

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies

2024-25 YEAR IN REVIEW





Center for Latin American,
Caribbean, and Latinx Studies

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(Rutherford County Schools)
Kendra Standberry, Edmondson Elementary
(MNPS)

Cover image: **Rosalinda Mendez** and
Salwa Daouk at *Hasta La Raíz*, a showcase
presented by Ballet Folklórico de Mexico
de Vanderbilt (BFMV); see [page 43](#). Daouk
was president of BFMV for the 2024-25 year
and was selected as one of Vanderbilt's top
ten outstanding seniors in 2025. Mendez, a
Vanderbilt alumna and president of Vanderbilt
Association for Hispanic and Latinx Alumni
(VAHLA), photographed the showcase.

Director's Corner



Colegas and Friends,

With Celso Castilho returning from research leave, I will pass back the director's *batutua* and return to being an affiliated faculty member of CLACX in 2025-2026. Coincidentally, I'll become the Interim Chair of the History Department, so I'll retain the *interino* tag for another year in a different academic unit. Regardless of where I'm sitting administratively, however, CLACX is where I feel most fully in community so I will still be active and present, doing what I can to help the Center thrive.

It has indeed been a strange, surprise-filled, and (at times) disconcerting year. Many of the things we're witnessing, like the shrinkage of graduate programs, the political targeting of scholarly institutions, a further shrinkage of the academic job market, and dramatic cuts in research funding have their roots in previous years, but they have taken on new immanence. Simultaneously recent books that I have been reading to prepare for teaching in the fall of 2025 already seem like they need to be revised to address new political realities. Uncertainty is the watchword of the moment. We just can't see what awaits Vanderbilt and CLACX yet. Nonetheless, I'm a firm believer that the best course is always to turn towards challenges and seek creative ways to embrace change. Another way to think about this is that unexpected shifts can stimulate new scholarly interpretations and offer us new topics and themes to enliven the classroom.

For all the talk of transitions, however, CLACX simply kept doing good work. It is impossible to offer a comprehensive list here, but some highlights for me were Viri Ríos and Tony Wood's discussion of Mexican elections and politics in October, The Simon Collier Graduate Student presentations of Guilherme Fasolin and Jean-Paul Rojas in January, Caribbean Week in March, and Lauren Heidbrink's Latinidades talk in April. Our outreach efforts continued to flourish with collaborations with the Frist Museum, InDigital V (Indigenous Media in the Americas), the Educator Book Club and Metro Nashville Public Schools. We have also deepened our connections with Latinx undergraduates and their organizations, supporting Baile Folklórico, the Night Market, and hosting student talking circles at the Center.

CLACX has also seen a pair of its stalwarts retire this academic year, Paula Covington and Marshall Eakin. This was particularly poignant for me because I met them when I came to Vanderbilt as a Latin American Studies graduate student in 1996. They have been valued mentors, friends, and colleagues ever since.

But I think amid the worries and looming uncertainties that unfolded this last academic year, two CLACX events that really spoke to me were our Reunion Reception in November and the Sesquicentennial event in April. In the former, Marshall spoke eloquently about the history of the Center, the important figures in its past, and his own memories at Vanderbilt ([see page 8](#)). He stressed how lucky he was to land at Vanderbilt and how he enjoyed a varied

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Caribbean Week Panel: “Biography as Liberation”

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CLACX Hosts Inaugural Caribbean Week

CLACX hosted its first Caribbean Week in March 2025 as part of the center's efforts to engage students in the field of Caribbean Studies. **Jesús Ruiz**, Assistant Professor of the Practice, organized and oversaw the diverse slate of events that included visiting speakers, students at Vanderbilt and regional HBCUs, and two exhibits.

The week began with two panel discussions that reconsidered Afro-Caribbean historical figures. "Rulers & Revolutionaries: The Epic Lives of Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, Haiti's First Emperor and King" featured **Julia Gaffield** (William & Mary) and **Marlene Daut** (Yale University) and was moderated by Ruiz. It was followed by a reception on Monday evening in the Central Library's Community Room. On Tuesday, **Chelsea Stieber** (Tulane University) and **Robin Mitchell** (The University at Buffalo) discussed "Biography as Liberation: The Lives of Louis-Joseph Janvier and Madame Suzanne Simone Baptiste Louverture in the Struggle for Haitian Sovereignty and Black Visibility." Vanderbilt historian **Brandon Byrd** moderated the panel.



Caribbean Week 2025

Monday, March 24
"Rulers & Revolutionaries: The Epic Lives of Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, Haiti's First Emperor and King" with Dr. Julia Gaffield (William & Mary) and Dr. Marlene Daut (Yale University).
 Central Library's Community Room, 4:30 – 6:00 PM.
 Reception to follow

Tuesday, March 25
"Biography as Liberation: The Lives of Louis-Joseph Janvier and Madame Suzanne Simone Baptiste Louverture in the Struggle for Haitian Sovereignty and Black Visibility" with Dr. Chelsea Stieber (Tulane University) and Dr. Robin Mitchell (The University at Buffalo), moderated by Professor Brandon Byrd (Vanderbilt History and AADS).
 Central Library's Community Room, 4:30 – 6:00 PM.

Thursday, March 27
Vanderbilt CSA Students Panel and Luncheon with students sharing their career trajectories and future plans while at VU.
 VCL Satellite at Rutledge College, 12:00 – 1:00 PM.
 Box lunches for attendees

Film Screening of "Chèche Lavi"
 "Chèche Lavi" is a lyrical portrait of two Haitian migrants, Robens and James, who find themselves stranded at the U.S. – Mexico border with no way forward and no one to rely on but each other.
 Buttrick Hall 103, 5:00 – 7:30 PM.

Friday, March 28
HBCU Caribbean Connections Panel in Collaboration with Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University
 Begonia Labs, 5:00 – 6:00 PM.

CLACX x EADJ Open House and Opening Reception for Between Rivers and Revolutions, an Exhibition by Vanessa Charlot
 Begonia Labs, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.
 Begonia Labs (2805 West End Ave).

Saturday, March 29
Between Rivers and Revolutions - Vanessa Charlot in Conversation with Grace Anzica Ali and Katie Delmez
 Frist Art Museum, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM.

CSA Carnival Celebration
 Alumni Lawn, 1:00 – 4:00 PM.

Ongoing Programs:
Between Rivers and Revolutions by Vanessa Charlot - Somewhere We Are Human
 Engine for Art, Democracy and Justice (EADJ) at Begonia Labs - March 24 to June 13, 2025.

M. Florine Démosthène and Didier William: What the Body Carries
 Frist Art Museum - January 31 to May 4, 2025.

For detailed program or updates, please scan QR code or visit: vanderbilt.edu/centerforcaribbean-week-2025



The visiting speakers, along with several Vanderbilt faculty and students, were invited to tour "What the Body Carries" at the Frist Art Museum, which featured Haitian American artists **M. Florine Démosthène** and **Didier William** (see pg. 58). The guests were treated to a private audience with William, who spoke about his works in conversation with Frist curator **Katie Delmez**. William also visited Ruiz's "Introduction to Caribbean Studies" class on Wednesday and presented his work to a public audience.

The latter half of the week focused on student-centered events, many of which were planned in collaboration with the Caribbean Student Association (CSA). On Thursday, Vanderbilt students of Caribbean descent shared their experiences and insights in a panel discussion designed to highlight current students and their future goals. The lunchtime panel led to an engaging Q&A exchange between students. That evening, faculty, students and members of the community attended a screening of *Chèche Lavi*, a powerful documentary that depicts the challenging journey faced by Haitians migrating to the United States



through a portrait of friendship. On Friday, students of Caribbean heritage from local Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College, participated in a discussion about the challenges and opportunities they have experienced. The event took place at Begonia Labs in collaboration with the Engine for Art, Democracy, and Justice. It was followed by an open house featuring a photographic exhibit by **Vanessa Charlot**, *Between Rivers and Revolutions*, that documents the spirit and resilience of the US Gulf South and Caribbean communities.

Students and other attendees had the opportunity to meet Charlot, who is an award-winning photographer, filmmaker, and Assistant Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Mississippi School of Journalism and New Media. The following day, Charlot presented her work in a conversation with **Grace Aneiza Ali** and **Katie Delmez** at the Frist Art Museum, which was attended by several CLACX faculty and community members.

Caribbean Week culminated on Saturday with the annual Carnival celebration organized by the CSA. The festival took place on Alumni Lawn and brought dance, sounds, colors, and traditions of the Caribbean to the heart of campus on a windy spring day.



Students at Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University participate in Caribbean Week.



In addition to CLACX, Caribbean Week was sponsored by Vanderbilt's Division of Government and Community Relations, the Office of the Vice Provost for Arts, Libraries and Global Engagement, and the Departments of Anthropology, Spanish & Portuguese, French & Italian, History, and African American and Diaspora Studies.

Caribbean Week events were attended by nearly 300 students, faculty, staff, and other members of the Nashville community. Thanks to **Luisa Mattos** and **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** for their work organizing and publicizing these activities.

Director's Corner cont. from inside cover

and purposeful career here working alongside other faculty and staff. At the latter gathering, we dove still more deeply into the history of the Center. In both events, the message emerged that people, policies, and initiatives evolve. Change happens and sometimes activities that were once central cease altogether. The priorities of administrators, faculty, and students shift, and the winds of funding may drive endeavors for a time before subsiding. The Center, in other words, has had many different names over the years, and its mission has been revamped and refocused at various junctures. There have been lean and quiet times, and periods of growth and greater activity. But the center endures regardless, and periodically new people come together to infuse our research, teaching, and events with renewed dynamism.

In sum, five or ten years from now we may look back on 2025 as a turning point the CLACX's history, but we've turned before. The key is to keep learning and seeking new ways to bring Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx Studies to life. Let's get to work!

Hasta pronto,
Edward Wright-Ríos, Interim Director

International Studies Consortium of Georgia and CLACX Host Virtual Visiting Diplomat Program

In November, CLACX collaborated with the International Studies Consortium of Georgia to support the Virtual Visiting Diplomat Program featuring the Deputy Consul General of Argentina. The program was attended by a total of 54 people, including 46 students and 8 faculty from 14 institutions. Participants represented several MSIs and 2-year colleges: Dallas Community College, Houston Community College, Tallahassee Community College, Georgia State University, Clark Atlanta University, Edward Waters University, and Alcorn State University. Other attendees came from Columbus State University, Georgia State University, Jacksonville State University, and the University of North Georgia, which is one of six senior military colleges in the nation. The 90-minute program introduced participants to social, cultural and economic footprint of Argentina in the US, and included a discussion of career paths. Thanks to **Raj Shasti** for organizing the event.



InDigital V: Indigenous Media Across Abya Yala

InDigital V: *Indigenous Media Across Abya Yala* took place February 19-20, 2025 at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC. The two-day conference coincided with the Smithsonian's tenth annual Mother Tongue Film Festival, which screens new Indigenous films in venues around DC. As the only conference of its kind in the United States, the biennial InDigital series began in 2015 and presents research documenting and analyzing Indigenous peoples' engagement with digital and electronic media. This year's event was organized by **Richard Pace** (MTSU) and **Amalia Córdova** (Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage) with support from **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** and **Luisa Mattos**. The conference is a collaboration between several sponsors and CLACX: the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), the University of Maryland's Center for Research and Collaboration in the Indigenous Americas, the Mexican Cultural Institute, and the University of Cincinnati.

As in previous years, *InDigital V* brought together Indigenous media makers, media trainers, and specialists in film/media studies, media/visual anthropology, and Indigenous studies. **Cacique Kakêt Bepuneiti Kayapó** welcomed the 65 attendees and provided opening remarks, followed by a keynote by **Genner Llanes-Ortiz** (Bishop's University). The conference featured discussions on indigenizing the digital world, methods for decolonizing data, and strategies for archiving digital materials. Other presentations addressed histories of erasure and tools for digital media ranging from form, medium, and aesthetics to self-representation and visual resistance. The conference closed with a book release, *Toast to Frames of Resistance: The Cinemas of Abya Yala*. Many participants stayed to attend the Mother Tongue Film Festival, which ran from February 20-23.

CLACX Consortium for Latin American Studies in the South Presents at SECOLAS and Debuts Website

The CLACX Consortium for Latin American Studies in the South (CCLASS) was founded in 2022 with Title VI funding to discuss and reimagine the nature and future of Latin American Studies across institutions in the South. The consortium was originally envisioned as a hub for Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), and four of the seven consortium partners are MSIs. These include Tuskegee University, one of the country's leading Historically Black College and Universities; the University of Texas-Arlington (UT-A) and Texas Woman's University (TWU), both of which are Hispanic Serving Institutions; and HBCU Tennessee State University (TSU). Other members of the consortium are the University of Alabama (UA) and Jacksonville State University (JSU), both public institutions located in Alabama, and Vanderbilt's CLACX.

Researching and teaching about the Latin America diaspora in the south is a cornerstone of CCLASS initiatives, as well as the recognition that

Latin American Studies programs in the south must be in dialogue with the growing Latino university-student populations across the region. The range of institutions represented by the consortium is essential to its mission, as it encourage diverse perspectives on the meaning of Latin American studies on different campuses. This is further complemented by the varied geographic locations of CCLASS partners, all of which are experiencing rapid growth of their Latinx communities in unique ways.

In April 2025, the consortium presented its work in a panel presentation at the 72nd annual meeting of the Southeastern Council for Latin American Studies in Mexico City. The panel traced the historical roots of the consortium, outlined the different contexts in which each institution is situated, described collaborative initiatives facilitated through the consortium, and encouraged discussion about the state of Latin American Studies in the southeastern United States as well as ideas for collaborations



caption



with colleagues based at other post-secondary institutions attending the conference. The panel was well-received by conference attendees and is the subject of a forthcoming article authored by CCLASS members and submitted for publication in *The Latin Americanist*.

While in Mexico City, the consortium also held its annual meeting to discuss ongoing and future initiatives. One of the central initiatives of the consortium is joint Portuguese instruction for students at Tuskegee and JSU. With funding and support from CLACX, Tuskegee began offering introductory Portuguese for its students in 2019 with the support of Title VI funds held by Vanderbilt's CLACX. In Fall 2023, the course was expanded to include students at JSU, complementing JSU's new minor in Latin American Studies. **Jared Hendrickson**, based at UA, was hired to teach the simultaneous course. Since 2019 enrollments and course offerings have expanded and reached a record in Fall 2024, with 18 students in PORT 101 and two in PORT 201. Ten students enrolled in PORT 102 to continue their language studies in Spring 2025. This upward trend continues with 24 Tuskegee students enrolled in PORT 101 and six Tuskegee students taking PORT 201 for the Fall 2025 semester.

In Spring 2025, CCLASS created a website featuring student and faculty stories about what

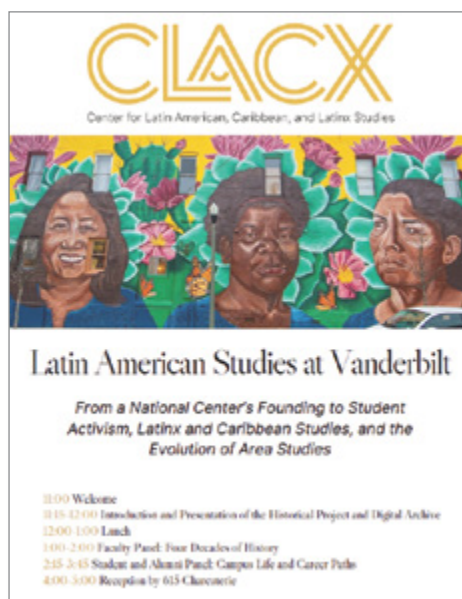


it means to study Latin America while living in the Southeastern US. The project was led by **Lance Ingwersen** (JSU), with support from Vanderbilt's program coordinator **Luisa Mattos**, and continues to evolve: **CCLASS | Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies | Vanderbilt University**

Individual members of CCLASS include **Rhonda Collier**, Director of the Tuskegee University Global Office and Chair of English and Modern Language; **Jared Hendrickson**, Director of the Portuguese Program and Instructor of Portuguese at UA; **Lance Ingwersen**, Associate Professor of History at Associate Professor of History at JSU; **Xavier Medina Vidal**, Director of the UT-Arlington Center for Mexican American Studies and Associate Professor of Political Science; **Sarah Moody**, Director of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies and Associate Professor in the department of Modern Languages and Classics at UA; **Angela Rodriguez Mooney**, Spanish Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Spanish at TWU; **Vladimir Betancur**, Coordinator of the Intensive English Center at TSU; **Celso Castilho**, Director of CLACX and Associate Professor of History at Vanderbilt; and **Avery Dickins de Girón**, Executive Director of CLACX and Senior Lecturer in Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt.

CLACX Recognizes Vanderbilt's Sesquicentennial with a Historical Look at the Center

In Spring 2023, CLACX was awarded a Sesquicentennial Grant to document the history of the center and create a digital photographic archive through its project, “Somos VU: Bringing Together Student Organizations, Alumni, and the Institutional History of CLACX.” Funds supported the creation of a 100-page document summarizing the history of the center from 1947 to the present. Previous efforts to document the history of the center existed but had not been synthesized into a thorough and cohesive narrative, or made publicly available. **Estelle Shaya**, A&S Founders Medalist in 2023, compiled the historical narrative with guidance from **Marshall Eakin**, **Paula Covington**, and **Avery Dickins de Girón**. The impressive document traces the founding of the Institute for Brazilian Studies at Vanderbilt in 1947 and its evolution over the years, the creation of the Latino and Latina Studies program in 2013, and the combination of these programs as CLACX in 2021. Sources of data for the institutional narrative include interviews with faculty, documents located in Special Collections, newsletters and records housed in the center such as NRC and FLAS reports, and other previously written histories partially tracing the Center’s history. The narrative is published on the CLACX website: [History | Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies | Vanderbilt University](#)



The grant also funded the curation of a photographic archive which was carried out by **Margaret Kelly** (Spanish and Portuguese) with guidance from **Paula Covington**. Photos from Special Collections, the *CLACX Year in Review*, and social media were selected to illustrate the history of the center and to align with the institutional history. The photos are accessible on the [CLACX website](#) and in our new offices in Garland Hall, making the visual history accessible to students and faculty on campus, as well colleagues off campus

and the general public.

