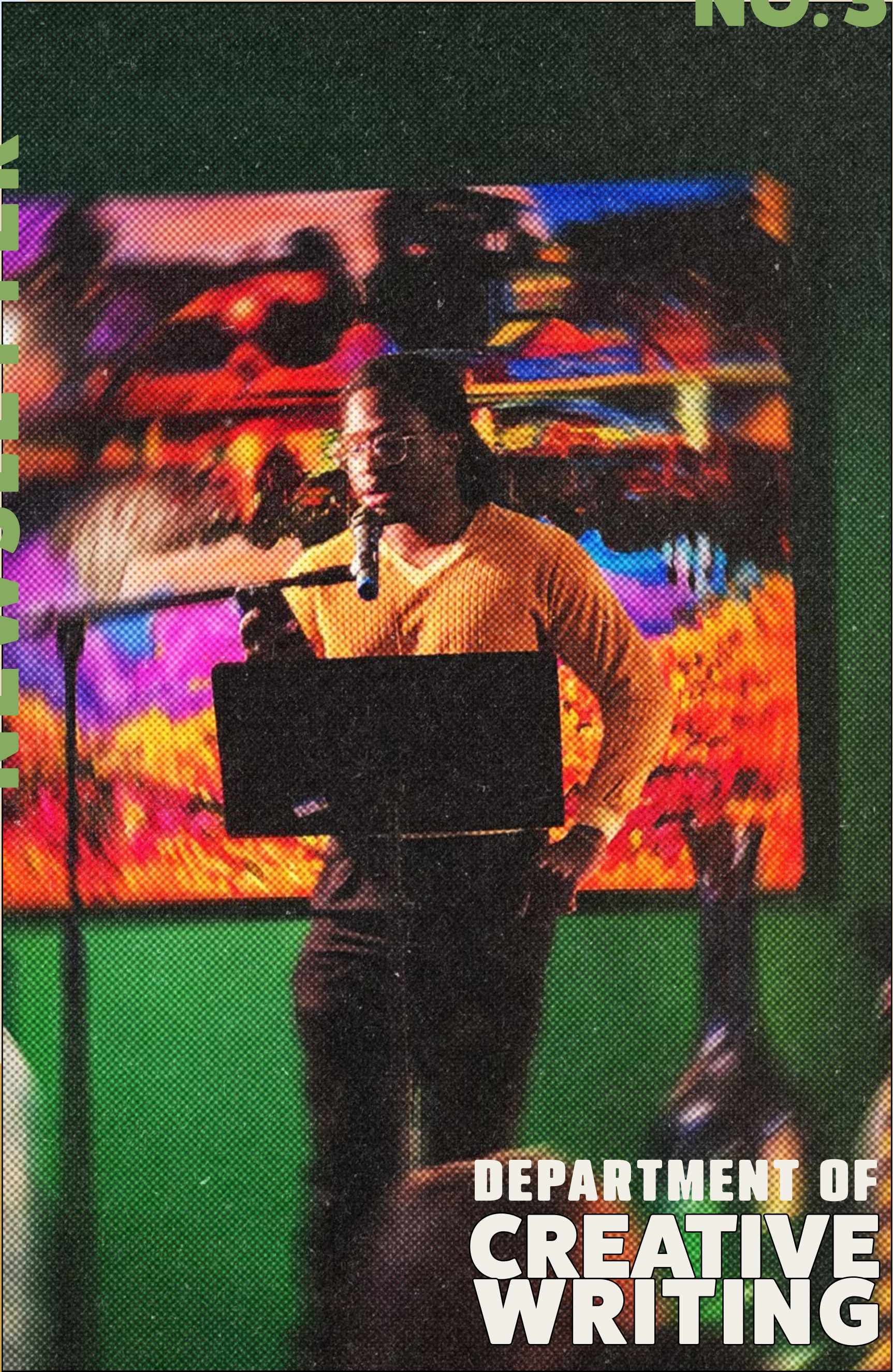




SPRING + SUMMER 2025

NO. 3

NEWSLETTER



DEPARTMENT OF
CREATIVE
WRITING

PHOTO OF MFA CANDIDATE KENAN AT OFF-SITE AWP
CONFERENCE READING IN LOS ANGELES, MARCH 2025



FOLLOW OUR SOCIALS MEDIA



Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT



Kenan Phillip
MFA Grad, May 2025

[The Ego Rhythm \(Flowersong Press, 2025\)](#)



Jonathan Solis
MFA Grad 2018

[Camp Supernatural: Mind Over Matter \(Esperanza Books, 2024\)](#)



Daniel Manuel Mendoza
MFA Grad 2015

[Drum the Double Sun—Algoems \(Madville Press, 2025\)](#)



David Carren
affiliate faculty

[Capturing Big Ideas for Less in Feature Film \(Routledge, 2025\)](#)



Esteban Rodríguez
MFA Grad 2013

[The Lost Nostalgias: Poems \(CavanKerry, 2025\)](#)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: FACULTY, ALUMNI, AND STUDENTS



David Carren

Professor David Carren, affiliate faculty, new screenwriting textbook, *[Capturing Big Ideas for Less in Feature Film](#)*, was released by Routledge on March 31, 2025.

Avery Castillo

MFA student, Avery Castillo, was selected as a 2025 We Need Diverse Books Picture Book *[Mentee](#)*, working under the guidance of Inda Ahmad Zahri. Avery's recent poetry has been published by *[Knee Brace Press](#)* and featured in the Women Who Submit blog series, as well as in *[This Makes Up the Sky: A Year of Looking Upward](#)*, edited by Jessica Ceballos y Campbell.



Julie Corpus

In April 2025, Julie Corpus, MFA Grad 2016, completed all Spanish translations for *Flesh To Bone*, a collection of short stories by ire'ne lara silva, TX Poet Laureate 2023. Additionally, *La Revista de la Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española* will publish four of Julie's poems in its July 2025 issue.

Heather Cathleen Cox

Heather Cathleen Cox, an undergraduate senior majoring in Creative Writing at UTRGV, had her poem "Cafe Sira," which depicts life in Israel post-October 7, published in *[Boundless 2025](#)*, the official anthology of the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival (FlowerSong Press).



ACCOMPLISHMENTS: FACULTY, ALUMNI, AND STUDENTS



Jessi Farfán

Jessi Farfán, MFA student, is a poet and essayist whose work explores themes of identity. Her recent publications include poems in *Shiela-Na-Gig* (“Nanih Waiya”), *Lucky Jefferson* (“Blood Quantum Math”), *Mouthful of Salt* (“Full Volume Figure”), and *MORIA* (“How to be Native” and “Bad Indian”). Her creative nonfiction piece, “Terms and Conditions,” appeared in *Shenandoah*.

Daniel Mendoza

Daniel Mendoza, MFA Grad 2015, is a poet and essayist. His most recent work is *Drum the Double Sun: Algoems* (Madville Press, 2025). Mendoza serves as Vice President of the Texas Association of Creative Writers and teaches English at South Texas College in the Rio Grande Valley.

