, forums, and seminars. YMSO was founded in 2004 by students from almost every corner of Yale: undergraduates, graduates, and professional students. In the fall of 2006, they organized three major events: El Grito with MEChA, El Día de los Muertos (where they constructed an altar de los muertos on Beinecke plaza), and La Posada in La Casa. Last semester, they held a conference named "Convergencias," the purpose of which was to discuss several different fields of Mexican politics. They invited four Mexican politicians to the conference: Patricia Mercado (former candidate for the Mexican presidency), Fernando Canales Clariond (Secretary of Energy, former economic secretary and former governor of Nuevo Leon), Enrique Jackson (former senator and president of the Mexican senate and candidate for the presidency of the PRI), and Javier Corral Jurado (journalist and former senator for the state of Chihuahua). The conference was a great success—many different people participated, including members of the Yale community and Mexican students from several north eastern universities.

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## Hispanic Scholarship Fund

The Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) Scholar Chapter at Yale is an extension of HSF. Its mission is to increase the percentage of Hispanics earning a college degree through academic support, career preparation, outreach, and mentorship.

During the fall semester, the organizations held many events such as a Hispanic College Night at the Wilbur Cross High School, an LSAT workshop, and study breaks. The chapter also supports Amigos mentoring at the same high school. This semester we are hoping to hold an MCAT workshop, a practice LSAT or MCAT exam, and more events which will help the Yale community be an important part of achieving HSF's mission.

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## Ballet Folklórico

Ballet Folklórico Mexicano de Yale is a small, six-member group on campus. Practices are held weekly at the Payne Whitney Gym. The group is relatively new to Yale and performs dances from several regions of Mexico including Chiapas, Veracruz, Jalisco and Mexico's Federal District. Ballet Folklórico travels to schools in the New Haven area and gives cultural presentations about the costumes, history and lyrics involved in the dances. The group's last on-campus event was a spring show (in ISO's Kaleidoscope), which was a great success as it was the group's first on-campus performance in several years. Ballet Folklórico plans to hold another performance this year with several new dances.

## MEChA

MEChA is an organization composed of politically, culturally and socially empowered Chicanos—politically conscious peoples who live and/or sympathize with the struggle of oppressed communities. The Chicanos in MEChA are from diverse ethnic backgrounds and include Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Salvadorians, and Mexicans. MEChA shares a genuine interest in social justice and in empowering Latinas/os as future leaders through education, the only powerful tool that La Raza has to lift themselves from poverty and become a stronger force in the U.S.

In the fall of 2006, MEChA continued its campaign in support of immigrant rights through active participation in rallies and marches that took place around Connecticut. Under the leadership of Melissa Campos, MEChA also put together Semana Chicana, an annual week-long conference celebrating Chicanismo. Among one of the most celebrated guests we had for the conference was educator and activist Sal Castro, an individual who continues to shake the foundations of U.S. history with his vibrant and unapologetic lessons on Chicano history. MEChA also worked on the ongoing campaign on Latino faculty recruitment. El Grito, one of MEChA's traditional events, took place on the eve of September 16th with the waving of flags from all over Latin America, celebrating the end of colonialism. In addition, MEChA organized El Día de los Muertos event on November 2nd with an elaborate altar and dinner. During the spring semester, MEChA coordinated the East Coast Chicano Student Forum at Yale, which was held on February 16th-18th. This semester, they hope to work with the City of New Haven in registering as many Yale students as possible with a Municipal ID Card to show solidarity with the city and its immigrant population.

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## Latin American Student Organization

The Latin American Student Organization at Yale (LASO) primarily provides a comfortable social atmosphere for Latin American students with emphasis on cultural celebration. There are weekly dinners, occasional parties, and happy hours featuring Salsa and Merengue music, as well as Master's Teas with Latin American speakers and other cultural events. LASO also encourage non-Latin Americans to join us in any of our events to get a taste of our culture. The Spanish Conversation Groups are especially for non-native Spanish speakers to practice and develop an interest in Latin America. In order to foster a comfortable atmosphere, the organization refrains from political activities.

This past semester LASO organized many different events, including a Poetry Reading Night, dinner with the two Yale World Fellows from Latin America, and a Christmas dinner. The board this year is attempting to expand membership and organize novel events that have never been planned before. It is their hope that in this way, the true colors of Latin America will be seen and appreciated by Yale's students and community.

# The New Kids on the Block

Newer La Casa student organizations take charge

by Raul Navarro

Given the large rise in the Latina/o population at Yale over the past few years, it comes as no surprise that several Latina/o student organizations have been formed in response to the growing cultural diversity within this group of students. What is surprising is the degree to which these new student groups have evolved since their formation—not only have they attained a strong base of student members, but they've also organized a wide variety of events that have helped bring together members of the Latino community here at Yale and elsewhere. Alianza, CAUSA, DSA, and Yspaniola are the newer La Casa organizations that after a few semesters have already become a critical part of the active Latina/o community at Yale.

Alianza is a pan-Latina/o organization that welcomes all students interested in Latina/o culture. When it first began three years ago, its purpose was to provide those students who could not identify with other La Casa groups an organization which had no specific cultural or political agenda. Though the organization initially drew a lot of students, the direction the organization would take in terms of its goals was unclear. Shortly thereafter, Alianza members met and decided on their goal, which is now stated in the organization's full name, Alianza: The Alliance Celebrating Latin Culture. Since then, the group has organized many social events including La Casa dinners, movie nights, NYC trips, La Casa Café, and other events coordinated with several other organizations. Through such events, Alianza has provided students with a means through which they can socially interact and truly celebrate Latin culture.