The historical document and digital archive were presented to faculty, alumni and students in an event on April 10: “Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt: From a National Center’s Founding to Student Activism, Latinx and Caribbean Studies, and the Evolution of Area Studies.” The day-long event featured 3 panels in which alumni, faculty, and current students discussed the center’s history.

The first panel, “Introduction and Presentation of the Historical Project and Digital Archive” provided an overview of the project. Avery Dickins de Girón introduced the grant project, Paula Covington described the sources used for the history, Estelle Shaya gave a high-level overview of the center’s institutional history based on the document she produced, and Margaret Kelly walked the audience through several photos capturing historical moments.



That panel was followed by a lunch for those attending, which included faculty, administrators, alumni, and students from across campus.

The following panel was led by faculty who spoke about the center's "Four Decades of History." This panel was moderated by Edward Wright-Ríos, CLACX Interim Director for 2025-25. It featured **Jane Landers**, **Marshall Eakin**, **Avery Dickins de Girón**, **Gretchen Selcke**, and **Celso Castilho**, each of whom presented unique perspectives on the center. Eakin discussed the center's founding and contextualized its shifts overtime in terms of broader historical trends, and shared his perspective on the center's impact on campus in the 1980s and 1990s. This was followed by Landers' summary of the center's work in the early 2000s and the importance of the FIPSE-CAPES program. Dickins de Girón spoke about the impact of Title VI funding on the center and the establishment of public engagement programs. Selcke discussed the founding of the LATS Program in 2013 and the establishment of Raices y Sueños celebration for Latinx students. The panel closed with Castilho's discussion of the merger of CLAS and LATS in 2021, as well as his vision for the center in the context of increasing Latinx enrollment at Vanderbilt.

The last panel, "Campus Life and Career Paths," featured several alumni and a current student. Each shared the impact of the center on their fields of study and career paths, and discussed how campus

life had changed over time. Panelists included **Gabriella Newell**, **Shelza Rivas**, **Estelle Shaya**, **Allen Kilgore**, **Edilza Sotero**, and **Adrian Quintana**, who graduated in May 2025. It was moderated by **Rosalinda Mendez**, the president of the Vanderbilt Association of Hispanic and Latinx Alumni. Both the faculty panel and the student-alumni panel were recorded and are available on the **CLACX website**.

The Sesquicentennial Grant program was created by the Office of the Chancellor to support activities and projects that engage with the university's history, look ahead to its future, and explore what makes Vanderbilt distinctive and unique. CLACX's proposal was one of 15 of 65 proposals selected for funding, and received \$29,850 for the project. The proposal was authored by **Avery Dickins de Girón**, with support from **Celso Castilho** and **Marshall Eakin**.





Over 100 Students Visit the Latin American Garden in Fall 2024

The Latin American Garden serves as a unique educational resource. In Fall 2024, over 100 students at Vanderbilt and local high schools visited the garden. **Ari Caramanica** (Anthropology) led students in her “Introduction to Archaeology” course in a workshop on archaeobotanical sampling and flotation methods. Students collected soil samples from the garden, which they passed through fine mesh, mixed with water, and then passed through a sieve. After drying the resulting floating material, they examined it using a stereoscope to identify plant remains.

In September, **Avery Dickins de Girón** gave ninth grade students participating in Vanderbilt’s School for Science and Math (SSMV) a tour focused on biodiversity, medicinal plants, and global staple crops. The SSMV program gives students the opportunity to participate in a four-year interdisciplinary research experience at Vanderbilt and enrolls students from high schools across MNPS. **Angela Eeds**, Director of SSMV, along with SSMV Instructors **Deweese Menton** and **Rebekah Stanton**, have been partnering with Dickins de Girón on projects in the Latin American Garden for

several years now and describe the garden visit as a “highly engaging and meaningful” part of the SSMV curriculum. In October, students enrolled in IB Environmental Science and IB Biology courses at Hunters Lane High School toured the garden. They were led by their teachers, Ms. Hoyal and Ms. Homoelle, and Avery Dickins de Girón provided two tours for the large group.

The garden was the focus of a new course in Fall 2024, “Cultivating Latin America: Plants and Culture through Vanderbilt’s Latin American Garden” (LACX 2016W) taught by Dickins de Girón. Students in the course examine cultures and histories of the Americas through a focus on plants, including the globalization of plants, the importance of medicinal plants in the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, and South America, and the role of major agricultural crops in political and economic relationships. Three class sessions were held in the garden so that the students could get to know some of the plants highlighted in class, such as cassava, amaranth, chiles, cacti, banana, and lesser-known plants like *Piper auritum*.



In August 2025, CLACX moved into the newly remodeled Garland Hall after relocating to the Bryan Building for two years. Come visit us in our suite in Garland 140!



CLACX Seminar Series

CLACX supports three working groups that host speakers and discussions throughout the academic year: Latinidades, Brazilian Studies Group, and GuateLab.

Latinidades

"Latinidades: Making and Unmaking Latinx/Latinidad" is an interdisciplinary seminar series that brings together scholars on and off campus to examine an extensive range of topics across Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx studies. The series was created and led by **Julie Gamble** (Gender and Sexuality Studies), **Rebeca Gamez** (Anthropology), and **Hilario Lomeli** (CLACX) in Spring 2024. Latinidades welcomed faculty and students back to campus with a Welcome Social in September. In November, the series featured a lunch talk by **Sergio Lemus** (Texas A&M), "The Pain Never Leaves Me": Working Hard, Injury, and Structural Violence among Mexican Yarderos in Transborder Chicago," which was attended by 40 students and faculty. In February, Latinidades presented a talk by **Lara Lookabaugh**, Vanderbilt's Librarian and Curator for Latin American, Iberian, and Latinx Studies, "So that everything could be different: Mam women's stories and political desire in Toj Coman, Guatemala." In March, members of the seminar group met for a collective reading to explore **Lauren Heidbrink's** work on migrant youth and transnational migration in anticipation of her visit in early April. In her campus visit, Heidbrink (California State University, Long Beach) presented her research in a talk, "From Detention to Abolition: The Care of Unaccompanied Children in the United States," which



was attended by 35. Heidbrink also met with several faculty and students during her visit.

Brazil Week 2024

Led by **Benjamin Legg** (Spanish and Portuguese), the Brazilian Studies Group hosted another exciting program for Brazil Week 2024, with over 100 students, faculty, and staff participating in activities. Brazil Week took place from September 9-13 and began with a screening of *Central do Brasil* (Walter Salles, 1998) in the Vanderbilt Center for Languages with a Q&A moderated by Legg. The following day, **Earl Fitz** (Spanish and Portuguese) and **Vanessa K. Valdés** discussed their co-edited forthcoming volume, *Machado de Assis, Race and the Americas* (2024). Wednesday featured recipients of Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships who spoke about their experiences in the Summer in Brazil program in 2024. On Thursday, our colleagues in LAPOP Lab at the Center for Global Democracy **Mariana Rodríguez** and **Rob Vidigal** presented their analysis of "Brazilian Democracy Today" to a crowded room. Brazil Week

closed with the lively karaoke party orchestrated by Legg. Over 30 students, faculty, and staff sang their favorite songs in Portuguese and were treated to Brazilian foods. Brazil Week was sponsored by CLACX in partnership with the Vanderbilt Center for Languages and LAPOP Lab.



GuateLab

GuateLab (IximLab) is a student-led initiative to discuss social issues with implications in Guatemala (Iximulew), such as access to education, inequality, racism, violence, hunger, health issues, and migration. GuateLab welcomes diverse points of view, and is open to Guatemalan students across the university, as well as any student interested in Guatemala. The group also hosts GuateSeminar, which allows students to engage in discussion with invited speakers. In October, GuateLab hosted a lunch talk with **Sandy Smith-Nonini**, a former journalist and adjunct assistant professor of anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In a lecture titled "Fossil Colonialism: The Energy/Debt Nexus behind Puerto Rico's Long Blackout," Smith-Nonini spoke about her research on the politics of health, environment, and energy. In November, GuateSeminar featured a presentation by historian **Laura Matthew** (Marquette University), "Thinking Through 500 Years: A Reconsideration of the "Indigenous Conquistadors.



Latin American and Caribbean Images Photo Competition

Each December, CLACX invites Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and visiting scholars to submit their favorite original photo taken from their travels for our annual Latin American and Caribbean Images Photo Competition. This year, we received **24 photos** representing **10 countries**: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Trinidad and Tobago. CLACX announced the winners of the competition on Thursday, January 23 with a ceremony and reception in our temporary home in the Bryan Building.

First place was awarded to **Céline Erauw** (Postdoctoral Fellow, Belgian American Educational Foundation in the Department of Anthropology) for “The elusive vicuñas” (above). **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** (Administrative Specialist at CLACX) was given second place for “Andando por La Antigua” and **Lesley Gill** (Emeritus Professor of Anthropology)

received third place for “On Point in a Cuban Bar.” The People’s Choice Award based on the number of “likes” received on social media went to “Kuélap: Where the Forest Guards Ancestral Memories” by **Emma Arabella Perea Ríos** (doctoral student in Anthropology), which received over 146 likes. The judges gave a special mention to “Grazing on the Hill of Sleeping Spirits” by **Connor Sutton** (doctoral student in Anthropology).

Thank you to this year’s judges, **Danielle Myers**, Program Manager at the Engine for Art Democracy & Justice (EADJ), and **Simon Tatum**, Program Coordinator for EADJ. Myers and Tatum selected the winning photographs and identified the top ten images, which were displayed in the lobby of the Bryan Building for a month. For the past eleven years, **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** has led and organized the competition and curated the exhibit.



Above: Lesley Gill, "On Point in a Cuban Bar"

Right: Ema Arabella Perea Ríos, "Kuélap: Where the Forest Guards Ancestral Memories"



Below: Alma Paz-Sanmiguel, "Andando por La Antigua"



Campus Events



CLACX and student organization leaders welcomed first-year students to Vanderbilt in our virtual Bienvenida on August 12. CLACX Director **Celso Castilho** greeted students, introduced the CLACX staff, and turned it over to the student leaders who facilitated breakout sessions to share their experiences as Latinx students at Vanderbilt and respond to questions from the incoming students. On August 23, CLACX hosted our annual Bienvenida, welcoming back over 60 students and faculty who stopped by our suite in the Bryan Building for empanadas.

On August 30, Majestad Negra ("Black Majesty") performed "Bomba" Afro-Puerto Rican music. The free performance drew a crowd of 100 and

highlighted the rich cultural heritage of Puerto Rico. The event was organized by the Program in Culture, Advocacy, and Leadership (CAL) with support from CLACX. The collaborations with CAL continued the following month with two events focused on decolonizing coffee through entrepreneurship. September 23 brought distinguished international baristas together for a "Barista Exchange Brew Up." Students, faculty, and staff had the opportunity to sample coffees and learn how entrepreneurship can be used as a tool for change. The following day, a panel discussion of coffee took place. "Decolonizing Cxffee: A Forum" featured **Tiffany Jonhson** (Associate Professor of Business, Georgia Tech), **Juan José López** (doctoral student in Anthropology at Vanderbilt), **Bartholomew Jones** and **Renata Henderson** (Founders of Cxffeeblack in Memphis), and **Ted Fischer** (Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Anthropology). The events were hosted by CAL and sponsored by Provost's Arts Discovery, and Innovation Fund, VU Libraries, Office of Government and Community Relations, Curb Center, A&S Dean's Office, Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Cities Grand Challenge Initiative, CLACX, Sociology, Anthropology, and Earth and Environmental Sciences.

The launch of the new **Center for Global Democracy** was celebrated in early September and featured a talk by **Kevin Casas-Zamora**, a former vice president of Costa Rica, "The Influence of Money on Global Democracy: Risks and Remedies." The Center for Global Democracy is a premier social science institute dedicated to pioneering research and innovation in democratic politics around the world. Built on the foundation of LAPOP Lab, the new center continues

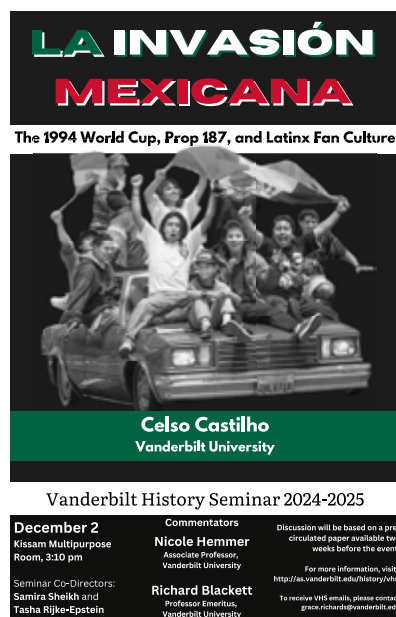
On October 25, CLACX hosted a panel featuring **Viri Ríos**, who is a leading voice on Mexican politics with experience as a writer, teacher, public policy adviser, and political analyst and **Tony Wood** (Assistant Professor of Modern Latin American History at the University of Colorado, Boulder and a former journalist). Their discussion, "Elections, Consequences, and Milestones: Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Claudia Sheinbaum, and the New Realities of Mexican Politics" examined Sheinbaum's election as ushering in a new period of Mexican history and politics. The speakers emphasized this shift as a democratic transition that followed the weakening of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in the early 2000s and the new consensus built under Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government. CLACX Interim Director **Edward Wright-Ríos** moderated the panel and engaged the audience of 30 in a Q&A.

LAPOP Lab, hosted a summer school on international survey methods at Vanderbilt, and plans to carry out a global survey project within the next year. **Noam Lupu**, professor of political science, directs the new center. See [pages 68–69](#) for more.

Beningo Trigo (Spanish and Portuguese) presented “Post-Nationalist Mystics: On Lolita Lebron’s Prison Writings” at the Vanderbilt Center for Languages on September 27. In early October, he led a McGill Hour discussion on his unpublished novel, “Supernova: The Story of a Puerto Rican Divorce.” McGill Hours are recurring programs of the McGill Project in which Vanderbilt professors or Nashville community activists visit McGill Hall to lead conversations on topics outside of classroom curricula.

Author **Daisy Hernández** was invited to Vanderbilt to speak about her book, *Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism*, on October 1. In anticipation of her visit, a book group read *Colonize This!* and joined Hernández for lunch while she was on campus. Her visit was sponsored by A&S Core, Gender and Sexuality Studies, African American and Diaspora Studies, CLACX and the English Department.

Jesús Ruiz (CLACX) presented a talk in partnership with the Caribbean Students Association, “Revolutionary Currents and Caribbean Studies: Unveiling the Cradle of Modernity and Its Global Legacy” in the Black Cultural Center on October 1. Ruiz spoke about the future of Caribbean Studies at Vanderbilt, including the importance of the Caribbean in the modern world and themes of colonialism, diaspora, revolution, liberation, currents of contemporary political economy, and the study of Haitian Kreyòl.



Celso Castillo presented “*La invasión mexicana: The 1994 World Cup, Prop 187, and Latinx Soccer Culture*” for the Vanderbilt History Seminar on December 2. The conversation was moderated by **Nicole Hemmer** and **Richard Blackett**. In January, the Sports & Society Reading Group presented a talk by Blackett (History) who spoke about Trinidad’s World Cup qualifiers after it attained independence from Britain in 1962, leading to its first near miss in Haiti in 1973.

Marieke Sattler (Anthropology) and **Roberto Tahay** recognized Indigenous Peoples Day on October 14 with a presentation on the importance of K’iche’ Mayan and opportunities to study the language at Vanderbilt.

Later in October, the Peabody Library, the Latin American and Caribbean Student Association, and the Student Center for Social Justice & Identity hosted an event in the Multicultural Community Space to examine the intersection of the US Census and the Latinx community. A Census Bureau Data Dissemination Specialist delivered a presentation on effectively utilizing Census data, providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and community leaders. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion that analyzed the complex relationship between Latinx identity and Census categorization, drawing inspiration from UCLA’s Latino Policy and Politics Institute’s research on “Latino is Not a Race.”

In November, the Vanderbilt History Seminar presented Vanderbilt alumnus **David Wheat** (Michigan State University) for a talk cosponsored with the Legal History Seminar. Later that month, the Legal History Colloquium presented Yanna Yannakakis (Emory University) who delivered a lecture on Colonial Mexico.

On November 12, a panel of scholars led students on a tasting tour of hot beverages in the Center for Languages: “Stimulating Conversations: The Social Lives of Hot Drinks Around the World.” **Jake Sauer** (Anthropology) spoke about the importance of mate in South America, **Ted Fischer** (Anthropology) analyzed nuances of coffee production, **Anna (Zhaohan) Song** (undergraduate in Anthropology) discussed the cultural importance of tea, and **Juan José**

Lopez (doctoral student in Anthropology) spoke about the history of cocoa in Mesoamerica.



Presentations in late January included both Vanderbilt faculty and invited speakers. **Brianna Castro** (Sociology) gave a talk, "The Eroding American Dream: Undocumented

Immigrants' Competing Risks and Aspirations in the Changing Climate." **Ever Osorio Ruiz** (Amherst College) presented "Making Multitudes out of Speech: Feminist Strategies for Social Change in Latinx America" and **Robert Kelz** (University of Memphis) discussed "A Scripted Silence: 'The Diary of Anne Frank' in post-Peron Polyglot Buenos Aires."

Spanish and Portuguese along with CLACX and the *Afro-Hispanic Review* invited award-winning Afro-Cuban documentalist **Gloria Rolando** to campus. Rolando spoke about her documentary *Hermanas de Corazón* on February 4. That same week, Spanish and Portuguese hosted **Jorge Pérez** (University of Texas, Austin) for a talk, "Celebrity Museums: Shrines, Cultural Heritage, and Tourism."

The Science and Technology Studies Seminar Flash Talks presented discussions led by **Sophia Chen** (History), **Matt Plishka** (CLACX), **Ken MacLeish** (MHS), and **Ruth Rogaski** (History) in early February.

On February 12, the Alexander Hamilton Society presented a talk by **Daniel Batlle** (Hudson Institute), titled "America's Backyard: The Western Hemisphere Revisited." Attendees were treated to Colombian empanadas.

