

# UHD magazine

Fall 2019



**COMMUNITY  
CRUSADERS**





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## Gator Pride IN THE CITY

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*Artist Anat Ronen captures Gator Pride.  
Read "To Art With Love" story on page 20.*



*2019 PeopleSoft Conversion Team*

# From The President's Desk

**W**elcome to the fall 2019 issue of UHD Magazine.

Twice a year, we have the honor of conferring approximately 3,000 degrees to soon-to-be alumni. And each fall, we welcome a new cohort of eager students ready and willing to Finish UHD Strong. So, it comes as no surprise to see how many Gators are making a difference with unmatched resilience or “grit” in the world around them.

Each day, I am inspired by these members of our UHD Community as they assist others and support their communities. Our University's proximity ... in the heart of Houston ... allows students, faculty, staff and alumni to touch many lives through their selfless contributions. That's what we refer to as the “Gator Way” — generously volunteering time, energy and resources to elevate our city and help fellow Houstonians.

Our University has many stories to tell about those who adhere to the “Gator Way” ... and this edition of UHD Magazine, themed “Community Crusaders,” features just some of these Gators who go above and beyond to make a difference.

This issue spotlights many examples of UHD's engagement in our city—from socially-conscious alums, such as entrepreneur Marcus Bowers and UP Art Studio co-founder Elia Quiles, to a University initiative focused on preserving the cultural history of Houston's Near Northside.

You'll also read about this year's 2019 Faculty Award winners in “Marvel of Educators” and learn of UHD's largest-ever art gift. Likewise, this issue introduces two new Gators, Dean of the College of Public Service Dr. Jonathan Schwartz and Vice President of Enrollment Management Dr. Jimmy Jung.

Thank you to our students, faculty, staff members, alumni and donors who contribute to making the University of Houston-Downtown a remarkable institution that is dedicated to changing the world one magnificent student at a time.



**Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz**  
President, University of Houston-Downtown

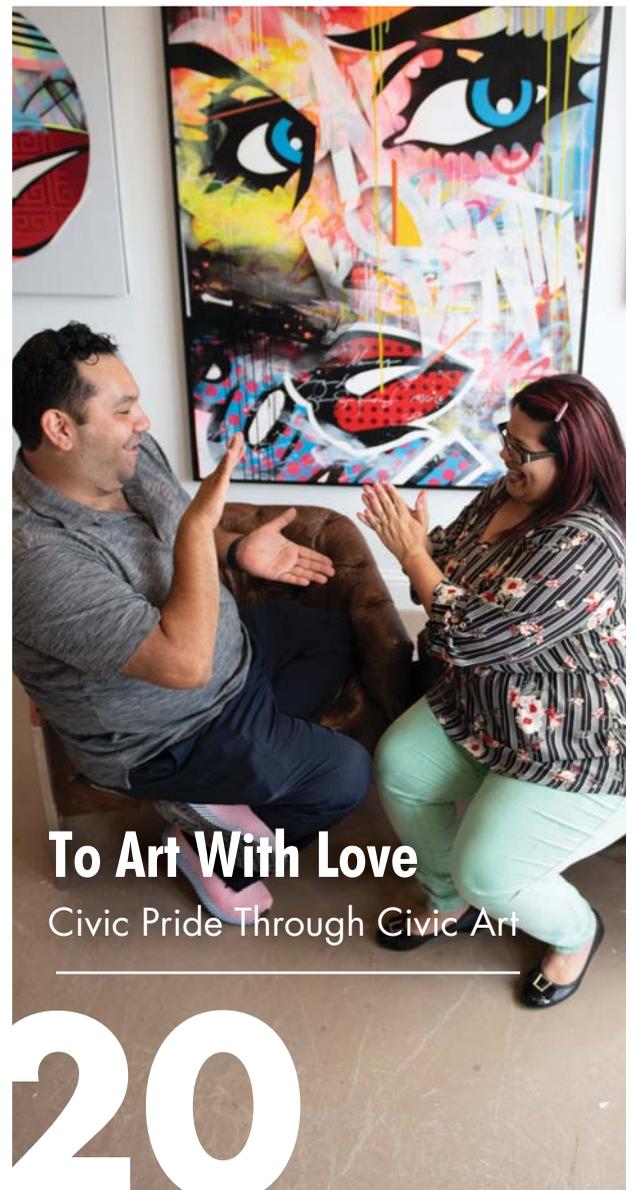
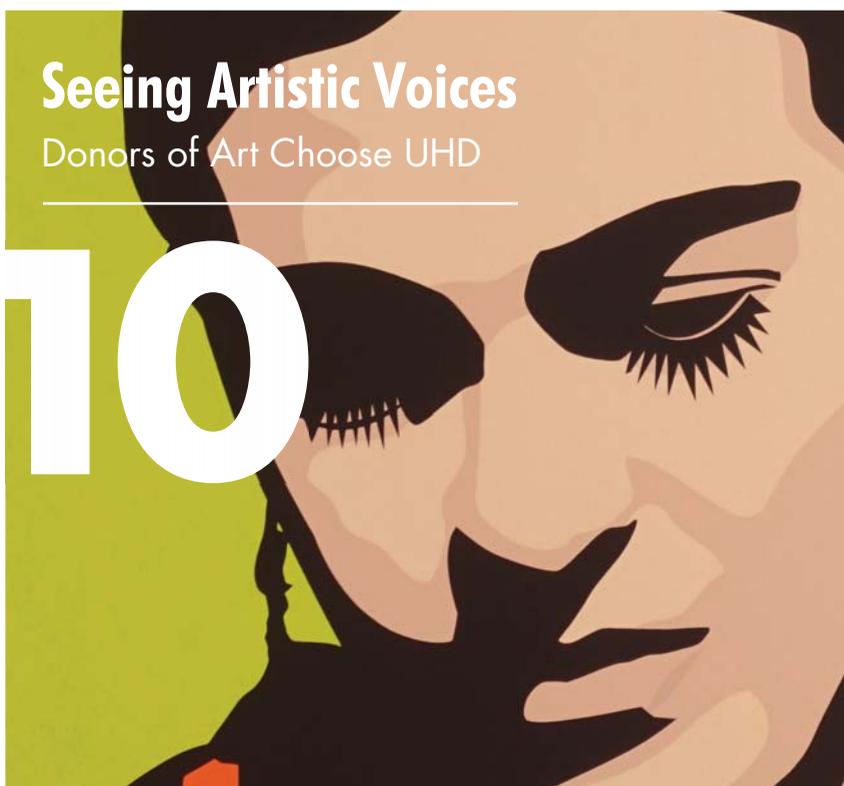




