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2015 NACCS Scholar Award Remarks

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NACCS Scholar of the Year Award
April 17, 2015

Thank you to the letter-writers who took time from their busy lives to make my award possible. It is an honor beyond words to be here today. It is even a greater distinction to be here with my colleague and friend Professor Miguel Carranza, co-honoree for the NACCS Scholar of the Year.

I would like to dedicate my remarks to my mother, Magdalena Herrera del Angel Hurtado, who recently passed. My mother was the first in our family to cross the US-Mexico border, making her the original Neplantera who set in motion the forces that led our family to where we are today.

Like the mothers in Central America who sent their unaccompanied children to the United States, all she ever wanted for her children was to have a better life than the one we were destined for in Tampico, Mexico.



My mother crossing the border resulted in her four children obtaining advanced degrees and working on behalf of social justice issues.

- My brother, José G. Hurtado, a.k.a. Pepe, is a social worker in Alameda County assisting young adults in foster care to transition out of the system.
- My middle sister Maria A. Hurtado, a.k.a. Bonnie, also a social worker by training was recently appointed Assistant City Manager for the City of Oxnard, California.
- My youngest sister, Arcelia L. Hurtado, a.k.a. Chelita, is a lawyer for the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board—and just finished a 6-month trial in Fresno, California defending the right of farmworkers to unionize.

My mother's border crossing also led me to the love of my life Professor Craig W. Haney and together we raised a wonderful family of activists:

- Erin D. Haney is a lawyer conducting death penalty appeals.
- Matt Haney is Vice President of the San Francisco School Board and works with Van Jones to reduce the prison population by 50% in 5 years.

- And Lynne Haney, a Professor of sociology at New York University, studies the detrimental effects on fathering when courts do not allow men to have contact with their children.

My mother's border crossing made possible our family's personal happiness but also led to tremendous social change.

However, today the bulk of my remarks are not about my family but a love letter to my discipline of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

I fell in love with the possibility of Chicana and Chicano studies as a first year college student at Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas.

It was there that I took my first course, in what was then called Mexican American Studies, with Professor Juan Antonio Chavira.

In his class I heard Spanish used for the first time in an educational setting, although South Texas is 90% Mexican and has the highest level of Spanish retention in the country.

It was also in Professor Chavira's class that for the first time in my formal education, I was exposed to what came to be called a "non-deficit" view of Chicano/a families. In his class, I learned that my parents were poor but not deficient; their struggles to provide for our family were heroic and worthy of praise and study.

I fell head over heels in love with Chicana and Chicano Studies and the love only grew with every single year of my educational trajectory.

But this was not a loca love—you know the kind, the one resulting in heartache and sung about in rancheras accompanied by tequila shots.

No, this was a deep, passionate, giddy love that inspired the best in me and in others.

The one my colleague Inés Casillas calls "Chicana Love"—the love you can count on no matter what.

And after more than 30 years of my passionate love affair with Chicana and Chicano Studies, I have not been disappointed. In fact, my love has grown because it is a love that is reinforced and fomented every day by those that have built the discipline.

When we participated in the building of Chicana and Chicano Studies in the 1970s and 80s, we were escuincle scholars—child scholars mostly in our early to mid 20s.

We loved deeply, worked hard, and believed that we could create a field that was both substantive and activist in nature.

The escuincle scholars included Pat Zavella, Denise Segura, Beatriz Pesquera, Maxine Baca Zinn, Tomás Almaguer, Ramón Gutiérrez, Carlos Arce, Juan Antonio Chavira, David Alvarez, Norma Cantú, Julia Curry, Larry Trujillo, Miguel Carranza, Arturo Madrid, Antonia Castañeda, Tomas Ybarra-Fraustro, Rosa-Linda Fregoso, Rusty Barceló, among many, many others.

We were a tribe that only saw each other periodically but who were committed to taking something that was nothing more than a spec in the universe and eventually bringing it to fruition.

The love has continued in all of these years in the academy—it is reinforced through constant acts of kindness by my colleagues and students as well as by those outside the academy who look to us to carry the dreams of their children into a better future through education.

There is not a week that goes by where I do not receive a note, an email, a phone call, and most recently texts and FB—porque la raza loves their technology—praising, affirming, reinforcing, something I have written or done.

The love is in the circle of affirmation and support that Norma Cantú, Elvia Niebla, and Elsa Ruiz surrounded me at the Anzaldúa conference when I found out that my best friend Sophia Garcia-Robles had died tragically in a car accident.

It is in the colleagues from my department, including my Chair Denise Segura, insisting that I take time to spend with my mother when she fell ill, and not to worry about my duties at the university.

It is in the dozens of flowers we received from all over the country for my mother's celebration of life from colleagues, students, and community members.

It is in my young colleagues Inés Casillas and Gerardo Aldana driving 8 hours, leaving small children behind, to come and support me during one of the hardest day of my life—the day we said good bye to our mother.

It is in my wonderful junior colegas in Santa Cruz like Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, Cindy Cruz, Cat Ramirez, Jennifer Gonzalez, among others supporting, and advancing my scholarly work, always treating me with respect and admiration when they are obviously much more talented than I am.

It is in the amazing and brilliant graduate students at UC Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz who remind me daily that our future is secure because of their dedication and commitment to the field.

It is in the undergraduate research assistants who work transcribing interviews of young Latino men, and after a grueling day of work, come and thank me for allowing them to participate in the creation of knowledge.

It is in in this magnificent organization that is NACCS—surviving through thick and thin, uniting us every year to continue our intellectual familia, socializing the young ones into a new

generation of escuincle scholars, undergirded by the dedication and love of its leadership and support by Julia Curry and Kathy Blackmer.

I could go on and on because there is not a single day that I do not receive an act of kindness from one of my colleagues, students, and community.

So I thank my mother for having the incredible courage to cross the border not only for the opportunities our entire family has enjoyed, but I thank her because in crossing the border she made me a Chicana and I encountered the greatest love of all—the discipline of Chicana and Chicano studies.

So I say to the young ones, my junior colleagues and students—fall in love, no holds barred, give yourself to this magnificent field, because after all these years of me being in love, there is nothing better than when the discipline loves you back.

I thank you so much for this honor.