Later in February, the Curb Center featured an exhibit curated by doctoral student **Miguel Cuj** (Anthropology), "K'iche' Women, Food, and Community." The exhibit provided a portrait of Indigenous women's lives and the construction of community in *Chi u wi meq'in ja* (Totonicapán), *Iximulew* (Guatemala) through 25 photographs depicting the preparation of food and cultural practices.

On February 26, **Celso Castilho** (History) shared his research on "Latino Fan Culture in the Context of the 1994 World Cup."

The Black Atlantic Speaker Series presented **Sara E. Johnson**, Professor of Literature of the Americas and Co-Director of the Black Studies Project at the University of California San Diego) on February 27. Johnson's lecture, "Encyclopédie Noire: the Making of the Moreau De Saint-Méry's Intellectual World" was attended by 70 and followed by a reception. Her visit was co-sponsored by the Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries, History, the Slave Societies Digital Archive, the Robert Penn Warren Center, CLACX, the

Program in Culture, Leadership, and Advocacy, and African American and Diaspora Studies.

In early March, the Borders of Citizenship Initiative hosted **Fernando Riosmena**, Professor of Sociology and Demography and Director of the Institute for Health Disparities Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His lecture, "Cumulative disadvantage and the aging of Mexican immigrants in the United States" explored the association between lifecourse disadvantage and disability trajectories in mobility, self-care and independent living among older Mexican immigrants in the United States using data from the 1998–2020 Health and Retirement Study.

On March 21, **Faith Smith** (Brandeis University) presented "DreadKin in our Contemporary Moment" in the Central Library's Community Room.

<p>GUEST SPEAKER: GLORIA ROLANDO AWARD WINNING AFRO-CUBAN DOCUMENTALIST</p>	
<p>SPEAKING ON HERMANAS DE CORAZÓN, WINNER OF THE 2023 CARACOL AWARD</p> <p>The documentary traces the origins of the Oblate Sisters of Providence and, in another part, narrates the work of this order in the largest archdiocese of the Antilles. The arrival of the Order and its schools in several provinces took place at the beginning of the 20th century. Although its founder, Mother Mary Lange, had already died, the work continued with the same essence: the education of black girls and adolescents. For Gloria, it was important to preserve this design because the historical information is rich and fascinating. These nuns were very famous, loved and respected, they promoted general education based on the models of the Catholic Church, and they helped their students prepare for domestic and professional life.</p>	
<p>FEB. 4TH @ 4:10PM</p>	<p>BUTTRICK 102</p>
<p>CLACX</p>	<p>VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY College of Arts and Sciences Department of Spanish and Portuguese</p>

Three researchers selected to visit Vanderbilt's Colombian Collections in 2025

Michael Palencia-Roth, Trowbridge Scholar Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois, and **Mario Alberto Dulcey**, student at Université Paris Est Créteil, conducted research in the Zapata Olivella Collections. **Javier Ardila**, doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania, carried out his research on the Helguera Colombiana collection. The visiting scholars were supported with funding from CLACX's National Resource Center grant and from the University Library. **Paula Covington**, the Library's Latin American Specialist, oversaw the fellowships and hosted the scholars during their visits. She says "it was gratifying to see how well these collections serve their research projects," which was also indicated by the scholars' statements:

"My work was enormously enriched by Vanderbilt's magnificent archive, its meticulous and accessible organization, its courteous and efficient staff. The University has a treasure of inestimable value in the Manuel Zapata Olivella and Delia Zapata Olivella Archive, as well as in the León Helguera Archive. Vanderbilt has become one of the premier research destinations

for scholars on Colombia, whether it be in the 19th century, Afro-Colombian studies, ethnic studies and anthropology, folklore studies, or the history of Latin American music and dance. Vanderbilt will, I am sure, support this treasure."

- Michael Palencia-Roth

"...[A] noteworthy discovery was the presence of handwritten corrections made by Zapata Olivella to the 1983 original edition, which were never incorporated into subsequent printings. [This] provides concrete material for future critical editions, including possible translations into other languages such as French. The richness of this collection invites future visits to further explore Zapata Olivella's creative process, intellectual networks, and the transnational significance of his literary legacy. I sincerely thank the Special Collections Library and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies for the invaluable opportunity to work in this space with all the necessary resources and comforts to carry out this research."

- Mario Alberto Dulcey

The uniqueness of some of the documents I saw could likely establish Vanderbilt as one of the richest repositories of Colombian history outside the country. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the CLACX and the Vanderbilt Libraries for providing me with access to their remarkable repository. The wealth of information I was able to gather is only the tip of the iceberg in this collection. It will serve my doctoral research and, hopefully, will help many other scholars in Latin American history.

- Javier Ardila

Introducing Lara Lookabaugh

My name is Lara Lookabaugh, and I started my position as the Librarian and Curator for Latin American, Iberian, and Latinx Studies in January 2025. I am thrilled to be working with the preeminent collections curated by Paula Covington over the last 50 years and to be collaborating with and supporting Vanderbilt students and faculty working in Latin American, Iberian, and Latinx Studies.

I came to Vanderbilt in August 2023 as a Collaborative Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow in Gender and Sexuality Studies. I earned my PhD in Geography and a graduate certificate in Participatory Research from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2023. My dissertation was an **arts-based collaboration** with a Mam Maya women's collective in Guatemala's Western Highlands that explored how Maya women use art, organizing, and storytelling to envision and enact different futures for their communities. I also earned an MA in Latin American Studies from the University of Florida in 2015 and a MS in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University in 2011. I am a founding member of the **Desirable Futures Editorial Collective**, a group that brings together scholars across fields to interrogate colonial constructions of time and bring new insight into how we envision and enact the future.

I've worked in libraries and archives for over 15 years, and I am looking forward to continuing that work with the Vanderbilt community. I am excited about teaching with archives and special collections and collaborating with faculty to **engage students in analysis and interpretation** of the



incredible collections held here at Vanderbilt. I plan to continue the tradition of curation that Paula Covington fostered while also integrating my own interests into both collections and instruction. Specifically, I plan to build out archival collections focused on the Latinx South and Latinx history of Nashville, expand our holdings of counterculture zines and comics from Latin America, and develop collections and projects to support new directions in CLACX like the Caribbean Studies minor.

This year we acquired 2 new Latin American and Caribbean Studies-focused databases: **Colonial Caribbean Module 2: Colonial Government and Abolition, 1833–1849** makes available materials from 27 Colonial Office file classes from the National Archives, UK from 1833–1849. This database is great for undergrads—very easy to use and includes teaching and research tools like timelines, thematic guides, and datasets. **Latin American History & Culture** is an indexed, full-text database providing centralized access to over 250 collections of Latin American and Latinx primary-source materials. This database compiles and preserves other open access books, manuscripts, newspapers, ephemera, oral histories, magazines, and films into one place.

We acquired several interesting items at the Feria Internacional del Libro Bogotá. For example, **De Cero a Cuatro Mil Ochocientos: Colombia, Fotografía, Alimento** by Alejandro Osses Saenz uses photography to illustrate differences in Colombia foodways as the altitude climbs from the Caribbean coast to the Andes mountains. **El pez muere por la boca** by photographer Santiago Escobar

Jaramillo reflects on the resistance and resilience of coastal communities in Colombia in the context of narcotrafficking. We also recently subscribed to the magazine, *Nuevo South*, which frames Southern history and identity through a Latinx lens using visual storytelling.

If you have any ideas or questions about our collections, library instruction, or if you would like a research consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me at lara.lookabaugh@Vanderbilt.edu. I am looking forward to working with you all.

Contributed by Lara Lookabaugh, Librarian & Curator for Latin American, Iberian, & Latinx Studies



Paula Covington was honored with a retirement celebration in November. The reception was attended by the numerous faculty and staff who worked with Covington during her 50-year career at Vanderbilt. University Librarian **Jon Shaw** thanked Covington for her years of service while attendees enjoyed champagne and a slide show detailing highlights of Covington's work over the years. Covington took the podium to express her gratitude for the inspiring students and faculty with whom she has had the opportunity to work, and for university's support for the strong collections she has built at Vanderbilt, particularly those focused on Colombia. Covington retired from her position in September 2024 but has continued on in a part time position as Latin American Specialist in Special Collections and University Archives, allowing her to focus on the Manuel Zapata Olivella, Delia Zapata Olivella, and J. Leon Helguera collections.





Verrier and Estigarribia Host Residency with Paraguayan Musicians in November with Support from CLACX

In Summer 2024, CLACX supported **Tom Verrier**, Senior Band Conductor and Director of Wind Ensembles, and **Ernesto Estigarribia**, Assistant Professor of Conducting, to travel to Asunción to team teach a course in ensemble musicianship for Paraguayan conductors and musicians. During the residency, they performed with the national orchestra and conservatory and selected four participants in the course to travel to Vanderbilt for a residency at the Blair School of Music in Fall 2024.

Verrier and Estigarribia hosted **Katya Fabiola Noguera Esquivel, Iñigo Paolo Herrera Rojas, Angel Sebastian Zárate Montiel, and María Alejandra Velázquez Rodríguez** in November for a week. The visiting musicians were integrated into MUSE 1010 (Orchestra and Wind Symphony) which gave Blair students the opportunity to learn traditional Paraguayan music. Verrier noted that the interactions with guest conductor Alejandra Velazquez were especially meaningful given “that the opportunity to work with such an inspiring woman conductor of color sent an empowering message that cannot be

underestimated in a profession that is all-too-often dominated by men.”

The impact of the residency extended beyond Blair students through several public events during the week. Estigarribia conducted a concert performance of the Vanderbilt University Orchestra on November 19 and hosted a panel presentation with the visiting musicians, “Musical Life in Paraguay.” The residency culminated with the Vanderbilt Wind Symphony concert on November 21, led by Tom Verrier with Alejandra Velázquez as guest conductor. In addition to performing with Blair students, the musicians visited Antioch High School. Verrier says “the enthusiasm of the Antioch students in was inspirational, and our guests not only played music for the students, but they also played alongside them.” Verrier described the residency across campus and the Nashville community as “deep and meaningful.” He launched a similar project in 2025 in Colombia and Argentina, which was also supported with funding from CLACX ([see page 38](#)).



Blair Students Travel to Colombia for a Musical Immersion Experience

In Summer 2025, Tom Verrier took two Blair students to Colombia as part of what he calls a “cultural-immersion-through-music experience.” William Perez and Pierce Ruch traveled with Verrier to San Roque, Antioquia to participate in the 5th annual *Banda Sinfónica Integrada de Las Américas*. The Blair students rehearsed with Colombian musicians throughout the week. The program culminated with two concerts that included traditional musical styles from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Venezuela, Peru, the United States, and Colombia. Verrier explained that Ruch, as a percussionist, “was given the very



unique experience of learning new Latin American styles and rhythms while also learning to play them on traditional percussion instruments.” Verrier also observed that although neither of the students were fluent in Spanish, “the act of making music together becomes a catalysis for a deeper understanding of what we all have in common as well a greater appreciation of our differences.” Read more in the [VU News article](#).

Latin American Musical Gems for Flute, Cello, and Piano Features Guest Musicians in Concert with Blair Faculty

CLACX collaborated with Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music to bring two internationally renowned musicians, cellist **Jesús Castro-Balbi** and pianist **Carmen Rodríguez-Peralta**, to campus for a two-day residency in March 2025. The highlight of their visit was a public concert, "Latin American Musical Gems for Flute, Cello, and Piano" that featured the two guest musicians performing works by Latin American composers alongside Blair flutist **Molly Barth**. The pillars of the program were two pieces composed by **Samuel Zyman**, Blair Professor of Music Theory and Analysis: *Suite de la Mancha* and *Sonata for Flute and Piano No. 1*. The concert provided a unique opportunity for the audience to witness a musical performance that had been informed by discussions with a living composer, who also attended it. The performers received a "warm and enthusiastic" reception from the audience, which included the cultural attaché to the Consulate General of Mexico in Atlanta, **Marco Enríquez**. Following the concert, Zyman joined the musicians



on stage for an enthusiastic round of applause. The concert was preceded by a panel discussion moderated by **Tom Verrier**, who put Barth, Castro-Balbi, and Rodríguez-Peralta into conversation with Zyman.

While in Nashville, the guest musicians coached and rehearsed with Blair students. Their engagement included performing for Michael Slayton's composition students, attending a piano duet with professors Heather Conner and Amy Dorfman, and providing feedback on performances by Felix Wang's students, which Castro-Balbi described as "polished and imaginative interpretations of Kabalevsky, Prokofiev, and Saint-Saëns." During a break from their busy schedule, the musicians joined Dickens de Girón, Luisa Mattos, Alma Paz-Sanmiguel, and Edward Wright-Ríos for lunch in CLACX. It was especially meaningful for Rodríguez-Peralta as her daughter, Andrea (Delgado) Galvez, obtained her MA in Latin American from Vanderbilt in 2018.

Jesús Castro-Balbi is Professor of Music at Kennesaw State University and has performed

extensively across the US, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Of Peruvian heritage and raised in France, Dr. Castro-Balbi graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur at Lyon, Indiana University Bloomington, the Yale School of Music, and The Juilliard School. Carmen Rodríguez-Peralta has appeared as soloist and chamber musician throughout the US, Peru, and Mexico. She is Chair of the Music Department at Middlesex Community College and Director of “A World of Music Concert Series,” and holds a Master of Music from The Catholic University of America, and a Post-Graduate Diploma from The Juilliard School.

The visit was coordinated over several months through conversations with Jesus Castro-Balbi,

Samuel Zyman, Michael Slayton, Carmen Rodríguez-Peralta, Avery Dickins de Girón, and Tom Verrier. Castro-Balbi and Rodríguez-Peralta expressed their gratitude to CLACX for the hospitality they received and thanked Blair staff, including **Jim Alderdice, Joseph Passarelli, and Kailey Ragland.**

The Spring semester included several presentations of Latin American music for Blair students, faculty, and the public. Guest flutist **Maria Fernanda Castillo** presented an all-Latin American program in Turner Hall in early March. Later that month, graduating student **Ana Cristina Soto** performed a musical repertoire from Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Perú featuring songs in Spanish, Portuguese, and Quechua for her Senior Recital Concert in Blair’s Steve and Judy Turner Recital Hall.

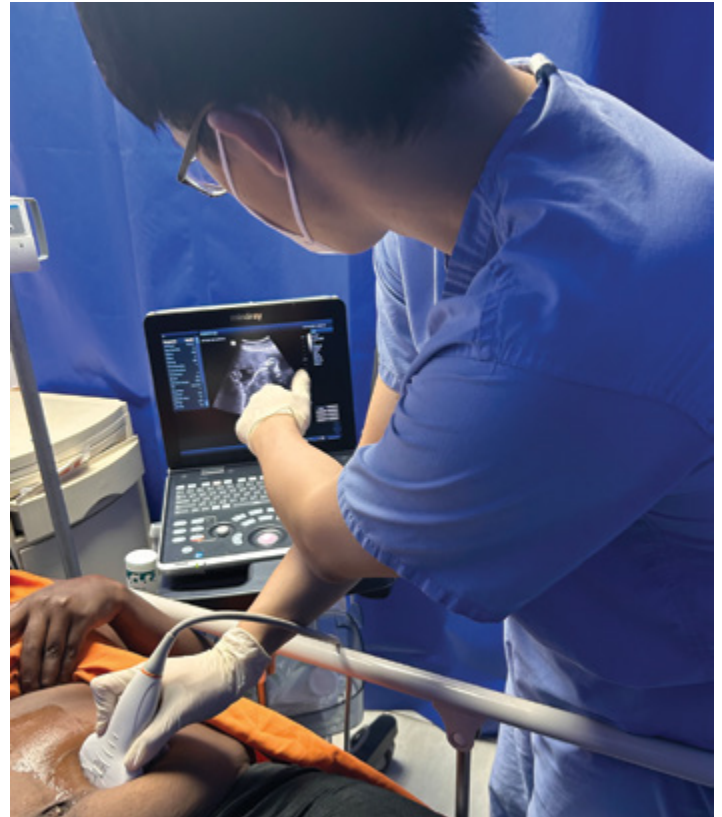


In May 2025, Vanderbilt’s Latin Jazz Ensemble was named one of the best collegiate Latin Jazz Ensembles in the United States by DownBeat Magazine. The group, directed by Dr. Marc Widenhofer, has been invited to perform at national conferences and regularly performs in Nashville, most recently at Rudy’s Jazz Room in April.

Medical Students Strengthen their Clinical Skills through Rotations in Latin America

Through the Global Health Integrated Science Course and Advanced Elective courses, Vanderbilt medical students engage in month-long clinical rotations at hospitals around the world. Prior to the rotation, students complete a pre-departure training sequence on cultural humility, mindful engagement, and country- and language-specific resources. During the course, students learn about global health topics through online modules and complete a capstone project that benefits the hospital/clinic or community and supports their learning goals. In Latin America and the Caribbean, while learning vital medical skills, students hone their medical Spanish skills. Seven students rotated in four countries this year:

- **Amad Amedy** (MD, 2025): Argentina, Vamos Spanish Academy
- **Alexandra Belfi** (MD, 2025): Peru, Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia
- **Starina D'Souza** (MD, 2025): Argentina, Vamos Spanish Academy
- **Lilly He** (MD, 2026): Guatemala, Primeros Pasos Clinic
- **Shimran Kumar** (MD, 2026): Argentina, Vamos Spanish Academy
- **Ann Manella** (MD, 2026): Argentina, Vamos Spanish Academy
- **Brian Song** (MD, 2026): Guyana, Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation



Brian Song, top. Lilly He, above.

Collaborations with Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation to Study Snakebites

Brian M. Song (MD, 2026) spent two months in Guyana at the Accident & Emergency Department (A&E) of Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), the main tertiary referral hospital of Guyana. In his first month, he had clinical shifts in the A&E and started work on his School of Medicine Research Immersion project, which focused on investigating toxicological emergencies in Guyana. Toxic ingestions, particularly intentional ingestions involving pesticides, are a severe yet understudied public health threat in Guyana. In coordination with Dr. Anisa Mughal at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) and Drs. Melissa Rickett and Salima Persaud at GPHC, he implemented Guyana's first toxicology registry, developing a system of paper forms that was integrated into the existing paper charts to record data on all toxicological emergencies presenting to the A&E.

