

LATINO TEXAS POLICY CENTER - POLICY FELLOWS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

2023-2024 FELLOWS



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Diana Almaguer, Ph.D., Leadership
Adjunct Lecturer-Regional Director
BCFS HHS Common Thread
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Fatima Frausto
Doctoral Student, Demography
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Diana Nunez,
Doctoral Student, Geography &
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Amai De la Fuente
VISTA Project Director
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Yulissa Chávez (Yu-li-sa) is currently a second year Masters candidate at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Government from the University of Texas at Austin. Her primary policy interests are public education policy, specifically how Texas is financed to affect the outcomes of its Latinx and Black students. This involves evaluating the “quality of life” of students regarding the incarceration of youth, the economic outcomes, and the bienestar of their families and communities. Before Yulissa was in graduate school, she was a public-school teacher who taught world history in Austin Independent School District. Yulissa is a Tejana, born and raised in Galveston, Texas. She is a proud first-generation student and the eldest daughter to parents from Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Her hobbies include sculpting faux cakes, interior design, creating political cartoons, swimming, and playing with her cat Aviato.

Vincent D. Carales is an Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at the University of Houston. With over 25 years of experience working in higher education, Carales currently serves as the program director for the Higher Education M.Ed. program in the College of Education at UH. Prior to joining the faculty at UH, Carales was a graduate fellow at the American Council on Education. His research interests include examining the experiences of community college students, student loan debt and college affordability, and how institutional cultures and climates influence Latinx and low-income students’ opportunities and outcomes across the P-20 pipeline. His scholarship has been published in a variety of educational journals such as the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, Teachers College Record, Educational Policy, Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, Community College Review, and several other academic publication outlets. He was the recipient of the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education graduate fellowship award and was a Faculty Fellow for the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education. He completed his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio and his bachelor’s degree in mass communication and master’s degree in Counseling and Guidance at Texas State University.

Dr. Sharon McIntyre teaches Public Administration and Security Studies courses at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley. Her research and practice include policy analysis, public sector ethics, human rights, social change, intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, and various levels of peacebuilding programs (civil society and government). One of her primary interests is the government implementation of policies regarding the quality of education and the nexus of economic mobility. She has also conducted qualitative research regarding the narratives students receive about 9/11 and the implication for peace and conflict resolution. McIntyre's interests also focus on experiential and applied learning of viable, multi-track peacebuilding theories, models, and practices. Dr. McIntyre is a member of the American Society for Public Administration and the Association for Conflict Resolution.

Dr. Andreea Stoian Karadeli serves as Assist. Professor. in the Department of Public Affairs and Security Studies, College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA. Dr. Karadeli has been collaborating with several international organizations (NATO, UN, EU) and institutions worldwide and worked as a foreign lecturer in the Department of Political Science and

