HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
‘La Valiente’ initiates discussion of sexual violence at the border

Nabeela Iqbal
Staff Writer

The Richland community saw the first program of the “I am Evidence” series for this season on Sept. 24 and 25 in Sabine Hall titled “La Valiente: No Estar Solas ... Violación y Violencia en la Frontera” (Brave Woman: You’re Not Alone ... Rape and Violence at the Border).

Equity Richland/Studies in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion partnered with Achieving Latino Academic Success (ALAS), the Black Student Association (BSA) and the Office of Student Life (OSL) to present the program.

“We chose to focus specifically on empathy, to make sure that we’re going a step beyond, a step above equality, so that every student and every employee is actually being treated as they want to be treated, not just equally, but on a level that is tailored specifically to their needs,” said Amy Bell, history professor at Richland and co-program coordinator of Equity Richland.

“La Valiente” was the first session of a series based on the documentary, “I am Evidence,” a documentary focused on the nationwide rape kit backlog. A rape kit is all of the DNA evidence collected from the body of the victim of a sexual assault incident, male or female.

“In the last five to 10 years, we have discovered that many of these rape kits, these boxes full of evidence, have been going on a shelf in a warehouse and nothing is ever done with them. It was discovered that we had more than 200,000 of them, at least, across the country sitting in warehouses that had never been tested or followed up on at all,” Bell said.

“I am Evidence” follows the stories of different cities and efforts to begin clearing that backlog. In Detroit, this search led to the discovery of more than 800 serial rapists freely roaming the city, according to the film. Repeat offenders, people who have raped over and over again, have never been caught or punished for their crimes.

In Texas, the Lavina Masters Act went into effect in September, allowing a formal procedure to be put in place to clear the backlog of rape kits. There are at least 20,000 untested rape kits sitting in Texas warehouses.

Bell said that this is not the entire focus of the series, however. She hopes the series will allow participants to have conversations throughout the year among different groups to discuss rape culture, sexual violence, toxic masculinity and gender issues.

“What I’ve asked the members of Equity Richland to do is actually choose a demographic group that they’re interested in working on. We’re going to have sessions throughout the year, one every couple of weeks, starting in October, that are tailored for the specific demographic groups that these members have chosen,” Bell said.

The first session focused specifically on the violence faced by Latinas (Latin-American women) migrating into the United States. The film took the audience on a journey, which began in three different Central American countries; Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and the state of Chiapas in Mexico. Women from these places face unimaginable acts of violence, forcing them to seek refuge status in the U.S. in hopes of living a better life."

The session also included a guest speaker, Elissa Polley, director of survivor advocacy at Traffick911, an organization that works to recovery of more than 800 serial rapists freely roaming the city, according to the film. Repeat offenders, people who have raped over and over again, have never been caught or punished for their crimes.

Gilbert Castillo gives a presentation about assault on the border.

Jamilah Williams, a Richland freshman, said listening to the stories of migrant women in the video clips shown at “La Valiente,” opened her eyes to the struggles Latina immigrants face when seeking asylum in the US.

“I think it’s very important that we are made aware of the trials faced by people who come from a different place because it helps us exercise more empathy,” Williams said. “I feel like the people who judge immigrants do so because they’re ignorant of the horrors that they faced back in their home countries, so sessions like these do a great job of educating everybody.”

Upcoming sessions throughout the year will focus on different demographic groups including the LGBTQ community, the African-American community and the Asian-American community. There will also be a session focusing on various religions and even one for people with disabilities.

Venezuela—poor little rich country

Barbara Gandica Martinez
Design Editor

“My school best friend was imprisoned for posting a tweet,” said Miriam Lefeld, art professor and director of 2D studio art at Richland. She led the presentation “Poor Little Rich Country: A Conversation on Venezuela,” part of the Passport to the Globe program organized by the Institute of Global Citizenship. The program was presented Sept. 24 in Sabine Hall. Lefeld discussed the history of Venezuela, her country of origin, leading up to the current socio-economic climate.

She highlighted what Venezuela is known for, including beauty pageants (seven Miss Universe titles), oil reserves and the contemporary art movements of modern informalism and geometric abstraction.

According to Lefeld, Venezuela historical roots are similar to that of the United States. She recounted the history of Venezuela from the settlement by Spaniards to the current political crisis.

Then she recounted the moment when the peace seized. In February of 1989, the price of gasoline rose by 100%. A series of protests occurred on February 27 resulting in violent government repression. In 1992, Hugo Chávez led a coup against the government and spoke on TV.

“Chávez said to the public ‘We have not reached our goals yet.’ Just recounting it give me chills,” said Lefeld.

Chávez went to prison following the coup but was pardoned by the government in 1999. That same year he won election and became president of Venezuela. Lefeld recounted that Chávez called for referendums and constitutional change. There was no separation of power between the political branches. Chávez served in office until he died of cancer in 2013. That year, an election was held. Vice-president Nicolas Maduro competed with opposition leader Henrique Capriles.

