



As one of UTRGV's legacy signature programs, The Festival of International Books and Arts (**FESTIBA**) was established in 2006 to promote the importance of literacy and the cultural arts to students, parents, educators and community members throughout the Rio Grande Valley. With the theme of *Building a Better World*, FESTIBA 2020 promoted and inspired education for sustainable development, and showcased opportunities for UTRGV students and our community to contribute to their community's literacy, health, and access to the creative arts in a way that will leave a lasting impact.

Over 100 FESTIBA events were held throughout the week and across the Rio Grande Valley, with more than 15,000 students and community in attendance. Events included academic presentations, workshops/competitions, presentations and book signings by authors and poets, artistic presentations, and music and dance concerts in both Edinburg and Brownsville. Many UTRGV faculty took the opportunity to engage their students in a variety of different research topics. <http://www.utrgv.edu/festiba/>

## **IMPACT REPORT** Public News Media Coverage for FESTIBA 2020

### **TV & Radio:**

UTRGV Student Media (Radio, TV)

### **Print:**

The Monitor

Brownsville Herald

The Edinburg Review

Texas Border Business

THE NEWSROOM, UTRGV

## **FESTIBA SPONSORS/PARTNERS**

UTRGV and Region One GEAR UP Programs

The Texas Book Festival Reading Rock Stars Program

The South Texas Literacy Coalition (book distributions)

Literacy Texas (FESTIBA Literacy Symposium)

Dustin Michael Sekula Library (International Book Discussion)  
The City of Edinburg  
Holiday Inn Express and Tru Hilton Edinburg  
The Office of Global Engagement  
The Mexican Consulate of McAllen  
The Tocker Foundation  
The National Endowment for the Arts

## **FESTIBA 2020 By the Numbers**

**Over 100 events were held during the 2018 FESTIBA Week:**

- Academic Presentations
- Artistic Presentations/Exhibits
- Workshops/Competitions
- Author/Poet Talks
- Musical Concerts

**Over 15,000 students and community members participated and/or attended:**

- 1,200 Students from Region One and UTRGV Gear Up programs participated, including students from 29 school districts and 63 campuses. Both UTRGV Faculty and Administration welcomed and presented information on UTRGV programs, recruiting for UTRGV during the presentations
- 130 attended the South Texas Literacy Symposium/Librarians Day
- National and international guests included over 40 authors, artists, nationally renowned scholars, and community leaders
- Thousands of books were distributed to over 3,600 children at five public schools in Edinburg, La Joya, Alton, Mission and Weslaco as part of the Texas Book Festival *Reading Rock Stars program*
- 723 students competed in the annual Mariachi Competition. Competing students traveled to UTRGV from all over Texas, Arizona, and Oregon. The School of Music created an information area at the PAC with Rack Cards describing music programs and process to apply; there was a presentation to 50 Mariachi Directors about Music Graduate programs
- Over 2,000 community members attended the Community Day Festival
- Over 2,000 free books were distributed at the Community Day Festival on March 6
- 300 students were recognized as *FESTIBA Top Readers*

## **GEAR UPS DAYS at FESTIBA 2020**

FESTIBA partnered with the UTRGV and Region One GEAR UP programs for the thirteenth year in a row. FESTIBA hosted close to 1,200 high school students in Edinburg on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and 300 students in Brownsville on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The students attended inspirational presentations with host speakers designed to educate the students on the importance of sustainability and sustainable lifestyle choices. The students were also inspired to discover the power of creativity, develop skills of literacy and self-expression for life success, and become college-ready. Keynote speakers included award winning author David Bowles, The Texas Poet Laureate, Emmy Perez, José Antonio Rodriguez, poet, the Ballet Nepantla from New York City, the Flamenco Troup of Jeronimo Maya from Andalucia, Spain, and other guest faculty from both the Edinburg and Brownsville campuses, who presented sessions on music, dance, and creative writing.