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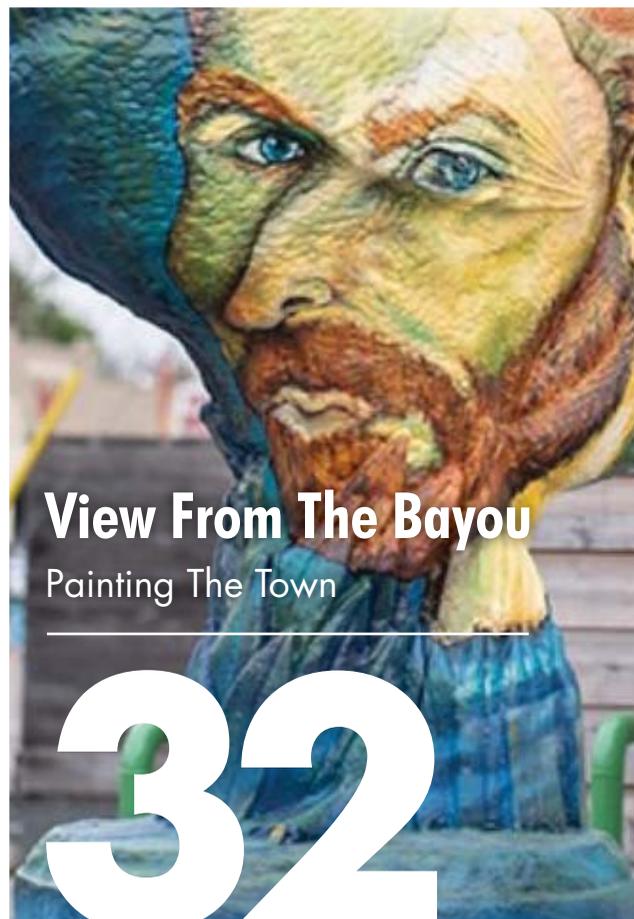
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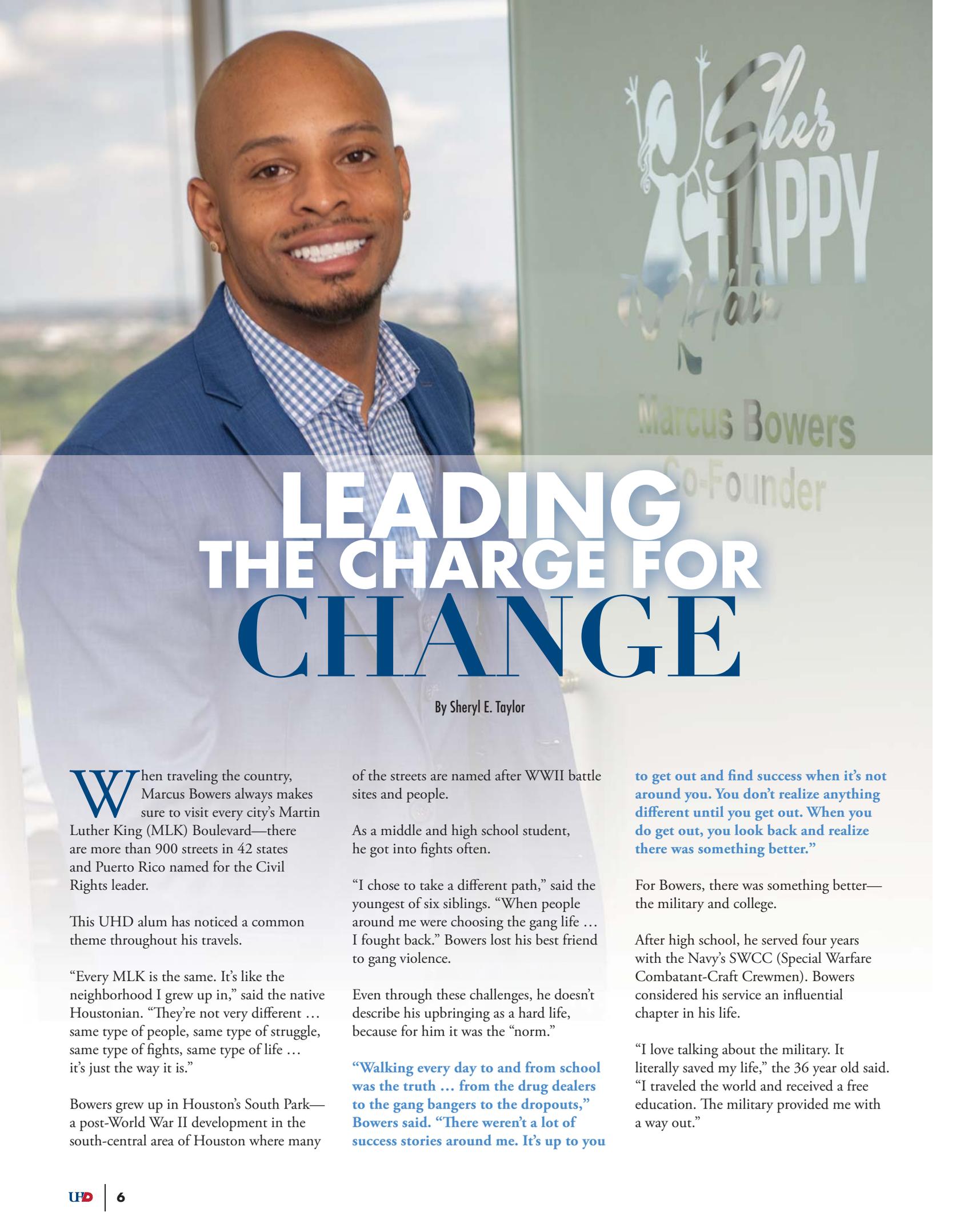