Continued on www.richlandstudentmedia.com
Hispanic Heritage celebrated at the Dallas Farmers Market

Kohloh-Obase Kammonke
Assistant Managing Editor

Hispanic Heritage Month kicked off Sept. 15 with a celebration at the Dallas Farmers Market downtown. The event featured activities and attractions ranging from dancers and a mariachi band to food and music, all in celebration of Mexican Independence Day.

“This event is significant of the time when Mexico fought for their independence from Spain and became its own country,” said Brenda Chavez, who attended the festival. “It [Mexico’s Independence Day] begins when they do the chant.”


The famous chant, “Viva Mexico” is synonymous with Mexican Independence Day celebrations. It holds historical significance and is now part of a yearly ritual performed by Mexicans all over the world the night before their Independence Day.

“There is something called the chant in Mexico. There was a priest, Miguel Hidalgo in Central Mexico, and he had been plotting how to revolt against the crown. He had gathered people and had done a lot of grassroots work,” said Garcia.

“On the 15th [of September] at night, he grabbed the troops, he gathered them, and he said, ‘Viva Mexico, Viva la Independencia la Mexico’ which means long live our independence. Then he chanted three times, ‘Viva Mexico, Viva Mexico, Viva,’ long live Mexico,” Garcia said. The battle cry is chanted every year on Mexican Independence Day.

The festival at the Farmers Market featured many activities. There were different types of food, dance performances and live music. A bar was available for those who were of drinking age. The market vendors sold fresh fruits and vegetables for those who wanted to shop for produce.

“My favorite thing about the festival is the fact that people get to enjoy themselves and bask in the culture whether or not they’re from there and they also learn about the Farmers Market,” said Nathaly Benavides, a vendor.

“Many people who came into my booth asked if I came for just the festival. I told them that I’m here every weekend and they didn’t know that the market even existed,” she said.

There was a diverse crowd attending the event and all seemed to enjoy the food and entertainment.

“One thing I felt like people who were not of Latino descent could learn from this festival is that is the fact that we all come together whether or not you’re Mexican, as long as you’re of Latino descent. We’re diverse but we embrace our diversity and show each other love because we’re all one,” Benavides said.

Chavez felt like people who were not Latino could learn about the culture by attending the festival, watching the dancers, enjoying the different foods and listening to the music.

‘Corn, our flesh:’ Learning about ethnic food

Mexican-American Studies professor Carlos Rovelo shows a corn tamale during his presentation.

Jack Ramirez Bernal
Staff Writer

Carlos Antonio Rovelo, political science and art history professor at Tarrant County Community College, presented “Corn, Our Flesh” at Richland Sept. 27. The event was sponsored by the club, Achieving Latino Academic Success (ALAS). At the event, Rovelo discussed the importance of corn and how it symbolizes the identity, history and culture of Latin American culture.

“It has to do with the way we are,” Rovelo said during his presentation. “Our faith is important. The food we eat is important. Knowing where we come from is important.”

His presentation explored, not just on how corn has influenced Latin cuisine, but how its domestication in the early Mesoamerican period became part of how they practiced religion. Corn was part of their interpretation of the creation of life, the understanding of nature and as an artistic icon. All contribute to the identity of what it means to be Hispanic.

“Every year we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month but, most of the time, the celebration is based on personalities like Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, astronauts and artists in general,” Rovelo said. “But there are things that are more at the center of heritage. Heritage is not just about people. It’s about what makes us and corn is a descender of the way our ancestor made us.”

When talking about the historical importance of corn, Rovelo focused on how cultures such as the Mayans and the Aztecs, revolved around the growing and consumption of corn. That lead to the creation of commonly known food items such as tortillas, atole (a corn dough based drink) and tamales. Additionally, he talked about the various ways corn is harvested in certain regions of Latin America. He discussed the milpa rotation system used by farmers for self-consumption growth and how it contrasts with the American method that focuses on mass production and market distribution.

Most importantly, Rovelo explained corn’s relationship to Mesoamerican religions in which the gods used the crop to symbolize of the cycle of life. Each culture represented the corn in their architecture, art and stories like the Mayan scripture, the Popol Vuh, which tells the story about how humanity originated from a grain of corn.

“As I started doing the research, I realized this was a very big subject,” Rovelo said. “That is not just artistically, but it is also philosophically, [theologically] and obviously about humanity.”

Rovelo was keen on identity and cultural origin during his presentation. When talking about how corn represents the identity of what it means to be Hispanic, he chose works of art from artists like Diego Rivera whose work is inspired by Mexican culture. Rivera painted his famous public murals that are scattered throughout Mexico City. His work reflects his personal interpretation of what it means to be Mexican. One painting, which Rovelo showed, was “La Molinea” in which Rivera painted a native woman preparing tortillas as she grinds corn and makes it into dough. The painting demonstrated a traditional aesthetic of Mexican culture from her traditional attire to the way she prepared the tortillas.