## **SOUTH TEXAS LITERACY SYMPOSIUM at FESTIBA 2020**

FESTIBA's Librarians and Educators Day collaborated with Texas Literacy/South Texas Literacy Coalition to present the South Texas Literacy Symposium, a professional development conference for local literacy providers. This free conference included information on various literacy topics including a panel discussion on sustainable development and life-style, workforce readiness, financial literacy, volunteer management, teaching strategies to reach low-literacy audiences, family literacy, health literacy, management techniques for literacy administrators including grant writing tips and program evaluation.

Close to 150 librarians, teachers, and childhood-literacy stakeholders attended the regional literacy conference that began with a panel of distinguished speakers. Also attending were 60 students participating in a leadership conference.

The opening Distinguished Panel included Dr. Alexis Racelis, professor at UTRGV, who focuses on agriculture, climate change and farming along the southern border of Texas and Mexico, and teaches courses on Agroecology, Urban Ecology, and Natural Resources Management; Marta de Angulo, attorney and founder of the Hermana Luna non-profit that promotes holistic wellbeing and ecologically sustainable lifestyles; Marianella Franklin, the founding director and Chief Sustainability Officer at UTRGV; and Stacey Proctor, sustainability teacher at Buell Central Social Studies, PSJA. Dr. Ida Acuna-Garza, CEO of South Texas Literacy Coalition was the moderator.

### **Guest Conference Presenters:**

Marcos Silva –counselor at IDEA Quest; Martin Loa, Independent Contract Trainer; Catalina Requenez, Adult Education Program, Region One Education Service Center; Jose Raul Ruiz, Continuing Education, STC; Persephonie Martinez, Financial Literacy Trainer; Gracie Avila, Region One Migrant Program; Dr. Olga Escamilla, Independent Contractor, Train PD; Theresa Sands, Independent Contractor, Train PD; David Gutierrez, Workforce Solutions; Janie Vela, HUD-Certified Sr. Home Buyer Advisor; Viviana, Children's Librarian, Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library; Terri Drefke, Former CEO of Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley, Non-Profit Training; Debra Tomai, RGV Down Syndrome Association, Literacy Skills; Abel Garza and Sonia Gonzalez, Wells Fargo Bank, Hands-on Banking; Felipe Salinas, Owner/Consultant, Contexto Consulting, Grant Writing Tips; Martin Loa, Customer Manager, Burlington English, Web-Based Course Training; Aaron Gonzalez, Workforce Solutions, Labor Market Information; Wayne Castillo and Bernadette Kim, World System Builder, Financial Literacy; Robin Graybill, Cambridge University Press, *Better Learning*; Paula Bauer, Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning; Marianita Escamilla, UTRGV Service Learning; Joe Castillo, Education Specialist, Region One Education Service Center

## **READING ROCK STARS**



In keeping with our mission to promote early childhood reading, FESTIBA 2020 was proud to continue the “Reading Rock Stars” program in partnership with the *Texas Book Festival*. This program is a popular mainstay of FESTIBA, to the delight of children and families in the RGV, who receive a signed book by a children's author of national repute.

The program illustrates the value of partnerships between the university and non-profits like the Texas Book Festival and extends the impact of FESTIBA beyond the classroom and into the community. Many of the books presented in this program are culturally relevant, bilingual books that students and families read together to promote a culture of learning and literacy in the home and school. The assessment of this program has primarily been through follow-up surveys with the school librarians, who report that students become more avid readers and more frequent users of the school libraries. Parents report a very high satisfaction with the program and become more committed to a culture of literacy in the home. It is evident that first hand-contact with an author makes a significant impact on the family and the community.