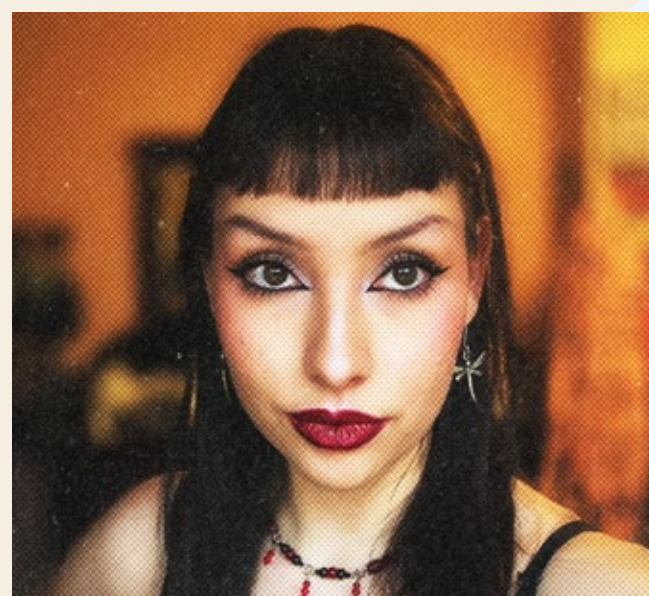


Kristin Montez

Kristin Montez, MFA student, is a queer screenwriter and filmmaker who founded Ciné Futuros, an experimental short film showcase in collaboration with Entre Film Center which aims to promote accessible filmmaking and to platform local RGV artists. Her film review on A24’s *Priscilla* (2023) was recently published in Issue #4 of *The Meat Puppet*.

Krista A. Olivarez

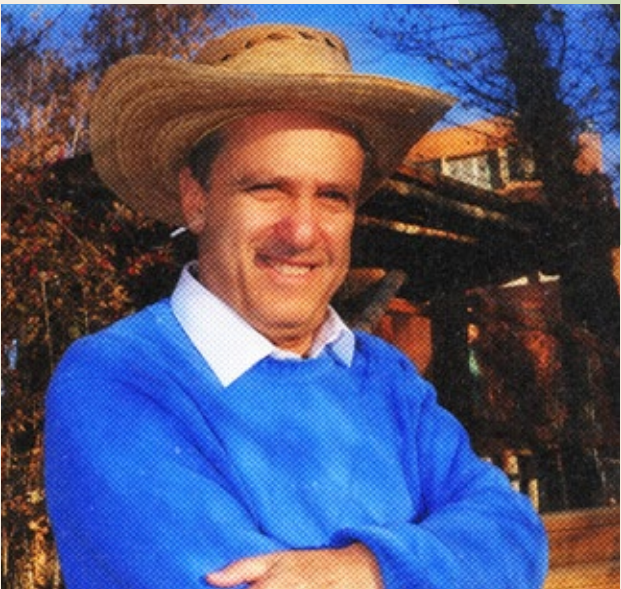
Krista A. Olivarez, MFA student, is a performance poet who, over the Summer, had her poem, “Yasmin,” published in the inaugural volume of *Abundance Literary Magazine*, as well as another poem, “The Glass Woman Elaborates,” published in *Streetcake Magazine*, both in July 2025. This August, Krista was interviewed by truchargv.com and featured in their article, titled “*Quién Es Tu Gente: The Performance Artists of the RGV.*”



ACCOMPLISHMENTS: FACULTY, ALUMNI, AND STUDENTS

Steven Schneider

Professor Steven Schneider had two poems, “Blue Landscape” and “Old Blue and Aspens,” published in *BLUE: a Hue Are You*, an anthology from Jambu Press featuring work by Federico García Lorca, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Emily Dickinson, and others. His poems “At The Mariachi Concert, Again,” “My Metamorphosis” and “Zona de Paz” were published in the anthology *All The Men Came and Danced*, edited by Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan. In February 2025, Professor Schneider’s collaborative exhibit with the artist Reefka Schneider, “Last Poet in the Woods,” opened at Quinta Mazatlán in McAllen, Texas, where he gave a talk during FESTIBA on the exhibit’s genesis. Schneider also chaired the judging committee for the Texas Institute of Letters’ Best Poetry Book and Best First Book of Poetry Awards.



Jonathan Solis

Jonathan Solis, MFA Grad 2018, recently published his debut novel, *Camp Supernatural: Mind Over Matter* (Esperanza Books, December 2024). The novel follows 13-year-old Lucas Fargo, a boy navigating mental health challenges who discovers unique abilities at a camp for kids with mental and physical disabilities. Solis also serves as a Student Learning Assistant and English tutor at South Texas College’s Starr County Campus Center for Learning Excellence (CLE).



PHOTO OF MFA SHOWCASE, MAY 2025

A TRIBUTE TO OUR RETIRING FACULTY



I want to offer a heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Jean Braithwaite as she steps into this exciting new chapter. It means so much for me to write this because Dr. Braithwaite has impacted my life in a way no other professor has. She is, without question, one of the most brilliant minds I've ever had the privilege to learn from.

When I first met Dr. Braithwaite, we instantly bonded over our shared love of graphic literature. From the very first day I reached out, before I was even her student, she gave me her time and attention. She sat with one of my personal comics and offered thoughtful, detailed feedback, treating my work with the same seriousness she would a published text.

She has been the most challenging professor I've ever had and I mean that in all the best ways possible. Under her guidance, I was pushed beyond

what I believed I was capable of. She saw something in me I hadn't yet seen in myself and refused to let me settle for anything less. To be believed in, especially when you don't yet fully believe in yourself, is one of the most profound gifts a student can receive. And I'll carry with me for the rest of my life.

It is a great loss for the university to part with someone who not only holds her students to the highest standards, but also believes in them with unwavering conviction. Her absence will be greatly felt, not just in the classroom, but in the spirit of this program she's helped shape.

Dr. Braithwaite, it has been true honor to learn from you. You have truly changed my life. I wouldn't be the writer I am today without your remarkable guidance this past year. You leave behind a legacy of students who will never settle for less.

- Chloe Vela

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Professor David Carren, affiliate faculty in Creative writing, was actually there at the beginning of my higher education career. I took several film production and screenwriting classes as a film production major. Anyone who's been lucky enough to have taken one of his classes can attest: no one lectures like he does. No one drops the most entertaining lore and film industry stories like he does. And no one is as quick-witted as he is—especially when you run into him in the hallways or in his office at 10 o'clock in the morning. His classes are a masterclass in what screenwriting really is at its core.

For those of you who don't know David Carren, he started writing out in L.A. back in the late 1970s. This is the part where I go ahead and show off some of his IMDb credits: He's written and produced more than 200 films and television shows, including *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Stargate SG-1*, and *Diagnosis: Murder*. He basically wrote for the TV shows that shaped and developed us millennials from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s.

I'd like to take a moment to personally thank him for the impact he's made on me—as a screenwriter and as an educator. I always knew I loved films, but taking his classes and receiving his invaluable guidance showed me how unapologetically passionate I could be about film and screenwriting.

I don't think I can put into words how dearly you will be missed by both the Theatre and Creative Writing departments. Thank you for consistently going above and beyond as an affiliated faculty member to our department; your unwavering support and contributions were invaluable, and the impact you made will be felt for years to come because I, for one, won't be able to stop talking about your work here at this university.