The Cuban American Undergraduate Student Association (CAUSA) is another of the newer La Casa organizations that was founded in the Spring of 2005. Since then, it has attended and hosted several events to accomplish its mission, which is to promote understanding of Cuba's culture and history. The group kicked off the Fall semester with "Dinner and Domino Night" at La Casa. It also began an event titled "Dinner with Cuban Faculty at Yale," which provides students with the opportunity to meet and talk to our Cuban faculty members. In addition, CAUSA has hosted several guest speakers and attended a conference entitled "The Future of Cuba: Crossroads or Continuity?" The group plans to continue promoting Cuban culture and history via dinners, guest speakers, and dinners with faculty members.

The Dominican Student Association (DSA) was started in the Fall of 2005, and its goal is to educate members of the Yale community about the Dominican experience. Soon after the group's formation, members planned to hold cultural events and have prominent Dominican scholars as guest speakers. The

group was able to combine these two ideas when it announced the planning of the first ever National Dominican Student Conference, which was held here at Yale on April 27. By bringing together Dominican students from all over the east coast, the group was able to initiate the formation of a network within this scattered community.

The last of the newer groups, Yspaniola, was founded in the Spring of 2005 when a group of Yale students visited Batey Libertad, a Haitian community in the Dominican Republic marked by conditions of extreme poverty. The purpose of this group is to create awareness of Haitian-Dominicans relations and other issues surrounding Batey life within the Yale community. The group also strives to provide community service to this area. Thus, since its formation, members have organized several trips to Batey Libertad every year and many fundraising events to learn about and help this poverty-stricken community.

All told, these organizations have generated many different events that have helped create awareness about the great diversity that exists within the Latino/a community. Consequently, they have also called attention to the need to generate communication between each of these groups. Nevertheless, these and older La Casa groups have contributed tremendously to the formation of an active Latino community. The groups mentioned above are only a few of the new La Casa groups recently established. Whether it be through study breaks, guest speakers, national conferences, or trips abroad—these more recent groups will help continue to bring together the Latina/o community here at Yale and beyond.



[www.yale.edu/lacasa/photos.html](http://www.yale.edu/lacasa/photos.html)

*Students enjoy an indoor barbeque hosted by Alianza.*





*The mural on one of the side walls of La Casa Cultural was painted in 2002 to represent the unification of the Puerto Rican and Chicano cultural centers.*

Most Yale undergrads involved with the Yale Latina/o community will always remember one address in particular: 301 Crown Street. When looking back at our time at Yale, memories of La Casa will lace the recollections of our college experience as we remember the good times spent inside the walls of the three story building located just a block away from main campus.

These memories of La Casa, however, vary greatly from those of past Yale Latinos. When we learn and understand the kind of work and activism past Yale Latinos engaged in, we realize that what is now one cultural house for us was once two; that what is currently the hub of Latina/o cultural activity on campus could have been demolished to make way for a parking lot—and we learn that what has become one of the most important places for Latinos at Yale could have never come to be.

The history of La Casa reveals the dedication and achievements of Yale alumni and begs us to recognize and appreciate their efforts. A La Casa timeline brings us to current Latino undergraduates working as the new activists, expanding the reach of the Latino community on campus and beyond, following in the footprints of our esteemed alumni.

### Where have we been?

Over forty years ago, a strong call for representation was budding in the Latina/o community at Yale. Outraged by the lack of resources available to them, Puerto Rican students and locals held demonstrations to demand cultural facilities from the administration. Today, former students who helped to cre-

# Learning From the Past:

## A Chronicle of La Casa's History

by Robert Sánchez

ate La Casa Cultural Julia de Burgos are old enough to return to campus with their children who are now seeking admission. Over the years, as generations have come and gone through the walls of Yale University, the legacy of the Cultural Center has continued to grow.

After the creation of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in 1977, located where La Casa stands today, Yale Chicanos also began to organize for services and representation. In 1981, another cultural center was constructed from a former Psychology building to serve Chicano student needs. The path to creating these centers was far from easy, and many meetings, demonstrations, and press conferences were needed in order to create them. As if the challenge of completing an undergraduate education at

**"The history of La Casa reveals the dedication and achievements of Yale alumni and begs us to recognize and appreciate their efforts..."**

Yale was not difficult enough, the students from this era truly went far and beyond what was expected of typical Yale students in order to achieve what they felt was necessary. Over the next fifteen years, the centers would serve their communities with their own funding, deans, and student groups, including Despierta Boricua and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA de Yale). New groups would later arise, such as chapters of Latina/o Fraternities and Sororities; in 1992, the Kappa Chapter of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity Inc., was founded at Yale, followed by the 1999 creation of the Pi Chapter of Sigma Lambda Upsilon/Señoritas Latinas Unidas Sorority Inc. The Latin American Students Organization later formed in the '90s.

Though student interactions existed between groups, the two centers generally functioned independently of each other, meeting the needs of the individual students who frequented them. This all changed, however, when the late '90s placed the future of the cultural centers in jeopardy.

In the late '90s, the administration recommended that one of the centers be demolished and transformed into a parking lot

as a reaction to 1997 reports deeming the centers uninhabitable. The Latino community quickly reacted. The student leaders and members of DB and MEChA collaborated with former Latino Dean Rick Chavolla to ensure a promising future for La Casa and the communities it served. After disputes and debates over what should be done, the Latino community ultimately called for the merging of the two houses after the administration conducted a full renovation of La Casa. This decision brought forth various issues. On one hand, the consolidation would lead to a loss of

**“In the late 90s, the administration recommended that one of the centers be demolished and transformed into a parking lot...”**

resources, namely the funding and representation of two deans and two centers. On the other hand, a unified house could lead to a sense of empowerment in numbers and the ability to better meet the needs of the growing Yale Latina/o community. At the time, more students were arriving who couldn't identify with either DB or MEChA, and their needs were not being met. These concerns continue to linger in the minds of Latino alumni. As Li Yun Alvarado (JE '02) reflects, “Many alumni, myself included, always worry that using ‘Latina/o’ as opposed to ‘Puerto Rican’, ‘Chicana/o’, and so on can limit the resources given to each community because there is now one versus many. The issue of national identity is an important one that should not be lost. However, I am excited about the inclusiveness and the support for communities that were not explicitly given support under the old titles and divisions.” The unification of the houses into a pan-Latina/o cultural center appealed to the broader Latina/o community emerging on to the Yale campus.