Over 3,600 free books were distributed during FESTIBA 2020. Visiting authors and schools included Hurla Midkiff Elementary (Mission) and E. B. Guerra Elementary (Edinburg): Carolyn Dee Flores (*The Amazing Watercolor Fish*), Rene Colato Lainez (*My Shoes and I*), Sharon Robinson (*Child of the Dream*); Bryan Elementary (Mission) and Cesar Chavez Elementary (Pharr): James Luna (*Growing Up in the Playground*), Bethany Hegedus (*Rise!*), Anna Meriano (*Love, Sugar, Magic*); Guillermo Flores Elementary (Mission) and Rudy Silva Elementary (Weslaco): Raquel Ortiz (*When Julia Danced Bomba*); Naibe Reynoso (*Be Bold, Be Brave*), and David Bowles (*They Call Me Güero*)

### **FESTIBA 2020 MARIACHI FESTIVAL AND CONCERT**

Guest clinicians at the Mariachi Workshop included the internationally renowned Mariachi Sol de Mexico from Los Angeles, California; Jonathan Clark, mariachi historian; and the Grammy award winner, Mexican singing star, Aida Cuevas. 723 students attended sessions on mariachi history, style, repertoire, and performance practices, and competed in the annual Mariachi Competition. Students attended from all over Texas, Arizona, and Oregon. The School of Music created an information area at the PAC with Rack Cards describing music programs and process to apply; there was a presentation to 50 Mariachi Directors about Music Graduate programs

### **FESTIBA 2020 COMMUNITY FESTIVAL**

FESTIBA 20200 partnered again with the City of Edinburg to present the Community Festival at the City Hall which attracted over 2000 community participants (including a large percentage of children). Six elementary schools from throughout South Texas were honored for their Top Readers and the school librarians and principals were recognized for their excellent leadership in promoting literacy. Over 300 children were recognized and received Top Reader T-shirts. The South Texas Literacy Coalition, another FESTIBA partner and champion for literacy in South Texas, distributed over 2,000 books at the Community Festival. The Community Festival featured the UTRGV Mariachi Aztlan, local performers, a Chinese Dragon Dance and Korean Drummers from OGE, author book signings, musical performances, children's activity tents, book displays, book distributions, local artists, and a variety of art and food vendors. The UTRGV Art Department presented hands-on print making demonstrations, and the UTRGV Office of Global Engagement had a strong presence at FESTIBA 2020 with samples of international foods.



## FESTIBA 2020 In the News

### FESTIBA kicks off Saturday with South Texas Literacy Symposium in Edinburg



RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS – UTRGV's FESTIBA (Festival of International Books and Arts) officially kicks off on Saturday, Feb. 22, with the South Texas Literacy Symposium Librarians and Educators Day, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Ballroom on the Edinburg Campus. The symposium, geared toward exploring the effectiveness of implementing teaching approaches that empower individuals to be catalysts for sustainable development in literacy, is sponsored by the Texas Workforce Commission/Literacy Texas and is hosted each year by UTRGV during FESTIBA.

[Read More](#)

## FESTIBA goes green

Paulina Longoria February 24, 2020 0



UTRGV Mariachi Ensemble guitar members mariachi senior Rodolfo De Santiago (from left), music education sophomore Ethan Villarreal and music education freshman Miguel Aguirre rehearse for Festiba 2020 Mariachi Festival Tuesday afternoon in the Mariachi Rehearsal Room, located in the Performing Arts Complex on the Edinburg campus. Invited guests include internationally renowned José Hernández and Mariachi Sol de México.

This week, FESTIBA 2020, following its theme of building a better world, will bring concerts, art exhibits, literary readings and panel discussions involving research and important sustainability issues. "The goal of FESTIBA is to promote literacy, to

celebrate the cultural arts," said Dahlia Guerra, UTRGV assistant vice president for Public Art. "It's about representing our culture, our region and our student body."

[Read More Here](#)

## Vietnam Veterans Share Memories at FESTIBA Panel

Multimedia Video

### Vietnam veterans share memories at FESTIBA panel

Emily O'Gyves - February 27, 2022



Powerful memories were shared by a panel of three Valley Vietnam War Veterans at the Festival of International Books and Arts held at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley on Thursday.

