

**COMMITTEE ON HISPANICS REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
11/13/2009**

Submitted by

Eduardo Mendieta

The present composition of the committee is the following:

Committee Chair

P-Eduardo Mendieta (2011)
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Associate Chair

(2011)

Committee Members

E-Agnes Curry (2010)
C-Gregory Pappas (2010)
C-Greg Gilson (2011)
S-Renzo Llorente (2011)
E-Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2012)
P-Carlos A. Sanchez (2012)
E-Roderick M. Stewart (2012)
C-Bernardo Canteñs (*ex-officio*) (*Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues*)

I. Sessions at the Division Meetings:

Over the last year, I worked closely with members of the committee to organize the following two sessions. One is an author meets critics session on Jorge Gracia's recently published book on the philosophy of art using the work of Cuban artist Estévez as a guide. I invited several people, but only two committed themselves. As with everything I have organized for the APA, I aimed to get gender parity and to include non-Latino philosophers who would benefit from the dialogue.

IV-J. APA Committee Session: Author Meets Critics: Jorge Gracia, *Images of Thought: Philosophical Interpretations of Carlos Estévez's Art*

Arranged by the APA Committee on Hispanics

9:00-11:00 a.m.

Chair: Eduardo Mendieta (Stony Brook University–State University of New York)

Critics: Mariana Ortega (John Carroll University)

John Carvalho (Villanova University)

Author: Jorge Gracia (University at Buffalo–State University of New York)

The second section we organized had two aspects. First, we wanted high profile Latino scholars to respond, comment, and analyze the process nomination and confirmation hearings of Sonia Sotomayor. We all agreed that this was a key opportunity for us to contribute to a public discussion of major import. The texts of such commentaries would be published in the Newsletter, which is being judiciously and effectively edited by Bernardo J. Cantens, who has stayed on as editor though his term on the committee has expired. The second aspect of the session, was to come together at the APA and revisit, revise, rethink our contributions to the analysis of the Sotomayor confirmation in hindsight of her selection to the Supreme Court. Most of our texts were written prior to the hearings and thus, we probably have different or at least more nuanced views.

VIII-I. APA Committee Session: On Sonia Sotomayor's Nomination to the Supreme Court – a Panel Discussion

Arranged by the APA Committee on Hispanics

1:30-4:30 p.m.

Chair: Bernardo Cantens (Moravian College)

Speakers: Linda Martin Alcoff (Hunter College and Graduate Center–City University of New York)

Otávio Bueno (University of Miami)

Angelo Corlett (San Diego State University)

Jorge Gracia (University at Buffalo–State University of New York)

Eduardo Mendieta (Stony Brook University–State University of New York)

Gregory Pappas (Texas A& M University)

Meanwhile, I collaborated with Gary Mar, chair of the APA Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies to co-sponsor a special session on “migrant laborers” in the US:

III-M. APA Committee Session: Migrant Laborers Building the Master's House: Enslaved Africans, Indentured Coolies, and Latino Contract Workers

Arranged by the APA Committee on Hispanics, the APA Committee on Black Philosophers, and the APA Committee on the Status of Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

2:00-5:00 p.m.

Chair: Gary Mar (Stony Brook University–State University of New York)

Speakers: Lisa Yun (Binghamton University–State University of New York)

“Imagining Future Freedom: Enslavement under Systems of Freedom and Mobility”

Linda Martin Alcoff (Hunter College and Graduate Center–City University of New York)

“Anti-Latino Racism”

Lewis Gordon (Temple University)

“Labor, Migration, and Race: Toward a Secular Model of Citizenship”

Commentator: Gary Okihiro (Columbia University)

II. Newsletter

The newsletter, which I helped establish a decade ago, has been an important venue for Latino/Hispanic scholars to remain informed about new philosophical work by and for Latino/Hispanic, to publish review essay, commentaries, and exchanges. The essay selected for the APA Prize on “Latin American Thought” is also published there. I worked closely with Bernie Castens to expand our pool of contributors. We have also made sure that everything we published is peer reviewed anonymously. This was one of our goals when we establish the Newsletter, namely to make sure that what is published there can count as a publication on your c.v. I am glad to report that our newsletter has a substantive offering of different, high quality, texts: essays, commentaries, and review essays. I am also glad to report that the Newsletter has become a vehicle through which to recruit or socialize younger Latino/Hispanic scholars into the profession and membership in the committee. I identified a group of such young and upcoming Latino scholars and have assured their contributions to the Newsletter.

I want also to report that I have seen several references to essays published in the Newsletter in the academic literature. I myself made extensive use of the materials published in it when I was writing an essay for a book on “Existentialism in the Hispanic/Latino World” for a book co-edited by Robert Bernasconi on Existentialism in the world.

Most of the credit, however, should go to Bernardo J. Castens, who has worked very hard to keep up with all the logistics.

III. APA PRIZE FOR BEST ESSAY ON “LATIN AMERICAN THOUGHT”

This last summer we selected the winner of the APA prize on “Latin American Thought” after we had to move back the deadline, due to the lack of sufficient submissions. This last summer we had three submissions, after the deadline was changed. Fortunately, the winner was an extremely solid contribution, from a young Ph.D. candidate of Mexican background, who is finishing his degree at the University of Oregon. The essay will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter.

I do have to be sanguine and acknowledge that we –the committee and myself—have to do a better job of publicizing the prize. It is my anecdotal sense that we never get more than three submissions, and at the most, we get four. This is surely not a reflection of the kind of work that is being done out there.

I will thus contact SPEP and SAAP to see if they can announce these prizes in their respective websites. I will also be sending out a special request to key faculty at Ph.D. granting programs to encourage their students to submit their work for the prize.

IV. INCREASE THE ENDOWMENT/FUND FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Two of my main goals when I came on board were to increase visibility of the original work Latino/Hispanic philosophers are doing by acknowledging through such dispositifs as the prize, but also and concurrently, to increase contributions from our members to the fund that underwrites the prize. I have planned to do a massive fund raising, which I hope to get to in the Spring, to encourage our committee members and other Latino/Hispanic members to add to their

membership fee an extra 30 to 50 dollars, especially ear marked for the essay. I like to see if we can increase the purse of the prize to 500 dollars, and eventually to have two different prizes. One for the best essay and the other for the best book on “Latino/Hispanic Philosophy.”

Another way in which we can both support and give greater credibility to the work of the committee is by organizing a mini-conference on the future of American Philosophy in light of the contributions that “Latino/Hispanic” as well as “Asian and Asian American” philosophers have been making and will continue to make. Prof. Gary Mar and I have discussed pairing up and submitting a grant request to the APA to host such a mini-conference in Manhattan.

V. TASKS AHEAD

In short, the committee has been busy on different fronts: the division meetings, the newsletter, the prizes and creating community with other committees.

I have presently identified four immediate major goals that I will work on assiduously with the other committee members:

1. Expand and sustain the Newsletter
2. Fundraise to increase the purse of the APA Essay Prize
3. Do more and better outreach and promotion of the Prize (contact SPEP and SAAP)
4. Write a grant proposal for a mini-conference on “Latino” and “Asian American Philosophy”