-Kristin Montez

Graduate Assistant Instructor



EVENTS

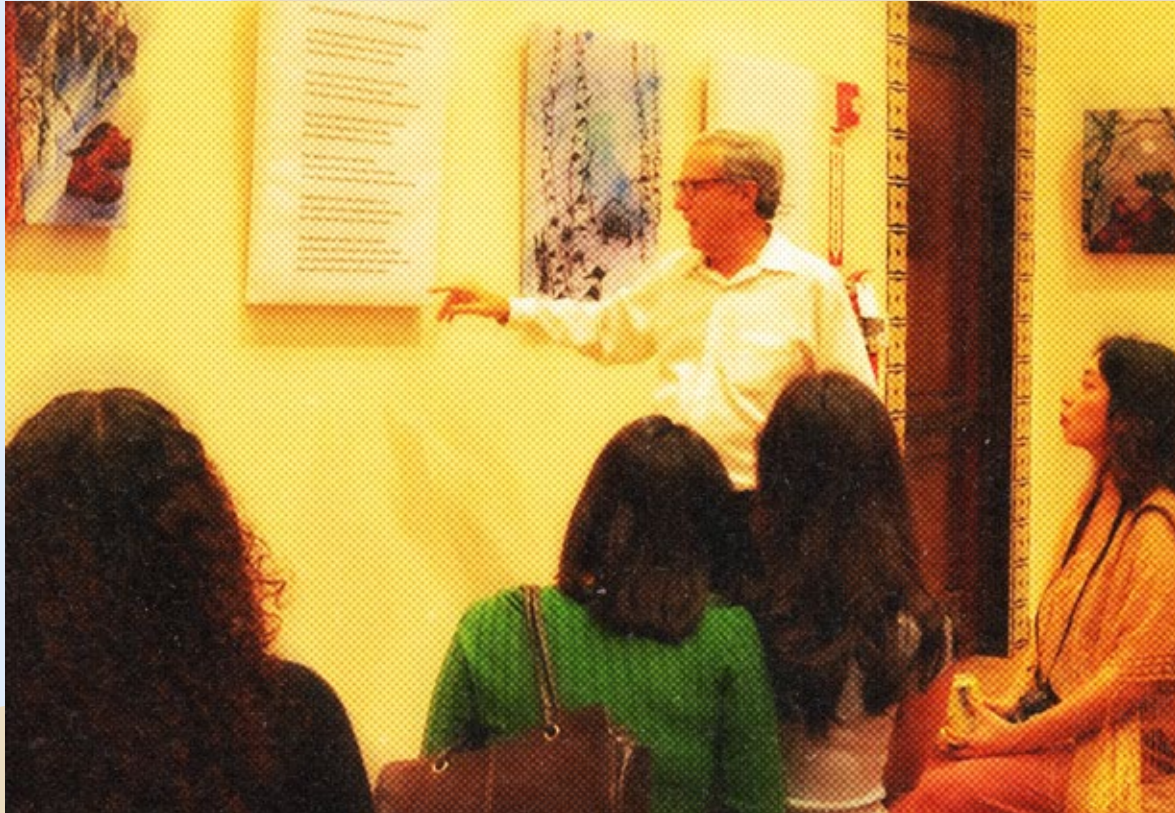


PHOTO OF PROFESSOR STEVEN SCHNEIDER EXPLAINING HIS POEM, "SHE SNOWSHOES UP THE MOUNTAIN," FEB 6, 2025



PHOTO OF KRISTIN MONTEZ AT CINÉ FUTUROS FILM SHOWCASE, AUG 23, 2025



PHOTO OF AFFILIATE FACULTY PROFESSOR DAVID BOWLES AND GUEST SPEAKER YAMILE SAIED MÉNDEZ, FESTIBA, FEB 26, 2025



PHOTO OF THE GALLERY MAGAZINE LAUNCH PARTY, AUG 29, 2025

EVENTS



PHOTO OF APRIL 30, 2025 OPEN MIC EVENT



PHOTO OF CINÉ FUTUROS FILM SHOWCASE, AUG 23, 2025



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER AND MFA ALUM ESTEBAN RODRÍGUEZ WITH STUDENTS AND PROFESSOR EMMY PÉREZ

Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

EVENTS

SPRING 2025

**FESTIBA EVENT:
CFA DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS SERIES
AMANDA JOHNSTON, TX POET LAURE-
ATE 2024, READING & Q&A**

Date: February 20, 2025

Co-sponsored by UTRGV Arts and Depart-
ment of Creative Writing

**FESTIBA EVENT:
JOSÉ A. RODRÍGUEZ POETRY READING
& Q&A**

Date: February 25, 2025

**FESTIBA EVENT:
YAMILE SAIED MÉNDEZ READING,
Q&A, & BOOK SIGNING**

Date: February 26, 2025

Co-sponsored by the Texas Book Festival
and Department of Creative Writing

**FESTIBA EVENT:
LAST POET IN THE WOODS, PRESENT-
ED BY REEFKA AND STEVEN SCHNEI-
DER**

Date: February 6 & 27, 2025
Quinta Mazatlan

**FILM WORKSHOPS BY ENTRE: CINÉ
SIN CAMARA**

Date: April 12th & 13th, 2025

**MONA SUSAN POWER
FICTION READINGS & Q&A**

Date: March 12 & 13, 2025



PHOTO OF AMANDA JOHNSTON, VISITING WRITER AND TX
POET LAUREATE 2024, FESTIBA 2025



PHOTO OF C. DIAZ PRESENTING AT FILM WORKSHOP: CINÉ
SIN CÁMARA, APRIL 2025

EVENTS

SPRING-SUMMER 2025



PHOTO OF KENAN PHILLIP READING FROM HIS THESIS
AT MFA SHOWCASE, MAY 2025



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA,
VISITING WRITER AND TEXAS POET LAUREATE 2025,
JUNE 2025

ESTEBAN RODRÍGUEZ READING & “SUBMISSION ESSENTIALS”

Date: April 21st, 2025

ONLINE OPEN MIC

Date: April 23, 2025

OPEN MIC

Date: April 30th, 2025

TEN MINUTE PLAY

Date: May 7-8, 2025

MFA SHOWCASE

Date: May 14th, 2025

OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA TEXAS POET LAUREATE 2025 WORKSHOP AND READING

Date: June 18th, 2025

DANIEL TOBIN “PERMUTATIONS OF FORM IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY”

Date: June 25th, 2025

CINÉ FUTUROS

Date: August 23, 2025

**Co-sponsored by ENTRE and Department
of Creative Writing**

THE GALLERY MAGAZINE LAUNCH PARTY

Date: August 29, 2025

EVENTS

VISITING PRESENTERS FOR SPONSORED/
CO-SPONSORED EVENTS



Amanda Johnston



Yamile Saied Méndez



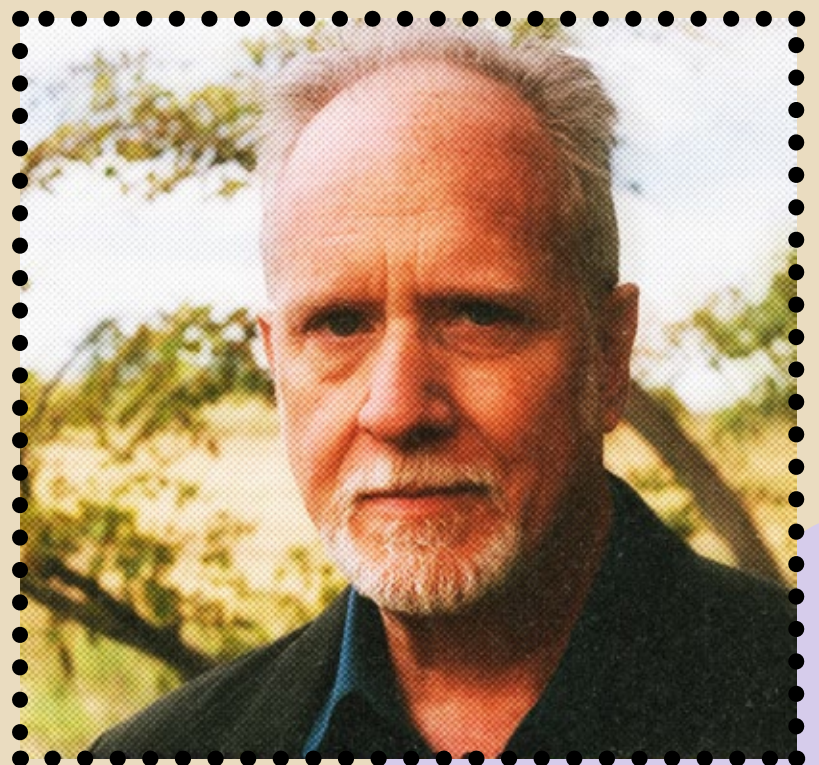
Mona Susan Power



Octavio Quintanilla



Esteban Rodríguez



Daniel Tobin

AMANDA JOHNSTON



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER AMANDA JOHNSTON, FEB 2025

“Art and poetry is a way of having a universal truth.” – Amanda Johnston, Texas Poet Laureate 2024

The UTRGV College of Fine Arts and the Creative Writing Department were honored to co-sponsor and co-host the 2024 Texas Poet Laureate, Amanda Johnston. Johnston gave a poetry reading and participated in a Q&A session as part of UTRGV’s FESTIBA lineup of events. She read from her full-length collection *Another Way to Say Enter*, as well as from works by influential African American poets such as Phillis Wheatley Peters. During the Q&A, Johnston answered students’ questions about navigating their craft and heritage—even leading everyone in an exercise where they said “I love you” to help destigmatize self-expression.