In his second month, Brian focused specifically on snakebite envenoming. While the data on snakebite incidence in Guyana is very limited, the data that exists indicates that the country may have one of the highest rates of snakebite in the Americas. Brian conducted a retrospective analysis of all patients who presented to the A&E for snakebite in 2024 to determine the incidence, patient demographics, and medical outcomes of snakebite envenoming at GPHC. He identified that the highest per capita rate of snakebite envenoming occurs in Guyana's remote forested Administrative Regions and that antivenom is often delayed many hours after the initial snakebite. Brian presented a poster on this



data at the Vanderbilt Global Health Symposium and will be presenting the results at national emergency medicine and toxicology conferences.

Brian's work during these two months was supported by the longitudinal relationship between the VUMC Emergency Medicine Department and the GPHC A&E, especially with the help of GPHC physicians Drs. Vedprakash Etwaria and Sri Devi Jagjit. The Global Health ISC and the Research Immersion program at the Vanderbilt School of Medicine allowed Brian to explore his interests in global emergency medicine and medical toxicology, gain experience working on health systems-level change, and join a thriving collaboration between VUMC and GPHC.

Thanks to Elizabeth Rose for contributing this content on VUMC programs

Vanderbilt and Universidad del Valle de Guatemala Biomedical Engineering Students Collaborate to Repair Medical Equipment in Guatemalan Hospitals



In March 2025, a cohort of Biomedical Engineering students from Vanderbilt University traveled to Guatemala as part of their course BME 3890-02, “Special Topics: Service Learning in Guatemala.” Professor **Cynthia B. Paschal** started this course in 2009 and has offered it biennially since then. She was excited this year to have Professor **Romina del Bosque** co-lead the course given del Bosque’s deep experience in instrumentation and her passion for healthcare in developing countries. Together, they trained VU BME students in medical equipment testing and repair and then traveled with them to Guatemala for work over spring break. Paschal’s longstanding collaborator at UVG Professor **Carlos Esquit**, Director of Electronic, Mechatronic, and Biomedical Engineering, organized the UVG cohort and a fabulous visit to UVG.

The Vanderbilt team included 11 students and Professors del Bosque and Paschal who collaborated closely with six UVG engineering students and two UVG professors. Together, they addressed critical needs in three healthcare facilities:

- Hospital Materna e Infantil Juan Pablo II in Mixco, a suburb of Guatemala City, where an exciting expansion of the hospital is occurring. The team learned that the hospital has increased the percentage of mothers who are breastfeeding, benefiting infant health and reducing costs.
- Hospital Nacional Pedro de Bethancourt in Antigua, a very resource-limited facility, where the team saw glimmers of hope in the form of a new neonatal care suite under construction and a new elevator for the hospital
- Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro, also situated in Antigua, where students were invited to visit the impressive surgical unit where teams

of surgeons from all around the world come to volunteer their time and talents.

Throughout the week, the team worked diligently to test and repair various medical equipment, tackling challenges that ranged from basic otoscopes, bilirubin lights, and infant incubators to more complicated endoscopy systems and ancient oxygen concentrators.

Beyond their technical efforts, the Vanderbilt students immersed themselves in the rich cultural tapestry of Guatemala. They climbed Cerro de la Cruz, processed cacao beans for chocolate, learned about Guatemala textiles, visited the Guatemalan National Museum of Art (MUNAG), and participated in a culinary workshop, where they prepared pepián, a traditional Guatemalan dish. The group also explored the local coffee culture by visiting a coffee grower and learning to roast and grind coffee in traditional

ways, and enjoyed playing a vigorous volleyball game while visiting UVG's amazing campus.

This experience was made possible through the generous support of CLACX, which provided funds and a pre-trip presentation by Avery Dickins de Girón, equipping the students with essential historical and cultural insights. Project C.U.R.E. Nashville also played a pivotal role by loaning necessary equipment for student training, further enhancing the educational impact of the trip. The VU Provost's Immersion grant funding purchased a simulator for testing various vital signs monitors, which was a tremendously helpful tool when testing equipment on site.

For more about the experiences and achievements of the team in Guatemala, visit the blog published by the Vanderbilt students at vubmeguatemala25.wordpress.com.

Thanks to Cynthia Paschal for contributing this content

Midwifery Students Gain Medical Spanish Skills through MEADOW Project

A new collaboration to support medical Spanish for midwifery students in Vanderbilt's School of Nursing was launched in Spring 2025. The project supported students enrolled in the MEADOW program, which provides high-quality clinical training focused on providing locally appropriate, context-responsive care that meets the perinatal health needs of rural and medically underserved populations. Through the program, MEADOW trainees carry out clinical rotations at sites in rural and medically underserved areas in Tennessee, many of which have significant populations of recently arrived immigrants from Central America.

Hannah McGrew, MEADOW Program Coordinator, and **Julia Phillipi**, MEADOW Project Director, reached out to **Avery Dickins de Girón** and **Chalene Helmuth**, Director of Vanderbilt's Center for Languages and Associate Professor of the Practice in Spanish and Portuguese, to explore the possibility of offering medical Spanish for MEADOW students. During several weeks of the Spring 2025 semester, Helmuth taught weekly medical Spanish for students in the program with intermediate level proficiency, as well as five other students who were not part of the MEADOW program. This group of students piloted innovative virtual exchange

sessions with medical students from the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo in Peru. Dickins de Girón led one of the sessions exploring perspectives on health and health care in Central America.

The initiative was supported by the MEADOW grant, which is funded through the Health Resources Services Administration. The collaboration is an outgrowth of a course for pre-specialty students that CLACX supported for several years, which combined medical Spanish taught by Helmuth with cultural perspectives taught by Dickins de Girón. The hope is to continue and expand this collaboration in the future.

Project Pyramid Students Partner with Organizations in Colombia and Panama

Each year, the Project Pyramid course brings together graduate students from across disciplines at Vanderbilt to provide pro bono consulting services to organizations in emerging markets. Housed in the Owen School of Management and supported by Vanderbilt's Center for Social Ventures, the experiential learning course is a student-led program that combines classroom and in-situ learning to examine the causes and symptoms of global poverty.

In Spring 2025, students partnered with organizations in Manizales, Cartagena, and Panama City to address real-world challenges related to sustainability, economic inclusion, and community development. Throughout the semester, interdisciplinary student teams worked closely with their partner organizations to assess strategic needs, offer research-backed recommendations, and co-create practical tools. The experience included in a weeklong international immersion mid-semester. Each team traveled to their client sites to conduct in-person fieldwork, stakeholder interviews, and solution co-design, which allowed students to better understand socially responsible business practices and the complexity of working across sectors and

cultures. Mario Avila, Faculty Director of the Center for Social Ventures, teaches Project Pyramid and reports that students “returned with sharpened consulting skills, broadened global perspectives, and



The “Missing Middle” of small entrepreneur businesses in Colombia was obvious throughout the trip. Seeing all the individual salespersons who if they had an employee, it was likely their child, reinforced my understanding of the difficulties Colombians face when growing a business.

—Noah Chamberlain (MBA, 2026)



a renewed commitment to impact-driven careers.”

In Manizales, which is currently consolidating its position as a destination for international academic programs, Project Pyramid students held meetings and working sessions with four organizations: Camino de Vida Foundation, Artesanías Lola Montez, the Association of Vicentina Volunteer Ladies, and Tío Conejo Coffee. The meetings focused on the development and promotion of market-based solutions to strengthen these organizations’ missions. Students described the experience as both meaningful and essential to understanding the complexities of social enterprises:

“Project Pyramid allowed me to apply what I’ve learned in the classroom in the real world. My team worked directly with the founder of Camino de Vida, which serves local students through weekend programming and job-skills workshops like videography and woodworking. By the end of the week, we didn’t want to leave. This opportunity will be a highlight of my time at Vanderbilt.”

– **Hailee Rodriguez** (MEd, 2025)

Another group of students worked with Furas, a social enterprise that supports women in marginalized situations in Colombia since 2015. Based in Cartagena, the organization provides training, networking, and sustainable employment opportunities directed towards empowerment and supporting women to find paths to build better lives for themselves and their families.

“My experience in Project Pyramid was an eye-opening exploration of the complexities of global poverty and sustainable development. Working alongside an interdisciplinary team, I gained valuable insight into how Furas approached poverty alleviation through innovative, community-driven solutions. This experience further solidified my passion for bridging business and social impact to create meaningful, long-term change.”

– **Chloe Urias** (MPH, 2026)

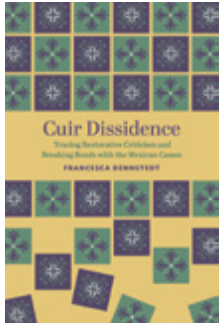
One team of students worked with Universidad Central in Panama City, which is dedicated to transforming Panama’s educational landscape into a modern one that meets the needs of students, employers, and the country as a whole. With a focus on business programs, the university promotes a project-based learning model, grounded in real-world challenges and reinforced by strong partnerships with local and regional companies.

“The critical insight from the immersion in Panama that I will carry forward into my career is the immense value of identifying and supporting entrepreneurs who possess the unique capability to maintain unwavering commitment to business fundamentals while simultaneously driving meaningful social returns.”

– **Abby Jenkins** (MBA, 2025)



Haiti and the Revolution Unseen
The Persistence of the Decolonial Imagination
 Natalie Marie Léger



Cuir Dissidence
Tracing Restorative Criticism and Breaking Bonds with the Mexican Canon
 Francesca Dennstedt



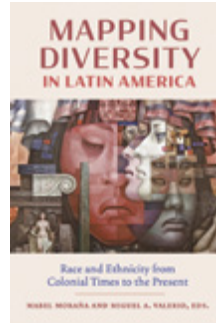
Workshop of Silence
Poems
 Jean D'Amérique,
 translated by Conor Bracken



Camille's Lakou
A Novel
 Marie Léticée, translated by
 Kevin Meehan and Marie Léticée



Mexico Unveiled
Resisting Colonial Vices and Other Complaints
 Carlos Pereda, translated by
 Noell Birondo with Andres Bonilla



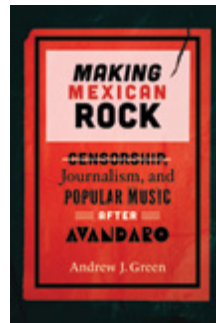
Mapping Diversity in Latin America
Race and Ethnicity from Colonial Times to the Present
 Edited by Mabel Moraña and
 Miguel A. Valerio



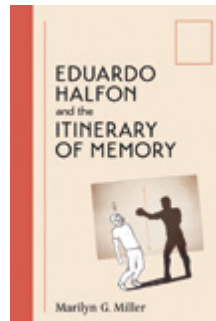
Changes in the Landscape
Humans and Nature in Nineteenth-Century Latin America
 Edited by Jennifer L. French



Where Social Identities Converge
Latin American and Latinx Youth on Screen
 Traci Roberts-Camps



Making Mexican Rock
Censorship, Journalism, and Popular Music after Avándaro
 Andrew J. Green



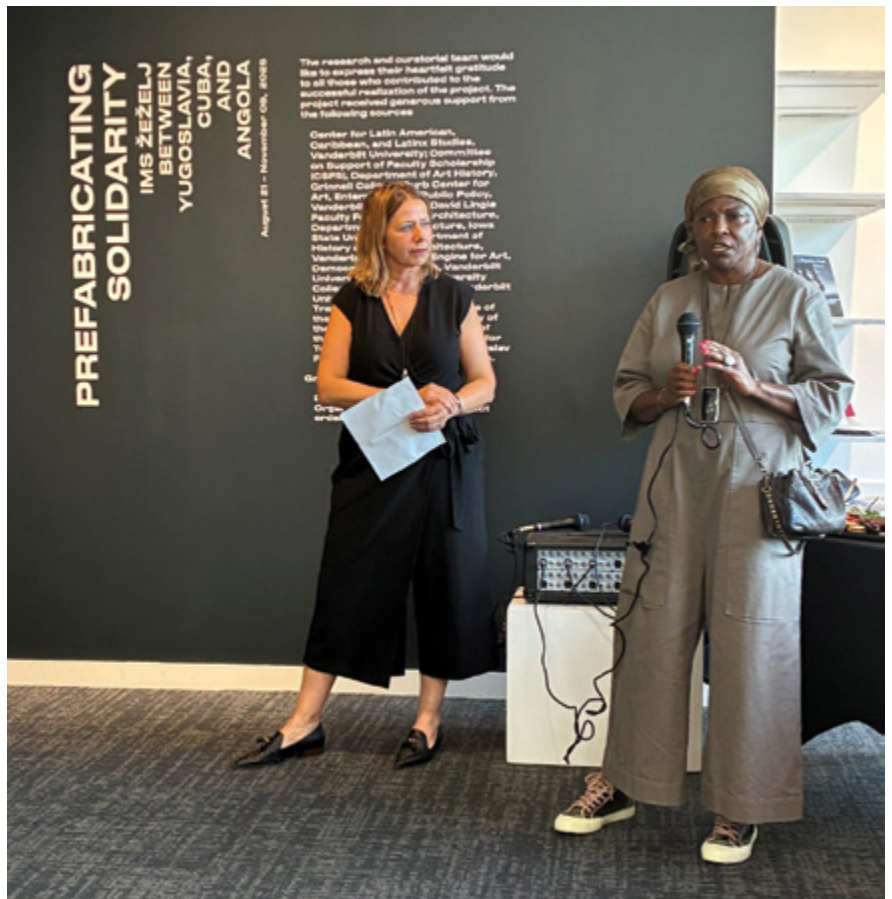
Eduardo Halfon and the Itinerary of Memory
 Marilyn G. Miller

Faculty News

Vesna Pavlović (Professor of Art and Paul E. Shwab Chair in Fine Arts) opened a new exhibition, *Prefabricating Solidarity: IMS-Žeželj Between Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Angola*. The exhibition was first presented at the Museum of African Art in Belgrade in May 2025, followed by its installation at the Engine for Art, Democracy, and Justice's Begonia Labs in Nashville in August. The project is the culmination of three years of research on the wide-scale adoption of Yugoslav prefabricated construction systems in Cuba, Angola, and Yugoslavia in the 1970s. The three countries, all members of the Non-Aligned Movement, were united through the use of a sophisticated skeletal structure of concrete columns held together by steel cables that was developed by engineer Branko Žeželj at Belgrade's IMS Institute in 1957. Pavlović and a team of artists and architectural historians traveled to Cuba, Angola, and Serbia in 2023 and 2024 to photograph buildings that incorporated this technology, examine archival documents, and conduct video interviews with architects and engineers, all of which are presented in the exhibit. Following these research trips, the team held a workshop at Vanderbilt in March 2024 to develop the exhibit, which opened in Belgrade on May 18 with a talk by the team. *Prefabricating Solidarity* opened in Nashville on August 21 at Begonia Labs (see photo on right), with a reception and brief remarks by **Maria Magdalena**



Above: Installation view of the exhibition at the Museum of African Art in Belgrade. Photo by Marijana Janković.





Campos-Pons (Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair of Fine Arts) and Pavlović. Members of the exhibits curatorial and authorial team include **Vladimir Kulić, Vesna Pavlović, Jelica Jovanović, Fredo Rivera, Ana Knežević-Cekić, and Emilia Epštajn.**

CLACX provided seed funding for the project, including travel to Cuba in 2023 and 2024, and supported the realization of the exhibit in Nashville as well as the exhibition's next installation at Iowa State University. Other sponsors of the exhibition include: Committee on Support of Faculty Scholarship (CSFS), Department of Art History, Grinnell College; Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, Vanderbilt University; David Lingle Faculty Fellowship in Architecture, Department of Architecture, Iowa State University; Department of History of Art and Architecture, Vanderbilt University; Vanderbilt

University College of Arts & Science; Vanderbilt University Global Engagement Travel Fund; Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia; Embassy of the Republic of Cuba; Embassy of the Republic of Angola; Institute IMS; Yugoslav Film Archive.

Read more about the exhibition here:

Prefabricating Solidarity: IMS Žeželj Between Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Angola

Felipe Barrera-Osorio (Associate Professor of Public Policy, Education and Economics), was featured on Vanderbilt's *Quantum Potential*. In the podcast, he discussed his groundbreaking research on the impact of need-based versus merit-based micro-scholarships programs with **Provost C. Cybele Raver**. Barrea-Osorio explains how these programs in rural, low-income communities in Cambodia, Colombia and Mexico were so successful that national governments around the world expanded investments in education. [Listen to the episode here.](#)

Robert Barsky (Professor of Humanities and of Law) held a Guggenheim Fellowship from 2022-2023 and published a new book in 2025, *The Beltline Chronicles* (The AmeriQuests Press). He received the 2024 Mayor's Office Individual Artist Award for *The Beltline Chronicles* in the amount of \$4,000. With Cécilia Laan and Andrea Schellino, Barsky published a book with L'Ombra (Università di Torino) in 2024, *Clamouring for Legal Protection*. Access it here: <https://morettievitali.it/lombra/>.

He also published a piece in the *MIT Press Reader*, "How George Orwell Paved Noam Chomsky's Path to Anarchism," adapted from his book, *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent*. The essay is available here: <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/how-george-orwell-paved-noam-chomskys-path-to-anarchism/>

Molly Barth (Blair School of Music) performed in *Latin American Musical Gems for Flute, Cello, and Piano* with Carmen Rodríguez-Peralta and Jesús Castro-Balbi (see [page 24](#) for more).

Research by **Ari Caramanica** (Assistant Professor of Anthropology) was featured in *The Conversation*. Caramanica's research explores societal responses to environmental and climate disaster in Peru's north coast. By studying ancient and complex irrigation systems, she hopes to better understand ways that modern systems can be improved. Read the [article here](#).

