

Leonard Ramirez, Ph.D.
2010 ILACHE Educational Leadership Award



It is both a privilege and an honor to support the awarding of the 2010 ILACHE Educational Leadership Award to Dr. Leonard Ramirez, Director of LARES at UIC. As a past Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I relied on Leonard's wisdom and leadership to carry us through the day on far too many occasions. Dr. Ramirez can be a formidable opponent or a staunch and unyielding supporter, and he can be one or the other with the same person, on the same day, but always in minority students' best interests. Leonard's dedication to the cause of minority student representation at UIC (for decades) remains a documented record, and one that is not questioned by either those who love him or those that (also for decades) would have preferred that he never set foot anywhere near Harrison Street. But there he stays, and there he has achieved remarkable success.

What is perhaps less known about Dr. Ramirez is that he has served as a true friend, mentor, and colleague to Latinos of all ranks. Whipped and battered though we might be at times, striving for equality and access, Leonard was, and is, always there with encouragement, advice, and, most important of all, strategy. I am proud to call him "friend" for so many years. And yes, Leonard, "I'm still watching for that uppercut." Congratulations – Del Corazon (though you might have thought at times that I didn't have one).

Sincerely,

David L. Torres, Ph.D.
Director, Commerce Degree Program
University of Arizona South

Dr. Ramirez has always been a visionary, committed to improving academic opportunities for Latino students in Illinois. In my many years working with Leonard, I was always impressed by his knowledge, compassion, dedication and hard work on behalf of the Latino community. ¡Felicitaciones Leonard! This leadership award definitely belongs to you.

Berta Arias, Ed.D.
Professor Emeritus, World Languages
International Education Coordinator
Joliet Junior College
IL Consortium for International Studies & Programs, Executive Chair

It is a great honor to be able to share with all of you some of my thoughts about my friend and colleague, Dr. Leonard Ramirez. Leonard was a part of my professional life at the beginning of my teaching experience. I still remember my first day at Latino Youth Alternative High School, during my tour of the facility at Gads Hill in Pilsen. As I was walking down the hallway, I saw a man escorting two students, pulling them by the ears. At first I thought I was in the “Welcome Back, Kotter” classroom and I asked who that was. I was told that it was Leonard Ramirez, one of the English teachers. Needless to say, I realized that I was in a very different institution where everything was possible, especially when it came to making changes. Please do not misinterpret this anecdote. Students came first on our agenda!

For those of you who don't know about Latino Youth, this was the place from where many individual successful careers originated, such as Alderman Solis, Sandra Cisneros and Richard Rutschman. Leonard, was, and still is to me, the Professor, the Pioneer, and the Leader, whose path I have been honored to cross many times and in many ways throughout my life. If I were to describe Leonard, I would have to say that he is wise, committed and has a big, kind heart. My dear friend, Leonard, I would like to congratulate you on this well-deserved award, because you have given so much of yourself to the students, to your peers and to the community.

With Respect and Love,

Madeline Roman-Vargas
Dean, Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center
Wilbur Wright College
One of the City Colleges of Chicago

Me encanta que honren a Leonard por que creo que en realidad se lo merece.

Leonard is very unique in many ways. Rather than playing the role of complacent minority that actually could have helped advance his career further, he has remained independent confronting power or collaborating as needed, always prioritizing the cause of Latino students, regardless. This has cost him many headaches and clashes but has kept him on track. I enjoyed working with him in the various initiatives where our paths crossed due to his determination, drive and willingness to go as far as necessary. Along the way, he tried to work with all Latino sides sacrificing at times his views for the larger cause. He has kept LARES together against many skirmishes and has made a difference for Latinos all along. He has been there when needed and as needed. He listens and speaks out, watches and learns, is stubborn when needed. He has put all his energy to the service of LARES as Latinos on campus and beyond.

Best,

John-Jairo Betancur, Ph.D.
Associate Professor,
UIC Urban Planning and Policy

Leonard's vision and leadership have created a strength for educational support through the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services (LARES) office. Through Leonard and LARES, generations of Latino students have achieved educational success through higher education.

**Vincent Paglione, Associate Dean
UIC College of Architecture and the Arts**

I have known Leonard Ramirez for over twenty five years and can say that his commitment to the Latino community is unparalleled. He is relentless and as tenacious an advocate for the Latino community as you will ever meet. I know firsthand that he has made many sacrifices and forgone many professional opportunities because of his unwavering commitment to the community.

He is basically a rather humble person, whose style is to work behind the scenes and let others receive the accolades. However, when it is time to be counted on for what may be for many, an unpopular but a very necessary stance, you can always rely on Leonard not to back down. This has special meaning when you consider that during this conservative age many from our communities put their career first and place our community priorities on the back burner. Leonard is truly a unique individual that have helped so many people.

Said another way, Leonard has planted the seed for others and countless individuals that have eaten fruit from that plant. He has made personal sacrifices. This special honor has been long overdue, I applaud ILACHE, for recognizing Leonard for all that he has done and continues to do on behalf of people of color throughout the state of Illinois.