Read the full story here:



#### Vietnam Veterans share memories at FESTIBA panel

When Calerino "Cole" Castillo II was deployed to Vietnam as a scout in 1971 he never expected to return.

"When I got to Nam, I volunteered for everything. I was in the infantry. I had my own unit, my own squad. They hated me, because I was always volunteering my squad to do search and destroy missions and so forth," he told a room full of listeners at UTRGV FESTIBA's Vietnam Veteran panel Thursday. Castillo described life in the Vietnamese jungle as "hard;" the stories he told Thursday make that word seem to benign to describe the war.

Read the full story at [themonitor.com](http://themonitor.com)

Powerful memories were shared by a panel of three Valley Vietnam War Veterans at the Festival of International Books and Arts held at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley on Thursday.

[Read more here](#)

[See Video Here -](#)

# The beauty in Mexican regional music

FESTIBA 2020 Mariachi Festival features Aida Cuevas

Paulina Longoria March 2, 2020 0




The UTRGV Mariachi Aztlán had the opportunity to share the stage with Grammy-award winner Aida Cuevas last Friday at the Performing Arts Complex (PAC) on the Edinburg campus. Hours before the event, Mariachi Historian Jonathan Clark led a workshop in the PAC in which he asked Cuevas about her early years into her professional career and what she has achieved over the last 45 years in the music industry with her 39 albums. Asked about what the public could expect from the concert, Cuevas replied in Spanish, “We prepared our very own Mexican pieces that we will be performing with the Mariachi Aztlán. We hope that it is to the liking of the audience because we really want to give them a little piece of Mexico through our singing.”

More than a thousand people attended the sold-out event.

[Read More Here](#)



## Community Celebration Ends Books and Arts Festival



Local News Education Fresh Briefing-News

### Community celebration ends annual books and arts festival

Matthew Wilson - March 7, 2020

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Pinterest](#) [Reddit](#)


EDINBURG — The sound of laughter and music mixed with the smell of frying food outside city hall here Friday evening as the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Festival of International Books and Arts closed out another year with 2020's Community FESTIBA Festival.

The festival tied together two weeks' worth of panels and performances with an evening of musical acts, book signings, art displays and award presentations.

Dahlia Guerra, UTRGV assistant vice president for public art & special projects, called this year's FESTIBA a success.

"I thought it was perhaps one of the best, if not the best, ever," she said. "I thought the theme was very profound and important. It was about sustainability, it was about building a better world and we held quite a bit of different presentations."

Over the course of the two weeks, the symposium featured world renowned pianists, flamenco dancers, noted agriculturalists, mariachis, and a variety of intellectuals and artists.



[Read the E-Edition](#)

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# FESTIBA 2020 - Guests, Authors and Artists

## READING Rock STARS:

### Carolyn Dee Flores



CAROLYN DEE FLORES is the illustrator of several books, including *A Surprise for Teresita / Una sorpresa para Teresita* (Piñata Books, 2016); *Dale, dale, dale: Una fiesta de números / Hit It, Hit It, Hit It: A Fiesta of Numbers* (Piñata Books, 2014) and *Canta, Rana, canta / Sing, Froggie, Sing* (Piñata Books, 2013). A member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, she lives in San Antonio, Texas.

### Naibe Reynoso



Multiple-Emmy and AP Award-winning Journalist NAIBE REYNOSO, has been working in front of and behind the camera for more than 20 years. She has worked and contributed to various regional, national and international networks including KTLA, France 24, Univision Network, Reelz Channel, CNN en Español, the Biography Channel, Fox News Latino, Larry King's ORA TV, and has even filled in as a co-host on ABC's "The View". In 2018 she created Con Todo Press, a publishing company that creates books to amplify the voices of underrepresented communities. Her first children's book, "Be Bold, Be Brave: 11 Latinas who made U.S. History," highlights 11 women who excelled in medicine, science, sports, the arts, journalism and politics. Naibe Reynoso aims to shine a light on heroes from our community.