Ahlenius Wins Best Doctoral Thesis Award

Jason Ahlenius, a postdoctoral fellow in Vanderbilt's Collaborative Humanities program, received the Best Doctoral Thesis award from the 19th Century Section of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) for his dissertation, "The Limits of Freedom: The Politics of Unfree Labor and Race on Nineteenth-Century Mexico's Borderlands, 1821-1915." The jury recognized Ahlenius for providing new perspectives on Mexican history through his interdisciplinary analysis of forced labor across borders and summarized the merits of his dissertation in their award statement: "Drawing on race studies, border studies, visual studies, and literary/cultural analysis, this dissertation integrates methods and theoretical insights from multiple disciplines. Its broad interdisciplinary framework

clarifies the cultural, political, and economic stakes of unfree labor, illuminating how discourses of nation, empire, and racial identity coalesced around perpetuating practices of forced labor. By examining the phenomenon of unfree labor across Texas, Yucatán, and Chiapas (with connections to Guatemala and Cuba), Ahlenius' work breaks away from Mexico City-centered narratives: its comparative lens reveals how forced labor regimes adapted to different regional conditions and changing historical circumstances while still linking Mexico's borderlands to broader Atlantic and global contexts. By situating forced labor as a central concern, the dissertation challenges longstanding narratives that celebrate Mexico as an early, radical abolitionist state. In this sense, the dissertation reveals the limits of

19th century liberal ideology and the shortcomings of its contractual legal framework. It also expands literary and cultural historiography to include the complexities of borderland experiences, revealing how race and labor shaped textual production, visual archives, and national imaginaries, through close readings of diverse artifacts such as photography, legal documents, and non-canonical writings. Overall, this project stands to reshape scholarly perspectives on nineteenth-century Mexican culture, race, and labor by situating borderlands at the heart of Mexico's national narratives, and by placing Mexico in dialogue with global debates on post-abolition societies." Ahlenius obtained his PhD in Spanish and Portuguese in 2024 from New York University.



COLLABORATIVE HUMANITIES POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM

CLACX bid farewell to our colleagues **Lidiana de Moraes** and **Matthew Plishka**, both of whom completed National Endowment for the Humanities postdoctoral fellowships through Vanderbilt's Collaborative Humanities program. De Moraes has taken a teaching position in the Honors Program at Florida State University and Plishka is Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Humanities at Amherst College.

Jonathan Hiskey (Professor, Associate Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Political Science) published two articles with Abby Córdova and Diana Orcés, both of whom obtained their PhDs in Political Science at Vanderbilt.

- Malone, Mary Fran, Jonathan T. Hiskey, Abby Córdova, and Diana M. Orcés. 2025. "On the Front Line of Violence: A Survey-Based Portrait of Women Seeking to Emigrate from Northern Central America." *Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública*, 14: 1-145. <https://doi.org/10.14201/rlop.31722>
- Córdova, Abby, Jonathan T. Hiskey, Mary Fran Malone, and Diana M. Orcés. 2024. "Undeterred: Understanding Repeat Migration in Northern Central America." *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 12(3): 160-181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024241268618>

Earl Fitz (Professor of Spanish and Portuguese) published a new book, *The Evolution of Literature in the Americas: A Timeline and Commentary* (Routledge Reference Series, 2025). He was co-editor, with Vanessa Valdes, of the volume *Machado de Assis, Blackness, and the Americas* (SUNY Press, 2024). Fitz served as a panelist at the American Portuguese Studies Association conference at Brown University, speaking on Brazilian Literary History. While there, he also gave a lecture to a class at Brown on "Brazilian Fictions of the Self" and discussed his 2024 book, *Clarice Lispector: From Brazil to the World*. His introduction to the Dalkey Archive Press book, *The Girl in the Photograph* (2012), was translated and reprinted in Brazil

in a special edition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the original book *As Meninas* by Lygia Fagundes Telles. Beyond campus, Fitz was nominated for a Mary Catherine Strobel Volunteer Award for his work over the past 19 years on behalf of the cancer support organization, Gilda's Club Middle Tennessee.

Yara González-Justiniano (Assistant Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture with emphasis on Latinx Studies) published an article in 2025, "A Flor de Piel: Exploring Latin American Decolonial Aesthetics for Religious Studies. Sensing Puerto Rican Media" in *Current Trends in the Study of Religion, Film and Media: Celebrating Ten Years of JRFM*. Access it here: jrfm.eu/index.php/ojs_jrfm/article/view/447

Jane Landers (Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor Department of History) was elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Fort Negley in 2025. She is also serving a three-year term (2023-2026) on the Council of the Omohundro Institute for Early American History & Culture.

Landers gave the Keynote for the 50th Anniversary of the Association of Latin American and Caribbean Historians (1974-2024): 500 Years of Resistance in Latin America and the Caribbean in Curaçao in June 2024, titled "African Kingdoms, Black Republics, and Free Black Towns across the Iberian Atlantic." She delivered several other public and academic talks during the 2024-2025 year, including: "Alachua County's Black History," for the Alachua

County Bicentennial in Gainesville; “Liberal Arts and Innovation in the Digital Age,” for the **Times Higher Education and Vanderbilt University Inaugural Summit** in Nashville; “Slave Societies Digital Archive: Preservando os documentos mais antigos para a história dos Africanos nas Americas,” at the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro in Rio de Janeiro; “Conspiradores Católicos,” at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro; “Reinos africanos, repúblicas negras e cidades negras livres do outro lado do Atlântico Ibérico,” at the Congresso Brasileiro de História do Direito in Curitiba; and “Fernando Ortega, Antonio Proctor, and Negro Abraham: Atlantic Creoles and Their Multi-racial Military Networks across Florida” for the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Founding of Tallahassee Symposium. She also published two articles:

- “An Homage to Peter H. Wood and Black Majority,” *Reviews of Books, Critical Forum, William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 82, no. 1 (January 2025):130-136.
- **“Yamasee /African Ties in Carolina and Florida,”** *Black Hibiscus: African Americans and the Florida Imaginary*, ed. John Lowe (University of Mississippi Press, 2024), 31-55.

Landers continued her research on two projects: “Recruiting and Training the Next Generation of Slave Societies Digital Archive Scholars” through an American Council of Learned Societies Digital Justice Development Grant and “Slave Societies Digital Archive Projects: Matanzas, Cuba and Mompos, Colombia,” which was supported by CLACX. She consulted and was interviewed on several

2024 media productions: **“Can AI Be Used to Save Historical Records?”** (Quantum Potential); **Lopez-li Films; “They’re Uncovering their Ancestry and Questioning their Families’ Racial Narratives,”** (NBC News), and **“Rediscovering Latinidad.”** She also served as a consultant for with the National Park Service & Florida State Parks Foundation on the Fort Mose Reconstruction Project and was Principal Investigator on a project, “Africans in the DeSoto Expedition,” for the National Park Service and Association for the Study of African American Life and History in 2023-2025.

Carolina Palacios (Principal Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of Spanish Level 1100-1101-1102; Department of Spanish and Portuguese) received a World Languages 360 - Extempore Grant for \$3000 to support language education through innovative technology.

Jesús G. Ruiz (Assistant Professor of the Practice in Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies) was selected as Faculty Head of Moore College and looks forward to engaging with students outside of the classroom. He published a new article: “Freedom, Faith & Sovereignty: The 1796 Boca Nigua Revolt as an Afro-Catholic Royalist Rebellion,” *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 46 (1): 100-123. Ruiz was Keynote Speaker at Tuskegee University’s Black History month in February and presented his research, “Unforgiven Freedom: Anti-Black Racism and U.S. Policy in Haiti.” He gave two public lectures, including “Crossing Boundaries: The History and Future of U.S.

Immigration, Exclusion, and Identity,” at Conexión Américas in December 2024 and a gallery talk at the Frist Art Museum, “Worlds Interwoven: Cuba, the Caribbean, and the Birth of the Modern Era,” on the exhibition, *María Magdalena Campos-Pons: Behold* (see page 57). Ruiz also secured four grants to support Caribbean Week (see page 2), including from Vanderbilt’s Big Questions Fund and Vanderbilt’s Division of Government and Community Relations.

Gretchen Selcke (Assistant Director and Senior Lecturer in Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies) was invited to the Truffle Time Conference in Zurich, Switzerland on “The Ticket Price of Natural Disasters.” Her talk, “The Permanent Refugee Recipe: Climate Change and War” focused on recent refugee trends from the Spanish Caribbean and Haiti. As part of this trip, Professor Selcke was also invited as jury member for the Hérens Quality Asset Management Corporate Excellence Awards, which focus on rewarding incremental achievement in ESG spaces of companies based in the developing world.

Beningo Trigo, Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, published an Op-ED in the Tennessean addressing disparaging remarks made by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe about Puerto Rico: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/contributors/2024/10/29/racist-joke-puerto-rico-tony-hinchcliffe/75907421007/>

CLACX Faculty Curriculum Development Grants

The following faculty received curriculum development grants from CLACX to develop new courses or enhance current courses. The grants are funded through our National Resource Center award from the US Department of Education.

Lori Catanzaro, Principal Senior Lecturer in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, received a Faculty Curriculum Development Award to enhance planning for her new travel embedded, service learning, advanced Spanish for the Professions course, “Emprendimiento: Global Supply Chain and Entrepreneurship in the Spanish Speaking World”. In July, Catanzaro traveled to Panamá, where she will take

her class over Fall Break 2025. During her July trip, she laid the groundwork for meetings with private companies, non-profits, and government agencies, focusing on global supply chain and logistics, the Panamanian economy and its role in global trade, and the entrepreneurial environment of Panamá. The Faculty Curriculum Development Award additionally supported building Emprendimiento’s course content and itinerary planning, including cultural activities and local guest speakers during the course trip. These activities are designed to enrich the students’ experience and knowledge of Panamanian history and culture, not only of the Panamá Canal and its role in global commerce, but also

environmental issues, sustainability, and indigenous people’s history and culture today. Throughout the Fall semester, students will work closely with local entrepreneurs and community initiatives through Conexión Américas in Nashville and will travel to Panamá during Vanderbilt’s Fall Break in October.

Chalene Helmuth, Associate Professor of the Practice in Spanish and Portuguese and Director of Vanderbilt’s Center for Languages, received a Faculty Curriculum Development Award in support of developing a new global food studies course in Costa Rica, to be proposed as a Maymester in Spring 2026. With CLACX funding she traveled to Costa Rica in May 2025. In





the company of colleagues from the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED), Helmuth visited potential sites for student immersive learning. Through this academic partnership she met with several new collaborators: Inmar Caribe Foundation (Cahuita on the Atlantic Coast), site of rich cultural and linguistic confluence of indigenous and Afro-Caribbean Costa Ricans; the food-producing entrepreneurial communities of San Gerardo de Dota (south of the Central Valley, high in the mountains of the rain forest); and the Guayabo National Monument Preserve in Turrialba, site of exciting archaeological discoveries in a valley on a flank of the Turrialba Volcano, a thriving agricultural and tourism zone. Situating the course exploration within the framework of Latin American history and culture, students in the Maymester course will consider how culture and climate, community and tradition, diet and farming, agricultural practices and market fluctuations, and other contributing factors make Costa Rica's foodways unique.

Gretchen Selcke, Assistant Director and Senior Lecturer in Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies, received a Faculty Curriculum Development Award to travel to Cuba to conduct interviews with artists and scholars at the Biennials in Matanzas and Miami to enhance LACX 4961, "Capstone Seminar: Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Literature and Culture." Due to unexpected US requirements for federally funded travel, she was not able to travel to Cuba.

Thomas Verrier, Associate Professor and Director of Wind Studies in the Blair School of Music, received funds to visit Colombia and Argentina, which have distinct musical traditions that are deeply connected to the wind band medium. In Manizales, Verrier spent a week in residency with the Banda Municipal de Manizales al Instituto de Cultura y Turismo de Manizales, the Banda Sinfónica de Santander, and the Universidad Industrial de Santander. Verrier carried out a similar program in Argentina in collaboration with the Banda Sinfónica Municipal de Córdoba and the Banda Provincial de Córdoba. At the close of the course, Verrier selected conductor Jorge Doumont for a residency at Vanderbilt in Fall 2025. He hosted a similar residency in 2024 (see page 22).



FACULTY PROFILE

Rebeca Gamez

Rebeca Gamez is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology whose research and teaching interests lie at the nexus of educational and cultural anthropology. Gamez's research examines the relationship between race, place, and space, with a focus on the educational and community experiences of youth of Latin American and Caribbean descent in the U.S. South. She notes that this region is often referred to as the "New Latinx South" or "El Nuevo South" to signify the unprecedented arrival of Latin and Central American immigrants to this region in the last thirty years. Her work explores how these demographic changes reshape school contexts and social relations—particularly in historically Black geographies—and how youth navigate the racial and spatial hierarchies that emerge in these settings. Gamez joined Vanderbilt's faculty in 2022 and has been a close collaborator with CLACX since then.

Trained in an interdisciplinary education Ph.D. program and deeply grounded in cultural anthropology, Gamez brings an ethnographic and spatial lens to the study of race, migration, and education. She conducts long-term fieldwork in both Spanish and English to explore how racial subjectivities are produced, regulated, and reworked across schools and communities. Her research investigates how schooling and informal learning settings are shaped by the layered histories and geographies in which they are embedded—histories marked by enduring relations of power—and how, in turn, young people's everyday movements and relationships within these spaces can reconfigure not only educational institutions but also the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located. Her work has been published in



Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Educational Researcher, Latino Studies, Teachers College Record, and Race, Ethnicity and Education. She is co-editor of the forthcoming *Race, Ethnicity and Education* special issue, "Critical Dialogues in Latinx Education," which assembles cutting-edge scholarship that challenges flat, even essentialist understandings of Latinidad, often through a lens of representational, multicultural, and/or neoliberal diversity. Her work has been published in

Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Educational Researcher, Latino Studies, Teachers College Record, and Race, Ethnicity and Education. She is also co-editor of the forthcoming *Race, Ethnicity and Education* special issue, "Critical Dialogues in Latinx Education."

These research interests are rooted in both Gamez's personal experiences and her long-standing commitment to community advocacy and education. Born in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, she migrated to the United States in her early childhood days and grew up in New Jersey—experiences that have shaped her questions about education, identity, and racialization. Her early encounters with migration, language, and schooling continue to inform her research on how youth navigate systems of power and belonging. Before pursuing graduate study, Gamez directed the Workers' Rights Program for the New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE) organization, which provided wrap around services for undocumented day laborers working in New York City. Following that, she was Director of Community Education at the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project from 2006-2008, and a reading teacher at the Foundation Academy Charter School in Trenton, New Jersey

from 2011–2013. Gamez obtained her PhD from the John Hopkins University School of Education and continued her advocacy work as a postdoctoral fellow through the Nobody Asked Me Campaign. This community research project gives voice to students, families and community members to ensure that students in the Baltimore City Public Schools district receive a “thorough and efficient” education, and that they will be in safe, healthy, and healing environments where they can learn and develop the skills to thrive in Baltimore.

In 2023, Gamez received the Vanderbilt H Family Dean’s Faculty Fellow in Racial Justice which helped her make significant progress on her current book project, *Contested Latinidades in Black Geographies: Youth, Schooling, and Latinx Formations in the U.S. Urban South* (under contract with the University of Texas Press). *Contested Latinidades in Black*

navigate and reimagine racial formations in everyday life. The book challenges the marginalization of Latinx youth while addressing tensions within localized constructions of ethnoracial difference.

Prior to coming to Vanderbilt, Gamez was a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. At Vanderbilt, Gamez teaches both core and elective undergraduate courses, as well as graduate classes, including *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (ANTH 1101), *Latinx/Afro-Latinx Ethnographies: The (Un)Making of Latinidades* (ANTH 2380W), *(Re)Imagining Education: Ethnography of Schools and Schooling* (ANTH 2385W), *Race in the Americas* (ANTH 2105), and *Ethnographies of Race, Place, and Space* (ANTH 6890). She also advises graduate students in anthropology and related fields. Across all her teaching, she encourages students to examine how

institutions, spatial histories, and racial ideologies shape subjectivities and opportunities. A former K-12 educator, she brings a pedagogical commitment to inclusion, critical reflection, and student-centered learning. Her current research project is a collaborative project in Nashville, working with Latinx-

[Gamez’s] early encounters with migration, language, and schooling continue to inform her research on how youth navigate systems of power and belonging.

Geographies explores how knowledge—and self-knowledge—about Latinx identity is formed in conversation with Black histories, neighborhoods, and schools in the U.S. South. Based on eighteen months of ethnographic research in two middle schools in Greenside City (a pseudonym), the book shows that Latin American and Caribbean origin youth come to understand and perform Latinidad differently depending on the Black geographies they inhabit. In one school, youth develop expansive forms of Latinidad that embrace Blackness and challenge mestizo-centric narratives; in the other, Latinidad is recognized only when it aligns with integrationist goals, distancing students from Blackness. By theorizing Latinidad as relationally forged through specific Black geographies, this work illuminates connections between Blackness and Latinidad and the spatial politics through which youth

identifying educators in the *Pioneros* program (a joint initiative with Lipscomb University). The project examines how pre-service educators enact leadership and relational practices in a city shaped by shifting geographies of race, migration, and educational reform.

In 2023, Gamez and Julie Gamble (Gender and Sexuality Studies) established the Latinidades Seminar Series, with Hilario Lomelí (Mellon Assistant Professor in Latinx Studies) joining as a collaborator during its first year. Supported through CLACX, the monthly interdisciplinary series brings together scholars on and off campus to examine an extensive range of topics to explore intersections between Latin American and Latinx studies. In 2024-25, the series will be led by Gamez, Gamble, and Lara Lookabaugh, who is the Librarian and Curator for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx studies.

Student Organizations and Events

CLACX Student Advisory Board Builds Stronger Connections with Undergraduates for a Second Year

Founded in 2023, the CLACX Student Advisory Board works closely with the center to ensure that its programming, resources, and courses reflect and support the needs of its student community.

The board is open to students from all years and academic programs and convenes twice each semester for focused discussions hosted by **Luisa Mattos**. Feedback from these sessions is essential to CLACX's ability to provide the best campus experience to the students it serves and ensures that student perspectives remain central to the Center's mission and decision-making processes.