Reflecting on this growing diversity, Alvarado (JE '02) marvels at the diversity inherent in the Latina/o community: “La Casa was a place for me to learn a great deal about other cultures. This is something that I think the general population might take for granted but that most Latinos are keenly aware of: Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Colombians, Dominicans, and on and on are all very different. Our biggest commonality of course is the shared Spanish language of our native countries, but even that can be debated. I have several funny stories of words that are completely harmless in ‘Puerto Rican’ Spanish that would send my Chicano friends into a frenzy. My involvement in the various Latino communities helped me to learn and appreciate these cultural nuances while celebrating our commonalities. After four years I was proud to wear the title of ‘honorary Chicana’ given to me by my peers and friends while still waving mi bandera



*Thanks to the hard work of many Latino alumni, the Latino cultural center was preserved. La Casa Cultural serves as a home away from home for many Latino students.*

Puertorriqueña with ferocious pride.

“After four years my relationships with people who were active in La Casa had developed into communities that were more like families. La Casa, like any home, was a place where we came together to foster and cultivate these self created families.”

#### **Where are we now?**

The Latino community on campus continues to grow in numbers and become represented in different facets of Yale life.

**“From just five Latino student groups in the late ‘90s, the number of groups has more than doubled over the last few years...”**

In terms of curriculum, we now boast a Latin American Studies department and an Ethnicity, Race and Migration Program, both staffed by esteemed and tenured faculty who serve as professors and mentors for Latina/o Yalies. Outside of the classroom, students have increased their presence and visibility by founding new groups and forming new alliances with other groups at Yale and in the New Haven community. From just five Latino student groups in the late ‘90s, the number of groups has more than doubled over the last few years with the creation of CAUSA, DSA, Yspañola, YMSO, and Alianza, among others, all result-

**Timeline** continued on page 8

## Timeline continued from page 7

ing from the spike in diversity of the Latina/o community on campus and the support they have found through a pan-Latino cultural center.

As a community, the challenges we face change with time. Today, there remains a need for a more diverse tenured Yale faculty, more funding for student activities, and more cooperation between Latina/o student groups. Recent prejudiced pieces published in college publications also remind us of the social challenges that we face both inside and out of the Yale community. But with the support we find in La Casa and among each other, coupled with the spirit and continued help of the alumni who paved the way before us, the current challenges we face as a community can and will be overcome.

### Where do we go from here?

As the Latina/o community continues to grow, important institutional changes need to compliment this growth. Efforts need to be made in order to increase the Latino community's visibility, and collaboration with student groups both within and outside of La Casa needs to take place. Through cooperation with other groups, students learn from others' struggles and create bonds that give both communities strength in numbers. In this fashion, when issues such as immigrant rights or offensive articles in Yale publications arise, students can quickly respond with the support system they need. The future of La Casa, then, lies in the ability of students to work together to promote a unified representation of Yale's diversity.

Julie Gonzáles (SM '05) offers the following advice: "I hope that La Casa and the Latino community at Yale continue to take active and present roles in the greater community. La Casa has always been a place built upon the ideals of community, *familia*, and respect. But it must also continue to be a place of activism and developing leadership, because out in the 'real world,' we're at a crisis in public education, where Latino students have very few role models or points of inspiration in terms of academics. I think that Dean Garcia and the student leaders at La Casa are doing a superb job of living as an example of academic excellence while maintaining connections to our culture and *comunidad*. *Qué viva la causa, y qué viva La Casa!!*"

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Contact [elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu](mailto:elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu) for more information.

## Latino Events continued from page 3

them correctly. But that's where our letter writing and phone calling skills come in handy. As exhausting as it may be to have to correct mistakes in stories about our events, groups, and campaigns, it needs to be done. We read the paper just like every other student on this campus. We should make sure to call them out on their mistakes. It's not enough to grumble amongst ourselves. It gets us nowhere. And if we really desired to change the paper's direction, we should aim to get ourselves on that staff. When was the last time a Latino or Latina became editor of the YDN? Our writing skills are top-notch. We can meet deadlines. We function well under pressure. Why not put our skills to work there? It's remarkable: the YDN, for many in our communities, remains a mysterious, exclusive, old Yale institution, as foreign to us as Mory's or boarding school backgrounds may be. And to it, we remain an angry, confusing, exotic group of individuals that can never be satisfied. If this is to ever change we need to establish a steady and permanent stream of interaction.

Some may have thought this issue was blown out of proportion, that it was a simple one-time mistake. However, it is not the first time that the cultural houses have had a problem with their coverage in the YDN. Remember the Black History Fiasco of 2003? The only Black History Month event covered by the YDN was the controversial visit by poet Amiri Baraka, and, seemingly, only in response to letters condemning him as anti-semitic. For a while after that, La Casa saw frequent visits by YDN reporters. It seems that it takes a major mistake by the paper for it to establish contact with the cultural centers. In my conversation with the YDN editor, it became clear that while the cultural centers maintain a strong sense of institutional memory, the YDN starts from scratch with each new editorial board. No wonder events like this continue to happen: no one remembers the mistakes of the previous years. So the YDN receives "militant" reactions it believes are undeserved because they don't look at the larger picture. It may seem to them that we are upset with a specific YDN board, but we're actually complaining about the YDN as an institution that has not maintained a smooth relationship with the communities of color on campus. As a public record of the university's dynamic and diverse community and the single main source of University news, the YDN has an obligation to adequately cover the events of other notable Yale institutions, including the cultural centers.