Our department reached out to the PSJA Ballew Learning center and Johnston met with their students where she shared that as the first Black woman to serve as Poet Laureate in the state of Texas, it’s important to her that she sees a continuing legacy representation in such a distinguished position. “All of you keep writing and keep sharing. Maybe you’ll be the next Texas Poet Laureate.” Johnston read several poems by African American poets in honor of Black History month. “An important thing we can do as poets and writers [...] is to witness the world that is taking place around us [...] and how can we translate that into a poem to share and keep telling that story?”

On the last day of her visit, Johnston presented her keynote, “Examining Life Through Literacy,” for the South Texas Literacy Symposium, co-sponsored by the South Texas Literacy Coalition and the College of Fine Arts/FESTIBA. Later that evening, Professor Pérez and Johnston attended an open mic in the community.

-Kristin Montez
Graduate Assistant Instructor



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER AMANDA JOHNSTON

LAST POET IN THE WOODS: ECO-TAPESTRY OF ART AND POETRY



PHOTO OF PROFESSOR STEVEN SCHNEIDER AND REEFKA SCHNEIDER



EXHIBIT ATTENDEES PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERACTIVE WRITING ACTIVITY PHOTO BY LAURA MARTINEZ



PAINTING TITLED "DON QUIXOTE IN EL SALTO" AND ITS ACCOMPANYING POEM "DON QUIXOTE AT TWILIGHT." PHOTO BY LAURA MARTINEZ

The exhibit *Last Poet in the Woods: An Eco-Tapestry of Art and Poetry* opened February 6, 2025, at Quinta Mazatlán's Discovery Center in McAllen and held a second presentation on February 27, 2025. The exhibits featured landscape watercolor paintings by Reefka Schneider paired with ekphrastic poems by Steven P. Schneider, the show offers a preview of their larger collaborative project inspired by the concept of biophilia and Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods*. The works are organized by season: Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring, and intend to inspire viewers to a heightened appreciation of the beauty in the natural world. The Schneiders have collaborated on two previous bilingual ekphrastic books and exhibits, *Borderlines: Drawing Border Lives: Fronteras: dibujando las vidas fronterizas* and *The Magic of Mariachi: La Magia del Mariachi*, demonstrating a long-standing commitment to combining literary and visual forms.

The exhibit's connection to environmental awareness aligns with Quinta Mazatlán's mission of engaging the community with the natural world. Steven Schneider, a Creative Writing professor at UTRGV, emphasizes the role of art and literature in inspiring reflection and creativity tied to nature. Visitors were invited to participate in an interactive writing activity, using sensory memory and personal experience to respond to prompts about how nature influences them. Through these paintings, poems, and participatory elements, *Last Poet in the Woods* encourages viewers to deepen their relationship with the environment and consider how that connection can inform their own creative expression.

[Read more here by MFA student Kristin Montez published on Trucha RGV: "A Taste of the Last Poet in the Woods" Exhibit: An Ekphrastic Journey Through Art and Nature Story](#)

MONA SUSAN POWER



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER MONA SUSAN POWER



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER MONA SUSAN POWER AND JESSI FARFÁN

We had the honor of hosting two events with award winning author Mona Susan Power for a deeply moving reading and conversation. Power, a member of the Yanktonai Dakota nation, is the author of *The Grass Dancer*, *Sacred Wilderness*, *Roofwalker*, and most recently, *A Council of Dolls*. Her latest novel is a touching work of historical fiction that follows three generations of Yankotnai Dakota women as they navigate the enduring impacts of colonialism and generational trauma. What makes it unique is its narrative lens: the story unfolds in part through the voices of the women's childhood dolls, who bore witness to history as it was happening.

During the events, Power read select passages from the novel, offering a glimpse into the emotional depth and layered storytelling found in her work. She discussed the craft choices she made alongside the creative ones with each passage. Getting insight into her process was a valuable experience for all in attendance. As someone from an Indigenous community, I found it meaningful to hear a story that reflects Indigenous experiences rarely seen in mainstream literature, shared with care and authenticity.

-Jessi Farfán

Graduate Assistant Instructor

AWP CONFERENCE, BOOKFAIR, & OFF-SITE READING 2025



PHOTO OF THE WRITERS PARTICIPATING IN THE READING AT THE MARGARET GARCIA ART STUDIO ON MARCH 26, 2025



MFA STUDENTS KENAN PHILLIP, JESSI FARFÁN, PROF. EMMY PÉREZ ARE PICTURED WITH MARGARET GARCIA AND HER PAINTINGS AT THE MARGARET GARCIA ART STUDIO IN LOS ANGELES, MARCH 26, 2025

The 2025 Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Conference took place in Los Angeles in March. The conference and bookfair draw thousands of attendees annually. Our department tabled at the conference bookfair to help spread the word about our national literary magazine, *riverSedge*, led by lead editor and Professor José Rodríguez. We also advertised our MFA program and displayed a selection of our alumni's book publications.

Our department also participated in an AWP off-site reading, collaborating with Mouthfeel Press, Arte Público Press, and the Margaret Garcia Art Studio in Los Angeles, where the event took place. Garcia's paintings were featured in the gallery space and about a dozen writers shared their work, including, from our department, Kenan Philip (MFA candidate), Jessi Farfan (MFA student), and Prof. Emmy Pérez, along with other featured writers representing their respective presses.

The department looks forward to participating in AWP Conference & Bookfair 2026 in Baltimore, Maryland.



OUR DEPARTMENT AND RIVERSEDGE TABLE AT THE AWP CONFERENCE & BOOKFAIR AT THE LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER, 2025