Public Administration, Faculty of Political Sciences, at Sakarya University in Turkey. The research conducted by Dr. Karadeli is multidisciplinary with the focus on global security and intelligence, and extensive expertise on the evolution of radical groups and terrorism after the Arab Spring. Her work has been published by national and international publications, while she has been a guest speaker in various conferences, forums, seminars, and television debates around the world. Apart from her academic work, Dr. Karadeli has been delivering terrorism-related courses and provided academic counselling for the training programs organized by the Center for Excellence - Defence Against Terrorism in Ankara, Turkey. Dr. Karadeli graduated from the PhD program in National Security and Intelligence at Mihai Viteazul National Intelligence Academy, in Romania and is also an alumnus of Exeter University, United Kingdom, graduating from a BA in Arabic and Middle East Studies and a Master of Research in Security, Conflict and Lizeth Lizarraga is a Ph.D. student in the Education Policy and Planning program at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests focus on issues of educational equity and opportunity for culturally and linguistically diverse students in K-12. Lizeth is particularly interested in Latinx family access, collaboration, and advocacy within the special education system. In addition, she is interested in developing decolonial curriculum in partnership with local school district teachers. Much of Lizeth's research interests derive from her previous teaching experiences and advocating for her students, family members who went through or are currently in the special education system, and volunteering for community-based programs that focus on linguistic and cultural revitalization. Her collaborative work has appeared in the Journal of Cases of Educational Leadership which focused on the sustainability of Latinx educators during COVID-19. Lizeth is originally from Reno, Nevada, where she earned a B.A. in Spanish Literature with a minor in Translation, and an M.S. in Equity and Diversity in Education from the University of Nevada, Reno. Justice.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Mexican American Studies (MAS) at the University of Texas at San Antonio where she also serves as co-director of the MAS Teachers' Academy. Lilliana's research draws from interdisciplinary methodologies in Chicana Studies, Chicana feminist thought, and decolonial theories to examine teacher identity and consciousness, epistemic struggles in education, and schooling practices. As a local scholar rooted in her community's struggles for social justice, Saldaña weaves her teaching, research, and activism to create public scholarship that is socially relevant and meaningful to her community. She is currently working on a Digital Humanities project, "Conscientizando Comunidades: Alternative Archives of Leadership and Activism in Texas" with Drs. Sylvia Fernandez and Sylvia Mendoza. Her research "Voices of Resistance: Decolonizing Fiesta San Antonio" documents the public writing, artistic production, and cultural organizing of Mexican American activists who have critiqued Fiesta's history and practices rooted in settler colonialism and white supremacy. Lilliana has published two co-edited books--- *Entre el Sur y el Norte: Decolonizing Education through Critical Readings in Mexican, Indigenous, and Chicano Music* with Marco Cervantes, and *Latinas and the Politics of Urban Space*, with Sharon Navarro. She is currently working on another co-edited anthology that documents the contemporary political struggle for bring Mexican American Studies into Texas public schools. Over the past seven years, Saldaña has played an active role in statewide organizing efforts to expand MAS in Texas PreK-12, namely through the NACCS Tejas Foco MAS PreK-12 Committee, the regional chapter of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. She also serves as co-director of the MAS Teacher's Academy --- a people-powered, teacher-scholarcommunity led effort that provides educators with foundational content and curricular support to teach MAS in PreK-12 public schools. As a community scholar, Lilliana also serves on the boards of organizations like the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center which promotes social justice through cultural arts programming and historical

preservation, and the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI), which is dedicated to chronicling and sharing historic and contemporary civil rights milestones. Lilliana is also passionate about foodways. She is currently teaching a new MAS course titled “Mexican American Foodways: Recipes for Justice, Health, and Liberation.” When she is not teaching or doing public scholarship, she is learning about Indigenous foodways to share through community-based cooking workshops and presentations. Inspired by her mama (the best cook she knows) and her family’s struggles with diabetes, Saldaña’s vision as a teacher, cook, and activist is to encourage people in her community to reclaim and sustain Indigenous foods for personal and collective wellness.

Guadalupe Cantu is currently a Masters of Public Affairs student at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. She obtained her B.S. from Texas A&M University. Guadalupe is a Graduate Research Assistant for the Latino Research Institute and a Graduate Assistant for the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Her policy interests lie at the intersection of crucial societal issues, including immigration, criminal justice, and environmental justice and marrying these policy areas with data visualization and modeling for analysis.

Alma Flores-Pérez is a third-year PhD Student in Linguistic Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. She completed her undergraduate degree at Stanford University, doublemajoring in Linguistics, Iberian and Latin American Culture, and minoring in Anthropology. Prior to returning to graduate school, Alma spent two years working at TalkingPoints, an educational technology non-profit providing a two-way multilingual communication platform to school districts across the country. Raised in Austin, Texas by two small-business owning Chicanas, Alma witnessed firsthand the importance of creating community-led spaces of resistance for the empowerment of the Latinx community. Alma’s research looks at the locally situated ways in which multilingual children in schools are socialized into and utilize multiple languages for the creation of social networks, ideologies of power, allegiances toward institutions, and identity formation. Following in her moms’ footsteps, she is passionate about ensuring that the research she produces creates tangible impact in the form of Language Education Policy in schools.