Since the publishing of my letter, the YDN has maintained communication with La Casa and covered our major events and campaigns very well. Hopefully, this is a trend that will last into the upcoming school year. Some students have suggested the YDN hold meetings at the beginning of the year with members of the cultural houses. That doesn't sound like a bad idea. It would give the paper a chance to demystify itself, and we could finally figure out how to grab and keep its attention without having to be angered first. In the meanwhile, I urge all of you who suffer from a writer's itch to make your services available at the paper and really steer it in the right direction.

# The Rise of Latino Alumni Associations

by Li Yun Alvarado

It's an exciting time for Yale's Latina/o alumni community! Thanks to the efforts of committed alumni, Dean Garcia, and the AYA, on Wednesday, April 11th, alumni from the tri-state area (NY, NJ, and CT) came together to vote for the members of the new Latino Alumni Association of the Tri-State Area's board of directors.

This is not the first time Latina/o alumni have organized. Through the years, Puerto Rican and Chicano alumni have built both formal and informal networks, laying the groundwork for today's organization. Most recently, a group of Latina/o alumni in the DC area formed a regional network. Last year, this group made a national impact when they challenged other regions to raise \$600 for the Latino Alumni Prize. If any region reached \$600, the DC Alum agreed to match that amount. As one can imagine, Alumni in other regions would not stand to be outdone, and a record amount of about \$3,000 was raised for the Latino Alumni Fund.

Last October, an event for Latino Alumni at the Yale Club of New York provided the perfect venue to begin discussing the possibility of a formalized alumni organization in the tri-state region. While the event itself was primarily social, several key points were raised, including the fact that we had the full support of the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA) backing these efforts. Since the October event, a small group of alumni have met to create a board structure and election process. On Wednesday, April 11th, those efforts culminated with the Latino Alumni Spring Cocktail Party and board elections.



Photo courtesy of Rosalinda Garcia

*Yale Latino Alumni came together in April to vote for board members of the newly-formed Latino Alumni Association of the Tri-State Area.*

## Latina/o alumni establish the groundwork for a national association

The Spring Cocktail Party was a wonderful success. More than sixty alumni spanning several generations were in attendance. It was incredible to see alumni reconnect with old friends while meeting new ones. We were fortunate to have the Honorable Judge Eduardo Padro '75, of the New York State Supreme Court, act as our keynote speaker. Judge Padro was one of the founding members of Despierta Boricua and has been an active alumni throughout the years. Among New York City alumni, Judge Padro has been known for hosting a Latino Alumni gathering at his home on the Friday after Thanksgiving each year. At the April 11th event, he discussed the history of Latina/o alumni organizing and the critical role our alumni association has the

**"Judge Padro expressed the confidence he had that the time was ripe to not only solidify the Yale Latino Alumni of the Tri-State Area, but also to begin paving the way toward a National Yale Latino Alumni Association..."**

potential to play. Finally, he expressed the confidence he had that the time was ripe to not only solidify the Yale Latino alumni of the Tri-State Area, but to also begin paving the way to a National Yale Latino Alumni Association.

At the event, the interim board also announced a goal of raising \$2,500 to benefit the Latino Alumni Fund and the Latino Alumni Prize. The group believed the goal was attainable but could not have anticipated that it would be surpassed almost as quickly as it was announced. One alumni pledged a \$10,000 challenge grant that very evening. In addition, almost \$1,000 was collected from other alumni that evening. These generous contributions will not only support the Latino Alumni Prize, but will also help provide for the immediate, emergency needs of current students. The Board will work with Dean Garcia and all donors to make sure these funds are used wisely and effectively.

After announcements and Judge Padro's address, Alumni were encouraged to read candidate statements and cast their votes. The board consists of twelve members: two co-chairs, a secretary, a webmaster, and eight at-large members. The at-large members will chair the four committees of the board: Membership and Outreach Committee, Special Events Committee, Fundraising and Scholarship Committee, and the Mentorship and Student Relations Committee. During this initial year the board will set the tone of the organization, determine the needs of the community, and establish the priorities of both the board as a whole and of the individual committees.

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# Fighting for Representation

*Former Yale professor Guillermo Irizarry moved to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to seek better tenure opportunities.*



<http://web.uconn.edu/prls/irizarry.jpg>

In the Spring of 2004, Yale College lost Professor Guillermo Irizarry to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. During his stay at Yale, Professor Irizarry had made invaluable contributions to the Latina/o community, both at Yale and beyond. Marisol León (ES '07) vouches that he had helped to bridge the gap between Latin American and Latino Studies, "had served as the faculty advisor and senior essay advisor to many students, and served as a mentor and role model for many Latino stu-

**"While Latinos represent only a small portion of the 10% tenured minority faculty, what should be more disturbing is the fact that only 10% of all tenured faculty are people of color..."**

dents on campus. He became very involved with different Latino student groups... and served a very important role in the development of *La Fuerza*." Beyond the bubble, Professor Irizarry had served on the board for JUNTA for Progressive Action in Fair Haven—one of the few professors at Yale to extend his abilities beyond our university's pearly gates. Even in light of his numerous achievements, Professor Irizarry was never offered tenure. Reluctantly, despite having firm roots in the Yale and New Haven Latina/o community, Irizarry moved to U. Mass, Amherst to pursue better opportunities than Yale had to offer.

