

CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES IN DETENTION: RETHINKING U.S. IMMIGRATION



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Created for CultureStrike's "Visions from the Inside" project,
in partnership with Mariposas Sin Fronteras and End Family Detention.
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Organized by UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

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Co-sponsored by UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging, UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and
Health in Latin America, UCLA Latin American Institute, and UCLA International Institute

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

On behalf of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), we welcome you to “Central American Refugees in Detention: Rethinking US Immigration,” which brings together scholars, lawyers, activists, policy makers, administrators, members of the community, and detainees to discuss the massive detention of Central American refugees that has been taking place since 2014. With this conference, we hope to reframe current debates about immigration, broaden public understanding of the current crisis, and share effective tactics for achieving social justice.

Today we are at a crossroads. Dominant US sentiment about immigration has coalesced around two contradictory positions: support for DREAM Act children, and a retributive attitude toward their parents and other undocumented adults. Conference sessions will present research and best practices on advocacy, policy, and legal strategies with an eye to shifting public attitudes and with the goal of charting new policy objectives. In order to integrate advocacy and policy with on-the-ground activism in Los Angeles, we’ll hear from formerly detained mothers and from participants in the UCLA Labor Center’s Community Scholars Program, who will emphasize the human dimension of detention and the critical support needed by migrant children and their families.

In the closing address, attorney Peter Schey will discuss *Flores v. Johnson*, a motion filed with the US District Court of Central California in February to enforce a 1997 settlement that established national standards for the detention of minors. Last month a district judge ordered the Department of Homeland Security to defend its detention of minors in deplorable conditions at border detention centers. If the government fails to make a satisfactory defense, the judge will likely order the release of the detained children—a major victory.

This conference is made possible through the humane vision and generous support of Tamar Diana Wilson. Tamar is a longtime CSRC supporter whose Wilson Fund at the CSRC supports students working on urban poverty and poverty alleviation as they apply to Latinos and Mexican and Central American indigenous populations. The UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America and the UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging have joined us as collaborators in this effort, helping us to situate immigration within a larger set of socioeconomic and health-related issues. We are also grateful for the support of the UCLA Latin American Institute and the UCLA International Institute.

Needless to say, this conference is the result of a larger collaboration involving our planning committee, invited speakers, and the indispensable CSRC staff. Thank you all. More than anyone, Leisy J. Abrego, associate professor of Chicana and Chicano studies at UCLA, deserves special thanks for her intellectual expertise, which is grounded in a hands-on commitment to ensuring that the voices of detainees are represented and heard today.

Chon A. Noriega
Professor and Director
UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

Charlene Villaseñor Black
Professor and CSRC Interim Director, Fall 2015
Conference Organizer

PROGRAM

8:30-9:15 a.m. *Registration and Continental Breakfast*

9:15 a.m. *Introduction*

Chon A. Noriega, Professor and Director, Chicano Studies Research Center,
UCLA

9:30-10:45 a.m. *Session 1: Legal Advocacy*

Exploring strategies from scholarly research to expert testimony

Cecilia Menjivar, Foundation Distinguished Professor, Sociology Department,
University of Kansas

Stephen W. Manning, Partner, Immigrant Law Group; Director, Innovation
Law Lab, Portland, Oregon

Hiroshi Motomura, Susan Westerberg Prager Professor of Law, UCLA Law

David Hernández, Assistant Professor of Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin
American Studies, Mount Holyoke College

**11:00-11:45 a.m. *Opening Address – “UnFAMILIAR Policies? The Detention of Central
American Refugee Families”***

Denise L. Gilman, Clinical Professor and Director, Immigration Clinic, Texas
Law, University of Texas at Austin

12:00-1:15 p.m. *Lunch*

1:30-2:30 p.m. *Session 2 – Politics and Policy*

A bird’s-eye view of the refugee crisis

Roberto Lovato, Journalist; Former Executive Director, Central American
Resource Center (CARECEN), Los Angeles; Visiting Scholar, Center for
Latino Policy Research, UC Berkeley

Robert Chao Romero, Associate Professor, Chicana/o Studies, UCLA

Alfonso Gonzales, Assistant Professor, Department of Mexican American
and Latina/o Studies and the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin
American Studies, University of Texas at Austin

Max Benavidez, Associate Vice President for Public Affairs and
Communications, Claremont McKenna College; Adjunct Professor,
Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, USC

2:45-4:15 p.m. *Session 3 – Care and Understanding*
The human dimension of addressing refugees’ needs