THE LOST NOSTALGIAS / SUBMISSIONS ESSENTIALS

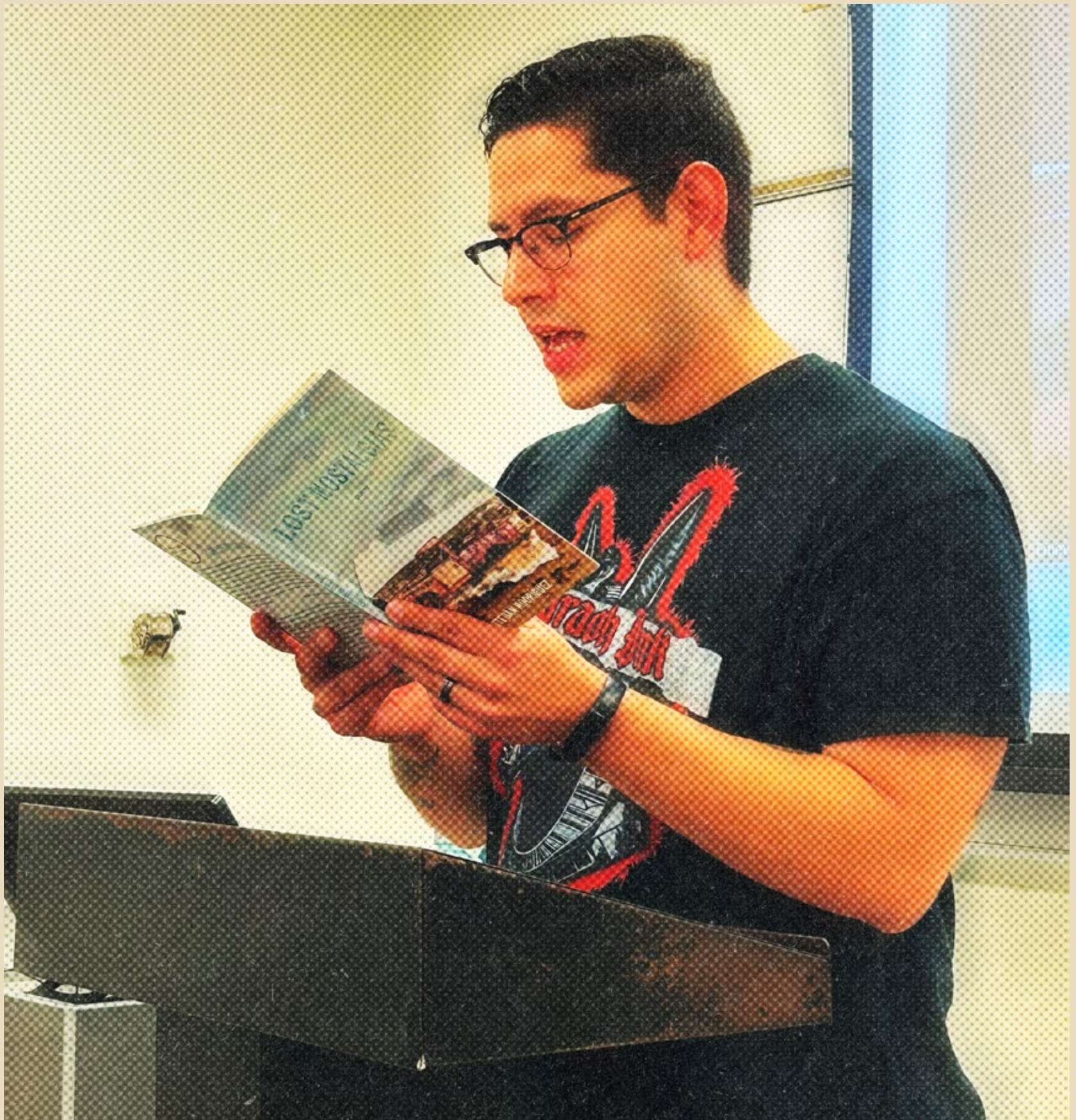


PHOTO OF ESTEBAN RODRÍGUEZ READING FROM *THE LOST NOSTALGIAS: POEMS*

We had the honor of hosting poet Esteban Rodríguez, MFA alum, for two events this spring to celebrate *The Lost Nostalgias: Poems* (CavanKerry Press 2025), his eighth book publication, described on the press’s website as “an exploration of familial moments that move between the tragic, the trivial, and the triumphant. A mother’s decaying teeth leads to questions of self-care and beauty. A quiceanera becomes a medication on masculinity... And a rave suddenly becomes a reflection on migration and survival.” At his featured reading, Esteban read several poems from the new collection and shared a bit of his process writing the work, some of the stories behind what were transformed into the poems, and answered students’ questions about writers’ block, publishing, and having lived in various Texas cities but retaining his Valley roots in his work.

That same evening, Esteban shared publication tips drawing from his vast experience as the author of numerous book and his continued work as an associate poetry editor of *AGNI literary magazine*. Last year, he also co-edited *AGNI*’s Issue 99: “To Never Have Risked Our Lives: A Portfolio of Central American and Mexican Diaspora Writing.”

CINÉ FUTUROS WORKSHOP



PHOTO OF CINÉ FUTUROS FILM WORKSHOP EVENT

In April, Kristin Montez, of the Creative Writing Department, collaborated with ENTRE Film Center to create Cine Futuros, an experimental short film showcase designed to engage students and community members who are artists, poets, musicians, and/or essayists interested in exploring film. The theme of the showcase aims to reclaim and subvert border narratives by challenging mainstream representations and “engaging with perceived realities and cultural power.” This showcase calls on artists to create with all forms of filmmaking including analog, digital, smartphone, and stop-motion/animation/mixed-media. As part of the programming, ENTRE Film Center hosted a free Cine sin Cámara workshop on campus. This workshop allowed participants to physically create a camera-less 16mm film using paints, markers, and other materials and tools.

The workshop was led by film archivist, filmmaker, and ENTRE co-founder, C. Diaz. Diaz gave an abridged lesson on the history and cultural significance of DIY handmade film, beginning with the inception of color processing in cinema during the 1930s. Diaz then demonstrated how to create a desired image on a film cell using tools like masking tape and stamps. One method for film painting, called “masking,” involves taping fragmented shapes along the cell frame and painting over them with acrylic paint. Once dried, the tape is removed, revealing a shape formed by the surrounding paint. This cell can then be placed over another film cell with an image to create a border for the film.

“I put an X mask on [this] face so you can look at what’s in the strip itself and make a story out of any found footage,” said Diaz. Participants then began creating images and poems on their film strips. At the end of the workshop, they were able to splice and wind their films into a projection reel that played their creations. Participants who produced a 10-second film during the workshop received a digitized version to use in their experimental short films for the Cine Futuros showcase.

The Ciné Futuros experimental short film showcase followed, screening selected short films on August 23, 2025, at 7PM at Entre Film Center in Harlingen, TX.

Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

3RD ANNUAL MIDWEST POETRY MASH-UP



PHOTO OF KRISTA OLIVAREZ AS SHE PERFORMS AT THE POETRY SLAM



PHOTO OF PERFORMERS AT THE POETRY SLAM

Taking place in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Midwest Poetry Mash-Up is a two-day poetry slam tournament where people from all over the world come together to exercise two things: Words & Math. A slam is a competitive word-sport of sorts that uses numbers to score poems, resulting in a final winner. Slams can be comprised of individual poets or teams. Krista competed with her team, “Hot n’ Sour,” this past April, and made it into finals, placing 4th out of the 10 teams that competed overall. 10 teams, 50 poets, over 100 poems separated into 5 bouts, in 2 days. Krista began her competition in the first bout, going up against 19 other poets early on in the competition, and she scored highest of them all with her poem “car crash in d(eer) major,” which she memorized and performed very specifically for the competition, merging her acting skills with her poetic craft in order to preform this persona piece.

The second time she performed in the tournament, she performed her poem “Ode to The Rot Girls on Twitter,” and her final performance was a reading of her poem “I Grew Up in The Door Christian Fellowship, And This is On Being A Hinge.” Krista’s poems packed a punch as she touched on “themes of fear, abandonment, twisted romance, teen girlhood and mental health struggles, as well as religious guilt and cutting toxic ties.”

Krista continues to write and perform whenever she can, at open mic events or at other slams. She will be teaching creative writing and performance class in Spring 2026.

STUDENT OPEN MICS



Online Open Mic

In April, MFA student Chloe Vela hosted “Things We Never Say,” a virtual open mic designed to create a welcoming, judgment-free space for students to share their work. The event brought together a diverse group of readers, some of whom had never read publicly before, offering a supportive environment that encouraged even those with high anxiety to participate. The event was filled with honest, heartfelt readings and a strong sense of community. Thank you to everyone who joined and helped make it such a meaningful experience!

Open Mic

Kenan Phillip and other MFA students hosted an all-day open mic that welcomed every kind of performance, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, music, stand-up, and acoustic sets. The event created a lively space where anyone could step up to the mic and share their work. Throughout the day, readers and performers came and went, building an atmosphere that was electric. Thank you to everyone who joined in and made the marathon of art and expression.