“People need to know where they come from,” Rovelo said. “We need to know where everything began in our own culture. My own culture didn’t start in Europe. It started with the [native] Indians of Mesoamerica.”
“The Shape of Water” (2017) – Your entertainment editor and humble professional film critic correctly predicted this film would win the Oscar for Best Picture and Guillermo del Toro would win Best Director.

Grade: A+

“Like Water for Chocolate” (1992) – Alfonso Arau helmed this tale about the magic of baking and the passion that comes when it is done with someone you love. Featuring Lumi Cavazos (“Bottle Rocket,” 1995).

Grade: A-


Grade: B

“Stand and Deliver” (1988) – Edward James Olmos is excellent in this tale of teacher Jamie Escalante who teaches his class the importance of having calculus in their lives.

Grade: B+

“Bandidas” (2006) – Two women: Penélope Cruz and Salma Hayek become partners in this tale set in the Old West that features one of the last performances of Sam Shepard. Also with Steve Zahn.

Grade: C+

“West Side Story” (1961) – Rita Moreno and George Chakiris won top Oscars for their supporting roles in Robert Wise’s tale of romance, love and the rival gangs the Sharks and Jets in New York.

Grade: B-

“Coco” (2017) – This tale about a grandmother and her connection with the undead in her afterlife won the Best Animated Feature of the year at the Oscars. This one has a lot of great music.

Grade: A-

“Traffic” (2000) – This great flick took home a plethora of awards including Best Director for Steven Soderbergh, best screenplay and Best Supporting Actor for Benicio Del Toro.

Grade: A

“Hellboy” (2004) – Director Guillermo del Toro captured the Dark Horse comic book in an interesting way. Ron Perlman plays Hellboy, a half-human, half-demon character once cherished by the Nazis, who ends up working for the Americans.

Grade: A+

“Blade II” (2002) – Guillermo del Toro worked magic with this tale about Wesley Snipes’ bloodsucker who works with a team portrayed by Kris Kristofferson and Norman Reedus. Ron Perlman supports as one of the other members of Snipes’ team.

Grade: A-

“Cronos” (1993) – This film marked the first time Ron Perlman worked with Director Guillermo del Toro on a film that deals with the early days of vampirism. This film is in Spanish with English subtitles.

Grade: A-

“The Devil’s Backbone” (2001) – Guillermo del Toro directs this Spanish-language film that deals with ghosts and other apparitions during the Spanish Civil War. Subtitles are provided in English.

Grade: A
Industry Giants Conference brings animation to life

Barbara Gandica Martinez
Staff Writer

“Today in our portfolio review we saw a young lady who said that last year they just slammed her and she took it all to heart and [she] had viewers today that said her portfolio was amazing,” said Vince Sidwell, co-chair of the animation collective A Bunch of Short Guys.

The group sponsored the 17th annual Industry Giants conference, which took place at Gilley’s in Dallas on Sept. 21. The event brings local animation, film and gaming students and professionals together with industry experts who share their experiences with aspiring artists. It coincided with the Big D Design conference which took place Sept. 19 – 21 at the same location.

“We want to educate and inspire and build a community of artists and that’s we been doing for 20 years,” said Will Nicholson, president of the guild. “We started out as a group of people who just wanted to make a short film, an animated film. It turned out that we weren’t as good at making a short film as we were at meeting and talking about it. So, the name A Bunch of Short Guys means a bunch of guys who want to make a short [film].”

A Bunch of Short Guys formed in 2000. The hosted the first animation, gaming and special effects forum in 2002. Games became part of the program in the years that followed.

The speakers of the conference shared their stories of how they became professional artists, animators and game developers. There were some commonalities among the speakers who were all passionate about their craft.

“Passion always wins out,” said John Pomeroy, president of John Pomeroy Productions about his career in the animation industry. “Learn what you love,” recommended Mark Simon, storyboard artist for the “Walking Dead” television series, on finding a focus within your field.

“People respond to stories,” Simon said. Frank Abney, an animator with Pixar Studios recommended artists put themselves into their work. “Tell your truth,” Abney said. “As artists we want to connect with people.”

The speakers also recommended aspiring artists be assertive in their pursuit for work and never stop learning.

Grace Liu, lead artist at Airship Syndicate, encouraged young artists to learn to work with feedback. “The first step is always the hardest,” she said and told the attendees to never lose hope in pursuing their careers.

In addition to the conference, the event featured Artists’ Alley where several artists displayed and sold their work. A figure drawing class and a portfolio review session also took place and offered attendees the opportunity to get feedback on their work from industry professionals.