This multidisciplinary, panel-based conference will address gender-based violence in the Rio Grande Valley. Our goals are: to raise awareness regarding the impact on victims and survivors, to gather stakeholders for honest and productive discussions of how to best address gender-based violence in our area, to educate on the processes involved in reporting, to make transparent the role of victim advocates, and to promulgate a trauma-informed, research-based, victim-centered approach to addressing gender-based violence in the Rio Grande Valley.

Panel Discussion Topics:

- Addressing SA and DV in the RGV: Access Issues, Immigration, U-Visas, Education, and Prevention
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Marginalized Populations (including Elders, LGBTQ-Identifying Individuals, Persons with Disabilities)
- The Devil that You Know: “Understanding” Offenders
- Confidentiality, Autonomy, Crisis Intervention, and Ethics
- Effects of Sexual Assault and DV on Victims and Survivors: Trauma-Informed, Victim-Centered, Research-Based Approaches and Understanding Revictimization and Victim-Blaming (Understanding Victim/Survivors and Non-Compliance)
- Protective Orders, No Contact Orders, Legal and Financial Services for Victims and Survivors
- Expert Witnesses and Legal Procedures: Understanding Process from Outcry to Conviction
- Brief Overview of Local Shelter Services in Cameron County
- Choking, Strangling, and Hickies: Forensic Evidence from the Perspectives Health Care Professionals; Handling Vicarious Trauma and the Effects on Direct Service Providers
- LE Panel/Alcohol- and Drug-Facilitated SA and DV/Enforcing Protective Orders
- Myths, Misconceptions, and the Elusive “Perfect Victim”
- Title IX, Mandated Reporting/Responsible Employees, and the Unique Challenges of Addressing SA, DV, and Stalking in Schools
Stigmas & Stereotypes in Gender-Based Violence
1st Annual Coalition Against Violence & Exploitation (CAVE) Conference

Speaker and Panel Training Conference Schedule: Pages 2-4
Keynote Speakers and Bios: Pages 3-5
Conference Co-Chairs: Pages 8-9
Invited Panelists and Bios: Pages 10-32
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Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the Rio Grande Valley: Pages 35-37
Acknowledgements: Page 38 (back cover)
Stigmas & Stereotypes in Gender-Based Violence
1st Annual Coalition Against Violence & Exploitation (CAVE) Conference

MONDAY, October 17, 2016

8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast and Registration

9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introduction
Dr. Kristin Croyle, UTRGV Vice President for Student Success

9:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. Panel 1: Addressing SA and DV in the RGV: Access Issues, Immigration, U-Visas, Education, and Prevention
Moderator: Dianna Blankenship, Ph.D., J.D.
Panelists: Rosalva Resendiz, Ph.D.; Cathy Potter, Ph.D., J.D.; Maricarmen Garza, J.D.; Daniel Pizana, J.D.; Melissa Garcia, Angie Ramirez, Luis Saenz, J.D.

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. TAASA Campus Prevention Coordinator Forms of Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse, Statistics, Compounding Factors Arising from DV – Rick Gipprich, Jr.

Lunch served at 12:00 p.m. for registered conference participants

1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Panel 2: Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in Marginalized Populations (including Elders, LGBTQ-Identifying Individuals, Persons with Disabilities)
Moderator: James Severn
Panelists: Shawn Saladin, Ph.D.; Oscar Lopez, Prof. Anastasia Lawrence, Lily Mendez, Chase Garza, LMSW

2:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Panel 3: The Devil that You Know: “Understanding” Offenders
Moderator: Professor Anastasia Lawrence
Panelists: Ed Stapleton, J.D.; Joann Mendoza, Col. Walter Llamas, Grover Rollins, Ph.D.; Officer Antonio Zarzoza

4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. Panel 4: Confidentiality, Autonomy, Crisis Intervention, and Ethics
Moderator: Cynthia Jones, Ph.D.
Panelists: Maricarmen Garza, J.D.; Sandra Hansmann, Ph.D.; Sudershan Pasupuleti, Ph.D.; Oralia Jaure

5:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. CEU/TCOLE/CLE forms completed

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the RGV (domestic violence awareness display) Courtyard/green space next to event location.
**TUESDAY, October 18, 2016**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Continental Breakfast and Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Welcome and Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15 a.m. -</td>
<td><strong>Panel 5:</strong> Effects of Sexual Assault and DV on Victims and Survivors: Trauma-Informed, Victim-Centered,</td>
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<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Research-Based Approaches and Understanding Revictimization and Victim-Blaming (Understanding Victims/Survivors and Non-Compliance)</td>
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<td>Moderator:</td>
<td>Martha Sanchez LCDC-I, LPC-I</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
<td>Chris Kaiser, J.D.; Cpt. Elissa Robinson, Kim Nguyen-Finn, MA, LPC-S; Karina Vega</td>
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<td>10:45 a.m. -</td>
<td><strong>Panel 6:</strong> Protective orders, No Contact orders, Legal and Financial Services for Victims and Survivors</td>
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<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Moderator: Gabriela Martinez, J.D.</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
<td>Julianna Sosa, J.D.; Alexandra Hughes, M.Ed.; Ruth Medina, Sandy Paredes, Det. Pablo Lopez</td>
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<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Be the Change; Be an Agent of Change: Peer Perspectives: Students Discuss Bystander Intervention, Healthy Relationships, Stalking Culture and Rape Culture</td>
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<td>1:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Moderator: Alexandra Hughes, M.Ed.</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
<td>Ariel Hernandez, Melissa Garcia, Jessica Villarreal, Francisco Tamez Cavazos, Miguel Venegas</td>
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<td>1:30 p.m. -</td>
<td><strong>Panel 7:</strong> Expert Witnesses and Legal Procedures: Understanding Process from Outcry to Conviction</td>
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<td>2:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Moderator: Jill Twark, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Panelists:</td>
<td>Brandy Bailey, J.D.; Omar Saenz, J.D.; Angie Ramirez, Sonja Eddleman, BSN, RN, CA/CP SANE, SANE-A, CMI-III, SANE-P, FACFEi, CFN</td>
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<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Panel 8:</strong> Brief Overview of Local Shelter Services in Cameron County</td>
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<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Panelists: Evonne Lopez and Oralia Jaure</td>
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<td>3:45 p.m.</td>
<td>TAASA Director of Public Policy/General Counsel – Chris Kaiser, J.D.</td>
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<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>CEU/TCOLE/CLE forms completed</td>
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<td>8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the RGV (domestic violence awareness display) Courtyard/green space next to event location.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>9th Annual Petals on the Lake</strong> Hosted by The Cameron County District Attorney’s Office</td>
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WEDNESDAY, October 19, 2016