Leisy J. Abrego, Associate Professor, Chicana/o Studies, UCLA
Alex Sanchez, Co-Founder, Homies Unidos, Los Angeles
Nancy Zuniga, Coordinator, Human Rights Alliance for Child Refugees and Families, Los Angeles
Jacqueline Munguia, Victor Interiano, and Mario de Leon, Labor Center Community Scholars Program, UCLA
Michael A. Rodriguez, Professor and Vice Chair, Family Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine, UCLA; Director, Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America, UCLA; Co-Director, Center of Expertise on Migration and Health, UCLA

4:15-4:30 p.m. *Break*

4:30-5:30 p.m. *Comments and Introduction*
Linda Alvarez, Former Television News Anchor-Reporter

Closing Address – “Mothers and Children in Detention: The Unfolding Litigation and Political Landscape”

Peter A. Schey, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, Los Angeles

5:30-7:00 p.m. *Cocktail Reception*

BIOGRAPHIES

LEISY J. ABREGO

Leisy J. Abrego is an associate professor in Chicana and Chicano studies at UCLA. With a focus on the lived experiences of Central Americans and other Latinos, her work examines their well-being as shaped by US immigration laws. Her book, *Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders* (Stanford University Press, 2014), exposes the economic and emotional consequences of long-term separation for Salvadoran immigrants and their families. While her academic work has garnered numerous national awards, as a committed scholar-activist she also dedicates her time to supporting and advocating for refugees and immigrants in various ways, including providing pro bono expert declarations for Salvadoran mothers and children in seeking asylum. She has written a number of editorial pieces, spoken at press conferences, and participated in a national fast held to call attention to the injustices suffered by detained Central American families. Abrego is affiliated with the Human Rights Alliance for Child Refugees and Families, Los Angeles.

LINDA ALVAREZ

Linda Alvarez is a former television news anchor-reporter. The first Latina to anchor a weekday English-language television newscast in Los Angeles, during her twenty-two years on the air she garnered twelve Emmys, seven Golden Mike Awards from the Greater LA Press Club, and numerous other awards. Alvarez served as anchor-reporter for KCBS news (1993–2007) and KNBC news (1985–1993) and was an embedded reporter in the Middle East during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Prior to joining KNBC, she was the anchor for KPNX in Phoenix, and she also served as the executive producer for their documentary unit. Her broadcast career began at WMAQ in Chicago. She has received accolades from a variety of community groups, including the YMCA of Los Angeles, the UCLA Alumni Association, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and Big Sisters of Los Angeles. Alvarez presently serves on the board of directors of the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles and the executive advisory committee of Leadership California. She was born and raised in Los Angeles and is a UCLA graduate.

MAX BENAVIDEZ

Max Benavidez is the associate vice president for public affairs and communications at Claremont McKenna College and an adjunct professor at the USC Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism. He is also a consultant on policy and media issues to a wide range of national and international cultural and academic institutions. His consultancy includes the UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging's research project Latinos and Economic Security, which is funded by the Ford Foundation and involves the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. He is a former adjunct faculty member at UCLA and has published extensively on a wide range of topics that include digital communications, the arts, and public policy.

ROBERT CHAO ROMERO

Robert Chao Romero is an associate professor of Chicana/o studies and Asian American studies at UCLA. He is also an immigration attorney, and he serves on the advisory boards of World Relief Garden Grove and the Immigration Resource Center of the San Gabriel Valley. Romero received his JD from UC Berkeley and his PhD in Latin American history from UCLA. His book *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882–1940* (University of Arizona Press, 2010) received the Latina/o Studies Section Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association.

MARIO DE LEON

Mario De Leon is a project coordinator for the UCLA Labor Center Community Scholars Program. He was born in Guatemala and immigrated to Los Angeles at the age of nine. As an undocumented student at UCLA, he advocated for equal access to higher education for immigrant students and served as co-chair of IDEAS at UCLA, one of the largest undocumented student support and advocacy organizations in the country. He is passionate about education, radically changing our current education and immigration systems, and using storytelling as a tool for empowerment.

DENISE L. GILMAN

Denise L. Gilman directs the Immigration Clinic at Texas Law, University of Texas at Austin. She has engaged in extensive scholarship and practice in human rights and immigrants' rights with a special focus on immigration detention and refugee law and policy. Over the last year, she and her students represented dozens of women and children asylum seekers from Central America who were held in family immigration detention centers and advocated to end family detention. Professor Gilman received her law degree from Columbia Law School. Her recent scholarship includes the article "Realizing Liberty: The Use of International Human Rights Law to Realign Immigration Detention in the United States," published in the *Fordham International Law Journal* (2013).