From activist Dolores Huerta, to Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Although Latinos are over 18% of the population, only 2% of books were written by Latinos according to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC). At Con Todo Press, we aim to bridge that gap, so children can learn about heroes from their own community.



### Sharon Robinson

SHARON ROBINSON is the educational consultant for Major League Baseball. She manages Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life a baseball-themed national character education curriculum that helps empower students to face obstacles in their lives. The program includes a national essay contest for students in grades 4-9 and throughout MLB's RBI program. Each year, thousands of students write an essay about how they used the values demonstrated by Jackie Robinson to overcome their challenges. Essay winners are celebrated in their schools and in Major League ballparks. Since 1997,

the program has reached over 22 million students and 2.9 million educators. Ms. Robinson is also the author of many works of fiction and nonfiction. She has written several widely praised books about her father, baseball legend Jackie Robinson, including *Jackie's Nine: Jackie Robinson's Values to Live By*, *Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America*, *Jackie Robinson: American Hero* (children's biography), and picture books *Testing the Ice*, illustrated by Kadir Nelson and

Jackie's Gift: A True Story of Christmas, Hanukkah, illustrated by EB Lewis. Sharon's other books include novels: *Safe at Home* and *Slam Dunk!* In January 2014, *Under The Same Sun*, illustrated by AG Ford, will be published by Scholastic.

## James Luna



JAMES LUNA is an elementary school teacher in Riverside, California. He is the author of a short, bilingual novel for intermediate readers, *A Mummy in Her Backpack / Una momia en su mochila* (Piñata Books, 2012), and two picture books, *The Place Where You Live / El lugar donde vives* (Piñata Books, 2015) and *The Runaway Piggy / El cochinito fugitivo* (Piñata Books, 2010), which was selected by Texas schoolchildren as their favorite book on the Tejas Star Reading List.

## Anna Meriano



ANNA MERIANO grew up in Houston, Texas, with an older brother and a younger brother but (tragically) no sisters. She graduated from Rice University with a degree in English and earned her MFA in creative writing with an emphasis in writing for children from the New School in New York. She has taught creative writing and high school English and works as a writing tutor. Anna likes reading, knitting, playing full-contact quidditch, and translating English song lyrics into Spanish and vice-versa. Her favorite baked goods are the kind that don't fly away before you eat them.

## René Colato Laínez



RENÉ COLATO LAÍNEZ is the author of numerous picture books for children, including *Mamá the Alien / Mamá la extraterrestre* (Lee & Low Books, 2016), *From North to South / Del norte al sur* (Children's Book Press, 2013), *René Has Two Last Names / René tiene dos apellidos* (Arte Público Press, 2009) and *I Am René, the Boy / Soy René, el niño* (Arte Público Press, 2005). He is an elementary school teacher in Los Angeles, California.



## Bethany Hegedus

BETHANY HEGEDUS is an award-winning author of picture books and middle-grade novels, including *Grandfather Gandhi* and *Alabama Spitfire*. A former educator, she teaches widely and enjoys mentoring young writers. Hegedus is owner and creative director of the Writing Barn, a writing workshop and retreat center. She lives with her family in Austin, Texas. Writer, activist, trolley car conductor, dancer, mother, and humanitarian--Maya Angelou's life was marked by transformation and perseverance. In this comprehensive picture-book biography geared towards older readers, Bethany Hegedus lyrically traces Maya's life from her early days in Stamps,

Arkansas, through her work as a freedom fighter to her triumphant rise as a poet of the people.