Outraged that Irizarry had been forced to such measures to seek tenure, León spearheaded a campaign to recruit more Latina/o faculty members in the hopes of preventing another devastating loss. Following these initial efforts, the issue of Latina/o faculty recruitment was taken on by several members of MEChA. MEChA member Sandy Plácido (ES '08) reports that in the Fall of 2005, the Latino Faculty Recruitment Committee (LFRC) "researched Latino faculty and courses at Yale as compared to other universities, met with professors on campus that offered invaluable support and guidance, and met with members of the Graduate Employee and Student Organization (GESO), who offered information obtained from their extensive research on faculty diversity." The Committee experienced great success in

**Yale students work to counter the glaring lack of faculty of color**

*by Elizabeth González*

the form of an Ethnicity, Race, and Migration pre- and post-doctoral fellowships and a Faculty Diversity Roundtable Discussion, "including a presentation and panel with Yale professors and deans." Perhaps the most encouraging sign of progress came in "President Levin's announcement to make concrete increases in the number of minority and women faculty at Yale over a period of seven years," says Plácido.

This year, the movement has transformed into the more united and broader-encompassing Minority Faculty Recruitment Committee. While Latinos represent only a small portion of the 10% tenured minority faculty, what should be more disturbing is the fact that only 10% of all tenured faculty are people of color, according to the LFRC's previous research. This 10% of tenured faculty stands against the 30% that is Yale's minority undergraduate population. With such a shortage of minority faculty members, minority students often find it difficult to seek the

**"With such a shortage of minority faculty members, minority students often find it difficult to seek the support and role models..."**

support and role models they need among faculty. For this reason, the few minority Yale professors are unduly overextended in their time and efforts. The new Minority Faculty Recruitment Committee, currently composed of almost entirely of MEChA members, is working on reaching out to other interested student groups to garner more support and awareness of the issue. They have put up posters in college dining halls relating facts and statistics and asking for students' opinions. The Committee is currently grappling with how to unite the entire student body on this worthy cause, and they hope to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the cause in the fall semester of 2007.

*If you are interested in our efforts to increase the number of minority faculty at Yale, please contact [vanessa.vasquez@yale.edu](mailto:vanessa.vasquez@yale.edu), [elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu](mailto:elizabeth.gonzalez@yale.edu), or [jose.rivera@yale.edu](mailto:jose.rivera@yale.edu).*

# Hasta Luego

## Latina/o students talk about taking a year off

by Anyuli González

"I don't think I would have been able to survive at Yale if I didn't do it," says Irma Mejía. She is not talking about a semester abroad or a glossy summer internship; she is talking about her year away from Yale. Taking a leave of absence from college is usually seen as something reserved for privileged students, who have the time and the money to do this. However, for many Latina/o students at Yale this is rarely, if ever, the case. Three Latinos, Harry Reyes (SY '05), Irma Mejía (JE '07), and Natasha Borrero (TC '07) shared with La Fuerza their experiences during their time off from college. Although the thought of taking time off is usually met with much apprehension, doing so helped these three students redefine themselves and their academic goals.

Though most students at Yale are perpetually stressed over work they have to do, Latina/o students may face additional pressures to do well. Harry believes there is a "snowball effect particular to minorities" where the enormous amount of pressure to work hard and excel in all endeavors eventually takes its toll. Natasha makes a similar case about why Latina/o students specifically might feel the need to take a term off. "I thought I'd have to fit into this role because I'd been admitted [to Yale]. I thought I had to be Super Latina." In addition, because many Latina/o students are typically on financial aid and work study, having a job is financially necessary. All three students had part-time jobs—Irma and Harry, for example, at some point managed three jobs on top of the organizations and events they were involved with. The combined pressure of academics, extra-curricular activities, and work overwhelmed these students until they finally decided they had had enough.

Despite initial fears from their families and friends, Natasha, Harry, and Irma were able to work through the issues that led them to leave Yale and venture into uncharted territory during their time away. This rings especially true for Irma, who went



Photo courtesy of Irma Mejía

*"I don't think I would have been able to survive at Yale if I didn't do it," says Irma Mejía, JE '07*

back to El Salvador for the first time since birth and met her father's family. Irma was also able to do a wide range of activities upon her return to her home in California, which included an internship at an art center, a job at an art book store, and some volunteer work. After her experience away from school, Irma made many realizations about her Yale education: "I realized how much of a privilege it was to be at Yale, how much I really loved it and loved school in general, and how much me and my family had worked so hard to get me here." For Irma, the time away from college helped direct her academic goals and rekindle her motivation to study.

The other students decided to find themselves jobs suited for their career interests. Before taking time off, Harry was convinced he wanted to be a lawyer. Consequently, he took on a job with a law firm, an experience he later describes as being far from positive. He decided that law wasn't for him, and upon his return to Yale, he decided to pursue his interests in medicine by becoming pre-med. Now, Harry is enrolled in a post-baccalaureate pre-medical program and could not be happier with his deci-

**"Though most students at Yale are perpetually stressed over work they have to do, Latina/o students may face additional pressures to do well..."**

sion to pursue medicine. Natasha was able to work on the depression collaborative with Americorps, where she researched depression and Latino mental health issues. This experience inspired her to obtain a career in public health. Thus, for Natasha and Harry, their time off from college ultimately helped them decide the career path they would pursue.

Each student grew and learned important things that are often impossible to find in a lecture hall, but when they came back to Yale, was their time off truly worth it? Not only did they all reply that it was absolutely worth it, but also recommended it to their fellow Yalies. For these three students, taking a year off helped build confidence both in themselves as well as in what they wanted to receive from their Yale education. In addition, the year off helped these students take more control of where their lives were headed and to realize that they did not have to conform to the "Super Latino" expectation. Finally, the time off brought a sense of renewal and excitement upon returning to college. Irma is especially adamant about this last point, as she says, "I'm so excited about different possibilities in academia..." She paused briefly and brightly added, "I feel just like a little freshman again."