## The Cover

UHD Alumnus  
Marcus Bowers



[UHD.edu/magazine](http://UHD.edu/magazine)



# LEADING THE CHARGE FOR CHANGE

By Sheryl E. Taylor

**W**hen traveling the country, Marcus Bowers always makes sure to visit every city's Martin Luther King (MLK) Boulevard—there are more than 900 streets in 42 states and Puerto Rico named for the Civil Rights leader.

This UHD alum has noticed a common theme throughout his travels.

"Every MLK is the same. It's like the neighborhood I grew up in," said the native Houstonian. "They're not very different ... same type of people, same type of struggle, same type of fights, same type of life ... it's just the way it is."

Bowers grew up in Houston's South Park—a post-World War II development in the south-central area of Houston where many

of the streets are named after WWII battle sites and people.

As a middle and high school student, he got into fights often.

"I chose to take a different path," said the youngest of six siblings. "When people around me were choosing the gang life ... I fought back." Bowers lost his best friend to gang violence.

Even through these challenges, he doesn't describe his upbringing as a hard life, because for him it was the "norm."

**"Walking every day to and from school was the truth ... from the drug dealers to the gang bangers to the dropouts," Bowers said. "There weren't a lot of success stories around me. It's up to you**

**to get out and find success when it's not around you. You don't realize anything different until you get out. When you do get out, you look back and realize there was something better."**

For Bowers, there was something better—the military and college.

After high school, he served four years with the Navy's SWCC (Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen). Bowers considered his service an influential chapter in his life.