8:30 a.m.  Continental Breakfast and Registration

8:45 a.m.  Welcome and Introduction

9:00 a.m. -  Keynote Address—Laura Maxwell: Mother of Sarah Maxwell Montemayor
10:00 a.m.  (Sing Happy Birthday to Sarah, whose birthday was October 19th)

10:15 a.m. -  Panel 9: Choking, Strangling, and Hickies: Forensic Evidence from Perspectives of Health Care Professionals; Handling Vicarious Trauma and the Effects on Direct Service Providers
Moderator: Marguerite DeWitt, M.D.
Panelists: Sonja Eddleman, BSN, RN, CA/CP SANE, SANE-A, CMI-III, SANE-P, FACFEi, CFN; Evonne Garcia, RN, CA/CP SANE; JoAnn Mendoza, Det. Ruben Salazar, Julianna Sosa, J.D.

11:30 a.m. -  Panel 10: Law Enforcement Panel/Alcohol- and Drug-facilitated SA and DV/Enforcing Protective Orders
Moderator: Rick Gipprich
Panelists: Alex Perotti, Det. Ruben Salazar, Jason Campo, J.D.; Sgt. Daniel Carrillo

11:45 a.m. -  Lunch

12:45 p.m.  Panel 11: Myths, Misconceptions, and the Elusive “Perfect Victim”
Moderator: Yvette Reyes, BS
Panelists: Aida Montanaro, J.D.; Adela Garza, J.D.; Oralia Jaure, Anna Del La Cruz

2:00 p.m. -  Panel 12: Title IX, Mandated Reporting/Responsible Employees, and the Unique Challenges of Addressing SA, DV, and Stalking in Schools
Moderator: Doug Stoves, Ed.D.
Panelists: Rick Gipprich, Jr.; Alicia Morley, PHR, SHRM-CP; Priscilla Palacios, MSSW

3:00 p.m. -  TAASA LE Trainer and Human Trafficking Specialist: Basics of LE investigations of SA, DV, Stalking; Trauma-Informed, Victim-Centered, Research-based Interviewing Tactics for Law Enforcement and Attorneys – Alex Perotti

5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. CEU/TCOLE/CLE forms completed

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the RGV (domestic violence awareness display) Courtyard/green space next to event location.
Keynote Speakers

Rick Gipprich, Jr.

Regional Outreach & Support Program Director, TAASA

Forms of Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse, Statistics, Compounding Factors Arising from Domestic Violence

Biography:

Rick Gipprich, Jr. joined the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) as a Training Specialist in September of 2014. This is his second round at TAASA where he served as Communications Director from 2011 to 2014. Prior to working at TAASA, Rick served as Deputy Director of Education & Development and Director of Prevention Education for The Rape Crisis Center in San Antonio. Rick started his career in the anti-sexual violence movement 15 years ago as a dedicated hospital advocate and hotline operator. Understanding the need and the importance of education, Rick eventually started working with neighborhoods, other non-profits, professionals, and schools by engaging them in dialogue surrounding the prevalence of sexual violence in our community and the ways we can prevent it. In addition to training on issues related to sexual assault, Rick works daily to ensure that communities across Texas understand the impact of sexual violence and its effect on the people of our state. Rick is proud to call TAASA his home, and feels honored to have been given opportunities to have a voice in this movement.
Alexander Perotti

Human Trafficking Specialist, TAASA

*Basics of LE Investigations of SA, DV, Stalking;
Trauma-Informed, Victim-Centered, Research-Based Interviewing Tactics for Law Enforcement and Attorneys*

**Biography:**

Alexander Perotti graduated from University of San Francisco with a BA in Business Administration. Upon graduation, Alex joined the US Army and deployed as an Infantry Platoon leader in Baghdad, Iraq. After graduating from the JFK Special Warfare Center, he began working with Special Operations and conventional forces in Afghanistan. He then went on to specialize as an inter-agency coordinator for counter transnational organized crime throughout Central America for Special Operations Command South. Alex continues to serve in the Army reserves and is a Human Trafficking Specialist at the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault.

Christopher Kaiser, J.D.

Director of Public Policy / General Counsel
TAASA

*Understanding the Legal and Legislative Challenges in Addressing Issues Surrounding Gender-Based Violence in Texas*

**Biography:**

Chris Kaiser is Director of Public Policy and General Counsel for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault. Chris manages TAASA’s public policy work, including legislative advocacy, research and reporting, administrative rulemaking, and amicus curiae litigation in state and federal courts. He currently trains widely on civil and administrative remedies for sexual assault survivors. He has also served on the Public Policy Committee for the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence since 2014.
Survivor Keynote
Laura Maxwell

Mother of

Sarah Maxwell Montemayor

Biography:

Laura Maxwell was born and raised in Michigan. After high school she moved to southern California and then on to Oklahoma where she met and married her husband, Wayne. They moved to the “border” of the Rio Grande Valley to serve as missionaries in 1985. They decided that the Rio Grande Valley would be a great place to raise a family and settled down in Harlingen, where they have lived for the past 28 years. Laura homeschooled her three children, Jeffery (36), Sarah (forever 29) and Bryan (28) throughout their lives. She served as executive director for Valley Proud Environmental Council for 10 years, retiring in 2011. She and her husband are raising Sarah’s son, who turned 9 years old just last week. She has served on her grandson’s school PTA board as president for the past two years. Spending time with family, loving on grandbabies, gardening and camping whenever possible are at the top of Laura’s list of favorite things to do! Laura and Wayne have 11 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.
Cynthia Jones, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Philosophy; Director of the Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Dr. Cynthia Jones received an undergraduate degree from Creighton University, a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri, and is currently an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. In addition to areas of Professional Ethics, such as Bioethics, Business Ethics, Technology Ethics, and Academic Ethics, Dr. Jones conducts research and publishes on issues of gender, violence, culture, and marginalization. She has extensive experience as a volunteer for domestic violence and rape crisis programs. She served as a board member for five years at Mujeres Unidas/Women Together. Along with Dr. Sandra Hansmann, Dr. Anne Stachura, and local community members, Dr. Jones founded the CAVE (Coalition Against Violence & Exploitation) Project in 2011, to bridge the gap between the community and the campus to provide support, promote research, and organize prevention programs to address issues of interpersonal violence. She currently serves as the director of OVAVP (Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention) and is the founder and director of the Ethics Center (PACE) at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Her office regularly organizes trainings and prevention and education events, including Art Against Violence, Stand Up Against Violence, ¿Podrias Caminar Una Milla en Tacones?, Take Back the Night, Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the RGV, and a local exhibit of Project Unbreakable. Dr. Jones served as the Principal Investigator on a Department of Justice/Office of Violence against Women grant awarded to UTPA for addressing sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking on campus. She is also the proud mother of three amazing teenagers, Sophia, Jose, and Genevieve.
Priscilla Palacios joined The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, formally The University of Texas-Pan American, in May of 2013, as the Program Coordinator for a Department of Justice/Office of Violence against Women grant. The grant’s main focus was addressing gender-based violence issues on the university campus by providing direct services to victims and survivors. Prior to working at UTRGV, Priscilla was the Sexual Assault Program Coordinator and the Prevention Education Coordinator at Mujeres Unidas/Women Together in Hidalgo County.