Photo courtesy of Harry Reyes

*"I most certainly would not have worked so much had it not been financially necessary," says Harry Reyes, SY '05*



Photo courtesy of Natasha Borrero

*"I thought I'd have to fit into this role because I'd been admitted [to Yale]. I thought I had to be Super Latina," says Natasha Borrero, TC '07*

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The results of the election were as follows. Co-chairs: Daniel Acosta '97 and Li Yun Alvarado '02; Secretary Lara Rios '02; Webmaster: Rodrigo Fuentes '06; At-Large Members: Stephanie Cabrera '01, Roy Cosme '77, Francisco Estrada '97, Ken Figueroa '97, Gladys Nieves '94, Edgardo Ramos '82, Jorge Torres '96, and Adam Torres '06.

While the event was scheduled to end at 8pm, most alumni continued laughing, talking, and catching up well into the night. In fact, at 9pm when the Yale Club staff was done cleaning the room, many alumni decided to continue the evening by going out to dinner together. As Alumni left, they were encouraged to sign up for committees and to save the date for the special reception for Admitted Latino Students on Wednesday, April 25th.

## ECCSF Winter 2007 a big success

by Edgar Díaz-Machado

MEChA de Yale sought to bring together the Chicano Movement's past, present, and future with its East Coast Chicano Student Forum conference "Past, Present, and Future: The Chicano Narrative" during the weekend of February 16-18, 2007. The Past of the Chicano Narrative was presented with a panel of three distinguished Chicanos. In the late 1960s, high school student Paula Cristóforo saw the virulent injustices surrounding her in the schools of East Los Angeles. In March 1968, Paula led what came to be the largest organized protest of students in American history. The Chicano Blowouts of 1968 were the initial explosion of student involvement in the Chicano Movement. Cristóforo was joined on the panel by American Studies Ph.D. students Mike Amézcuca and Monica Martínez.

The Chicano Narrative's Present was discussed in three panels on immigrant rights, alternative media and organizing methods, and LGBTQ Chicanos. José Covarrúbias and Kika Matos spoke to the conference attendees on immigrant rights and the current struggle. In May 2006, Covarrúbias and a classmate helped popularize and organize the May Day walkouts in Orange County. Matos recounted how New Haven's immigrant population has grown and how there are efforts to protect those that are working towards getting American citizenship.

In terms of the present-day Chicano Narrative, Ricardo Domínguez, one of hacktivism's founding fathers, spoke about the work Zapatista rebels in México have done and how modern day activists can take part of the struggle. Domínguez pointed out to those in attendance how the decades-old struggle can

now be moved to cyberspace, as seen in electronic "sit-ins" on the Mexican government and the American Pentagon. Finally, the Chicano Narrative's present was seen through the eyes of LGBTQ Chicanos at Yale: senior Rosario Doriott, junior Juan Castillo, and sophomore Ben González. LGBTQ Chicanos find themselves balancing their own sexual identity with that of a movement which bases itself a largely heteronormative cultural mindset. However, National MEChA is actively promoting the acceptance of the LGBTQ community within the Movement. The panelists spoke about how their identities as LGBTQ and Chicanos/Latinos are actually, for the most part, complementary.

Finally, the Chicano Narrative's future was discussed in a panel on causes the Movement can take up. Camilo Romero spoke about the Killer Coke campaign, which works to expose the injustices the Coca Cola Company causes in countries where their workers are trying to unionize. Writer Oscar Torres, of the film *Voces Inocentes*, spoke on his experiences with child soldiers. Yale PhD student Melissa García presented on the problems of the maquiladoras and the femicides of Ciudad Juárez.

The East Coast Chicano Student Forum's winter 2007 conference was a huge success. Along with 150 students from 15 other East Coast schools, MEChA de Yale reflected on what the Chicano Narrative has been, what it is, and what it can be. Originally a Thanksgiving reunion for the few Chicanos on the East Coast, ECCSF has grown into a tight-knit network of like-minded students working together for various causes. MEChA de Yale has played a huge roll unifying the Chicanos in diaspora across the East Coast and ECCSF is proof of that.

On April 11th, Despierta Boricua sponsored a Master's Tea at Morse College featuring Jose Serrano, a member of the New York state senate from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Other events during the week included a cooking night (April 9th), a movie night (April 10th), La Casa Cafe (April 12th), and finally a party on Friday night, all open to both current students and alumni.

DB is looking forward to continuing to hold successful events this year and in the future. Some ideas include sponsoring a little league baseball team in the area, and even bringing a popular music artist to Yale.

## DB celebrates 35th anniversary

by members of DB

Despierta Boricua kicked off its 35th anniversary with an exciting week-long series of events on Saturday, April 7, 2007. DB alumni and current students at Yale shared a dinner at Dwight Hall chapel where Eduardo Padro, DB alum and founding member of Despierta Boricua spoke about the group's history and its impact and growth since its beginning years.

Following the dinner, dessert was served at La Casa Cultural, complementing an exhibit showcasing various archived DB accomplishments and memorabilia, from newspaper clip-

## Unidad Latina en Acción

One organization dares to tackle the increasingly divisive issue of immigration

by *Melissa Campos*

There are few organizations willing to risk working with undocumented immigrants. However, within New Haven, there is at least one group confronting the issues facing this marginalized group within marginalized populations: Unidad Latina en Acción (ULA). ULA is a grass-roots organization staffed by individuals who were and are undocumented in the United States. Consequently, the people working toward greater immigrant rights share the same experiences and situations as the people they work for.