"I love talking about the military. It literally saved my life," the 36 year old said. "I traveled the world and received a free education. The military provided me with a way out."

Bowers wants to bring together veterans to help dispel the myths associated with serving in the military within inner-city neighborhoods.

“I want them (veterans) to speak louder against the negative rhetoric ... and echo my voice to lead and encourage people that there is a better way.” After the military, he earned an associate’s degree from Houston Community College. In 2011, he graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration from the Marilyn Davies College of Business.

**“UHD gave me the opportunity to work full-time. The evening college experience was just what I needed. I didn’t have to change my lifestyle,” he added. “One of the great things about UHD is that you can maintain your life while advancing your future.”**

His mother didn’t graduate high school. With a ninth grade education, she raised six children. As the first person in his family to graduate from college, Bowers felt different with a UHD degree.

**“My mindset changed. I didn’t want to get a job ... I wanted to create them,” he emphasized. “A college degree isn’t a license to stop.”**

### **An Entrepreneur Is Born**

In the summer of 2012, he decided to start a business with fellow veteran, Warren Broadnax.

With \$800, Bowers sold bundles of hair extensions from the trunk of his car, and he never looked back.

Now, seven years later, their company She’s Happy Hair is one of the largest suppliers of virgin hair in the United States, with eight stores across the country and more than \$22 million in annual revenue. Recently, the company signed multi-million dollar partnerships with Walmart and Macy’s.

Earlier this year, the Houston Chapter of the National Black MBA Association honored Bowers and Broadnax at its 19th Annual Leadership Empowerment Scholarship Banquet, which recognized pioneers of excellence and innovation.

### **Sense of Responsibility**

**“The most powerful thing I learned from studying business at UHD was that social responsibility matters,” said Bowers. “Business is not just about making money, it’s about making a change in the community. If not you, then who? You have the**



**resources to make change as a business leader. When you’re successful, you have to take care of your customers and their communities because they take care of you.”**

Bowers is a man of his word who applies his military mindset of protecting and serving to his business acumen.

Each year, the She’s Happy Hair Foundation sponsors national Back to School Drives, Christmas Toy Drives and various events that impact communities in multiple U.S. cities, as well as the the annual Mike Bowers Scholarship, which honors Bowers’ late brother who passed away in 2015. The \$1,100 scholarship is awarded to a Worthing High School basketball athlete who is in good academic standing and has been accepted to a university. The unique award amount represents Mike Bowers’ jersey number (11) that he wore as a basketball player at Worthing. The Foundation plans to extend this scholarship to other Houston-area high schools in the near future.

Every Veterans Day weekend, Bowers hosts The Fish Bowl Experience (similar to the “Shark Tank” TV series) that offers a platform for aspiring entrepreneurs (college graduates or vets) to pitch a business idea to a panel of eight multimillionaires who also are veterans and college graduates. The first business idea received \$30,000 to open a Houston restaurant.

### **Five-Year Plan**

Bowers has begun work on his first book, “Martin Luther King Boulevard: Road, Street Mindset,” which he hopes to complete this year.

The proud UHD alum also wants to give back to his alma mater. Bowers sees his success as a means to give back to the community through youth, education, veterans, business and entrepreneurship initiatives.

**“Do you want to just live or be remembered? If you’re not creating anything or leaving a legacy, then what are you doing? We need to share the blueprint for success.” UFD**



Michelle Bigley

# COMPLETING THE DREAM

By Mike Emery

Persistence pays off. University of Houston-Downtown students, **Keith Baines** and **Michelle Bigley**, are aware of this fact. Both have experienced diversions on their personal and professional journeys. Through determination, however, they are on their way to earning their degrees and Finishing UHD Strong.

Thanks to UHD’s Bachelor of Applied Arts & Sciences (BAAS) program, both Baines and Bigley are proof that no matter life’s challenges or detours, higher education can be accessible with the right mindset.

“Our BAAS degree is an integral part of the University’s mission to serve the Greater Houston metropolitan region,” said **Dr. Eric Carl Link**, senior vice president for Academic & Student Affairs & Provost. “By providing an option that allows adult learners the opportunity to continue their studies and earn a degree that positions them

for a wide variety of administrative positions fundamental to a thriving economy, UHD is able to provide pathways to career growth for a wide spectrum of students and, in doing so, contribute to the success of Houston and beyond.”

### Overcoming Adversity

Baines, a native of Wharton, Texas, admits that he was not a model student in high school.

“I spent a lot of time hanging with the wrong crowd,” Baines said. “I was kicked out of high school but earned my G.E.D. later.”