During her time with the rape crisis center, Priscilla coordinated numerous events, including their annual 5K run/walk “Walk a Mile in her Shoes”, provided educational and training workshops for numerous schools and agencies, and accompanied clients to the local hospital as a sexual assault advocate, serving over 500 clients in her tenure at Mujeres Unidas. During her time at UTRGV, Priscilla has dedicated her work to helping students, staff, and faculty gain the knowledge, education, and resources available to them, not only on the campuses, but also throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

Priscilla began her work as a Victim Advocate after obtaining her Bachelors in Social work in 2007 and received her Masters in Social Work in 2016. Because Priscilla is a childhood survivor of domestic violence, she has dedicated her career to educating, advocating, and empowering those who are or have been victims or survivors from Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Priscilla is the proud mother of one daughter, age 16, and three sons, ages 12, 9, and 3.
Invited Panelists

Luis Saenz, J.D.
Cameron County District Attorney

Luis V. Saenz took office January 1, 2013 as Cameron County’s District Attorney for a four-year term. Saenz served as Assistant District Attorney from 1984-1990 and was promoted First-Chair Prosecutor in just 18 months. He prosecuted cases with only one goal in mind – JUSTICE. He was appointed District Attorney by the Cameron County Commissioners’ Court in 1990, elected as District Attorney in 1992, appointed as Special Prosecutor in 2005 and appointed Cameron County Magistrate by the Board of Judges in 2005.

Saenz acquired a bachelor of science degree in education from Texas A & I Kingsville in 1974, served as a Brownsville educator from 1975-1981 and attended The University of Texas Law School from 1981-1984 where he passed the bar exam before graduating from law school.

He served on the Brownsville Independent School District Board of Trustees from 1987-1990 and was elected School Board President in 1988 and 1990. He was recognized by the Texas Education Agency for his leadership on the School Board.

Mr. Saenz arrived in Brownsville in December 1974 where he stepped off a bus with nothing more than $20 in his wallet. He held something more valuable – a recently hard-earned degree in education from Texas A & I University in Kingsville. After receiving his first paycheck as a dedicated educator in January 1975, he married his college sweetheart, Delia Gonzalez. They have been married now for 37 years and have two sons.

He is one of six siblings raised by a single parent. As a child, his mother stressed the importance of responsibility, service and education. From kindergarten to senior year in high school, not a day of school was missed.
Sonja Eddleman, BSN, RN, CA/CP SANE, SANE-A, CMI-III, SANE-P, FACFEi, CFN
CARE Team Clinical Coordinator, Driscoll Children’s Hospital

Sonja Eddleman is the Clinical Coordinator of the (CARE) Child Abuse Resource & Evaluation Team at Driscoll Children’s Hospital and Director of the Adult Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program at Doctor’s Regional Medical Center in Corpus Christi, Texas. She has been a Registered Nurse for more than 30 years in which 22 years she has focused on Forensic Nursing. She also serves as the Clinical Coordinator for the Child to Adult Abuse Response Team at Valley Baptist Medical Center in Harlingen, TX. Her experience includes the development, implementation and continuing improvement of all three diverse teams. Mrs. Eddleman has lectured on a local, state, national & international level. She also testified as an expert in civil and criminal cases on both the district state and federal level. She has provided consultation and testimony for the prosecution and the defense.

She has also been recognized by United States Customs Service for her effort in the fight against child pornography. She has been honored with: an invitation by the U.S. Department of Justice to serve on the medical working group to formulate the first National Protocol for Pediatric Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations published in 2016 as well as being invited to serve as an item writer for the SANE-A and SANE-P certification examinations sponsored by the International Association of Forensic Nurses, the Edith Rust Medical Award of Excellence by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault in 1996 and again in 2008. The program at Driscoll Children’s Hospital was the first in the State of Texas to provide 24/7/365 comprehensive medical forensic response for concerns of child sexual & physical abuse as well as neglect. The CARE Team is recognized by the State as one of only 8 designated Centers of Excellence for suspected victims of child abuse.

Mrs. Eddleman is a well-known clinician; educator and consultant whose passion is provide care to a population of people locally, regionally, nationally & internationally who have “small voices.”
Maricarmen Garza, J.D.
Coordinator for Victim Rights Group and Director of the Legal Alliance for Survivors of Abuse, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid

Maricarmen Garza is the group coordinator for Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid’s (“TRLA”) Victim Rights Group and the director of the Legal Alliance for Survivors of Abuse (LASA) project. Started in 1999, the LASA Project is a unique collaboration between TRLA and 31+ domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault across 68 counties of central, south, and west Texas. Through the LASA Project partnership, TRLA ensures that at their initial point of contact with a domestic violence shelter or rape crisis center, victims receive the legal assistance that is critical to breaking the cycle of violence. As project director, Maricarmen is responsible for managing the day-to-day activities and progress of project and partner staff. In October 2015, the project received TAJF funding to expand the project to 114 new counties in North West Texas, with the specific focus of providing civil legal services to survivors of sexual assault. As group coordinator for the Victim Rights Group, Maricarmen oversees TRLA’s new Legal Aid to Survivors of Sexual Assault team, providing direction, mentorship and supervision.