## David Bowles



DAVID BOWLES grew up and lives in the Río Grande Valley of South Texas. A many-faceted writer and scholar, he's the author of *Feathered Serpent*, *Dark Heart of Sky: Myths of Mexico*. His middle-grade fantasy *The Smoking Mirror* was selected as a 2016 Pura Belpré Author Honor by the American Library Association. "They Call Me Güero" recently was awarded a 2019 Tomas Rivera Book Award, but that's not the first acknowledgment for the book. Bowles, and "Güero," have earned multiple accolades recently for excellence in poetry: Pura Belpré Author Honor Book; 2019 Walter Dean Myers Awards for Outstanding Children's Literature; School Library Journal 2018 Best Books List Honor, Middle Grade; National Council of Teachers of English Notable Verse Novel for Children 3-13; ALSC

Notable Children's Book, 2019; and Shelf Awareness 2018 Best Children's & Teen Books of the Year, Middle Grade.

## Raquel M. Ortiz



RAQUEL M. ORTIZ was born and raised in Lorain, Ohio. She is the author of two other bilingual picture books: *Sofi and the Magic, Musical Mural / Sofi y el mágico mural musical* (Arte Público Press, 2015) and *Sofi Paints Her Dreams / Sofi pinta sus sueños* (Piñata Books, 2019). She has worked at The Brooklyn Museum, the Allen Memorial Art Museum and El Museo del Barrio. Currently, she creates educational material for the Puerto Rican Heritage Cultural Ambassadors Program at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in New York City.

## FESTIBA 2020 – Distinguished Performers, Guest Authors and Artists

### Jerónimo Maya



JERÓNIMO MAYA, a real guitar genius, and a direct descendant from the guitarist Ramón Montoya, started his musical career at the early age of 5. He was immediately recognized as a gifted child by the audience and the flamenco community, and whose worth was recognized by great masters, such as Sabicas or Paco de Lucia. His playing is full of personality and character, as well as virtuosity. His complex harmonies and his conception of music are definitely forward-thinking. He has accompanied many singers: Diego el Cigala, Chano Lobato, Esperanza Fernández, Estrella Morente, José de la Tomasa, and more frequently his uncle Ricardo Losada el Yunque, Ginesa Ortega or Paco del Pozo, as well as sharing stage with artists such as Paco de Lucia, Camarón de la isla or Sabicas,

who were friends as well as colleagues.

In his presentation at UTRGV - "A gypsy and two worlds", Jerónimo illustrated flamenco in a fusion with other cultures that form a single voice. The performance conveyed that the fusion of different cultures, no matter how different, come together to form a universal language: MUSIC. The presentation included a flamenco singer, dancer, and percussion.

## Emmy Pérez



EMMY PÉREZ, The Texas Poet Laureate 2020, has lived in the Texas borderlands for the past 19 years, the first six reconnecting with her family history in Ysleta/El Paso and then moving several hundred miles east to the Rio Grande Valley, where she has lived in McAllen for the past 13 years. Originally from Santa Ana, California, she is a graduate of Columbia University (MFA) and the University of Southern California (BA). She is the author of the poetry collections *With the River on Our Face* (University of Arizona Press), *Solstice* (Swan Scythe Press), and is currently working on a third collection. Pérez's Texas Poet Laureate term is set to begin in late March 2020 for a full year. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship (2017), in previous years, was awarded poetry fellowships from CantoMundo, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Fine Arts

Work Center in Provincetown, MacDowell, the Ucross Foundation, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts. She has also received the Modesta Avila Award, the Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation Award, and the James D. Phelan Award. Since 2008, she has been a member of the Macondo Writers' Workshop founded by Sandra Cisneros for socially engaged writers. She has also served on the organizing committee for CantoMundo and judged the 2018 CantoMundo poetry book prize. Pérez's poetry has been published in the Academy of American Poets Poem-a-Day series and appears on the Poetry Foundation online. Her work has also been published in *Split this Rock's The Quarry: A Social Justice Poetry Database* and journals such as *Prairie Schooner*, *North American Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Pilgrimage Magazine*. Her poetry anthology publications