Thank you to the members of the 2024-2025 CLACX Student Advisory Board:

Renato Zamboni de Albuquerque

– Economics & Human and Organizational Development (HOD)

Edwin Rivera – Computer Science

Isabel Skerlec – Child Studies and Human and Organizational Development (HOD)

Cinthia Bernal – Economics and Latin American Studies

Brittany Bretz Martinez – Cognitive Studies and Medicine, Health, and Society (MHS)

Areli Zuniga – Human and Organizational Development (HOD) and Medicine, Health, and Society (MHS)

Emily Alvarado – Psychology and Sociology

Kenya Louison – Human and Organizational Development (HOD), and Climate Studies

Pedro Rosales-Diaz – MHS and Latino/a Studies

Catherine Morrison-Rodriguez – Anthropology and Spanish



Multicultural Leadership Council Hosts Latin Market Night

The Vanderbilt Multicultural Leadership Council celebrated Latinx culture with a Latin Market Night on October 29.

Student organizations including the Mexican American Student Association (MASA), the Association of Latin

American Studies (ALAS), and the CSA (Caribbean Student Association) contributed to the festive event, which took place on Rand Patio. CLACX professors were invited to participate, giving students the opportunity to engage with faculty in an informal setting. **Edward Wright-Ríos, Gretchen Selcke, Jesús Ruiz, Jason Ahlenius, and Hilário Lomelí** hosted a booth and gave out CLACX T-shirts, stickers, and handouts about courses Spring 2025 courses.





Ballet Folklórico de Mexico at Vanderbilt Presents Hasta La Raíz Showcase

On April 2, Ballet Folklórico de Vanderbilt (BFMV) presented *Hasta La Raíz: Ballet Folklórico Showcase* in Sarratt Cinema with support from CLACX. Student members of BFMV danced and made costumes for the showcase. The performance celebrated Mexican heritage through regional dances ranging from Sinaloa's energetic steps to Veracruz's graceful movements accented with vibrant costumes and live mariachi music. A highlight of the evening was a tribute to **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel**, the group's advisor and CLACX administrator, who was honored for her dedication to students and cultural

programming. In addition to Paz-Sanmiguel, CLACX faculty **Gretchen Selcke** and **Jesús Ruiz** attended the event, along with alumna and president of the Vanderbilt Association of Hispanic and Latinx Alumni (VAHLA), **Rosalinda Mendez**. Members of the BFMV, which was founded in 2021, expressed pride in carrying out a successful performance that was enthusiastically received by the audience. Read more in the Hustler: <https://vanderbilthustler.com/2025/04/06/rooted-in-rhythm-vandy-folklorico-dances-into-tradition-with-debut-showcase/>

ColorStack Vandy Organizes Event to Support Professional Readiness for Students

ColorStack, a non-profit supporting Black and Latinx Computer Science students in the US, hosted a community-building workshop on October 3 titled "Apply with Us: Application Assistance." CLACX helped promote the event, which provided mentorship to computer science and data science students as they prepared their internship and job applications. Participants received guidance, support, and practical tips from experienced mentors, fostering a collaborative environment to strengthen their application materials and professional readiness.

Mexican American Student Association Hosts Craft Workshop with CLACX

On September 19, CLACX partnered with MASA to host a traditional Mexican Clay Handicraft Decoration Workshop for students. The workshop was led by **Fátima Alejandra González Solano**, Professor at Universidad de Guadalajara's Centro Universitario de Tonalá, and **Rodolfo Sánchez Zamarrón**, Coordinator of the Licenciatura en Diseño de

Artesanía program at the same institution. Both were eager to share the art of *decoración de artesanía en barro* with approximately 60 Vanderbilt students. Participants painted and decorated nearly 100 clay *conchinitos* (little pigs) while enjoying delicious catering from the local Latino-owned restaurant Mofongo Café. CLACX invited González Solano and Sánchez Zamarrón to campus; while in Nashville they also conducted a *papel picado* workshop for K-12 educators organized by CLACX (see page 62).

Student Organizations Host Latin Fusion

The Mexican American Student Association (MASA), Peabody Latinx Alumni and Student Association (PLASA), Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA), Lambda, and ColorStack Vandy hosted *Latin Fusion* to celebrate graduating seniors and the end of the academic year. The event took place at the Black Cultural Center and showcased Latin culture to a broad campus audience, with a mariachi band and empanadas. Attendees included students pursuing degrees in Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx studies as well as others who came out to enjoy the party. MASA secured funding the band and CLACX collaborated with ALPFA to cover catering costs.

CLACX Awards \$162,000 to 20 Students for Research and Language Study in Summer 2025

Twenty students received CLACX funding to study languages or conduct research in Latin America in Summer 2025.

CLACX awarded **16 SUMMER FLAS FELLOWSHIPS** for the study of Portuguese, K'iche' Mayan, or Kaqchikel. Each student received tuition support of \$5000, a stipend of \$3500, and a travel award up to \$1000.

Twelve students received funding to study Portuguese in São Paulo through the Summer in Brazil program administered by Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and CLACX.

Vanderbilt undergraduate students **Andre Mendoza** (majoring in Earth and Environmental Sciences and History of Art) and **Elsa Steer** (majoring in International Relations and Business) received funding to study Portuguese.

In line with our objective to support students at institutions that do not have FLAS funding, CLACX also awarded Summer FLAS fellowships to the following non-Vanderbilt students: **Egohosasere Asemota** (undeclared major at Tulane), **Marie-Julie Hackel** (majoring in International Relations and Political Science at Tulane), **Alina Hillery** (pursuing a master's in Public Health at Tulane), **Pritam Jot Khalsa** (majoring in International Relations at Tulane), **Kosisochukwu Ifeji** (undeclared major at Tulane), **Sofia Patino-Vergara** (majoring in Business at Tulane), **Gabriela Berges-Lazo** (majoring in Political Science and International Relations at Loyola), **Juliana Abeid** (majoring in Political Science at Tulane), **Julia Atencio** (majoring in Psychology and Sociology at Tulane), and **Milan Nguyen** (undeclared major at Tulane).

Three Summer FLAS fellowships supported the

study of K'iche' Mayan in Guatemala through the Mayan Language Institute administered by Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and CLACX: **Joshua Lieberstein** (pursuing a master's in Linguistics at University of California Santa Cruz), **Willie Hurst** (doctoral student in Hispanic Studies at Emory), and **Cesar Ovando** (doctoral student in History at Penn State). **Kelly Brennan** (majoring in Linguistics at the University of Maryland) received a fellowship to study Kaqchikel Mayan, also through the Mayan Language Institute.

Two students received **ACADEMIC YEAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND AREA STUDIES FELLOWSHIPS** for the study of Portuguese or K'iche' Mayan during the 2024-2025 academic year. **Natalie Bruno**, doctoral student in Anthropology, received a fellowship to study K'iche' Mayan. **Julia Landivar Donato**, master's student in Public Health, was awarded a fellowship to study Portuguese. Both students received a \$20,000 stipend and \$18,000 in tuition for the academic year FLAS fellowship.

CLACX awarded fellowships to six Vanderbilt students for the 2025-2026 academic year. Due to the withholding of federal grant funds in July 2025, CLACX has been unable to honor these awards. However, we recognize these students for being selected for academic year fellowships: **Kenneth Krogh** (majoring in Political Science), **Evan Bennett** (majoring in Spanish and Portuguese), **Ethan Skinner** (majoring in Spanish and Portuguese), and **Ethan McCoy** (majoring in Medicine, Health, and Society and Spanish and Portuguese) received awards to study Portuguese. **Sydney Varnardo**, pursuing a master's in Public Health, was awarded a fellowship



to study Haitian Kreyòl and **Natalie Bruno**, doctoral student in Anthropology, received a second AY fellowship to continue her study of K'iche' Mayan.

SIMON COLLIER TRAVEL GRANTS in the amount of \$2500 each were awarded to four students to conduct research in Latin America in 2025.

Sophie Kavalali, a rising junior pursuing majors in Anthropology and Economics & History, received funding to travel to Neltume, Chile and San Martín de los Andes, Argentina to conduct research on climate mitigation efforts by Mapuche residents of the region in the face of environmental disasters. Working with a team under the guidance of Dr. **Jacob Sauer** (Anthropology), Kavalali analyzed water and clay samples to reconstruct environmental history and conducted ethnographic research to uncover oral tradition within the Mapuche community. The team of Vanderbilt students and faculty also used drone LiDAR with partners at the Universidad Autonoma and Universidad Austral de Chile and surveyed a series of Capuchin churches and residential schools across the Chilean-Argentine border that conducted forced assimilation of Indigenous communities from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

Fernando Martín Gou received funding to explore how institutions with historical legitimacy

and symbolic importance shape perceptions of what constitutes violations of democracy in Latin America. He conducted four focus groups in Argentina and four in Mexico to examine the issue in these two countries, which have different institutional structures and democratic trajectories. Gou also used an interactive research methodology, Q sorting, to have study participants rank and categorize various political actions based on their perceived democratic legitimacy. This approach allows Gou to capture the underlying logic behind individuals' categorizations of political actions as democratic or undemocratic.



Doctoral student in Anthropology **Emma Perea Rios** received funding to conduct an archaeological reconnaissance project in the Shunte and Mishollo Forest Preserve in Peru. While archaeological research in the Amazon has produced some of the most revolutionary data in recent decades, little is



known about the relationship between the cultural region of the Amazon and the neighboring Central Andes, in part because transitional zones, such as the eastern Andean slopes below the Amazon headwaters like the Shunte and Mishollo Forests, remain understudied. Her research addresses how pre-Hispanic societies adapted to and transformed Amazonian landscapes, in the context of interaction between highland and lowland groups. The project provided preliminary data for her dissertation research, allowing **Perea Rios** to build collaborations with Peruvian institutions, and contribute to cultural heritage preservation in San Martín.

Erica Scarpitti, doctoral student in Earth and Environmental Sciences, received funding for her project, “Timing and Mechanisms of Fluvial Responses to Climate and Land-Use Changes in the Southern Pantanal of Brazil.” As the world’s largest tropical wetland and one of the most biodiverse regions in South America, the Pantanal highlights the susceptibility of such ecosystems to anthropogenic pressures and climate change (Schulz et al., 2019). Scarpitti’s research investigated fluvial landscape variability in the Pantanal through analysis of sediment cores, geochemistry, remote sensing, and geochronological dating. Her study will provide data on the impacts of natural hydrological and climatic processes, historical land-use changes, and recent shifts in flooding and fire activity to better understand landscape evolution and ecosystem resilience.

In January 2024, two of the 2024 Simon Collier Travel Grant recipients presented their research to students and faculty. **Guilherme Fasolin** (doctoral student in Political Science) conducted research on the political economic of environmental policies in the Brazilian Amazon. **Jean-Paul Rojas** (doctoral student in Anthropology) shared the results of his preliminary research in Nicaragua’s Corn Islands, which involved residents of the islands in a community based ethnographic archaeological project.

Summer Funding Opportunities through CLACX

In Summer 2026, CLACX will offer funding for student summer research through **Simon Collier Travel Awards**. A historian of Chile with an expertise in Argentine tango, Simon Collier was director of Vanderbilt’s Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies and Chair of the Department of History. Simon Collier Travel Awards preferentially fund research in Chile and Argentina but may also be used elsewhere in Latin America. These awards are available to both graduate and undergraduate students. CLACX issues a call for summer awards applications each December and announces award recipients by March. For more information on CLACX funding opportunities, visit as.vanderbilt.edu/clacx/aid-and-awards.



SUMMER LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: Brazil

Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and CLACX collaborated again to host the "Summer in Brazil: Portuguese Language and Culture" program in São Paulo. The six-week intensive program is offered in partnership with CET Academic Programs. The program received 35 applicants and enrolled 25 students from across the country.

Students in the program take advanced or intermediate Portuguese language courses, as well as "Contemporary Social Issues in Brazil" (PORT 6150). CET faculty, supervised by CET Brazil Academic Director Felipe **Leandro de Jesus**, teach the courses. **Megwen Loveless** (Tulane) served as US faculty director of the program, providing students with support and guidance. Students lived in São Paulo's Perdizes neighborhood, with some students opting for homestays with local families and others sharing apartments with local Brazilian students. In addition to coursework, students participated in several excursions to historical and cultural sites in São Paulo, including the Museu Afro-Brazil, Museu de Arte São Paulo, Memorial da Resistencia, Avenida Paulista, and the Soccer Museum. Students also traveled to the State of Rio de Janeiro to spend a weekend in the colonial city of Paraty.

CLACX awarded FLAS fellowships to 12 students to attend the program ([see page 44](#)). **Hannah Palmer**, Assistant Director for Academic Projects and Programs in Tulane's Stone Center for Latin American Studies, worked closely with **Hector Cruz-Feliciano**, Director of Latin American Programs at CET to organize the six-week program. **Súlia Folli**, Program Director at CET Brazil organized Brazilian faculty, designed orientation, and hosted extracurricular events with help from Resident Director **Ariane Torres Facci**, Assistant Resident Director **Emile Ribeiro**, and Resident Coordinator **Leandro Tardin**.



Thanks to Hannah Palmer for contributing this content



SUMMER LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: Mayan Language Institute

Administered by Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin America and CLACX, the Mayan Language Institute (MLI) took place in Guatemala from June 21-August 2, 2025. This program immerses students in the intensive study of K'iche' Mayan or Kaqchikel Mayan. **Telma Can Pixabaj**, Investigadora Asociada at CIMSUR-UNAM, and **Malcolm Miguel Botto**, Program Coordinator for International Study Programs at Brigham Young University, both returned this summer to direct the K'iche' program. **Manuela (Nela) Tahay** has served as Resident Director for many years and coordinated the team of K'iche' instructors from Nahualá.

The K'iche' program experienced robust enrollment in 2025, with 9 students (4 returnees and 5 new students). Three were supported through Vanderbilt FLAS fellowships: **Willie Hurst**, **Joshua Lieberstein**, and **Cesar Ovando**. **Sydney Humphrey** (MA student in Spanish Linguistics at the University of Alabama and 2023 CLACX FLAS Fellow)

returned as the Assistant Director of the program. For the first time, the program was divided between Quetzaltenango (also known as Xela, short for Xe Laju' Noj or "Below the ten spiritual guides/ mountains") and the small community of El Novillero, an aldea of Santa Lucía Utatlán in Sololá. In Quetzaltenango, the program continues to partner with the nonprofit organization DESGUA (Desarrollo





Guatemala Scholars' Network Hosts 8th Conference in Antigua

In July 2025, the Guatemala Scholars Network hosted its eighth conference in Antigua. Approximately 150 people attended the 2-day conference which featured a diverse set of panel discussions ([view the program](#)).

On July 8, two days prior to the conference, Guatemala was rocked by an earthquake of 5.7 magnitude. It was followed by several aftershocks and was responsible for several deaths, hundreds of injuries, and severe damage to buildings. The epicenter of the quake was located southwest of Guatemala City and close to Antigua. Due to mandatory post-quake infrastructural inspections at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), where the conference reception is normally held, conference organizers quickly pivoted to host the reception at Restaurante El Comalote.

Students in the Mayan Language Institute (see opposite page) and students enrolled in a study abroad program led by **Lauren Heidbrink** at California State University-Long Beach were among the conference attendees. **Hannah Palmer**, who organizes the MLI, described it as “a truly wonderful professional experience for both our students and our instructors.” One of the students enrolled in the MLI, **(Alice) Ngoc Diep**, put together a [video](#) highlighting the MLI's participation in the conference.

The GSN brings together over 400 scholars from Guatemala, Mexico, North America, and Europe with the mission to create linkages between scholars conducting research or leading educational programs in Guatemala and to elevate the voices of Guatemalan academics internationally. CLACX serves as the administrative home of the GSN; its listserv is managed through CLACX, **Avery Dickins de Girón** leads the GSN and **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** runs registration and coordinates logistics for the conference, which is organized by the GSN board.

Sostenible para Guatemala), which creates jobs and educational opportunities for Guatemalans. Many thanks to La Red staff members **Willy Barreno**, **Rosita Rabanales**, **Mildreth Barrios**, and **Ramona Guzmán**, President of DESGUA. In El Novillero, students worked with a group of community members led by **Silvia Can**. In both communities, students lived with local families, heard from experts advocating for K'iche' Maya peoples, and took educational excursions to K'iche' speaking communities.

The Kaqchikel program hosted 9 students this year in Ciudad Vieja, outside of Antigua. Once again, **Judie Maxwell** directed the program with the assistance of **Ambrocía (Ixnal) Cuma Chavez** and returning Assistant Director **Emma Kainz**.

Both programs participated in the Guatemala Scholars Network Conference in Antigua, Guatemala, July 10 – 11. Four K'iche' program participants presented their work, and Kaqchikel instructors organized two panels focused on gender in Maya communities. The groups shared a celebratory dinner together at the restaurant Itzam. Thanks to **Hannah Palmer** at Tulane University for overseeing all aspects of the program and to **Ambrocía (Ixnal) Cuma Chavez** for organizing all in-country planning and administration.

Thanks to Sydney Humphrey for providing this content



Congratulations Graduates!

CLACX hosted a reception on May 8 in honor of our graduating students. Graduates were also honored at a ceremony in Langford Auditorium on May 7. That event was hosted by the Student Center for Belonging and Communities in lieu of Raices y Sueños, which recognized the achievements of graduating Latinx students for several years. Prior to graduation, CLACX hosted a photo shoot for our graduating students at the Wyatt Center and supported a celebration honoring graduates on April 18 organized by the Mexican American Student Association and the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA).

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MAJORS:

Cesar Palacios graduated with majors in Latino and Latina Studies and Child Studies. He has accepted a position as a teacher in Metro Nashville Public Schools beginning August 2025.

Adrián Quintana graduated with majors in Latino and Latina Studies and Neuroscience. Following graduation, he will be a Research Assistant in the Arbab Lab at Harvard Boston Children's Hospital.

Hedid Rojas graduated with majors in Latino and Latina Studies and Psychology and plans to become a social worker.

Pedro Rosales Díaz graduated with majors in Latino and Latina Studies and Medicine, Health, and Society. He will pursue a doctorate in Chicane Studies at The Ohio State University.

Vanessa Schor Guerrero graduated with majors in Latino and Latina Studies and Child Studies. She has accepted a position as a Primary School Spanish Assistant Teacher at the Washington International School in Washington, DC.