Maricarmen started her legal career as a staff attorney for Catholic Charities in Houston, representing clients in removal proceedings, VAWA self-petitions and political asylum cases. As a TRLA attorney Maricarmen, focuses her practice on assisting survivors of family violence and sexual assault in contested child custody cases, divorces, protective orders, CPS cases, and privacy issues.

Maricarmen served on the Texas Council on Family Violence’s Public Policy Committee (2003-2015) and has done numerous presentations on the issues of domestic violence, confidentiality and privacy, and immigration options for victims. Maricarmen conducts bi-monthly legal option clinics for clients of the Houston Area Women’s Center and provides referrals to local legal services providers. Maricarmen received a Bachelor’s of Arts in Child Psychology from the University of the Incarnate Word in 1992. She received her J.D. from St. Mary’s University school of Law in 1996.
Cathy J. Potter, Ph.D., J.D., PLLC

Cathy Potter graduated with a B.A. in history summa cum laude from Rollins College and went on to earn a Ph.D. in Russian and European History at Yale University. She was a professor in the Department of History at Chinese University of Hong Kong for thirteen years, serving on the Committee that created a Master’s Program in Women’s Studies and a Doctoral Program in Gender Studies. She served as Head of the Graduate Program in Gender Studies at its start-up and for the subsequent three years. She retired in 2005, returned to the United States and decided to go to law school. After earning a J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, she moved to the Rio Grande Valley to pursue a specialization in immigration and nationalities law, starting her own law firm in 2010. She served as Acting Director of ProBAR for six months, and continues to assist ProBAR attorneys on an ad hoc basis. In addition to other immigration and nationality cases, she successfully files U-visa cases, the majority of which are for undocumented women in the Rio Grande Valley who have suffered severe domestic violence and/or sexual assault at the hands of their partners.

Yvette Reyes
Community Educator, Family Crisis Center, Inc.

Yvette Reyes has an Associates of Arts in Psychology, Bachelors in Psychology and is currently seeking her Masters in Psychology with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She is currently working as a Community Educator with the Family Crisis Center in Harlingen, Texas.

Dr. Sandra Hansmann
Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling

Dr. Sandra Hansmann is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). She received her B.S. in Behavioral Sciences at Concordia University Texas and her M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Special Education/Counselor Education at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Hansmann has been at UTPA/UTRGV since 2005; she was previously a faculty member at the University of Texas at Austin where she was the Principal Investigator and Director of the Rehabilitation Issues in Mental Illness Program. She teaches courses in assessment and psychology of disability. Dr. Hansmann has authored a number of articles, monographs, and book chapters, and is a regular speaker at national conferences and other professional events, and a judge for Regional and National Ethics Bowl competitions.
Aida Montanaro-Flores, J.D.
Texas Council on Family Violence's Public Policy Committee; Family and Criminal Law, Montanaro-Flores Law Firm

Aida Montanaro-Flores is proud graduate of Gladys Porter High School class of 2006. After high school, Aida attended the University of Texas at Austin where she received her Bachelor's in Communication Studies-Political Communications. Immediately after college, Aida began law school at St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas, where she simultaneously received her Juris Doctorate and Master's Degree in International Relations-Security Policy and National Security Issues.

While in law school, Aida was a research fellow at the Center for Terrorism Law and a teaching assistant with the Civil Justice Clinic. Aida also clerked with the Honorable U.S. District Judge Hilda G. Tagle and the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of Texas. Aida received several awards while at St. Mary's Law including the Pro Bono Service Award, Dean's Scholarship, Blask Fellowship, and the Henry B. Gonzalez Outstanding Achievement Award, awarded to one St. Mary's Law Student by the Hispanic Law Alumni Association.

Aida began her legal career as a prosecutor at the Cameron County District Attorney's Office, ultimately becoming the head of their Domestic Violence Unit. As a result, Aida developed a passion for advocacy and currently sits on the Executive Board of Directors for Friendship of Women, a local battered women's shelter, and on the Board of Directors for the Cameron County Child Advocacy Center-Maggie and Monica's House.

After the DA's Office, Aida worked at a civil law firm practicing medical malpractice defense before opening her own law practice in March 2016, the Montanaro-Flores Law Firm. Aida's law practice focuses primarily on family and criminal law and makes it her mission to help survivors of domestic violence navigate through the various legal issues they face.

Currently, Aida sits on the Texas Council on Family Violence's Public Policy Committee where she travels to Austin to work jointly with advocates and lawyers from throughout the state to help shape the legislative agenda regarding family violence.
LTC Walter Llamas  
Professor of Military Science

Lieutenant Colonel Walter Llamas is a native of Puerto Rico. He was commissioned as a 2LT in the Quartermaster Branch in 1994 through the ROTC program at University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Information Systems. In 2005 Lieutenant Colonel Llamas received a Master of Science degree in Logistics Management from the Florida Institute of Technology.

He has served in several leadership positions as a company grade officer and field grade officer throughout his 22 plus years of service to include Company and Detachment Commander, Aide-de-Camp and Battalion Executive Officer all over the United States and overseas to include Germany and Iraq.

He arrived to the Rio Grande Valley in August 2013 and assumed the duties of Professor of Military Science for both University of Texas Pan American and University of Texas Brownsville. He then transitioned and integrated the program into The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Under his leadership the program has commissioned 32 officers and is scheduled to commission another 33 by summer 2017.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (3OLC), the Army Commendation Medal (1OLC), the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Superior Unit Award, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, Parachutist Badge and Parachute Rigger Badge.

Oralia C. Jaure  
Victim Advocate, Family Crisis Center

Oralia C. Jaure has been employed at the Family Crisis Center for the past 23 years. She began her career at the Family Crisis Center as a Woman’s advocate at the safe house for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. After a few years she transferred to the Central Office where she has held numerous positions. As an Outreach Worker she became certified as a Promotora or Community Health Worker by the Texas Dept. of Health. In 2007, she was awarded “Educator of the Year” by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault in Austin Texas. Oralia continues to receive training though the Texas Counsel on Family Violence and Texas Association of Sexual Assault. In her current position she serves as a Victim Advocate.
Detective Ruben Salazar is employed by the city of Harlingen Police Department since April 14, 2004. He transferred to C.I.D. in June 2012, and spent the last 3 ½ years working sex crimes and crimes against children.