## Denice Frohman



DENICE FROHMAN is a poet, performer, and educator from New York City. A CantoMundo Fellow, she's received residencies and awards from the National Association of Latino Arts & Cultures, Leeway Foundation, Blue Mountain Center, and Millay Colony. Her work has appeared in *Nepantla: An Anthology for Queer Poets of Color*, *What Saves Us: Poems of Empathy and Outrage in the Age of Trump*, ESPNW and garnered over 10 million views online. A former Women of the World Poetry Slam Champion, she's featured on national and international stages from The Apollo to The White House, and over 200 colleges and universities. She has a Master's in Education and co-organizes #PoetsforPuertoRico. She lives in Philadelphia.

## Javor Bračić



The Croatian pianist JAVOR BRAČIĆ was hailed by New York Concert Review for "deep, genuine musicianship and an outstanding technique" at his solo Carnegie Hall debut recital presented by New York Concert Artists. His CD album *Tribute to Haydn* was released by Labor Records, and his performance was broadcast on WQXR in the McGraw Hill Young Artists Showcase. He was the first prize winner of international piano competitions *Luigia Stramesi and Citta' di Minerbio* in Italy, *Les Rencontres des Jeunes Pianistes* in Belgium, *Zlatko Grgošević* in Croatia, and *New York Concert Artists' Carnegie Recital Debut Audition*. He has performed solo recitals at *Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall*, *Steinway Hall*, *Austrian Cultural Forum*, *Polish Consulate* in New York, *Bohemian National Hall*, *Rhinebeck Chamber Music Society*, and the

*EUNIC series at the Austrian Embassy* in Washington, DC. As a member of chamber music ensembles, he performed at *Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage*, *New York Historical Society*, and *Merkin Hall*. He performs regularly at the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* in the *Ethel Foundation* series. In his programs, he frequently includes works by Croatian composers.



## Marianella Q. Franklin - UTRGV Chief Sustainability Officer



Marianella Franklin joined UTRGV's legacy institution (UTPA) in 2003 to manage projects for Facilities, Planning, and Construction. In 2009, she has founded the Office for Sustainability and now is the UTRGV Chief Sustainability Officer. Under her leadership, UTRGV (and its legacy institution, UTPA) has forged forward in creating a sustainable development platform for the University and the region it serves, influencing partnerships nationally and globally. Franklin has a Bachelor in Architecture from Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon in Monterrey, Mexico.

## Jose Antonio Rodríguez, Poet, Memoirist, Translator



Poet, memoirist, and translator José Antonio Rodríguez is a Mexican immigrant and first-generation high school and college graduate. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Nation*, *McSweeney's*, *POETRY*, *Paterson Literary Review*, and *Latin American Literature Today*, among other publications. His most recent book is *This American Autopsy: Poems*, recently recommended as "new and noteworthy" by *The New York Times*. Other books include the memoir *House Built on Ashes*, finalist for the PEN America Los Angeles Literary Award; and the poetry collections *The Shallow End of Sleep*, winner of the Bob Bush Memorial Award from the Texas Institute of Letters; and *Backlit Hour*, finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize. He's also part of the collaborative work *Borderlines: Drawing Border Lives*, a collection of artwork by Reefka Schneider, poems in English by Steven Schneider, and Rodríguez's Spanish translations.

José Antonio Rodríguez is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, Macondo Writers' Workshop, and CantoMundo. He received a Ph.D. in English and Creative Writing. He also holds degrees in Biology and Theatre Arts and teaches writing and literary translation in the M.F.A. program at The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley.