Eventually, he decided to return to the classroom and attended classes at Wharton County Junior College. After completing his associate’s degree, he explored different options and discovered UHD’s Bachelor of Applied Arts & Sciences in Applied Administration (BAAS-AA) program. The online program is part of UHD’s University College and is ranked among

the top 100 online bachelor’s programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.



“This degree program is unique because it allows students from all career disciplines to apply the workforce credits they earned at community colleges toward the BAAS-AA,” said **Dr. Karen Kaser**, program director for the BAAS-AA and senior lecturer.

Baines works two jobs in his hometown of Wharton, and the flexibility of the BAAS-AA classes appealed to him. Likewise, UHD’s affordable tuition and scholarship options have helped him remain focused on coursework. Still, Baines has faced

challenges during his time at UHD. After Tropical Storm Harvey displaced him from his home, Baines stayed in hotels and moved to Houston briefly before finding his way back to Wharton.

Through it all, Baines has kept his eye on the prize. By December, he expects to graduate with his BAAS-AA degree. He hopes to contribute the knowledge and experience gained at UHD to a nonprofit organization that helps formerly incarcerated populations return to school or seek new opportunities.

He'd like to inspire others in the same way UHD motivated him to keep pushing forward toward his degree.

**“UHD helped me, and it’s helping other students who want to make a difference in their city and community,” Baines said. “I would like to inspire others who think college is out of reach and to let**

**them know anything is possible if you work hard and have the right attitude.”**

### **Busy Bigley**

Between work, family time and community service, Michelle Bigley managed to fit higher education into her busy schedule.

Her family certainly keeps her busy. Bigley is the mother of six in a blended family and a grandmother of three. And professionally, her days are occupied as a teaching assistant at Waltrip High School. She also serves as a chairperson for the National Society of Leadership and Success Community Services. And, she has volunteered for Phi Theta Kappa and the National Society for Collegiate Scholars.

In spite of all of these activities, she completed her associate’s degree at Houston Community College after her third attempt at college. And as the adage

goes, the third time was definitely the charm for Bigley.

She discovered UHD’s BAAS program in Early Childhood & Family Systems (based in the College of Public Service) while attending a Gator Preview event with one of her daughters. The encouragement of the University’s Urban Education faculty and staff instantly made her decision easy.

**“I knew I found my school,” Bigley said.**

Additionally, the BAAS program allowed her to transfer seamlessly to UHD and will ultimately assist in achieving her goal of becoming an elementary school teacher.

**“The BAAS program is set up perfectly for everything that I’ve done in my associate’s degree. I can just move into this program and earn my bachelor’s degree.” UFD**

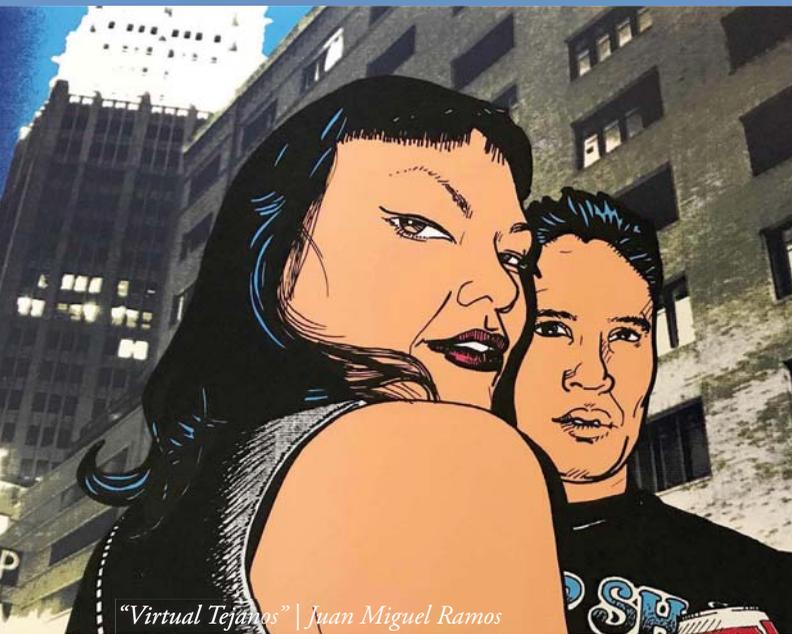


*Photo: Thomas B. Shea*

*Keith Baines*

# Seeing Artistic Voices

By Mike Emery & Sheryl E. Taylor



*"Virtual Tejanos" | Juan Miguel Ramos*

**D**rs. Harriett and Ricardo Romo came to the University of Houston-Downtown with a gift that will keep on giving.

It started with the campus exhibition, "Close to Home: Latinx Art and Identity," featuring 54 pieces from their extensive art collection. Even though the exhibition concluded its two-month run, the pieces didn't leave. In fact, the Romos decided to donate more of their extensive exclusive collection of Chicano Art—the largest art gift ever made to UHD, valued at more than \$200,000.