Unidad Latina en Acción was started by a group of individuals from Guatemala. Today, the group's staff has grown to include people of Colombian and Mexican descent, among others. The tradition of activism in ULA has produced a very progressive and active organization that is constantly working and lobbying with the city of New Haven to improve conditions for immigrants in the area. In the past, they have worked with New Haven toward granting undocumented immigrants access to driver's licenses and other forms of identification that could be used toward receiving public services.

While the immigrant community has historically been distrustful of organizations, the makeup of ULA is such that it has gained access to the lives of undocumented immigrants. One of the many obstacles ULA encounters is the language barrier, for some of the undocumented immigrants living in New Haven speak neither English nor Spanish. For example, some of these immigrants are Mayan Indians who continue to speak their native tongue. In spite of these problems, ULA continues to work with all undocumented workers.

Organizations that work with populations with low visibility, such as Unidad Latina en Acción, are extremely important. In New Haven alone there exist 70,000 immigrants, even by conservative numbers. This population continues to grow in size, yet remains in the shadows of society with no improvement in living situations. Unidad Latina en Acción hopes to bring light to the lives of these undocumented immigrants and allow them the same basic rights afforded to all others.

It is a main belief of Unidad Latina en Acción that social change doesn't happen simply through the law. They work directly with individuals to influence society to gain rights for undocumented immigrants. In 2006, during the last few months of the spring semester, both graduate and undergraduate Yale students supported the rallies on the New Haven Green coordinated by Unidad Latina en Acción and several other organizations in support of immigrant rights. ULA has been actively organizing events during these important days to let New Haven and the nation know that they—undocumented immigrants and supporters—have had enough.

If you would like to contact Unidad Latina en Acción, you can write to them at: [ulaccion@yahoo.com](mailto:ulaccion@yahoo.com).

## DB conference addresses Puerto Rico's political status

by *Natasha Borrero*

What would happen if Puerto Rico became the 51st state? Why can't Puerto Rico just become independent? What does Commonwealth mean? What is the deal with the three party system?

On November 11, 2006, Despierta Boricua (DB) hosted a conference on the political status of Puerto Rico where these questions, along with many more relating to the island, were discussed. DB President Alberto Medina PC '07 opened the all-day event with a welcoming address and brief historical background of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States. The first session of the morning was a lecture by Puerto Rican lawyer and author, Roberto Fernández, whose most recent work includes the book, "El constitucionalismo y la encerrona colonial de Puerto Rico". Fernández discussed the history of legislation that has affected the island's political status. The second morning session was conducted by Professor of Sociology and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at UMass-Amherst and Visiting Scholar at Yale, Agustín Lao-Montes. Professor Lao-Montes lectured on and answered several questions about Puerto

Rico's current commonwealth status and the relationship between Puerto Ricans living on the island and those in the United States.

The highlight of the conference was the afternoon session, which was a panel of politicians from each of the three major political parties in Puerto Rico. Kenneth McClintock, President of the Senate and member of the New Progressive Party, gave his opinions on why Puerto Rico should become the fifty-first state. Luis Vega Ramos, member of the House of Representatives and the Popular Democratic Party, spoke about how Puerto Rico could maintain a positive relationship with the United States without becoming independent or a state. Manuel Rodríguez Orellana, Secretary of North American Affairs and member of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, presented his ideas on why Puerto Rico should become an independent nation. A discussion between the panelists followed their introductions. These politicians discussed many complicated issues such as economics, United States citizenship, and Puerto Rican identity to name just a few. Although it may be a long time before the political status of Puerto Rico is resolved, the Yale and New Haven community became more enlightened about this very important matter.



# Beyond Education:

Christina Sánchez, Yale and its Admissions, and Teach for America



Photo courtesy of Christina Sánchez

*Christina Sánchez, '05, made the transition from Yale student to Yale Admissions Officer. In the interview that follows, she reflects on her college experiences, provides insight into her work at the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and details her future plans.*

by Reny Díaz

## What types of activities were you involved in as an undergraduate at Yale?

I was heavily involved in La Casa - primarily through MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) - serving as moderator for the 2003 calendar year and representing the group in the Pan-Ethnic Coalition. I also served as Yale's representative for the East Coast Chicano Student Forum. I worked as a Student Recruitment Coordinator (SRC) in the Yale Admissions Office and helped with the recruitment of underrepresented minorities to Yale. I participated in FOCUS on New Haven, a program that introduces incoming sophomores to the politics and history of New Haven, as an orientation leader. I was also a Cultural Connections Aide my senior year. I was very busy.

## What was your most memorable experience as a Yalie?

This question is always tough. I can think of so many moving memories from my Yale experience, but if by "most memorable" you mean the one that I will never forget, then—however corny it may sound—I suppose I would have to say my first day on campus. Even when I'm a viejita, I think I won't be able to forget that particular moment. See, for me, I never visited Yale before the day I moved in. I made my decision to attend all the way out in California. All of my first impressions of the school were based on the pictures I saw in the view book and the descriptions that students and alumni had shared with me. So there was a lot riding on the day I moved in. Would the actual place live up to the hype? Would I like it? When I walked onto Old Campus it felt like one of those view book pictures came to life. It was bright and sunny, the architecture looked regal and majestic, and there was just so much energy buzzing all around me. At that very moment is when I must have first felt like "a Yalie," because that's when the place finally became real, became mine.

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## What is it like working at the admissions office? What do you do?