Captain Elissa R. Robinson is a native of Dallas, TX. She was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps in 2007 through Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia and her assignments have included: Maintenance Control Officer, Echo Forward Support Company; Maintenance Platoon Leader, Echo Forward Support Company; Executive Officer, Echo Forward Support Company; Supply and Management Officer, 27th Brigade Support Battalion; Support Operations Munitions Materiel Management Officer, 501st Sustainment Brigade; Company Commander, 157th Quartermaster Field Services Company. She currently serves as Assistant Professor of Military Science for the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. CPT Robinson deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2008-2010 and Operation New Dawn.

CPT Robinson’s military education includes the Ordnance Basic Officer Leader Course, Aberdeen, MD, the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course, Fort Lee, VA, and the Military History Instructor Course, Fort Leavenworth, KS. CPT Robinson holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance from Texas Woman’s University and is currently pursuing a Master of
Arts in Higher Education Administration at the University of Louisville. Her awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Achievement Medal, Meritorious Unit Award, National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal (with three Campaign Stars), the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and the Army Overseas Ribbon (with Numeral 3).

Dianna C. (Ann) Blankenship, Ph.D., J.D.
Lecturer II, Criminal Justice Department

Dr. Blankenship earned her J.D. from Texas Wesleyan University School of Law (now Texas A & M University School of Law), was on the Law Review staff, and received the AmJur Award for Academic Excellence. Her Ph.D. and M.S. are from Texas Woman’s University and her B.S. is from Texas Christian University. While at TWU, she was an Allsup-Lane Graduate Fellow and Scholar and a State of Texas Doctoral Fellow. After receiving her law degree, she worked as a legal research trainer, edited the third edition of Texas Hospital Law, and practiced as a research attorney. She has taught at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth, Tarrant County Community College, the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College, and UTRGV. After retiring from UTB/TSC, and prior to returning to UTRGV, she served as Program Attorney, Research and Grants Program Manager, and Director of Curriculum for the Texas Center for the Judiciary.
Angie Ramirez
Legal Advocate, Family Crisis Center

Angie Ramirez has been with the Family Crisis Center for 13yrs. In the years with the center, she has served different positions. She has worked at the agency’s safe haven as a resident advocate where she has assisted victims of Domestic Violence and /or Sexual Assault with peer counseling, community resources, referrals as well as transportation. Angie has served as the Information Specialist for 9yrs where she maintained data for the victims that is crucial for the grants such as HHHS, Voca, OAG- SAPCS as well as United Way. Within the last 4 years she has held the Legal Advocate position where she assists victims of Domestic Violence and/or Sexual Assault from court accompaniment, police reports, assisting with protective orders, referrals to Districts Attorney’s office, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, LASSA and Texas Advocacy Project.

Daniel Pizana, J.D., PLLC
Law Office of Daniel Pizana

Daniel Pizana is the founding member of the Law Office of Daniel Pizana and a United States Customs Broker. He received his Bachelor’s degree from Texas A&M University in College Station, where he majored in Political Science. Daniel graduated from St. Mary’s University School of Law in May of 2013. During law school, Daniel volunteered with Casa de Proyecto Libertad, a non-profit that represents battered immigrant survivors of violence. After law school, Daniel opened up his own law firm, specializing in immigration and family law. He was recently chosen as the chairman of the Greater Dallas Legal and Community Development Foundation. Daniel is also current board member of Friendship of Women that serves battered individuals in the Brownsville area.
Martha Sanchez
Licensed Professional Counselor Intern, Family Crisis Center

Martha Sanchez has an Associates in Social Work, Bachelors in Psychology and a Masters in Counseling and Guidance. She is currently a Licensed Professional Counselor Intern and training to become a Registered Play Therapist by attending the University of North Texas Summer Play Therapy Institute and a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional through the International Association of Trauma Professionals. She is also currently seeking certification in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and has attended various workshops offered by the Center for Trauma and Loss in order to learn more about the impact of trauma and ways to alleviate its symptoms.

Her work with survivors of abuse began during her undergrad internship at Children’s Advocacy Center, Monica’s House that later led to her employment. She later moved on to work at Texas Workforce Center as a career counselor and then at Tropical Texas Behavioral Health as an IDD Coordinator. Later she moved on to work at the University of Texas at Brownville as the Collegiate Recovery Center Coordinator. She is currently a Licensed Professional Counselor Intern with Family Crisis Center where she counsels children and adults who are survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Kim Nguyen-Finn, MA, LPC-S
Lecturer, Rehabilitation Services and Counseling

Kim Nguyen-Finn, MA, LPC-S, has over 18 years as a mental health counselor and is a Texas Licensed Professional Counselor Board-approved Supervisor. Aside from providing individual, family, and couples counseling for a wide range of issues, including anxiety disorders, OCD, depression, trauma resolution, and gender identity, she is a lecturer at UT-Rio Grande Valley for the School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling. Ms. Finn is also in private practice with Valley Psychological Services, as well as a doctoral student in UTRGV’s Rehabilitation Counseling program. She has been certified as an LGBTQ Ally Trainer, Mental Health First Aid Trainer, Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Trainer, and Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) trainer. Ms. Finn was raised in a military household and earned her Masters of Arts in Educational Psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio, before moving to the Valley as soon as she could.
Ariel Hernandez is one of the founders of a community outreach group called Advocacy for Everyone. With the support of my closest friends, we formed AFE because we saw a need to discuss the issues of sexual assault and domestic violence in our community. As a sexual assault survivor, I think it’s important to put a face to these issues, talking about assault or abuse shouldn’t be seen as shameful. Advocacy for Everyone was born out of a lack of awareness in the community surrounding services dealing with issues of emotional, physical, and sexual violence and our desire to reach out to women and men who are marginalized by abuse. Community advocacy is needed in order to create a network of support for all survivors in the RGV and to guarantee that required resources are identified and utilized. By aiding the RGV community, we hope to see an increase in survivors coming forth to identify dangerous individuals lurking in our homes, schools, places of work, political and religious settings. As a community, it is our job to educate our peers on the realities of being a survivor residing in South Texas. There is no shame in coming forward.