## The Magic of Mariachi / La Magia del Mariachi Exhibit by Reefka Schneider, Artist and Steven Schneider, Poet



In this exhibit, *The Magic of Mariachi / La Magia del Mariachi*, luminous paintings of mariachi musicians hang side by side with poems inspired by these works of art. Together, these beautiful paintings and lyrical poems, written in English and translated into Spanish, invite you into a colorful world of pageantry and musical tradition. Reefka's paintings and drawings, done in pastel, watercolor and charcoal, were inspired over the course of many years by her close association with both student and professional mariachi musicians. Steven's poems, written about the paintings, to the paintings, and in the voice of the subjects of these paintings, reflect his deep knowledge of the classical tradition of Ekphrasis, poets

who respond to silent works of art. This exhibit, which was invited to China in 2018, encourages cross-cultural understanding, bilingual learning, and creativity as well as deepens the ties that bind all of us together.

The very first Latino U.S. Poet Laureate, Juan Felipe Herrera, wrote about *The Magic of Mariachi / La Magia del Mariachi*: "The Magic is here! We swoon, dance and enter the true and authentic universe of the mariachi in this exhibit. The paintings are luminous, passion-fired, and bring us into a majestic example of beauty, art, love and life-struggle."

## Abstract Narratives

Exhibit by Angela Scardigno

Sponsored by the UTRGV Center for Latin American Arts

Abstract Narratives is a series of small size digital collages that reference Edward Hopper's paintings, especially his period between 1920-1960. These paintings are translated into abstract landscapes with engaging shapes, colors, and textures. The challenge for the artist is to reflect in each representation her own temperament, leaving Hopper's aura intact.



## Mexihcah Aztec Photographs from the Wesley Billingslea Collection

Art exhibition curated by Daniel Ymbong & Carol López

Sponsored by the UTRGV Center for Latin American Arts



The Wesley Billingslea Mexihcah Aztec Photograph Collection is a body of works by photographer Wesley Billingslea that focuses on raising awareness about Mexican and Aztec cultures and attempts to keep knowledge of these ancient traditions alive. The ancient Mexihcah were the descendants of the Aztecs from the Chichimec lineage and culture that originated in Northern Mexico. Their ancestors migrated to the South, following Mexi, the Sun. They received a vision of Huitzilpochtli in the form of a majestic eagle perched on a cactus in the middle of a body of water, Lake Texcoco. It was there that the Mexihcah founded the city of Tenochtitlán and flourished as a cultured society in the sciences, arts, and humanities. Wesley Billingslea created this group of photographs with accompanying texts to promote human rights and work in conjunction with the descendants of the Mexihcah, who are depicted in these images, to help them tell their stories in their own words. Edinburg

University Library, Floor case next to the Center for Latin American Arts Exhibit open through March 13, 2020

## Invisible Fires

### Exhibit by Gaby Rico, Andy A. Villarreal and Octavio Quintanilla






This exhibition invites you to discover the creative works for three renowned artists, as they share their passion-fueled artistry with the City of Brownsville. Gaby Rico, Andy A. Villarreal and Octavio Quintanilla bring their distinct artistic styles to an art show you will not want to miss!

## War, Life, & Literature

**WAR, LIFE, AND LITERATURE**  
Thursday, Feb. 27 | 12:30 - 1:45pm | Borderlands RM (EEDUC 3.204)

Watch a livestream of this event with Zoom:  
<https://utrgv.zoom.us/j/8289511284>



CELE CASTILLO      BETO CONDE      AL GARCIA

Poet Beto Conde, memoirist Al Garcia and visual artist Cele Castillo will discuss the impact of Vietnam on their life, culture and creative work. Q&A and book signing to follow.  
Moderated by Dr. Diana Noreen Rivera.

This event featured Beto Conde and Alejo Garcia, published authors of poetry and prose who write about their memories as military men in the Vietnam War. Beto Conde was stationed in Vietnam and is the author of poetry and prose collections *We Were Raza* (2017) and *Memories in Green, a mind's fifty year journey from drafted to PTSD* (2019). Alberto (Al) Garcia was a combat journalist and is the author of *Where the Mesquite Tree Grows* (2018), a memoir that takes the reader from his childhood working in the cotton fields to the violent jungles of Vietnam and details his return to south Texas after decades away from his homeland.