



UCLA CHICANO STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER

For immediate release

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UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center awarded NEH grant to preserve collections focusing on religion, faith, and spirituality in Mexican American social history

April 7, 2020 (Los Angeles, CA) -- The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) has been awarded a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The \$349,000 grant will support the three-year archival preservation project, "Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Mexican American Social History, 1940-Present."

"Over 90 percent of U.S. Latinos identify with a religion or faith, and yet there is a surprising absence of humanities research related to the role of religion, spirituality, and faith in this community's history," says Professor Chon Noriega, the project director and CSRC Director. "This project provides a unique opportunity for UCLA to play a leadership role in bringing attention to the role of religion in existing archival resources that can then inform social histories, educational practices, and public programming related to the Mexican American population as a constituent element of U.S. social history."

This project draws attention to three types of collections:

- faith-based organizations that serve individuals, families, community-based groups, and communities
- religious and spiritual leaders working outside their formal positions in a church or religion, often as founders of service-based institutions in underserved communities
- individuals whose lives give insight into the role of religious belief in day-to-day life and civic engagement in Latino communities

The CSRC will process recently acquired collections, reprocess legacy collections, and digitally preserve materials consisting of nearly 250 linear feet of documents, 125 audio recordings, and over 14,000 photographs and slides. The collections give insights into churches and faith-based organizations (Church of the Epiphany, Homeboy Industries, Católicos for La Raza), key religious figures (Father Gregory Boyle, Father Richard Estrada, Sister Karen Bocalero), and individuals whose daily and professional life reflect faith-based values (Lupe Anguiano, Joe Ortiz, Josefa L. Serna).

Charlene Villaseñor Black, a professor of art history and Chicano/a studies, notes that “Faith-based organizations and community groups have played a key role in the social lives and civic engagement of the Mexican-descent population since the colonial period of the U.S.” The processed collections are expected to serve as the basis for dissertations, scholarly books, undergraduate and graduate research projects, teaching assignments that provide hands-on experience with archival research, and as loans for museum and library exhibitions.

CSRC Librarian and Archivist Xaviera Flores emphasizes the impact of the project grant on the community and on developing a community-focused archival practice. “The really exciting aspect of this NEH grant is that it will allow us to deepen our community engagement through the project, developing new best practices in this area, while also training the next generation of archivists.” Flores is also co-project director.

In addition to making these materials publically accessible, this grant will allow the CSRC to hire, train and mentor students interested in learning archival work. Flores herself started her career as a project archivist on a similar type of grant. "I am overjoyed to be able to provide someone now with that same opportunity through this NEH grant and give back to the community."

The NEH grant is one of 18 awarded in California for a total of \$3.4 million. Six grants went to UC campuses: Berkeley (3), Santa Barbara (2), UCLA (1). Nationwide the NEH awarded 224 grants totaling \$22.2M. The CSRC has been award two prior NEH grants in 2012 and 2015.

Established in 1969, the CSRC includes a Library with the largest number of archival and digital collections in the U.S. on the Chicano-Latino population. The CSRC’s extensive and significant archival holdings—and its imperative to provide broad access to these materials—have led the CSRC to become a major research site, instructional resource, and lending institution on par with the nation’s premiere libraries, archives, and museums. These holdings include 170 digital collections with 410,000 digitized and digital-born objects and 520 archival and special collections (roughly 5,550 linear feet). In just the last six years, CSRC archival materials and digital objects have been loaned to nearly 50 museum exhibitions reaching over 840,000 people. Collections are also regularly used by scholars and graduate students from around the world, and are integrated into ongoing outreach efforts to K-12 students across Southern California. The CSRC also includes an award-winning academic press, collaborative research projects, public programs and community-based partnerships, and a competitive grants and fellowships program.

For more information, please visit <http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/> or contact Rebecca Epstein, repstein@chicano.ucla.edu

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