ALFONSO GONZALES

Alfonso Gonzales is an assistant professor in the Department of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies and the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. His scholarly interests are in Latino and Latin American politics, migration control, and migrant social movements in the United States, Mexico, and Central America. He is particularly interested in what the politics of migration control—which, broadly conceived, includes policing, asylum, detention, and deportation—means for democracy, human rights, and justice. In pursuing this research, Gonzales has relied on a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, including political theory, global political economy, critical ethnography, discourse analysis, and critical race theory. He is the author of *Reform without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and affiliated with the Human Rights Alliance for Child Refugees and Families, Austin.

DAVID HERNÁNDEZ

David Hernández is an assistant professor of Latina/o studies at Mount Holyoke College. His research focuses on immigration enforcement, particularly the US detention regime. He is completing a book manuscript titled “Undue Process: Immigrant Detention and Lesser Citizenship.” He is the co-editor of *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader* (Duke University Press, 2016).

ROBERTO LOVATO

Roberto Lovato is a writer and visiting scholar at UC Berkeley’s Center for Latino Policy Research. He is the recipient of a crisis reporting grant from the Pulitzer Center. His journalistic work centers on immigration, the drug war, national security, race and racism, language and politics and climate change. In 2000, he and a committed group of students and faculty founded the first Central American Studies Program in the United States at California State University, Northridge (CASP). Lovato has also served as executive director of the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) in Los Angeles. His work has appeared in numerous publications and national and international media outlets.

STEPHEN W. MANNING

Stephen W. Manning is a partner at Immigrant Law Group PC in Portland, Oregon, and is the director of the Innovation Law Lab, a non-profit that uses technology and best practices to create new capacity in immigration legal practice. He is the recipient of the 2014 Founder’s Award, the 2010 Jack Wasserman Memorial Award, and the 2009 Edith Lowenstein Memorial Award from the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the 2008 Gerald R. Robinson Award for Excellence in Immigration Litigation from the Oregon State Bar, and other awards and recognitions. He is the author of several amicus briefs, practice advisories, and *Ending Artesia* (Innovation Law Lab, 2014).

CECILIA MENJÍVAR

Cecilia Menjívar is the Foundation Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of Kansas. She specializes in immigration, gender, family dynamics, social networks, and religious institutions, and she is interested in two main empirical areas: the impacts of the legal regime and laws on immigrants, and the effects of living in contexts of multi-sided violence on individuals, especially women. Her work on immigration focuses mainly on the United States, although she has undertaken research in other national contexts; her work on violence is centered on Latin America, mostly Central America. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship to write a book based on her longitudinal fieldwork on immigration and legality in Arizona.

HIROSHI MOTOMURA

Hiroshi Motomura is the Susan Westerberg Prager Professor of Law at UCLA. His book *Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2006) received the Association of American Publishers PROSE Award as the year’s best book in the Law and Legal Studies category, and his new book, *Immigration Outside the Law* (Oxford University Press, 2014), won the same award in 2015. He is also the co-

author of *Immigration and Citizenship: Process and Policy* (7th ed., West Academic Publishing, 2012) and *Forced Migration: Law and Policy* (2d ed., West Academic Publishing, 2013). Hiroshi received the UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award in 2014, and he is one of twenty-six law professors nationwide profiled in *What the Best Law Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

JACQUELINE MUNGUIA

Jacqueline Munguia is a US-born Salvadoran woman from the city of Bell, whose parents are from San Miguel, El Salvador. She is a member of the UCLA Labor Center Community Scholars Program. She is a UCLA alumna and lives in the complicated interstices of grad student and regular human life, pursuing a PhD in literature at UCSD with a focus on cultural studies and Central American literature. Currently, she is learning to heal and love with her community as a member of the grassroots Southeast L.A. Collective in the neighborhood in which she grew up.

CHON A. NORIEGA

Chon A. Noriega is the director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and a professor of cinema and media studies. He has published ten books on Latino art, media, and performance, and is completing a book length study of Puerto Rican multimedia artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz (b. 1934). His policy-related work includes a three-part study of hate speech on broadcast and online media and a focus group study of conservative white senior citizens' attitudes on economic security and immigration. He currently serves on the advisory board for the UCLA Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity. He is cofounder of the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP), established in 1999, and served two terms on the Board of Directors of the Independent Television Service, the largest source of independent project funding within public television.

MICHAEL A. RODRIGUEZ

Michael A. Rodriguez is a professor and vice chair in the Department of Family Medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. He is also the director of the UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America, co-director of the UC Global Health Institute's Center of Expertise on Migration and Health, and chair of the UCLA Minor on Global Health and Faculty in Residence for the Office of Residential Life. His research activities include health equity, ethnic/racial health disparities, migration, food insecurity, violence prevention, and development of health workforce and research capacity in low- and middle-income countries.