Shalini Thinakaran graduated with majors in Latin American Studies and Computer Science and minors in English and Data Science. She has accepted a position at Adobe as a Software Engineer in New York City.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MINORS:

Niklas Cooper graduated with a minor in Latino and Latina Studies, and a major in Medicine Health and Society. After taking a gap year, he plans to attend medical school.

Danni Chacón graduated with minors in Latin American Studies and Data Sciences, and a major in Political Science. She has accepted a position as a Technology Consultant at FTI's San Francisco office and then plans to apply to Law School.

Nicole Hill graduated with minors in Latin American Studies and Business and majors in Economics and Mathematics. She has accepted a position at Boston Consulting Group in Denver.

Lauren Johnson graduated with a minor in Latino and Latina Studies and majors in Human and Organizational Development (International Leadership Track) and Spanish. She has accepted a Princeton in Latin America Fellowship with Dr. Miguel Canela Lázaro in Provincia Hermanas Mirabal in the Dominican Republic for the 2025-2026 Fellowship Year.

Qihao (Justin) Yang graduated with a minor in Latin American Studies.



Diana Zamarripa graduated with a minor in Latin American Studies and a major in Medicine, Health, and Society.

CLACX awarded Graduate Certificates to **Julia Landivar Donato**, who graduated with a Master's in Public Health and held an academic year FLAS fellowship for 2024-2025, and to **Brayan Serratos** who received a PhD in Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature in August 2025. Serratos worked with CLACX to provide Spanish language translations for signage at the Parthenon and has taken a position as Assistant Professor of Spanish at Kalamazoo College beginning in June 2025.

Photos: CLACX congratulated our students and welcomed their families at a reception the day prior to commencement.





NORMA ANTILLÓN AWARD

Cesar Palacios received the 2025 Norma Antillón Award, which is given to a student that exemplifies the traits most admired in Norma, the center's administrator from 1986–2011: her character, collegiality, and concern for others. Palacios was recognized for his outstanding

contributions to CLACX, the Vanderbilt community, and K–12 initiatives, as well as his deep commitment to these values. Upon learning that he had been selected for the award, Palacios responded, "CLACX has been instrumental to my undergrad career and I am incredibly grateful for the support, mentorship, and opportunities I received. I look forward to staying connected through the Educator's Book Club and in my new role as a public school teacher with MNPS."



Pedro Rosales-Diaz successfully defended his Latino and Latina Studies Honors Thesis with Highest Honors on April 11, 2025. His thesis, "La luz y la tumba de las xicanas: The Historical, Literary, and Theoretical Rises of the Chicane Feminist Movement," was under the direction of **Gretchen Selcke** and second reader **Cynthia Cyrus**. It examines Chicane history through literature reviews, scholarly works, and contemporary novels to provide a more expanded representation of the Chicane Feminist Movement and its associated frameworks. Pedro is pursuing a doctorate in Chicane Studies at The Ohio State University.

Alumni News

Carlos Caballero, who graduated in 2024 with majors in Latin American Studies and English will attend Harvard Law School. Caballero was nominated for both the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship and the Samvid Scholarship.

Nathan Dize, Assistant Professor of French, Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, published an **article** about anti-Haitian rhetoric in US politics in *The Conversation* the put anti-Haitian rhetoric in the US in a historical context.



CLACX and VAHLA Partner for Reunion Weekend

In November, CLACX welcomed alumni back to campus for Reunion Weekend in partnership with VAHLA, the Vanderbilt Association of Hispanic and Latinx Alumni. The event attracted a lively crowd of alumni, faculty, and current students. To the delight of many alumni who had him as a professor, **Marshall Eakin** was the featured speaker. Eakin provided a summary of the center's history within the context of larger political shifts and shared personal stories of his career at Vanderbilt. VAHLA president **Rosalinda Mendez** presented a gift on behalf of VAHLA to Eakin. Thanks to **Jess Abbattista**, Director of Affinity Groups in Vanderbilt's Alumni Office, and their team for working with CLACX to host the event.



CLACX Hosts Annual Summer Educator Institute in Guatemala



The 2025 K-12 Summer Educator Institute, “Tejiendo Saberes: Indigenous Knowledge and Practices in Guatemala,” took 16 teachers from across the country to Guatemala for ten days in June. Enrollment in the institute was highly competitive, with only 16 teachers selected of 110 applicants. Participant travel was subsidized by Title VI funds, in line with our mission as a NRC to provide continuing education for K-12 educators.

The immersive experience was designed to support and strengthen participants’ classroom teaching by introducing them to Mayan educational practices, Indigenous perspectives, and Guatemala’s cultural heritage. The culmination of the institute was the creation of curricular materials by the educators. This was the third installment in a four-year institute series hosted in collaboration with Tulane University’s Stone Center for Latin American Studies and the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Arizona.

Activities incorporated hands-on engagement and community-based learning through excursions

and workshops with Mayan educators, knowledge keepers, and community leaders. A cultural walking tour of Antigua’s World Heritage sites introduced teachers to Guatemalan history with visits to City Hall Palace, Fountain of the Sirens, Royal Palace, San José Cathedral, the Maya Jades Museum, and Paseo de los Museos at Hotel Casa Santo Domingo. Participants engaged in an interactive chocolate-making experience in the town of San Juan del Obispo and visited a local coffee plantation, “De la Gente,” in San Miguel Escobar. A visit to the Maya school Oxlajuj B’atz in Sacatepéquez introduced the educators to a curriculum grounded in Guatemala’s intercultural context and community traditions. Attendees learned about the protection and preservation of ancestral Maya weaving as intellectual property, along with community-led programs focused on medicinal plants and economic empowerment through a workshop at the AFEDES weaving collective (Asociación Femenina para el Desarrollo de Sacatepéquez).

The itinerary also included a guided tour of Iximche with archaeologist **Laura Gamez** (University of Pittsburgh) who gave teachers an overview of the Maya calendar, Pitz/Pok-a-Tok ballgame, and the site’s historical significance. In Xela, the group visited the Chico Mendes Reforestation Project for a presentation on reforestation strategies and medicinal plant use. They also took a tour of DESGUA (Desarrollo Sostenible para Guatemala) and learned about initiatives that support economic and educational development for migrants and Mayan communities in Guatemala and the diaspora. Participants ended the week with a trip to Chichicastenango, where they enjoyed a traditional lunch at Proyecto Tux. Founded by author **María Jacinta Xón**, the project focuses on pre-Hispanic culinary research and indigenous food



sustainability. The program concluded with a visit to “Los Próximos Pasos,” a local high school where students performed traditional marimba music. These experiences allowed educators to witness the ingenuity and cultural richness of Guatemala’s Indigenous communities, while also grappling with contemporary challenges such as environmental justice, educational access, and cultural preservation.

Using the knowledge gained through the institute, teachers produced curriculum projects with the guidance of **Brooke Grant**, Senior Professor of the Practice in Teacher Education at Tulane University. Participants are slated to present the results of these curricular projects at a virtual 2026 Summer Institute. Curriculum projects include:

- *Mesoamerican Cultures: Maya Unit*
- *Collecting Coffee: A Study of the Global Economy through the Perspectives of Guatemalan Coffee Farmers*
- *La Abuela Sabia*
- *Food Stories: A Global Exploration for High School Multilingual Learners*
- *The Language of Me: Exploring Identity; What Effects Do People Have on the Environment?*

- *Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Cultural Revitalization & Self-Determination*
- *Harvesting Knowledge: Agricultural Practices & Indigenous Wisdom in Guatemala*
- *Beyond the Peace Accords: Maya Memory, Resistance, and the Fight for Sovereignty*
- *Community Organizing: Changemakers in Guatemala*
- *Testimonio as Personal Statement Writing*
- *Guatemala in Focus*

The success of the institute was the culmination of several months of planning and coordination. **Luisa Mattos** (CLACX), **Cynthia Garza** (Tulane), and **Katrina Dillon** (University of Arizona) organized the institute. Garza traveled with the teachers to Guatemala, along with institutional partners who were instrumental in providing in-country assistance: **Brooke Grant** (Tulane University), **Gretel Acosta** (Tulane University), and **Alvaro Diaz** (University of Arizona).

Thanks to Luisa Mattos for this content



CLACX Collaborates with the Frist Art Museum on Exhibits, Community Programs, and Spanish Language Translations

CLACX was a program sponsor for two of the Frist Art Museum's exhibits this year: *¡Printing the Revolution! The Rise and Impact of Chicano Graphics, 1965–Now* and *María Magdalena Campos-Pons: Behold*. The first opened on June 28 and featured 119 works ranging from traditional screen prints to digital graphics and augmented reality works, to site-specific installations by more than 74 artists of Mexican descent and their cross-cultural collaborators. The exhibit examined how graphic arts have been used to build community,

engage the public around social concerns, and wrestle with shifting notions of the term Chicano, adopted by Mexican Americans in the 1960s and 1970s as a sign of a new political and cultural identity.

In addition to sponsoring the exhibit, CLACX collaborated with the Frist Art Museum on several events. In recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Frist Art Museum hosted an evening community program in September focused on the exhibit. It featured a gallery talk by Mellon Assistant Professor of Latinx studies, **Hilario Lomelí**, who



Didier William spoke about his paintings and artistic process with Vanderbilt faculty, students and visiting speakers in March 2025.



discussed the radical politics of Chicana feminism through the visual artwork of Ester Hernández. Centering the figure of the *chingona* ("bad ass" or "bitch"), he traced the queer, liberatory, and militant imaginaries in Hernández's tender and urgent artwork while emphasizing her life-long participation in revolutionary social activism and organizing. Following Lomelí's talk, participants were invited to take a Spanish language tour of the exhibition, guided by a Frist Art Museum docent. The evening concluded with a chocolate tasting and talk by historian Sophia Rea that traced the history of chocolate from Mesoamerica to the Spanish empire and the modern West. On September 20, the Frist Art Museum's Chief Curator Mark



Scala led a tour of the exhibit for 25 CLACX students and faculty.

María Magdalena Campos-Pons: Behold featured three decades of work by **María Magdalena Campos-Pons**, Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair Professor of Fine Arts at Vanderbilt. Hauntingly beautiful and emotionally charged, *Behold* evokes the history of diaspora and present-day realities of cultural displacement, labor and race, and motherhood and spirituality through Campos-Pons's layered identity as a Cuban woman with ancestral roots in the Yoruba culture of West Africa, as well as Spain and China. The exhibit opened on September 26 with a performance by Campos-Pons followed by a reception in her

honor and ran through January 5, 2025.

In addition to these program sponsorships, CLACX organized several events around *M. Florine Démosthène and Didier William: What the Body Carries*. The exhibit featured works by these two Haitian American artists that explored how immigrant bodies carry memories and heritage while simultaneously embodying a new, hybrid reality. The multimedia artworks presented in the exhibition reflect Démosthène's and William's lived experiences and depict the complexity of personhood through multiple forms referencing the divine twins of Haitian Vodou and Marassa Jumeaux. Frist Art Museum Senior Curator **Katie Delmez** described the significance of the exhibit: "In a context where immigrant narratives have often been oversimplified in the media, we hope this exhibition gives more expansive and authentic insights into how their families' relocations to the US have shaped the creative practices of two artists making their marks on the contemporary landscape, as well as how personal stories shape our communities, survival strategies, and overall vitality." CLACX Assistant Professor of the Practice **Jesús Ruiz** worked with Frist Interpretation Director Meagan Rust to provide an external review for an interactive timeline of Haitian history that accompanied the exhibit. As part of Caribbean Week, Vanderbilt students, faculty and visiting speakers were invited to a private tour of the exhibit with William and Delmez ([see page 2](#)).

CLACX was the Spanish language sponsor for *Behold and ¡Printing the Revolution!*, as well as *Journey through Japan: Myths to Manga* that ran from October 25–February 16. For the upcoming year, CLACX will support Spanish language signage for the following exhibits: *In Her Place: Nashville Artists in the Twenty-First Century* (January 30–April 26, 2026), *An Indigenous Present* (June 26–September 27, 2026), and *Shimmer: Dreaming the Post-Human* (September 25, 2026–January 3, 2027).



Engine for Art, Democracy, and Justice and CLACX Partner on Community Programming for Vanessa Charlot's Exhibition *Between Rivers and Revolutions*

In March, the Engine for Art, Democracy, and Justice (EADJ) opened a new exhibition by Haitian American photographer Vanessa Charlot, *Between Rivers and Revolutions*. Charlot's work centers the sacred, the ancestral, and the revolutionary, drawing visual connections across time, place, and memory within the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Diasporic experience. *Between Rivers and Revolutions* featured a striking collection of black-and-white photographs that poetically trace diasporic journeys through the Mississippi Delta, the shores of Haiti, and the coastlines of Florida. Included in the center's inaugural Caribbean Week programming ([see page 2](#)), CLACX collaborated with the EADJ to host an opening reception with Charlot in Begonia Labs on March 28 following a panel discussion featuring local HBCU students. Charlot spoke at the Frist Art Museum the following day. Also as part of Caribbean Week, students in **Lidiana de Moraes'** course, "Afro-Diasporic Legacies" (LAS 2150W) took a guided tour of *Between Rivers and Revolutions*. The tour resonated with the course's themes, including Black identity, resistance, migration, and spirituality, and encouraged thoughtful dialogue among the students. CLACX extends sincere thanks to the EADJ for their ongoing collaboration in supporting learning beyond the classroom and for spotlighting voices from across the African Diaspora.

TEACHER ADVISORY BOARD

The Teacher Advisory Board is a dynamic group of five passionate educators from several schools in Middle Tennessee. Led by **Luisa Mattos**, the board meets bi-monthly during the academic year to engage in thoughtful discussions on key issues impacting education. These conversations cover a wide range of topics, including curriculum development, strategies for improving student engagement, institutional support, and other important areas of focus. By working together, the Teacher Advisory Board strives to create innovative solutions and actionable outcomes that enhance the quality of education for their own students and for schools across the region.

A heartfelt thank you to the members of the 2024-2025 Teacher Advisory Board: **Raeanne Carella** (Lebanon High School, Wilson County), **Addison Barrack** (Antioch High School, MNPS), **Kendall Headley** (Hillsboro High School, MNPS), **Julia E. Podesta** (Smyrna High School, Rutherford County), and **Kendra Standberry** (Edmondson Elementary, MNPS).

Luisa Mattos Represents CLACX at the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) Conference

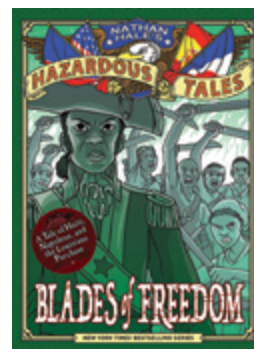
Luisa Mattos attended the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conference in Boston in November 2024 at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center. In collaboration with other Latin American centers, CLACX held a booth at NCSS to provide conference attendees resources to enhance their teaching of Latin American Studies content in K-12 classrooms. More than 200 educators stopped by the booth, which offered a comprehensive selection of materials.

Prior to the conference, Mattos attended a meeting for Outreach Coordinators, area studies directors, and administrators at Title VI institutions from all world areas. That meeting was attended by **Brian Cwiek** and **Mark Bladel**, officers in the International Foreign Language and Education (IFLE) department at the US Department of Education. **Elsa Wiehe**, Outreach Manager at the Boston University African Studies Center and **Lindsay Moats**, Outreach Officer at the Harvard Center for African Studies, hosted the meeting.

Educators Book Club

In the Fall of 2024 and Spring of 2025, **Luisa Mattos** hosted monthly meetings for the CLACX Educators Book Club. This year, Mattos expanded the club to include non-local educators by creating a hybrid format for meeting, in which some participants joined in person and others joined virtually. Twenty-six educators from 12 different schools across Metro Nashville, Williamson County, and Rutherford County in Tennessee and 10 educators from Massachusetts, Illinois, Connecticut, New York, Georgia, and California formed the club.

The book selections, chosen by the participating teachers, included *We Will Be Jaguars* by Nemonte Nemquimo, which explores Indigenous activism in the Ecuadorian Amazon; *Maní Semilla Finds Her Quetzal Voice*, highlighting the experiences of a Guatemalan teenager; *The Wind Knows My Name* by Isabel Allende; and *Blades of Freedom*, a graphic novel that introduces readers to Caribbean studies through the Haitian Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase. The reading list also featured *On the Move*, a book addressing climate change in Central America, among other thought-provoking titles.



Metro Nashville Public Schools and CLACX Partner to Bring Educational Programs to Teachers and Students

For over a decade, CLACX has partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) to support professional development for teachers and engage students in educational activities. This year's programs included student-focused activities at Charlotte Park Elementary School, White's Creek High School, Overton High School, and our ongoing partnership with the Office of English Learners. For the 2024-2025 school year, MNPS identified over 21,000 students as English Learners, representing at least 26% of students in the district. Over one-third of MNPS students identify as Latino, Latina, or Latinx and several Indigenous Latin American languages are spoken by MNPS students.

STEM Night and Multicultural Night at Charlotte Park Elementary School

In early February, CLACX partnered with Vanderbilt Student Volunteers for Science (VSVS) to participate in Charlotte Park Elementary's STEM night. This event was part of VSVS's ongoing K-12 outreach initiatives aimed at promoting science engagement among young learners across MNPS and was a pilot activity for a new collaboration between VSVS with the Latin American Garden.

Luisa Mattos, Avery Dickins de Girón, and Molly Wollschleger hosted an interactive booth featuring educational activities

inspired by the Latin American Garden. Over 50 Charlotte Park students and their families stopped by the booth to sample *yerba mate* and *pericón* teas and learn about the importance of milkweed plants for the life cycle and migration of the monarch butterfly. A maze linking plants to different geographical areas of the Americas and coloring sheets brought the content to life for younger students.

On May 2, CLACX again partnered with Charlotte Park for its annual Multicultural Night (MCN), a vibrant fundraising event that highlights the diversity of the school community. Families shared traditional dishes, wore cultural attire, displayed posters and flags, and presented music and artifacts that reflected their heritage or homeland. CLACX, with the support of Peabody undergraduate and student-teacher **Cesar**



Palacios, hosted a booth that featured country boxes from Latin America. Attendees also sampled teas and picked up activity sheets, both which were requested by Charlotte Park teachers based on their positive reception at STEM Night.

