

UCLA School of Law Dean Shares Her Personal Educational Experiences and Pressing Issues Affecting Hispanic Americans

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Princeton, NJ – When Rachel F. Moran was in elementary school she overheard a teacher say, “Such a bright girl. Too bad there’s no future for her.” Even then she realized that her educational prognosis was wrapped up in perceptions of her Mexican ancestry. Moran, now Dean of the UCLA School of Law, has overcome many obstacles on her road to success. She details these, and the importance of connecting with mentors, in the just published 2011 Tomás Rivera Lecture.

Moran was the keynote speaker at the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) annual conference earlier this year. Her address at the conference is reprinted for the annual Tomás Rivera Lecture. The lecture series began in 1985, and is named in honor of the late Dr. Rivera, professor, scholar, poet and former president of the University of California, Riverside. Rivera also served on the board of Educational Testing Service (ETS). This is the third year that AAHHE and ETS have collaborated together to publish the annual lecture.

From her elementary teacher, Mrs. Lola Clevenger, who saw the potential in young Rachel, to Dr. Edmund Deaton, director of a college summer program in mathematics, who helped her gain admission to Stanford University, Moran layers personal insights with the latest research and expert opinion on the pressing issues affecting educational opportunity for Hispanic Americans.

“Today, Latinos’ educational success continues to depend on early intervention, high-quality teachers, and systems of mentoring and support,” Moran says. “According to a study of a universal preschool program in Oklahoma, Latinos benefitted more than any other group from access to this early enrichment experience. For the effects to endure, however, it is key that preschool lead to a strong program of elementary and then secondary education.”

Moran details that while the Latino population is the fastest growing in the United States, it continues to lag in educational attainment. Between 1987 and 2007, the number of Latino students in public schools doubled from 11 percent to 21 percent, and the Census Bureau predicts that by 2021, one in four pupils will be Latino. In certain states the numbers are even larger. Yet many states have disinvested in the education of Latinos. This group is, by one measure, the most segregated student body in America, and there are fewer avenues for parents to participate in educational reform at the school level.

While acknowledging these and other issues, Moran told her academic colleagues, “There is much that can be done at an individual and collective level. As individuals and members of organizations, we need to publicize these issues through the outlets available to us. As leading academics, you have many ways to make your voices heard. But we also need to reach beyond the academy to raise awareness among members of the general public.”

“Each of you can be an ambassador for improving educational attainment among Latinos. You can talk to people you know,” she continued. “You can participate in organizations that address these concerns, and you can write op-eds and blogs on the topic.”

“Dean Moran delivered an eloquent presentation focusing on her educational journey and credits her teachers, mentors

and colleagues for her success,” says Loui Olivas, Professor Emeritus at the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. “This report stands as a testimony on the critical factors that must be present in order for one to accomplish their career goals. AAHHE is again privileged to partner with ETS in the production of the Tomás Rivera Lecture annual report.”

The Tomás Rivera Lecture may be downloaded at www.ets.org/research/pic.

About ETS

At ETS, we advance quality and equity in education for people worldwide by creating assessments based on rigorous research. ETS serves individuals, educational institutions and government agencies by providing customized solutions for teacher certification, English language learning, and elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, as well as conducting education research, analysis and policy studies. Founded as a nonprofit in 1947, ETS develops, administers and scores more than 50 million tests annually — including the TOEFL® and TOEIC® tests, the GRE® tests and The Praxis Series™ assessments — in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide. www.ets.org

About AAHHE

The American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, Inc. (AAHHE) is a professional association of Hispanic faculty and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities. AAHHE supports the development of Hispanic college professionals and is dedicated to increasing the pipeline of Hispanics in higher education, bringing issues pertinent to Hispanics to the attention of the larger academic community, and recognizing the achievements and accomplishments of Hispanics in support of higher education. AAHHE has created a Graduate Fellows Program and a Junior Faculty Fellows Program to provide guidance, instruction and mentors to help young Latinos and Latinas who are higher education professionals navigate the complexities of higher education and increase their preparedness for positions of leadership in higher education. In addition, AAHHE bestows six annual awards to individuals who champion Hispanic higher education issues in the areas of leadership, faculty research, teaching, support, fine or performing arts, and literary arts or publications. For more about AAHHE, visit www.aahhe.org.

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