*"Plaza De Santa Fe" | Larry Portillo*

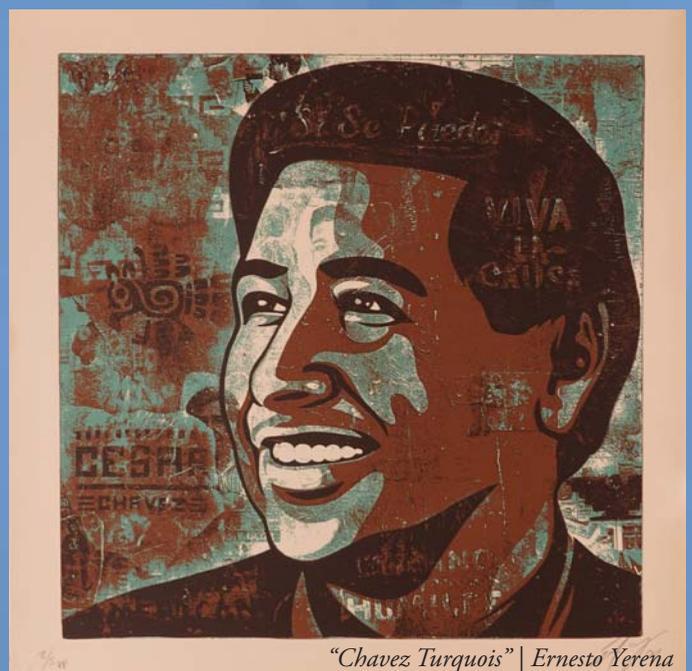
"Great universities engage communities and initiate dialogue on relevant topics," said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. "We are grateful to receive this gift from the Romos. These works donated to our University will do that and much more. They will inspire current and future students and likely contribute to scholarly activity across academic disciplines, enliven our campus and serve as a distinctive hallmark for our University."



*Drs. Ricardo & Harriett Romo with Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz*

"I recall my excitement when I first viewed artwork that represented my community," said Ricardo Romo. "It was a thrilling experience, and Harriett and I are glad to create that moment for Hispanic students and others at UHD and throughout Houston."

Art acquired from the Romo's collection will include a variety of more than 90 prints that will be displayed throughout the University's campus.



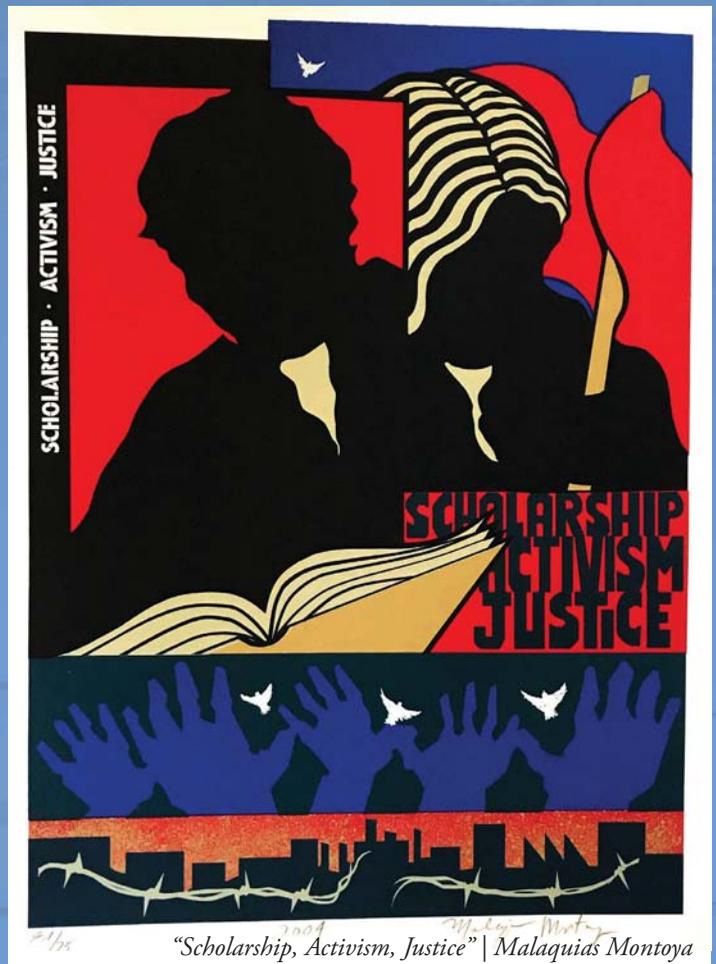
*"Chavez Turquoise" | Ernesto Yerena*



*“Roadman VI” | Ricky Armendariz*



*“Young Frida (Green)” | Raul Caracoza*



*“Scholarship, Activism, Justice” | Malaquias Montoya*

Mark Cervenka, director of UHD’s O’Kane Gallery, will oversee the procurement and installation of the donated artwork. He familiarized himself with the Romos’ collection and was inspired by the recurring themes of identity and social justice found in these works.