Respectfully,

**Michael Toney, Ed.D.
Executive Director of UIC Urban Health Program
Illinois Committee for Black Concerns in Higher Education (ICBCHE)**

Leonard Ramirez is the consummate engaged scholar-- he doesn't just pontificate, he also walks the talk. He is a giant among men, and has a steadfast and tireless commitment to social justice, and access and equity for traditionally underrepresented groups. Leonard is an unsung hero of the education community in Chicago and across the state of Illinois. We are much better for having him in the struggle. I can't think of anyone who is more deserving of the ILACHE Leadership award.

**Valerie C. Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor - DePaul University
Illinois African American and Latino Higher Education Alliance (IALHEA)**

It is great to hear about Leonard's 2010 ILACHE Educational Leadership Award. It is extremely well deserved! I would like to express my respect for his exemplary leadership and commitment.

**Phil Bowman, Executive Director
National Center for Institutional Diversity
University of Michigan**

Leonard Ramirez continues to be a source of inspiration for many of us at UIC. Over the many years that I've known Leonard he has taught me to always have the courage to speak up; that the community trusts us to be their voice for education. From Leonard I learned that reason can prevail even in the most heated of circumstances. Congratulations on the well deserved ILACHE Leadership Award.

Jorge Girotti, Ph.D.
Associate Dean and Director - UIC College of Medicine

I always think of Leonard as being both the memory and the conscience of the university. He was UIC history. He was on campus when most policy was established and remembered the circumstances surrounding the establishment of and the intent of policy affecting support programs. When retrenchment movements were afoot, he effectively reminded the same decision makers why they had agreed to a particular policy; and in effect, challenged them to agree or disagree with themselves. Leonard is a master of détente.

Michael Hatcher

I have known Leonard for almost 20 years. I met him during my formative years at UIC. He recounted to me stories from history and the many lessons to be learned from them. He is a great teacher and mentor. I hope to someday pass on those same great stories and lessons to my sons.

Ricardo Gonzalez

The project of much scholarship by intellectuals of color is to recover what George Lipsitz calls "the Hidden Histories" of our communities. In order to produce such scholarship, the scholar must always look back at the mentors who continue to influence their intellectual activities. Dr. Leonard Ramirez is one important person who fueled my scholarly interest in my undergraduate years at UIC and now at the University of Minnesota. Our dialogues on Chicano/a and Latina/o studies, Raza in the Midwest, and community activism all have made substantial impact on my academic career, to the extent of pursuing a doctoral degree. Dr. Ramirez, the intellectual, also holds a prominent place in the presence of Latina/o education as an administrator, educator, activist, community leader. His very existence at the University of Illinois at Chicago has opened the doors for hundreds of Latina/o students to enter the University which then become successful professionals and community role models. So here is to the "Hidden History" of UIC, one of struggle, of learning, helping students succeed; here is to the acknowledgement of Dr. Leonard Ramirez, a dear friend and mentor. -Rudy Aguilar, April 13, 2010.

Saludos,

Rodolfo Aguilar, PhD Student
Department of American Studies
University of Minnesota

Dr. Ramirez has always humbly put his intellect and love of learning at the service of his vision of empowering Latinos. He imparts lessons holistically, sharing not only information but creating an environment of analysis, wonder and respect. He demands the best of his students only because he gives twice as much. He is an asset and a source of light in the oft dark tunnels of the Educational Pipeline.

**Norma L. Seledon,
Grants Management & Administration**

I want Dr. Ramirez to know that his class touched me not only academically but personally and that he inspired me to continue on my personal journey. When I was ready to give up on myself he DID NOT and he made sure to keep pushing me to find my inner strength. I want him to know how grateful I am to him for always believing in me!

Liz Villarreal, ENLACE Fellow

Cesar Chavez said, "There are many reasons for why a man does what he does. To be himself he must be able to give it all. If a leader cannot give it all he cannot expect his people to give anything."

My master's program required taking a course with Dr. Leonard Ramirez. My fellows and I were worried about beginning the semester as we had heard scary things about the man; "he is a hard professor, one who asks for just too much." It was all true and a bit more.

Mysteriously, a Latino Educational Policy course became Leonard's agenda to teach ten Latina graduate students to identify the "big elephant in the room," to analyze issues from a "multidimensional perspective," and to master the art of "knitting paragraphs" in a harmonious way. That semester, I felt challenged, uncomfortable, and always in awe.

The reality about Leonard, the professor, is that he knows Latino students have been cheated on their education and that the expectation of academic excellence is just not there. But he also knows it is never too late to make an impact on a person's life, it is never too late to plant that seed of love for life-long learning, and that when you expect great things from people, people will do great things.

Behind his humble character, Leonard is the leader who gives it all expecting others to do the same. Many of us have been touched by his leadership; we now carry a huge responsibility to do the same.

Luvia Valentin, NEIU ENLACE Fellow

Leonard Ramirez has been a consistent voice for Latino students at UIC. Dr. Ramirez's class was pivotal in our tenure as an ENLACE cohort. He had the ability to challenge us and take us out of our comfort zones to engage us in authentic learning. His knowledge and breadth about research has guided me beyond the classroom and there is not a week that passes by in my job where I do not reference something he taught us. More than just articles, papers, and books, he made us also reflect on the fundamentals of who we are and our roles in creating change in education. I am indebted to him for the valuable knowledge he shared, but also taking forth the responsibility of what that knowledge brings to our community.

Liz Monge, NEIU ENLACE Fellow