Francisco Javier Tamez Cavazos is originally from Monterrey, Mexico. He moved to the U.S. around four years ago, seeking a Bachelor’s in Computer Information Systems at legacy institution UTPA, now UTRGV. After three years of undergraduate study, he obtained his BBA in Computer Information Systems as a Cum Laude graduate. During his undergraduate time, he gained valuable experience working UTPA in the IT department and for the office of Research, and in his last semester with the UTRGV Division of Research, Innovation, and Economic...
Development. After graduating with honors he is now a Security Analyst for the Information Security Office at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He is currently collaborating with OVAVP on a cyberstalking and cybersecurity outreach and education campaign, recognizing that many victims and survivors of DV encounter substantial issues with technology stalking at the hands of their abusers.

Melissa Garcia
President, Agents for Change Student Organization

Melissa Garcia is a senior at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley where she is majoring in Psychology with a minor in French Language, Literature, and Culture. She is the Agents for Change Student Organization President and the former Vice-President of her university’s French club. Her interest in gender equity began as a young girl, growing up in Monterrey NL, MX and in Brownsville, TX she was able to see the inequalities affecting both cultures. Inspired by her experiences and the people she met along the way, Ms. Garcia volunteered at Friendship of Women, Inc. and was offered an internship while interning at Friendship of Women, Inc. Melissa became a research assistant for Dr. Nora Montalvo in the Latino Teen Project. Melissa moved her way up through the organization from volunteer, to intern, to Outreach Educator to her current position Primary Prevention Coordinator for Friendship of women, Inc. These advancements were made through hard work and dedication to the cause to raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Ms. Garcia has received professional trainings from The Texas Council on Family Violence, The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, among others. Ms. Garcia is an active member of The Texas Preventioneers, RGV Millennials, Brownsville Young Chamber, Positive Community Impact Coalition, United Way Loaned Executives and TCFV Coaching Group Leadership Council. In Ms. Garcia’s free time she likes to volunteer in the community and practice yoga in local studios.

Dr. Marguerite DeWitt
Lecturer, Department of Criminal Justice

Dr. DeWitt is a full-time lecturer with the Department of Criminal Justice at UTRGV. Her unique experience and background animate her courses. As a retired medical examiner, she brings 30 years of medical and medicolegal experience to the classroom. Prior to becoming a
forensic pathologist and medical examiner, she practiced medicine as a hospital-based pathologist for 15 years. Following her medical career, she went to law school and then a fellowship in forensic pathology. She is one of a few medical examiners with both medical and law degrees. Her work has involved the completion of over 3000 autopsies, hundreds of medicolegal investigations, suspicious and violent death scene examinations, and live courtroom testimony. She has lectured and presented to colleagues and students at universities, hospitals, and at legal and medicolegal conferences. She began teaching at UTB in 2011 and enhances the student learning experience with her numerous case files, videos and case studies, PowerPoint presentations, courtroom visits, and student mock trials.

**Grover Rollins, Ph.D.**
Psychologist

Dr. Grover C. Rollins is a contract psychologist who services violent juvenile and adult offenders, sex offenders and criminal cases both state and federal along the South Texas border from Brownsville to Laredo.

Dr. Jill Twark
Associate Professor of German at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina

Dr. Jill Twark is an Associate Professor of German at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. She has assisted student victims of rape on and off campus to seek counseling and to negotiate campus and judicial reporting processes. She has also lobbied the North Carolina state legislature to fund the State Bureau of Investigation better to reduce processing times for rape kits. See [http://www.endthebacklog.org/north-carolina](http://www.endthebacklog.org/north-carolina) for more information on the rape kit backlog and some solutions to it.
Ruth Medina
Victim Advocate, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

My Name is Ruth Medina. I’m the Domestic Violence Advocate for the Cameron County District Attorney’s office. I was born and raised in Brownsville, Texas and have been working with the District Attorney’s office for a year and eight months. I’m a proud mother of four wonderful children and I love helping others.

Omar A. Saenz, J.D.
Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Omar Antonio Saenz is an Assistant District Attorney for the Cameron County District Attorney’s Office. I was born in Mission, Texas and attended Sharyland High School. After completing high school, I attended Austin College where I served as the Pre-Law Society president which inspired me to pursue a career in law. I attended St. Mary’s University School of Law in San Antonio and received my juris doctorate in 2012, and I was subsequently licensed to practice law in the State of Texas in November of that same year. Since receiving my law license, I have served the Cameron County District Attorney’s Office for the last three years. For the last year and a half, I have been assigned as a prosecutor for the Child Abuse Unit, which specialized in prosecutions of child sexual abuse. Besides my employment, I also serve as a board member of the Cameron County Bar Association, Cameron County Children’s Advocacy Center, and the Cameron County Young Lawyer’s Association.
Dr. Shawn Saladin
Professor of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling

Dr. Shawn Saladin is the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs with the UTRGV College of Health Affairs. He is also a Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling. He currently serves as vice president of the Texas School for the Deaf Governing Board and he has served as a board member to the Deaf Abused Women and Children Advocacy Services in Austin, TX.

James Severn
Co-Founder of RGV Pride Home, Inc.

I graduated with a BA in History from UTPA in 2014 and am currently in my second year of the master’s program in History from UTRGV, focusing on social and cultural studies in American history. I presently work for the Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention at UTRGV as a Graduate Assistant and have served as an officer for the student organization Student Equality Alliance at UTRGV, which advocates for LGBTQ rights on and off campus. I am also a co-founder and board member of the non-profit RGV Pride Home Inc., which will aim to provide housing to homeless and abused LGBTQ youth when it opens in January of 2017.
Alexandra Hughes is the Assistant Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Within her position, she works with students in both academic and behavioral misconduct and adjudicates a wide range of issues ranging from drugs and alcohol to sexual assault and violence. It is in this position that she works to educate students on their role at the university and she strives to maintain a safe and secure environment for our university’s students, faculty, and staff members. Alexandra has her Master’s Degree in Higher Education Administration & Leadership with a concentration in Law & Policy. Alexandra has had the opportunity to work in multiple departments across Student Affairs at both private and public universities, including being a Community Director in Housing & Residence Life, Student Judicial Hearing Officer within the Dean of Students Office, Office of Multicultural Affairs and many more. Alexandra’s passion is for Student Success and bringing awareness to the issues that students face today, and how we can create environments that foster growth, development, and change.

