

USC Dornsife

Marine and Environmental Biology



Los Angeles Times

National Hispanic Heritage Month Week 3

Belonging

This week we broaden our perspective to address the Latinx experience not just in academia, but as members of the Los Angeles and USC community. The resources below capture only a partial snapshot of this deep history and the complicated relationships therein. As a major university situated amidst the many growing Latinx communities in South Los Angeles, USC has played an increasingly supportive role over the past 25 years (e.g., the [McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative](#)).

However, as an historically white institution, USC has also been a source of discrimination and persecution for Latinx people. The forced sterilization of Mexican American women at USC LA County hospital in the 1960s and the ensuing [Madrigal v. Quilligan](#) trial stand out as a prime example of the latter. In ruling in favor of the hospital, Judge Curtis absolved USC doctors of any accountability by stating that it was not their responsibility to understand the different culture to which the women plaintiffs belonged. This attitude is counter to the security and support that Latinx individuals require in order to feel a sense of belonging in this shared community.

Latinx Stories of Los Angeles

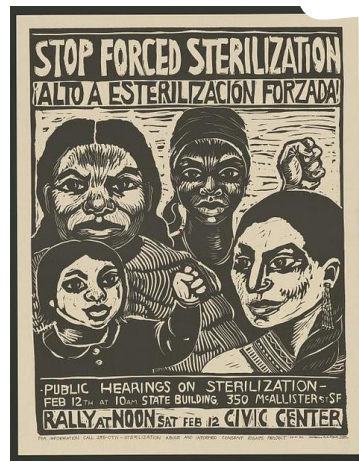
Watch a panel discussion including USC's own Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, George Sanchez, and Natalia Molina, highlighting their work telling the stories of how Latinx communities throughout L.A. are shaping its culture, history, and struggles for social justice.



Madrigal v. Quilligan

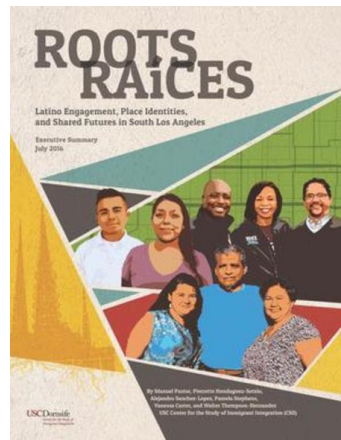
Read Alexandra Minna Stern's [historical overview](#) of forced sterilization in California.

Read an [interview](#) with historian Virginia Espino, producer of the 2015 documentary *No Más Bebés*, which tells the stories of the plaintiffs in *Madrigal v. Quilligan*.



Roots/Raíces

Read the “Latinos on Living in South LA” chapter in the *Roots/Raíces: Latino Engagement, Place Identities, and Shared Futures in South Los Angeles* 2016 report prepared by USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII).



Cuentos/Contos

Stephanie Aguillon

Postdoctoral Researcher, Stanford University

Stephanie, a Texas-born, but Arizona-raised evolutionary biologist, tells us about how her immigrant roots influenced her work and school ethic. The importance of building community is discussed, especially with allies that understand DEI issues and the type of mentor she strives to be. Lastly, Stephanie offers three important recommendations for making academic cultures more inclusive for Latinx students.



[Read more.](#)

Suzana Gonçalves Leles

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Southern California

Brazilian oceanographer, Suzana, discusses her academic trajectory across the globe, and how she ended up building mathematical models querying microbial food webs in Los Angeles, California. She addresses the supporting factors (and discouraging aspects) that allowed her to succeed and become a Ph.D., despite enduring hurtful experiences and how

she continued on an academic track. Finally, Suzana provides helpful tips on building welcoming spaces for non-native English speakers! [Read more.](#)



Ivan Moreno

Ph.D. student at Scripps Institute of Oceanography

Long Beach native and microbial ecologist, Ivan, studies microbes in extreme environments via genomics. He discusses the importance of a work-life balance as an



underrepresented student (soccer and video games!) and how this keeps him grounded. Ultimately, Ivan believes that if he strives to be the best scientist and researcher now, he will be able to provide those same opportunities for others once he's an established academic. [Read more.](#)



Latinx Scientist Profile

Francisco "Frank" Carlos Rubio is a Salvadoran American (Los Angeles born, but Miami raised) was recently selected to participate in the newly formed Artemis Team, a team of astronauts that will explore the moon. He will be 1/2 Latinos to ever walk the moon!

He is a NASA astronaut, U.S. Military Academy graduate, a UH-60 Blackhawk Pilot, flight surgeon, was second lieutenant/company commander/platoon leader in the US Army and holds degrees in

International Relations (Bachelor's) and Medicine from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Maryland (M.D.).

When being interviewed on his success, he credited his immigrant mother's ethos, "I owe a lot of who I've become to my mom and the values she instilled, which is hard work and a good attitude will get you far."

Frank Rubio's advice to Latinos pursuing STEM, "Make the most of your opportunities...but it's not endless opportunities so the ones you get, you have to make the most out of...Don't be afraid to fail, and when you do fail, pick yourself back up and do better the next time around...The last thing, probably the most important thing, none of us have gotten here by ourselves, it's always been a team effort. Absolutely, family is first, but even at work...the more you can help others to succeed, the more successful you will be yourself."

Check the full 7-minute interview (in Spanglish!), conducted by the Orlando Sentinel [here](#)



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