“These are themes that are familiar to so many of our students and relevant to our community,” Cervenka said. “The bold color and compositions are perfect for engaging UHD students, faculty and staff. They will be great additions to our campus.”

Donated works include: Raul Caracoza’s “Young Frida,” colorful variations of a portrait of Frida Kahlo; Ignacio Gomez’s “El Pachuco,” depicting a zoot suited young man proudly standing before the Los Angeles skyline (an image used for posters advertising the play “Zoot Suit”); Alma Lopez’s “La Briosa y La Medusa,” an ode to masked luchadoras; and Patssi Valdez’s “Forbidden Fruit,” offering a vision of an altar adorned by images of the Virgin Mary, fruit, flowers and saintly figures.

The Romos, both longtime educators, have collected art for decades. The first major piece in their collection was Rufino Tamayo’s “The Man With a Hat,” which was obtained while residing in Los Angeles.

Ricardo Romo was the fifth president for The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) from 1999 to 2017. His wife, Harriett Romo, serves as a UTSA professor of sociology and directs the university’s Child & Adolescent Policy Research Institute and UTSA Mexico Center. [UFD](#)

# NEW Newman Fellow

**BOSTON-BASED NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**, Campus Compact, recently announced its 2019 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows. The organization, which works to advance the public purposes of higher education, selected 262 students from around the country for this honor. Among this new class of fellows is UHD's very-own Mikaela Lopez, who is studying biology in the College of Sciences & Technology and an active leader in issues of social inequality. For the past four years, she has worked closely with underserved communities. As a Newman Fellow, she will participate in projects that emphasize personal, professional and civic growth. Such initiatives aren't new to Lopez, who has been involved in political campaigns to encourage voting and addressing issues like women's inequality, sexual violence and incarceration of non-violent convicted criminals. **"Ms. Lopez shines when she talks about the various projects that she leads,"** said UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. **"She has much to contribute to the conversation and will learn from like-minded persons across the country. I am confident that she will truly benefit from this honor and develop as a leader on local and national stages."** **UHD**

Mikaela Lopez

# Gator Pledge



**UHD HAS HELPED MANY HOUSTONIANS** realize their dreams of earning their bachelor's degrees. Through a number of University initiatives, students are able to Finish UHD Strong with little or no debt. Gator Pledge is among UHD's programs aimed at helping students succeed academically without financial worry. This program helps incoming freshmen whose families have an adjusted gross income of \$50,000 or less by covering tuition and fees for up to four years.

**"UHD is founded on access and success,"** said Daniel Villanueva, UHD associate vice president, Enrollment Management & Registrar. **"It provides our students with greater social mobility, particularly those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. We're proud to deliver such a program to them ... one that funds their higher education and helps them earn their degrees."**

The Gator Pledge complements UHD's status as the most affordable university in Houston and one of the best higher education values in Texas. The University is among the institutions with the lowest net price tuition in the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education's College Affordability and Transparency rankings. **UHD**

# iPads & Mental Health

**APPROXIMATELY 3,000 PEOPLE RECEIVE PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT AT THE HARRIS COUNTY JAIL EACH DAY** ... making the county's main detention center Texas' largest mental health provider.

In an effort to help address mental health issues outside of the jail, area agencies recently implemented a Tele-Health Pilot Program. This program helps law enforcement officers receive on-the-spot consultations from master's-level mental health clinicians via iPad communications when responding to people in crisis. Ultimately, the online support from mental health professionals will assist in reducing unnecessary transports to Harris County Jail, psychiatric centers and hospitals, and will help facilitate on-the-scene treatment or assistance for these citizens.

Thanks to support from Arnold Ventures, faculty from University of Houston-Downtown's College of Public Service will assist in conducting a process and outcome evaluation to provide data that can possibly help strengthen and expand the program.

The Tele-Health Pilot Program is a partnership between the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and The Harris Center for Mental Health and Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities. UHD researchers received a \$318,000 grant to help assess the implementation of the program and the technology used

to connect officers and mental health professionals, the consistency of the program's procedures when assessing citizens in crisis, stakeholder responses, and its immediate outcomes.