Dr. Douglas Stoves
UTRGV Associate Dean of Students and Director of Student Rights & Responsibilities

Doug Stoves has a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Texas A&M Corpus Christi, a Masters in Education from the University of Wisconsin-Superior, and a B.S. in Biology from Northland College. He is a member of numerous professional organizations, including ACPA and NASPA and the Association of University Housing Officers-International. He served as the Dean of Students at the University of Texas Brownsville from December 2013 until August 2015 when it merged to form UTRGV, where he currently serves as the Associate Dean of Student Rights & Responsibilities and Deputy Title IX Coordinator. Dr. Stoves is committed to student-centered,
research-based approaches and he developed the campus Superhero Project as an active bystander project to address issues of gender-based violence at UTRGV. He also served as the liaison for the Campus Climate Survey project and has developed numerous other education and intervention trainings to address issues in student conduct.

Chase Garza
Mental Health Therapist, UTRGV Counseling Center

Chase Garza is a licensed master social worker by the State of Texas, and an LCSW Candidate. He works as a mental health therapist at the UTRGV Counseling Center. Areas of interest include substance abuse, suicide prevention, LGB counseling, gender and transitioning counseling, coming out to loved ones, and educating others on inclusive language and pronouns.

Dr. Sudershan Pasupuleti
Chair and Professor of Social Work

Dr. Sudershan Pasupuleti currently serves as professor and chair of Social Work Department at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and Discipline Coordinator and adjunct faculty for UTRGV School of Medicine. Recently, Dr. Pasupuleti served as undergraduate program director and professor at the University of Toledo. He has nearly two and half decades of
experience in teaching, research, practice, and consulting in working with large systems (communities and organizations) including 13 years of administrative experience as department chair, director of UT Office of Service Learning and Community Engagement and CEO of Development Action & Research Center in India. He has extensively taught at both undergraduate and graduate programs at different schools of social work in the United States and in India. Dr. Pasupuleti has 35 peer-reviewed journal articles/book chapters and a book to his credit, in addition to 60 professional presentations at national and international conferences. Dr. Pasupuleti served as member of the editorial board of Journal of Community Practice and as special editor for its special edition on service learning (2009-12). He was also special editor for the Journal of Social Development Issues (2012-13). Dr. Pasupuleti currently serves as editor for International Journal of Social Perspectives, member of editorial board of International Journal of Social Science Research and the Journal of Practicing Social Change, reviewer for Journal of Aging and Social Work and peer reviewer for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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**Adela K. Garza, J.D.**

Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Adela Kowalski-Garza is an Assistant District Attorney, First Chair 404th District Court in charge of criminal prosecutions for the Cameron County. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas and her Doctor of Jurisprudence from the South Texas College of Law in Houston, Texas. While working at Texas Southmost College as an English as a Second Language Professor during the Summer of 1990, she worked as an Assistant Criminal District Attorney for Cameron County. Among her credits are the seven years she worked as a federal prosecutor handling cases which dealt with immigration, drugs, weapons, and money laundering as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas in Brownsville. She also worked for ten years as an Associate Attorney in the Law Office of Noe D. Garza, Jr., practicing criminal, civil, and family cases in federal and state courts. During her time as an Associate District Attorney, she worked at the University of Texas in Brownville as an Adjunct Professor in the Criminal Justice Department.
Evonne Garcia RN, CA/CP SANE, CFN
Director, S.A.F.E. Place at Mission Regional Medical Center

Evonne has been a Registered Nurse for 12 years, 7 of those being a forensic nurse. She started the Forensic program at Mission Regional Medical Center better known as the S.A.F.E. Place in 2009 because she saw the need of specialized medical care in our community for victims of crime such as domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, sexual assault, and traumatic injuries. In our county, there was no established program for victims of abuse when this program was started. Evonne truly has a strong passion for this specialty. As of today she has seen over 1,300 cases of abuse, unfortunately. Evonne also continues to educate herself and her staff to keep up with them up to date on any new or changing practices to provide the best care for these patients. The program works closely with all law enforcement agencies, advocates, prosecutors, and the DPS crime lab who work towards helping these victims and prosecuting these crimes.

Antonio Zarzoza
Training Officer & Field Training Coordinator, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Police Department-Professional Standards Unit
Antonio Zarzoza started his career in law enforcement in November 2000 with the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office where he worked in several capacities. In June 2013, Zarzoza was recruited by the University of Texas Pan American (now UTRGV) Police Department as the agency’s Training Officer and Field Training Coordinator where he provides training for his fellow officers and other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Zarzoza is vetted as a Subject Matter Expert in state and federal court in the fields of Police Use of Force, Defensive Tactics, Crimes against Children, Sexual Assault & Family Violence Investigations, and Crisis Intervention Tactics. Zarzoza is an active trainer for the States of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Illinois. Zarzoza has been published by reputable police magazines, websites and professional association journals. Zarzoza is a renowned speaker at law enforcement conferences where he presents on Officer Safety, Police Emotional Resilience and Mental Readiness for Deadly Force Encounters. Zarzoza’s most recent career highlights are his appointments as adjunct Instructor for the US Department of Justice, the US Department of Homeland Security, and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Zarzoza is licensed as an Advanced Instructor & Instructor Trainer for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. He is a certified instructor for Joint CPS/Law Enforcement Advanced Child Abuse Investigations, Sexual Assault/Family Violence Investigations, Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Training, Below 100, VALOR National Training Initiative and Emotional Survival among other specialized instructor certifications.

Alicia Morley, PHR, SHRM-CP
Director, Office of Institutional Equity

Alicia G. Morley joined the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley as the Director for the Office of Institutional Equity in the Department of Legal Affairs in May 2015. She oversees the University’s compliance efforts in Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Title IX. She is the designated Title IX, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Coordinator for the UTRGV, working closely with the Offices of Students Rights & Responsibilities, Faculty Affairs, and the Office of Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention.

Prior to being appointed as the Title IX and Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Coordinator at the University of Texas Pan American in 2013, Ms. Morley spent twelve years with the Human Resources Department at the University of Texas Pan American as an Associate Director, responsible for administering the areas of Compensation, Recruitment and Staffing, Immigration Services, Employee Relations, and Training and Development. In 1999, she started her career in higher education with UTPA as an Admissions Counselor handling student
recruitment, orientation, and financial aid before becoming Program Director for the South Texas Center for Professional Development, responsible for administering the Title II Teacher Recruitment Grant in the College of Education.

Ms. Morley earned her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Speech Communication at the University of Texas-Pan American. In 2012, she earned her certification as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) from the HR Certification Institute and achieved the SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) in 2015 from the Society for Human Resources Management.