ALEX SANCHEZ

Alex Sanchez is an internationally recognized peacemaker and the co-founder of Homies Unidos in Los Angeles, where he has developed and implemented innovative violence prevention and intervention programs since 1998. He has led the organization as executive director since 2006. An outspoken community leader, Sanchez's commitment to disenfranchised youth and their families in the Latino and largely Central American communities of the Pico Union, Westlake, and Koreatown areas of Los Angeles is rooted in his own personal journey that includes having been a gang-involved youth and a target of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, the

Los Angeles Police Department, and Salvadoran national police and death squads. His family migrated to Los Angeles at the end of the 1970s, during the height of military repression in El Salvador. After serving time in state prison, he was deported in 1994 to El Salvador, where he met Magdaleno Rose Avila, the founder of Homies Unidos in El Salvador, and others striving for social change. This was a turning point, and Sanchez made the commitment to improve his life and to help other youth do the same. He brought back that message of hope and redemption to California and helped found Homies Unidos in Los Angeles in 1998.

PETER A. SCHEY

Peter A. Schey has served as lead counsel or co-counsel in over 100 major civil rights and class actions in federal courts throughout the United States. These cases involve access to education, health and welfare benefits, administrative law, the rights of women, children, and indigenous people, the rights of immigrants and refugees, and complex constitutional, criminal, transnational, and corporate issues. He is the president and executive director of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law. The Center, founded in 1980, is dedicated to the protection and promotion of fundamental civil liberties and human rights through major class action litigation, direct legal services, education, training, and the presentation of petitions before international fora. In the 1980s, the Center, along with other counsel, filed a class action on behalf of Jenny Flores et al.; that case, *Flores v. Meese* (1998) led to a 1997 settlement in which the US District Court for the Central District of California set minimum national standards for the detention, release, treatment, and housing of children detained by federal immigration officials. In 2015, in response to an exploding number of detentions and deplorable conditions at the detention centers, Schey and his colleagues filed a motion to enforce the 1997 settlement. In July the district judge declared that the government was not meeting the terms of the settlement and ordered the government to show cause. The government's failure to satisfy the judge could lead to the release of the children and the end of the mass incarcerations.

CHARLENE VILLASEÑOR BLACK

Charlene Villaseñor Black is the associate director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, the interim director for Fall 2015, and professor of art history and Chicana/o studies. While much of her research investigates the politics of religious art and global exchange in the early modern Ibero-American world, she is also actively engaged in the Chicana/o art scene. She recently edited Shifra Goldman's *Tradition and Transformation: Chicana/o Art from the 1970s to the 1990s* (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2015) and a dossier in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* dedicated to teaching Chicana/o and Latina/o art. She is the author of the award-winning book *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

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UCLA CHICANO STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER

Since its founding in 1969, the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) has played a pivotal role in the development of scholarly research on the Chicano-Latino population, which is now the largest minority group in the United States. The CSRC publishes the premier peer-reviewed journal and houses the largest library, archival, and digital holdings in its field. Its collaborative research projects and award-winning books span numerous disciplines, including public health, education, economic security, media policy, and arts and culture. The CSRC is one of four ethnic studies centers established at UCLA that are now part of the Institute of American Cultures, which reports to the Office of the Chancellor. The CSRC is also a founding member of the national Inter-University Program for Latino Research (est. 1983), a national consortium of Latino research centers that now includes twenty-five institutions. www.chicano.ucla.edu

TAMAR DIANA WILSON

Tamar Diana Wilson graduated from UCLA in 1992 with a PhD in anthropology. Her PhD research was on patterns of migration to a Mexicali colonia and transnational migration to the United States from a rancho in Jalisco. She has published articles on Mexican migration in *Critique of Anthropology*, *Human Organization*, *Latin American Perspectives*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Research in Economic Anthropology*, *Urban Anthropology*, and *Review of Radical Political Economics*. Her book, *Women's Migration Networks in Mexico and Beyond* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009), looks at the centrality of women's roles in internal migration and international migration from Mexico to Arizona and Nevada. The Tamar Diana Wilson Fund, which is administered by the CSRC, supports student research, internships, and work-study appointments that focus on urban poverty and poverty alleviation as they apply to Latinos and Mexican and Central American indigenous populations in the United States and their home countries.

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Latinos and Economic Security (LES) is a national research project funded by the Ford Foundation designed to enhance retirement security for middle-aged and older Latinos by developing and fostering a new policy agenda that will make issues of aging Latinos a priority for policy makers as well as the Hispanic community. This project is a collaborative effort of the UCLA Center for Policy Research on Aging, the USC Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center, and the CSRC, in partnership with the National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA), the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). www.latinoeconomicsecurity.org

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