PHOTO OF OPEN MIC EVENT, APRIL 30, 2025

Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

TEN-MINUTE PLAY FESTIVAL



PHOTO OF TEN-MINUTE PLAY FESTIVAL 2025

This spring, UTRGV students in the Advanced Creative Writing: Workshop in Playwriting course once again brought their original works to the stage during the annual 10-Minute Play Festival, held on May 7th and 8th at the Jeffers Theater. Guided by Dr. Robert Moreira, Senior Lecturer, the festival marked the culmination of a semester devoted to developing, refining, and realizing short plays from script to performance. Students not only authored the pieces but also took on directing and production responsibilities, gaining hands-on experience in all aspects of theatrical creation.

The Ten-Minute Play Festival featured original plays by Nicole Castillo, Sergio Cuellar, Diego Garza, Javier Gonzalez, Charlotte Hinojosa, Margith Jimenez, Julien Juarez, Rolando Marin Alvarez, Kayla Martinez, Matthew Martinez, Victoria Montes, Camila Palacios-Ramiro, Noe Salinas, Jr., Nathan Smith, Pedro Raymundo Torres, and Baldemar Trevino.

The 2025 festival's success was the result of a collaborative effort from students and Dr. Moreira. The department thanks Dr. Moreira for his leadership and dedication to fostering new voices in Playwriting. The 10-Minute Play Festival continues to be a highlight of the UTRGV Creative Writing program, providing students with a public platform to share their stories with the community.

ENGL 4351's Ten-Minute Play Festival

Featuring Original Plays by

Nicole Castillo
Sergio Cuellar
Diego Garza
Javier Gonzalez
Charlotte Hinojosa
Margith Jimenez
Julien Juarez
Rolando Marin Alvarez
Kayla Martinez
Matthew Martinez
Victoria Montes
Camila Palacios-Ramiro
Noe Salinas, Jr.
Nathan Smith
Pedro Raymundo Torres
Baldemar Trevino



Image by Kayla Martinez

UTRGV
Creative Writing

Wednesday, May 7, 7pm-10pm
Thursday, May 8, 7pm-10pm
Albert L. Jeffers Theatre

FREE TO THE PUBLIC

May contain strong themes and language.
For special accommodations, email robert.moreira@utrgv.edu

Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

MFA SHOWCASE

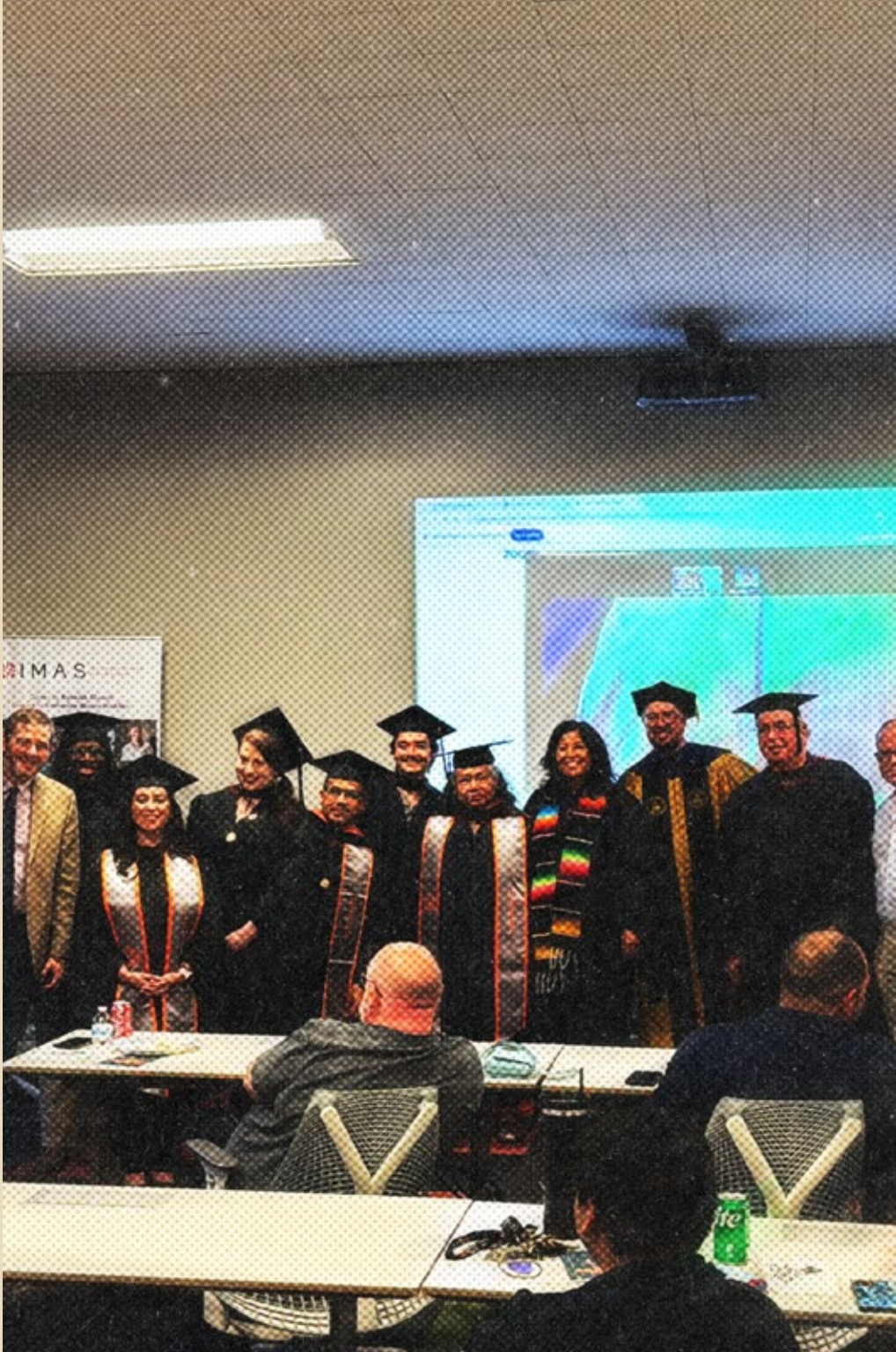


PHOTO OF MFA SHOWCASE



PHOTO OF MFA SHOWCASE

On May 14, we gathered both online and in-person to celebrate our graduating MFA candidates of 2025, Kate Dirrigl, Saul Dominguez III, Kendra Lara, Juan Gabriel Mendoza, Maria Magdalena Pérez, and Nathan Kenan Phillip. The candidates read an excerpt of their theses followed by the first MFA creative writing hooding ceremony. Professors Jean Braithwaite, David Carren, Britt Haraway, Emmy Pérez, José A. Rodríguez, as well as Dean Jeff Ward, were in attendance and assisted in officiating the ceremony. We ended the showcase with a social gathering that featured a Q&A panel with the candidates. Congratulations to all the MFA creative writing graduates and their accomplishments thus far.

OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA LISTENING TO WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

Texas Poet Laureate 2025, Octavio Quintanilla, Alum of UTPA, and professor at Our Lady of the Lake University, visited UTRGV on June 18th, 2025 for an immersive workshop on visual poetry.

Quintanilla began by sharing examples of his own “frontexos” (visual poems) and spoke about the intersections of text and image in his creative process. Participants were then guided through a series of inventive prompts, such as imagining their poems as elements, colors, or artworks, and even closing their eyes to visualize their poems as pieces of visual art. The session concluded with participants sharing their imaginative responses, creating a dynamic conversation about the ways language can transform into images.

After the workshop Quintanilla presented his poetry in the Studio Theater with a reading from his award-winning collection *Las Horas Imposibles / The Impossible Hours*.



PHOTO OF VISITING WRITER OCTAVIO QUINTANILLA

CINÉ FUTUROS SHOWCASE



PHOTO OF CINÉ FUTUROS SHOWCASE FILMMAKERS, AUG 2025

Ciné Futuros is an experimental short film showcase conceived by CW MFA grad student Kristin Montez. “I wanted to find a way to encourage interdisciplinary artists to delve into the form of experimental filmmaking and find an alternative way of expressing their creativity. Experimental filmmaking is accessible—anyone can do it!” said Montez.