Pablo Lopez
Detective, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Police Department

Pablo Lopez has a combined 14 years of law enforcement experience. He previously worked with the McAllen Police Department, in which he was part of the Auto Theft Task Force and Youth Crimes division. He is currently employed with The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley as a Detective in the Criminal Investigative Division. He is an advanced peace officer, TCOLE instructor, holds a Special Investigator License for SAFVIC and ACAi, and is a certified field training officer. He also worked as an instructor at Kaplan College. During his career, he has received numerous awards, including a Life Saving Award from McAllen PD in 2003 and Officer of the Year Awards from UTPA in 2014 and from UTRGV in 2015.

Julianna A. Sosa
Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Lily Mendez
Victim Advocate, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Brandy Bailey, J.D.
Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Jason Campo
Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Gabriela Martinez
Assistant District Attorney, Cameron County District Attorney’s Office

Oscar Lopez
Valley AIDS Council & South Texas Equality Project

Rosalva Resendiz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at UTRGV

Anastasia Lawrence
Lecturer II of Criminal Justice at UTRGV
Joann Mendoza
Friendship of Women

Karina Vega
Friendship of Women

Sandy Paredes
Friendship of Women

Evonne Lopez
Friendship of Women

Ed Stapleton, J.D.
Ed Stapleton Law Office

Sgt. Daniel Carrillo
UTRGV ROTC

Jessica Villarreal
UTRGV ROTC Cadet

Anna Del La Cruz
Executive Director of the Children’s Advocacy Center Monica/Maggie’s House
What is Victim Advocacy?

The Role of Advocates
Advocates most commonly provide any or all of the following services:

- Crisis telephone line staffing, which involves giving victims of sexual assault immediate support and information about what to do after an assault.
- Medical-evidentiary exam response, during which an advocate’s primary functions are to provide the victim with information about options, answer questions, provide support and crisis intervention, and advocate on the victim’s behalf with the medical personnel providing care.
- Law enforcement statement accompaniment, which involves the advocate accompanying the sexual assault victim to an investigator’s office to give an official statement of the assault.
- Courtroom accompaniment, which involves accompanying the victim to attorney appointments, as well as to the courtroom.
- Family/significant other supportive counseling, which involves providing information and support to family members or significant others.

Advocates may also provide walk-in crisis intervention; individual, ongoing supportive counseling; or support-group facilitation. However, these roles are less common for volunteers.

Maintaining Confidentiality
It is important to maintain confidentiality because it is the victim’s right, it gives the victim more control and the ability to make informed decisions about whom to tell, and promotes safety of disclosure.

Advocates have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality, to the limits of the law, about each and every case with which they are involved.

Sexual assault may represent a loss of control over one’s body and over the ability to choose with whom to be sexual. It is extremely important that the victim be able to retain control after the assault to the greatest extent possible. Deciding who will know about the sexual assault is an important part of regaining control. Maintaining confidentiality is one way to help the victim regain control over who does and does not know that the sexual assault occurred.

Only when victims know the limits of the confidentiality can they make a safe, educated choice about what to tell the advocate, SANE, or counselor. Sexual assault advocates/counselors in many states have gone to great lengths to get state legislation passed to ensure that their conversations with sexual assault victims are completely confidential and that they cannot be subpoenaed to testify even if the case goes to court. Advocates must know the limits of confidentiality for sexual assault advocates in their state and communicate these to victims before the victims disclose information (Ledray, O’Brien, and Chasson 2011).
Numerous resources exist for victims, survivors, and advocates, including:


General resources for crime victims: [http://www.ovc.gov/help/](http://www.ovc.gov/help/)

Information on crime reporting: [https://ucr.fbi.gov/](https://ucr.fbi.gov/)

Information on Title IX and Higher Education/K-12 requirements via the Department of Education: [http://www.ed.gov/category/keyword/title-ix](http://www.ed.gov/category/keyword/title-ix)


Information on legal needs for sexual assault victims: [http://www.victimrights.org/about-vrlc](http://www.victimrights.org/about-vrlc)

Local Resources:

UTRGV: [www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP](http://www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP)

Cameron County:

Hidalgo and Starr Counties: [http://mujeresunidas.org/](http://mujeresunidas.org/)

Texas Resources:

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA): [http://taasa.org/](http://taasa.org/)

October 1st marks the start of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This is a time to connect those who suffer from domestic violence and those who work to end domestic violence, celebrate those who have survived domestic violence, and especially take time to remember and mourn those whose lives were lost as a result of domestic violence. Domestic violence can happen to anyone. In the United States, 1 in 4 women have suffered severe physical violence from an intimate partner. Every year, the Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention at UTRGV remembers victims of domestic violence in the Rio Grande Valley with our Remember Me project, where we raise awareness about those who have lost their lives to domestic violence in our region.

This year’s Remember Me installation includes audio recordings narrating the stories of 10 women who were murdered by a current or former intimate partner. Those who have lost their lives to domestic violence cannot tell us about themselves, or what happened to them, and so this project gives them the voice that they no longer have.

**Trigger Warning: Violence**

*Please be advised that these narratives consist of deeply personal, emotional, and tragic events that have resulted in death.*

For the past five years, the CAVE (Coalition Against Violence & Exploitation) initiative, and now OVAVP (Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention), has been hosting the "Remember Me: Confronting Violence Against Women in the RGV" project. Remember Me features vinyl body outlines and crime scene tape as a powerful visual representation of gender-based violence leading to murder. Remember Me is a variant of the international campaign Silent Witness, which is described as follows.

*Silent Witness International is the leading voice that honors the lives of domestic violence homicide victims through family support, community connections, and advocacy for change. Many women and men die each year in acts of domestic violence in the United States. Each one has a story. Join our efforts to end this tragedy. Because we need to remember their stories. We need to remember their names.*

Narratives available at:

[www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP](http://www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP)
OVAVP offers a sincere “Thank You!” to all those who made Remember Me possible, including:

**Scriptwriter:**
- David Carren
- UTRGV Department of Theatre

**Voice Actors:**
- Clarrissa Rivera
- Naomi Cortez
- Jackqueline Alejos
- Daniela Pena Gonzalez
- Luisa Perez

**Recording and Vocal Coaching:**
- Prithvi Palimar

**Art Creation and Design:**
- Erika Balogh
- Sarah Tamez
- Heaven Mendoza
- Travis Trapp

**Research:**
- James Severn
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- Priscilla Palacios
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