Spanish-speaking volunteers played a vital role in these activities, as many students at Charlotte Park Elementary come from Latin American backgrounds. The presence of bilingual educators ensured that the information was accessible and inclusive, enhancing the learning experiences for participants and fostering deeper connections between CLACX.



International Day at Whites Creek High School

Whites Creek High School teacher **Helder Monette-Weil** invited **Luisa Mattos** to speak to students for the school's International Day on April 2. Mattos shared information about CLACX's work as a National Resource Center and presented content about Latin America and the Caribbean with both students and faculty. The highlight of her visit was the school's initiative to offer extra credit to students who presented three facts about CLACX and its resources, which encouraged enthusiasm and active participation among the students. Given the success of the event, CLACX was asked to collaborate with the school next year on activities for Hispanic Heritage Month and Día de los Muertos. Mattos expressed her gratitude for the warm hospitality with which she was received at Whites Creek and the opportunity to connect with such engaged learners.

Overton High School Students and Teachers Learn about Latin American Plants

Greg Smith and **Ryan Bowen**, science teachers at Overton High School, invited **Avery Dickins de Girón** to give a presentation for students in the Interdisciplinary Science and Research Program (ISR) in April. Her talk introduced students to the history and culture of the Americas through several plants, including epazote, potato, cassava, and cacao. The classroom session brought the Latin American Garden, which is dormant in April, to the students through plant samples and teas. Students sampled pericón tea made from dried marigold leaves harvested from the Latin American Garden, smelled pungent stems of epazote, and passed around chuño, freeze-dried potatoes from the Andes. They also learned about the importance of medicinal plants in the Americas and around the world.

Dickins de Girón returned to Overton in May to lead a half-day professional development workshop for 8 teachers. The group of teachers, who span several disciplines, recently established a garden on campus. Dickins de Girón introduced content on specific plants that can be grown in middle-Tennessee and discussed how those plants can be integrated into teaching curriculum in ways that interest students. Similar to the presentation for ISR students, teachers examined plants and sampled teas to bring the content to life. Ongoing aspects of the partnership include the donation of plants and seeds from the Latin American Garden to Overton and storing selected plants from the Latin American Garden in Overton's greenhouses during the winter months.

Mattos Serves on MNPS English Learners Fellowship Scoring Committee to Support Future EL Educators

CLACX Program Coordinator **Luisa Mattos** was invited to serve on the committee charged with selecting ten educators for the 2025-2026 English Learners Fellowship cohort. Mattos joined the EL Fellowship scoring committee at the MNPS Wellness Center in April to help evaluate candidates for this

impactful yearlong program. Fellows selected for the program participate in professional learning, design advocacy projects that benefit multilingual students and their families and then implement those projects throughout the course of the yearlong program. Mattos was honored to contribute to the initiative that strengthen CLACX's partnerships with MNPS and encourage educational equity and community engagement.

Gretchen Selcke visited Lockeland Design Center's elementary Spanish classes to speak to students about how she uses Spanish in her profession. Students developed interview questions in Spanish for Spanish-speaking students in MNPS.

Taller de Papel Picado: A K-12 Workshop

CLACX invited Mexican **Fátima Alejandra González Solano**, Professor at Universidad de Guadalajara and **Rodolfo Sánchez Zamarrón**, Coordinator of the *Licenciatura en Diseño de Artesanía* program at the same institution, to lead a workshop for K-12 educators in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. Twenty-eight educators from 17 institutions, including MNPS, the Nashville Symphony, and Voces de Nashville attended the "Taller de Papel Picado."

Solano and Sánchez Zamarrón began the workshop with a theoretical introduction to the history of the craft, the regions

in which it is most popular, its cultural meanings, and the various techniques used to create it in Mexico. Participants then engaged in a hands-on lesson in which they designed their own *papel picado* pieces. The workshop provided educators with techniques that can be that incorporated into their classrooms for Hispanic Heritage Month or as part of multidisciplinary lessons throughout the year. MNPS teachers who attended the workshop received a certificate counting toward their MNPS professional development hours. Thanks to **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** for her work coordinating the visit and **Luisa Mattos** for organizing the workshop.





CLACX Hosts Screening of *I'm Still Here* at the Belcourt Theatre

On February 8, CLACX and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese hosted a screening of the Academy Award-nominated Brazilian film *I'm Still Here* at the Belcourt Theatre. The Academy-Award nominated film was introduced by **Benjamin Legg** (Spanish and Portuguese) and attended by several Vanderbilt students and faculty.

CLACX Donates Books from its Lending Library to Community Organizations

As part of the center's ongoing effort to increase access to Latin American and Latinx literary resources, CLACX donated books from our lending library to Scarritt Bennett Center, Conexión Américas, and Aventura Community School. CLACX Program Coordinator **Luisa Mattos** led the initiative with assistance from Alma Paz-Sanmiguel and Edward Wright-Ríos. The donated collections included several prestigious Américas Award-winning titles for children and young adults, including *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo, *The Other Half of Happy* by Rebeca Balcárcel, *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi, *A Hammock Between the Mangoes* edited by Thomas Colchie, *Silver People: Voices from the Panama Canal* by Margarita Engle, *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh, *Mexican WhiteBoy* by Matt de la Peña, and *Yo no soy tu perfecta hija mexicana* by Erika Sánchez. Additional selections included Spanish-language titles: *Robo en la Noche* by Kristy Placido, *Esperanza renace* by Pam Muñoz Ryan, *Un Regalo para Abuelita* by Nancy Luenn, *Mario y el agujero en el cielo* by Elizabeth Rusch, and *Pasando página* by Sonia Sotomayor. Through these donations, CLACX aims to inspire a love for Latin American literature and strengthen connections with educational organizations in Nashville.

ReadWorks and CLACX Support Reading Comprehension Across the United States

CLACX has partnered with ReadWorks, an edtech non-profit dedicated to supporting reading comprehension since 2017. CLACX initially produced content for their "Article a Day" series and translated English language texts to Spanish, but since 2023 the collaboration has evolved to include Vanderbilt students enrolled in **Chalene Helmuth's** SPAN 3891 course. Working with **Natalie Karimian**, Content and Curricular Supports Developer for ReadWorks, students in Helmuth's class create Spanish language texts. This shift aligns with the organization's mission to target low-income school districts in the US, many of which have high enrollments of native Spanish language speakers.

Since the partnership began, 325,019 teachers in 71,853 schools nationwide have used content produced by CLACX, and over 1.4 million students have been given digital assignments containing CLACX content.

Community Partnerships



CLACX staff and affiliated faculty were invited to Conexión Américas' annual "The Latin Party" in September where they enjoyed a live salsa band and Latin street food while supporting the nonprofit dedicated to assisting Latino families in middle Tennessee. In April, Conexión extended invitations to CLACX staff for Cafecito, the organization's annual fundraiser; CLACX Assistant Director **Gretchen Selcke** and Professor of the Practice **Jesús Ruiz** represented the center.

CLACX again served as a Silver Sponsor for *The Tennessean's* "Latino Tennessee Voices" event in October as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. The annual series features community members speaking about their life experiences and is hosted by David Plaza, Director of Opinion and Engagement at USA TODAY NETWORK, Tennessee. The 2024 speaker line-up included **Stephanie Amador**, photographer for *The Tennessean*; **Jacob Aparicio**, communications director at Tennessee Human Rights Commission; **Viridiana de Leon**, founder of Nash Latina Bosses; **Sandra Sepulveda**, the first Latina on the Metro Council of Nashville-Davidson County; and **Diego Eguiarte**, founder and CEO of Nuestro Financial.

KEFI ART COLLECTIVE HOSTS SUGAR SKULL WORKSHOP ON CAMPUS

Students on Vanderbilt's campus also participated in activities for Día de los Muertos. The Kefi Art Collective hosted a workshop on October 29 and 30 that brought students and community members together to make sugar skulls. The Collective hosts monthly art initiatives to increase the accessibility and presence of art on campus. CLACX was invited to partner on the event, with its organizers noting that "CLACX's support is essential to the success of the event as it emphasizes cultural awareness and celebration of diverse heritages" and "creates a more enriching and educational experience for students...fostering a sense of community." CLACX helped encourage turnout for the event and provided *agua fresca* for the workshop. Also on campus, CLACX Professor of the Practice **Jesús Ruiz** gave an engaging talk to Vanderbilt Residential Colleges, linking altar traditions to themes of memory and community.



Nashville Symphony Hosts Concert and Community Activities Honoring Día de los Muertos

The Nashville Symphony also hosted a program recognizing Día de los Muertos on October 27. Prior to the concert, community members were invited to participate in free family-friendly activities including crafts and an interactive “Instrument Petting Zoo.” **Luisa Mattos** and **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** hosted a booth for CLACX. Visitors stopping by the center’s table were treated to glow-in-the-dark tattoos and had the opportunity to peruse a selection of books on Day of the Dead from CLACX’s K-12 Lending Library as well as bilingual educational materials on the holiday. The centerpiece of the program was a performance by the Nashville Symphony that included traditional folk tunes and modern arrangements of beloved classics in celebration of the holiday. **Pablo Zamora Mata** conducted the concert, which was accompanied by performances by actors **Andrea Hernandez** (Ballet Folklórico Sol de México) and **René Millán** (Lecturer of Theater and Acting at Vanderbilt).

CLACX Participates in Cheekwood’s 25th Annual Día de los Muertos Festival

Cheekwood Estate & Gardens hosted its 25th annual *Día de los Muertos* festival in 2024 on November 2 and 3. CLACX has participated in the festival since 2009: a member of the center serves on the organizing committee, center staff and often students create an altar, and educational materials created through the center are distributed at the event. For the past two years **Luisa Mattos** has participated in the monthly organizational meetings. This year, she and **Alma Paz-Sanmiguel** designed an altar honoring the cultural and spiritual significance of the holiday and involved student volunteers in its creation. Other festival highlights included traditional music and dance, hands-on art activities, Latin American cuisine, and a lively marketplace.

Since its inception twenty-five years ago, Cheekwood’s *Día de los Muertos* festival now spans two days and attendance has doubled. Eight thousand people attended the event in 2024, reflecting the importance of Latin American cultural traditions to Nashville’s growing Latinx population.

Thanks to all who contributed to the altar, and especially to **Molly Wollschleger**, international education master’s student in Peabody, who staffed the altar during the event, explaining its significance to attendees.

Global Education Center Brings Danzas Genéricas de Colombia to Nashville with Support from CLACX



CLACX supported a residency by Danzas Genéricas de Colombia hosted by the Global Education Center. Originally slated for the spring, the event was postponed to June due to funding shortfalls in the arts community. The residency started on Friday, June 13 with “Colombian Fire,” which included a performance by the dance group, followed by a salsa workshop. The evening featured a social dance with retro and contemporary salsa tunes that packed the Global Education Center’s Charlotte Avenue space. On Saturday, Danzas Genericas de Colombia gave an outstanding concert and engaged the audience with a range of ballet folklórico performances at the 4th Story Theatre. The weekend also included three workshops that introduced the Global Education Center master dancers to new choreography, which they will weave into their repertoires. South Arts provided the majority of the funding for the residency, with additional support coming from CLACX, Tennessee Arts Commission, Metro Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, La Cara Productions, and West End Methodist Church.





THANK YOU TO OUR EVALUATION TEAM

CLACX thanks our Evaluation team for providing assessment and ongoing feedback for our programs. Since 2010, **Xiu Cravens**, Associate Dean for International Students and Affairs and Professor of the Practice in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations in Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education, has served as the center's Evaluator. In 2022, CLACX expanded our assessment team to include an External Evaluator for our Title VI grant projects. **Amanda Wolfe**, Assistant Dean of Global Programs at University of Arizona Law serves as the External Evaluator. Both Cravens and Wolfe work with CLACX Executive Director **Avery Dickins de Girón** to develop feasible and meaningful assessment protocols to measure the impact of CLACX programs on the university, the Nashville community, the Southeast region, and the nation. **Luisa Mattos**, CLACX Program Coordinator, implements assessments and oversees summary reports with guidance from Cravens and support from the Evaluation Intern, who is a graduate student in the International Education Policy and Management Program. This year, **Molly Wollschleger** served as our Evaluation Intern. Thanks to Wollschleger for her dedication to CLACX, including the initial development of summary briefs outlining the impact of CLACX programs. Check out the briefs here: [University Impact](#), [K-16 Impact](#), and [Public Engagement Impact](#).

CLACX Continues Partnership with Nashville Parthenon

Since 2023, CLACX has provided translation of selected signage and exhibition materials into Spanish for the Parthenon. **Brayan Serratos**, doctoral student in Spanish and Portuguese, translated signage for the "Contemporary Kumiko Exhibit" which featured work by David Gootnick and for Christy Lee Waters photographic exhibit, "The Muses" that opened in December 2024 and ran through early June. In 2025, Serratos did

Spanish translations for Alan LeQuire's "Monumental Figures" exhibit, which features several activists, musicians, and athletes, native to Nashville on a monumental scale. Serratos also worked with the Parthenon to provide a lengthier translation for the related historical exhibit, "Goddess in Progress," that traces the story behind the construction of Nashville's *Athena Parthenos*. LeQuire won the commission from the Parthenon in 1982

by proposing a historically accurate replica of the ancient statue, which he spent 8 years creating. The exhibit delves into the challenges he faced in constructing a full-scale, indoor replica of the Greek statue. Both exhibits opened on June 13; "Monumental Figures" runs through September 21 and "Goddess in Progress" will be on display through mid-2026.

Vanderbilt Launches the Center for Global Democracy

The newly launched Center for Global Democracy (CGD) builds on the influential legacy of LAPOP Lab and its founder, the late Mitchell A. Seligson, expanding its internationally recognized research on democratic attitudes and behaviors. Housed within CGD, LAPOP Lab continues to lead the AmericasBarometer, a gold-standard regional survey of public opinion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Under the leadership of Noam Lupu and following a decade of direction by Liz Zechmeister, CGD is extending its reach globally, while remaining deeply engaged with the region through new studies and collaborations and continued methodological training through its Summer School on International Survey Methods. CGD's mission is to generate rigorous, policy-relevant research that strengthens democratic governance in Latin America and beyond.

CGD congratulates its newest doctors Emily Noh and Meg Frost.

New lab research:

- **Disaster and Political Trust: Evidence from the 2017 Mexico City Earthquake**

Margaret H. Frost, SangEun Kim, Carlos Scartascini, Paula Zamora, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

A 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Mexico City led to an 11% drop in general political trust, but proximity to disaster relief efforts helped offset this decline, highlighting how effective aid can play a key role in maintaining democratic legitimacy after natural disasters.

- **Measuring Gender in Comparative Survey Research**

Oscar Castorena, Eli G. Rau, Valerie Schweizer-Robinson, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister

Most innovations in gender measurement come from online or phone surveys in the Global North, but this study focuses on face-to-face surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean. Using in-person and online experiments, the authors find that an open-ended, respondent-provided gender identity question reduces discomfort and maintains data quality, offering a promising approach for broader use.

2025 Summer School in International Survey Methods Recap:

The 2025 Summer School in International Survey Methods, held at Vanderbilt University from June 2-11, offered an intensive 8-day training program focused on advanced survey methods in global contexts. Over 30 students from 10 different countries participated, benefiting from expert instruction in topics like questionnaire design, sampling, and survey experiments. Learn more [here](#).

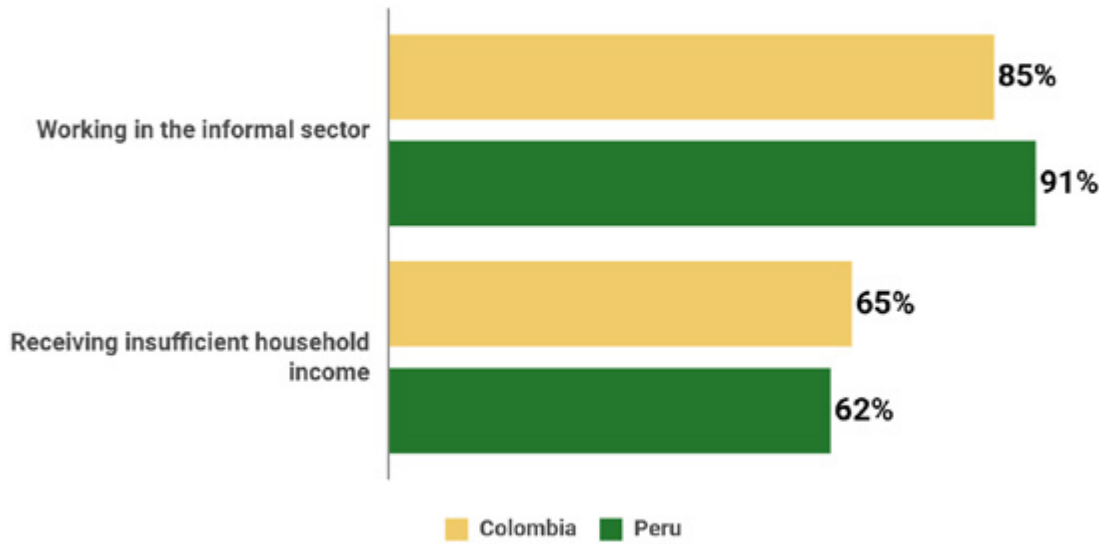
The Future of the Venezuelan Diaspora

By Mariana Rodríguez, CGD Director of Research & Engagement

Published in *Americas Quarterly*, this article explores the resilience of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Peru, who, despite facing economic hardships and discrimination, remain optimistic about their futures. As the possibility of returning to Venezuela becomes increasingly unlikely, many migrants are adapting to their new lives in host countries, persevering through persistent challenges. Read the full article [here](#).

Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Peru face steep economic challenges

SHARE OF VENEZUELAN MIGRANTS THAT REPORT



Note: Survey of Venezuelan migrants in four cities in Colombia and three cities in Peru, Aug.-Dec. 2024

Sources: "Venezuelan Diaspora in Colombia 2024" and "Venezuelan Diaspora in Peru 2024," [LAPOP Lab at Center for Global Democracy](#); Vanderbilt University (2025)





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