An open submission to UTRGV students and local community members encouraged them to make an experimental short film that aligned with this year’s theme of reclaiming and subverting border narratives by challenging mainstream representations and engaging with perceived realities and cultural power. With the support of Entre Film Center and the Creative Writing Department, the Cine Futuros program commenced with the Ciné Sin Camara workshop in April. Students and community members were guided by filmmaker and Entre co-founder C. Diaz in the history and art of cameraless DIY filmmaking. Participants created their own ten-second reel on 35mm film strip.

The program concluded on August 23, when short films selected from submissions screened at Entre Film Center in Harlingen, TX. Artists whose work was shown participated in a Q&A panel following the screening, led by Kristin Montez and C. Diaz.

CINÉ FUTUROS SHOWCASE



PHOTO OF KRISTIN MONTEZ INTERVIEWING FILMMAKER



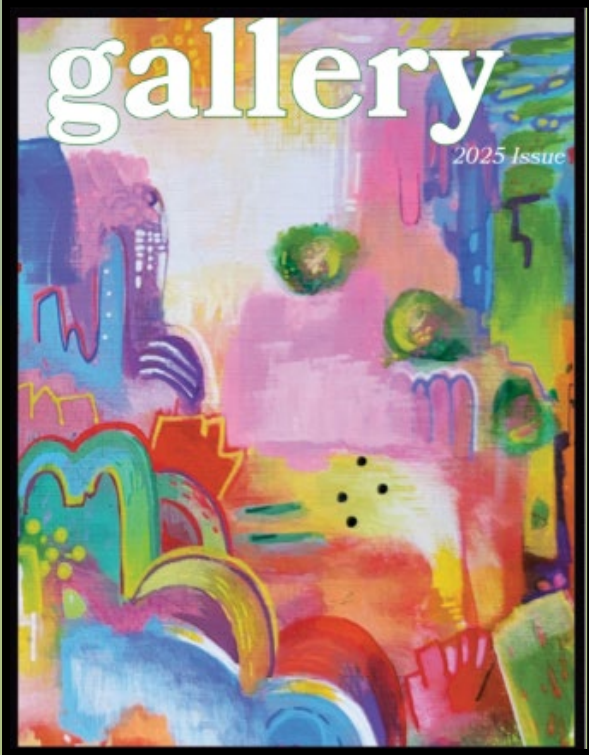
PHOTO OF CINÉ FUTUROS SHOWCASE



PHOTO OF CINÉ FUTUROS SHOWCASE AUDIENCE

Students, faculty, and alumni, please send your achievements to: cw@utrgv.edu.

PUBLICATIONS



CONGRATULATIONS TO GALLERY MAGAZINE 2024 STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS AND ALSO TO ADVISOR BRITT HARAWAY!

Gallery '24 received two awards at the recent Texas Intercollegiate Press Association awards.

Carolina Cabrerra won first place in the Literary Writing category. She is an English major with a concentration in CW.

Maya Wilson and Anita Garza received Honorable Mention in the Literary Magazine Design category. Anita is an art major with the COFA.

TIPA is an association of dozens of universities and colleges in Texas that compete in various media categories for recognition.



PHOTO OF PROF. BRITT HARAWAY SPEAKING AT THE GALLERY MAGAZINE LAUNCH PARTY AUG 29, 2025



PHOTO OF DEAN JEFFREY WARD, COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS, SPEAKING AT THE GALLERY MAGAZINE LAUNCH PARTY AUG 29, 2025

CLUBS

JOIN TODAY!



PHOTO OF AMANDA JOHNSTON EVENT

CREATIVE WRITING CLUB

The UTRGV Creative Writing Club is the perfect space for you to connect with fellow writers and students to share your work.

For more information please visit V-Link!

COMIC BOOK CLUB

A new comic book club, The Gutter Syndicate is looking for members! We explore storytelling techniques, character design, panel layout, why comics matter, and of course reading comics! No experience necessary, just bring your ideas. Join us for weekly hybrid meetings.

For more information please email: Chloe.Vela01@UTRGV.edu or find us on V-Link!

MINOR IN CREATIVE WRITING

18 CREDIT HOURS!



PHOTO OF OPEN MIC APRIL 30, 2025

UTRGV is excited to offer a new minor in Creative Writing, open to all majors for 18 credit hours.* Students can explore a range of courses, including Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Graphic Literature, Playwriting, Screenwriting, Social Action Writing, and the Gallery Magazine course. This program is perfect for anyone looking to enhance their storytelling and literary skills across multiple genres.

Minor Requirements - 18 hours

Required - 6 hours

ENGL 3351 Creative Writing I

ENGL 4353 Forms and Techniques in Creative Writing

Electives - Choose 12 hours

ENGL 3350 Gallery

ENGL 3352 Creative Non-Fiction

ENGL 3353 Creative Writing: Cross-Genre Writing

ENGL 4350 Advanced Creative Writing: Poetry

ENGL 4351 Advanced Creative Writing: Workshop in Playwriting

ENGL 4352 Advanced Creative Writing: Workshop in Fiction

ENGL 4354 Advanced Creative Writing: Graphic Literature

ENGL 4355 Advanced Creative Writing: Screenwriting

ENGL 4356 Advanced Creative Writing: Children's Literature

ENGL 4357 Advanced Creative Writing: Creative Writing and Social Action

ENGL 4358 Advanced Creative Writing: Writing for Performance

ENGL 4359 Special Topics in Creative Writing

SPAN 3329 Creative Writing in Spanish

SPAN 3330 CW in Spanish: Narrative

SPAN 3331 CW in Spanish: Poetry and Prose Poetry

THTF 4315 Scriptwriting for the Stage and Screen

*The only exception to this is English Majors concentrating in Creative Writing, as they are ineligible to pursue this minor.

PODCAST

Write by the River

ESCRIBIENDO EL RÍO

LATEST EPISODES:



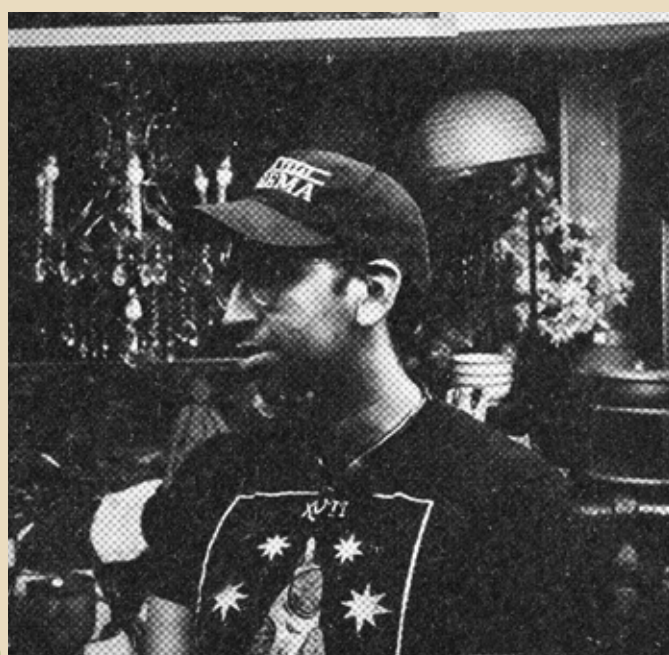
Episode 14: Kenan Phillip

MFA candidate Krista Olivarez sits down with Kenan Phillip to discuss his latest book, *The Ego Rhythm*, with question contributions by Aisha Teegarden.