Dr. Diana Almaguer has served, since 2019, as the Regional Director for Common Thread, a program under the Human Trafficking Interdiction Division with BCFS Health and Human Services. Common Thread is a program whose mission is to connect with Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth through relational advocacy, intensive case management and peer support. In this role, she oversees the direct delivery of services of human trafficking survivors in 13 counties under the Rio Grande Valley region. Prior to joining the BCFS family, Dr. Almaguer served as an Executive Director for CASA of Hidalgo County Inc., as well as an Investigations Supervisor and Licensing Supervisor with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services for over ten years. Dr. Almaguer is also an Adjunct Lecturer in the Public Affairs and Security Studies Division with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Dr. Almaguer has over 20 years of experience in advocating for youth who have been victims of abuse and neglect and children who have suffered severe trauma through other forms of abuse. Dr. Almaguer’s experience extends into both the private and nonprofit sectors. Dr. Almaguer has been certified as a TBRI (Trust Based Relational Intervention) Practitioner. Dr. Almaguer is an active member of the Pharr Sunrise Kiwanis and has served as President, as well as two years as the Lt. Governor for Region 11 for the Kiwanis. Dr. Almaguer is also an active board member for Palmer Drug Abuse Program, San Juan Community Lions Club and currently serves as the Chair of the Public Administration Advisory Committee at

South Texas College. Dr. Almaguer is a graduate of Our Lady of the Lake University with a PhD in Leadership Studies and holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Texas Pan American

Ms. Fatima Frausto is a second-year doctoral student in Demography at UTSA, studying how policy influences population health, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities in Texas. Ms. Frausto's prior research and practice areas have been in sexual & reproductive health, child & adolescent health, and cancer prevention. She is an active member of the Texas Public Health Association, serving a 3-year term on the association's Governing Council. Before her doctoral studies, she was employed with the Texas Department of State Health Services under several roles: Team Lead for the Intervention Group, housed in the Immunization Section; Outreach Coordinator for the Blood Lead Surveillance Branch; and deployed to the State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) COVID-19 response efforts. Ms. Frausto received a BA in Sociology, and a BSA in Neuroscience, from the University of Texas at Austin, and an MPH in Health Promotion and Health Education from UTHHealth Science Center School of Public Health-Houston. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, and gardening.

My name is **Diane Nuñez**, I am originally from California but when I was in middle school my parents moved to Kansas, so that's been my home ever since. I am the daughter of immigrant parents, and I am also a first-generation college student. I received both my undergraduate and master's from Fort Hays State University in Hays, KS. I am now at the Department of Geography at Texas State University where I am a first year PhD student working on an NSF grant at US Mexican Border working alongside my advisors. My research interests are in migration studies and human health.

Amai De la Fuente is a border-native from both California Sur and Texas in the RGV. They graduated from Texas State University with an Interdisciplinary Bachelor's in Psychology, Mass Communications and English Literature & Writing, with a focus in Educational Leadership and Administration. They are results-driven professional with a passionate commitment to culturally-aware leadership development, who specializes in assistance program fluency, coalitionary initiatives, community organizing efforts, and analyzing policies. They enjoy finding creative ways in optimizing outreach strategies and improving program operations to maximize effectiveness and resource utilization for engagement of diverse stakeholders and communities with strategic planning, data analysis and research. They are currently working with Hidalgo County in South Texas as a Project Director who is spearheading a Leadership Youth Academy, in partnership with the United States National and Community Service program, AmeriCorps VISTA, and South Texas College, a #1 ranked academic institution in Texas for enrolling and graduating Latinos, and #3 in the nation for Hispanic undergraduate enrollment. They hope to incorporate their Fellowship experience to enhance their current project and bring more opportunities for professional development and mentorship to border communities