It's a very exciting job. I do a ton of things. In the fall I do a lot of traveling. My assigned admissions region is Southern California. That means that I read all the applications that we receive from that territory and in September and October I travel to the area to visit schools and conduct presentations on Yale and our admissions process. Once I return from my travel, I begin to read the applications that were received for the Early Action round. After I have read through those files, I prepare to present them in front of an admissions committee. After committee deliberations we mail out decisions and then the phone calls start coming. I spend a lot of time fielding questions from admits, students we deferred, and students that were denied admission. After a short break, I repeat this process with the applications for regular decision. The entire month of April, I am calling admits, working with alumni to plan local receptions, and preparing for Bulldog Days. A very exciting part of my job has also been working with the current SRC team. As a former SRC and Yale graduate this was probably one of my favorite parts of my job. The SRCs and I worked very closely with the three cultural centers to plan events like the Multicultural Open House in the fall and the Diversity Reception during Bulldog Days.

## What do you do in your spare time?

It's hard to believe that with all the application reading I have to do I still enjoy reading during my spare time, but it's true, I do. I'm also a big fan of good film. I just really like stories. I cook a lot when I can and sample as much New Haven cuisine as possible. I'm looking to start a hobby, but haven't decided on one yet.

## I hear you're moving on from Yale admissions this year. Where are you moving on to?

I will be moving back home to LA this fall and teaching with the Teach for America program. The experience and knowledge I've gained through the Admissions office has really been tremendous. I'm so grateful that this is how I decided to spend my first year out of college. It not only enriched my professional life, but it gave me an opportunity to give back to a community that did so much for me. However, I've always been pulled to return home and contribute to my community there as well. Another thing I've come to recognize—and appreciate—even more after my time in admissions is that Yale provides us with such powerful armaments, tools we can use as we attempt to shape the world in a way that reflects our personal philosophies and ideals. I can only hope to share those skills and make them useful to others. This is what I will try to do when I get to LA.

# Graduate School in the Sciences

## Professor Jorge E. Galan shares his past and present academic experiences

by Jarrad Aguirre

### Where are you from?

I am from Argentina, where I originally received my D.V.M. (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine). In Argentina, like in Europe, you have to commit yourself to a career after you finish high school. I got my PhD from Cornell University and did my post doctorate at Washington University in St. Louis. My first faculty position was at SUNY-Stony Brook and in 1998 Yale hired me to start my program.

### Why did you choose to study biology?

Initially, I was not really interested in biology. I was more interested in the social sciences, like anthropology. I did like the sciences, and I quickly realized I did not enjoy being a practicing vet. I went to vet school for all the wrong reasons, mostly because I thought that was what I was going to do when I grew up. I lived on a farm in Argentina, so I either had to become a vet or an agroeconomic engineer. There was no science background in my family—we were mostly involved in business. I came to the United States for six months and I was a very good student and graduated with the highest GPA out of a class of twelve-hundred students. It was easy to get into Cornell because of fellowships. I was only planning to be in the United States for a little bit until things settled in Argentina. When I got to Cornell, I immediately knew I loved science. I liked a lot of other things too, mind you. Coming from the college environment in Argentina, where universities were suppressed, taking seminars was like being in heaven. I took many different kinds of classes, but I really liked science. When I took my first faculty position I thought I would eventually go back home, but nothing has provided the excitement that working in the sciences has.

### What does your research entail?

My Ph.D. is in microbiology and my post doctorate training involved working with bacteria and pathogens. We study how bacterial pathogens interact with their host. We focus on *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. We are interested in understanding how these pathogens interact with the human host so we can learn about how they cause disease and figure out ways to intervene. As a basic science lab, we generate knowledge which can be used in the development of vaccines and drugs.

### How has your time at Yale contributed to your work?

I love being at Yale. I think this is a great place to study science in general, especially for my area of research. A unique aspect of Yale is that you can easily interact with the other science departments. It is very easy to engage with other scientists in collaborations and discussions. Our work requires an interdisciplinary approach and we need the expertise of others, due to the



*Professor Jorge E. Galán is the Lucille P. Markey Professor of Microbial Pathogenesis and the Cell Biology Chair of Microbial Pathogenesis at the Yale Medical School. He has published numerous articles in publications such as Nature. He continues to thrive in the scientific community and below is a sampling of the wisdom that he has gained as a Latino in the sciences.*

complexity of biology. It is essential to have these resources and Yale has remarkable depth that is accessible. I find that tremendously positive.

### Why do you think there are so few Latinos in the sciences?

I think it is true that there are not many Latinos in the sciences; however, I do not know the reasons. It is conceivable that people more scientifically inclined just enter medical school. Whether it is a Latino thing or a socioeconomic thing, I honestly don't know. But it is probably right that there are less Latinos in basic sciences than in the population. There are programs in place to facilitate these types of things. You could also argue people are big on role models; however, I did not enter the sciences because of a role model. One can only personalize one's own experiences. Across the board, undergraduates do not know what graduate school is all about. There is a great ignorance about graduate school, and we are not doing a good job of informing undergraduates about it. Students may do a research internship simply to put it their resume, and such students are usually uninterested in pursuing science careers. But when you get a student that does research for the right reasons, they are hooked and you can tell them apart immediately.

### Do you have any advice for students considering a career in science academia?

My advice would be to figure out if you really like it or not. You have to like science to enjoy it. You also have to work hard if you want to do well, as it is a very demanding field. The act of executing science, on the experimental level, can be boring. The actual pursuit is rather habitual, but once you are in that routine, you know what is at stake—you understand that the tube you're centrifuging is part of a project that has never been done before. This understanding, in a sense, tickles you. Loving science is the only requirement. If you love science, no matter what field you pursue, you will be happy. It is demanding, it requires a commitment that is unusual. If you want to be successful you have to entirely immerse yourself in the process. Your head is always immersed in the science; it is a way of life. Being a scientist to simply make a living is a bad idea.