Episode 13: jo reyes-boitel

In this episode of *Write by the River*, MFA student Chloe Vela sits down with poet, playwright, and scholar jo reyes-boitel, a queer, mixed Latinx artist and MFA alum, whose work pulses with questions of home, femme identity, and cultural reclamation. Currently pursuing a PhD in English at Texas Tech University, jo shares insights into their time and work in the program. We talk about everything including crafting a book from it's first spark to navigating academia.



Episode 12: Christian Martinez

In this episode of *Write by the River*, MFA student Kristin Montez sits down with MFA alum Christian Martinez to discuss film. Martinez is a writer and filmmaker based in the RGV where he's a Lecturer for the Department of Writing and Language Studies at UTRGV.

UPCOMING EPISODES:



Jonathan Solis

To be hosted by Chloe Vela and Aisha Teegarden

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS



Jessi Farfán
Graduate Assistant Instructor Spring 2025



Caroline De La Garza
Student Assistant Spring 2025



Kristin Montez
Graduate Assistant Instructor Spring 2025



Krista Olivarez
Graduate Assistant Instructor Spring 2025



Kenan Philip
Graduate Assistant Instructor Spring 2025



Aisha Teegarden
Student Assistant Summer 2025



Chloe Vela
Graduate Teaching Assistant Spring 2025

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

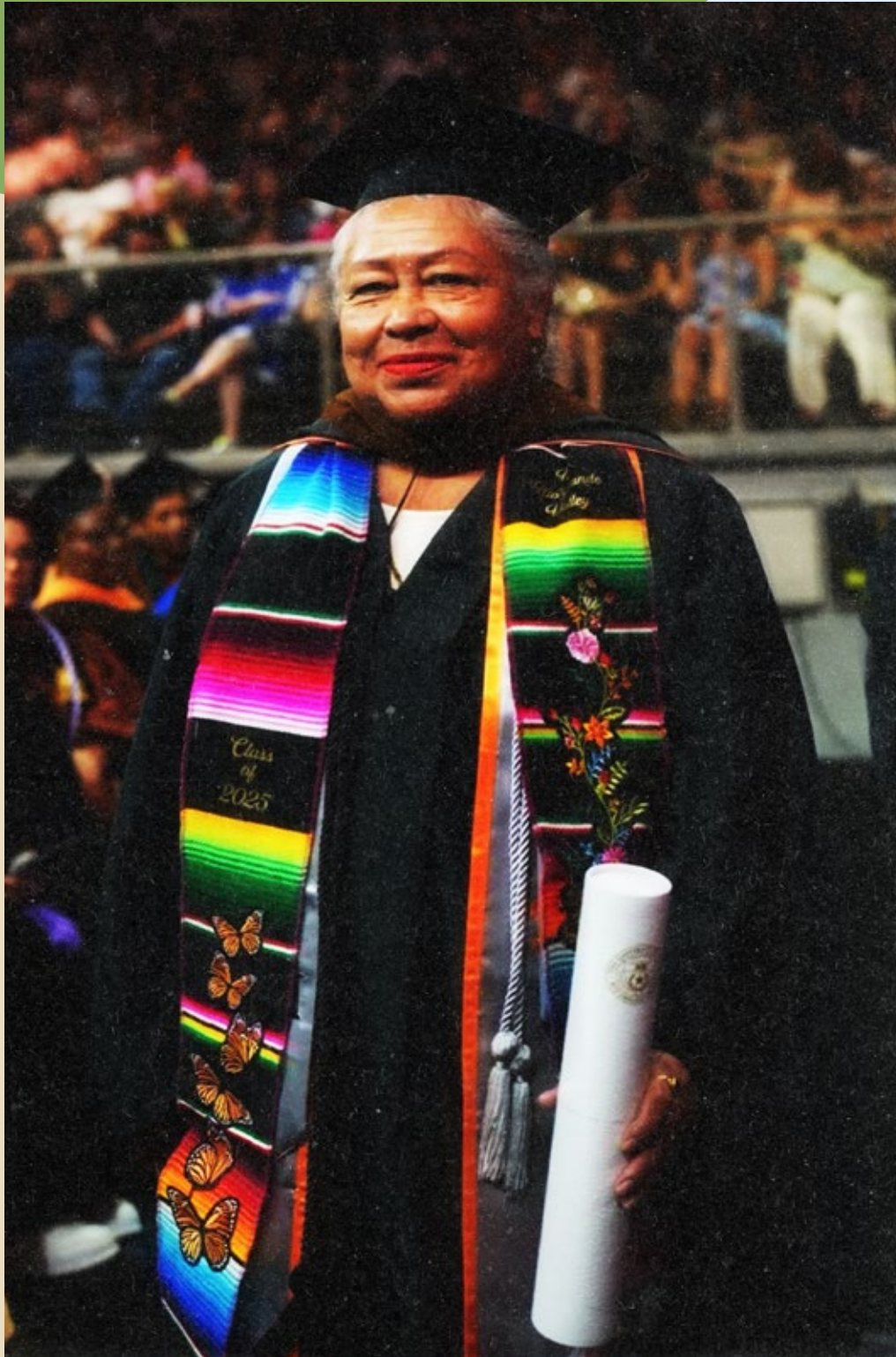


PHOTO OF MFA GRADUATE MAGDALENA PÉREZ, PHOTO CREDIT:
UTRGV PHOTOGRAPHER

Kate Dirrigl
Saul Dominguez III
Kendra Lara
Juan Gabriel Mendoza
Maria Magdalena Pérez
Nathan Kenan Phillip

THANK YOU



PHOTO OF MFA GRADUATE KATE DIRRIGL WITH HER FATHER AND PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY DR. FRANK DIRRIGL

I'd like to begin by thanking Chloe Vela for designing another wonderful newsletter and to the graduate student team who contributed to the newsletter. We believe it is important to try and document the teamwork of our active department as we celebrate our student, alumni, and faculty accomplishments. We also celebrate the work of our visiting writers who inspire and encourage our community of writers.

I'd also like to thank Dean Ward, the UTRGV Arts team, and the College of Fine Arts for their support, particularly with co-sponsoring Amanda Johnston's visit with our department. Thank you as well to the Department of Theatre, Center for Latin American Arts, and the College of Education / Borderlands Room, and the Performing Arts Complex staff for allowing us to borrow their spaces for some of our events.

Thank you to the Creative Writing faculty and students involved in co-organizing department events, with gratitude to Student Fee Funds and other sponsors for the support of our Visiting Writer and Student Reading Series. Thank you to the Texas Book Festival for collaborating with us on Yamile Saied Méndez's campus presentation. Thank you to Jessi Farfan for serving as our Graduate Assistant for our Visiting Writer series, and in particular, assisting with Mona Susan Power's visit to make it a wonderful success.

Thank you to MFA alum Daniel García Ordaz and FlowerSong Press editor Edward Vidaurre for continuing the great work of the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival, where many of our students and alumni gather to perform their work and learn from the featured poets you invite.

Congratulations to all of the MFA graduates Spring 2025! It was an honor to hear your work at the MFA Showcase and see you walk the stage at graduation.

Thank you to the AKR Foundation for the grant we received for the archival work on Gloria Anzaldúa that MFA student Kristin Montez began this summer 2025 as a Research Assistant and for your support of our reading series.

Thank you to all of our wonderful visiting writers and podcast participants this Spring and Summer 2025 for inspiring students and community members alike, with special congratulations to UTPA alum, Octavio Quintanilla, on being named Texas Poet Laureate 2025! Thank you for your terrific workshop and reading in July 2025.

Congratulations to all of the contributors (writers, visual artists, and editors) of Gallery Magazine 2025. It was wonderful to hear presenters at the Aug. launch event.

Most of all: Thank you to all of the creative writing students, graduate and undergraduate, who write and share your work not only in class but in our community and beyond it. Thank you to our alumni for paving the way for future graduates to continue the writing life and do important work in the community. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Emmy Pérez
Professor & Chair

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