Dr. Ashley Blackburn, chair of UHD's Department of Criminal Justice & Social Work and associate professor of criminal justice, and Dr. Lori Lovins, assistant professor of criminal justice, are serving as the study's principal investigators. The research team also includes Dr. Heather Goltz, associate professor of social work, and Dr. Dana Smith, assistant professor of social work and director of Social Work Field Education, who are serving as co-investigators on the evaluation.

Blackburn, Lovins, Goltz and Smith are analyzing data collected from HCSO, including information related to calls made to HCSO dispatchers and details collected by officers when responding to these calls.

**"One of the things we'll look at is the disposition of the citizens involved in these calls," Blackburn said. "That's very important as we evaluate the effectiveness of the communication with clinicians and how it's used to triage situations."**

UHD researchers also are collecting information through ride-alongs with HCSO officers and interviews with deputies, clinicians, clients, other

stakeholders at HCSO and The Harris Center. Likewise, Blackburn and colleagues will conduct focus groups comprised of officers and clinicians.

According to Blackburn, the program's processes also will be manualized to share with other agencies that might want to replicate its processes.

**"Our work on this project will help inform practitioners, as well as members of the academic community," Blackburn said. "It also will provide our students the opportunity to learn about new and innovative practices in the field."**

Blackburn recently joined representatives from HCSO and The Harris Center at the Texas Crisis Intervention Team Conference in South Padre Island, Texas to deliver a presentation on both the program and UHD's evaluation plan.

The grant supporting this research is the first to be awarded to UHD by Arnold Ventures.

**"Arnold Ventures has an interest in justice and lasting reforms, as well as multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving," Blackburn said. "We are very grateful to work with Arnold Ventures and for its support of this initiative." UHD**

# LEADERSHIP in Enrollment

**Dr. Jimmy Jung** is the new vice president of Enrollment Management. In this role, Jung will provide leadership and strategic direction for enhancing student access and enrollment services.

“I’m excited to join the University of Houston-Downtown. I strongly believe in the University’s mission, and I look forward to working with the entire UHD community to serve Greater Houston.”

Prior to UHD, Jung served as the vice president for Student Affairs &

Enrollment Management at New Jersey City University. His prior roles include serving as vice president for Enrollment Management at the University of Maine; assistant vice president for Enrollment Management at The College at Brockport (State University of New York); and executive director for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Baruch College (City University of New York).

He has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, specializing in Quantitative Methods & Evaluation from the

Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Jung also holds a Master of Arts in Psychology from The City College and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Hunter College.

“Dr. Jung brings a wealth of experience to the position, with a keen understanding of our work here at the University as he brings his experience and insights to Houston and helps UHD grow and thrive in the coming years,” said Dr. Eric Carl Link, senior vice president for Academic & Student Affairs & Provost. 



# PATHWAYS FOR SUCCESS

**HOUSTON IS A HUB FOR MARITIME CAREERS.** As home to one of the world's largest ports, the city's job outlook in water transportation, logistics and supply chain management is on the rise. With industry growth, however, comes the need for education, training and workforce development.

University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), Houston Community College (HCC), Houston Independent School District (HISD) and the Port of Houston Authority have officially partnered to prepare students for careers in maritime logistics and global supply chain management.

Representatives from these institutions signed a Letter of Intent detailing a commitment to a program in which HISD students can earn college credits in maritime logistics and global supply chain management. They would then apply those credits to an Applied Arts & Sciences degree in logistics or global supply chain management at HCC and transfer to UHD's Bachelor of Applied Arts & Science in Applied Administration program (ranked among the best in the nation by U.S. News & World Report). This career pathway for students that begins in high school, extends to higher education

institutions, and, ultimately leads to potential maritime jobs.

Galveston College President, Dr. W. Myles Shelton and UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz also put their pens to paper to sign an articulation agreement focused on student success. This pact commits both institutions to creating seamless pathways for Galveston College students seeking to transfer to UHD, providing resources such as degree maps and cooperative advising, offering joint admissions and data sharing.

The UHD-Galveston College partnership is part of the Houston Guided Pathways to Success (Houston GPS) initiative and

fulfills the goals of the 60x30TX Higher Education Plan of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, whose overall goal is to have at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25 – 34 complete a technical certificate or degree by 2030.

Led by the University of Houston, Houston GPS includes Houston and Gulf Coast area institutions working together to create an integrated system of cohesive, interdependent strategies designed to increase and accelerate student completion and a smooth two-year to four-year college transfer process while improving educational quality for Houston-area students, ultimately saving students time and money. **UHD**



*UHD President, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz; Port of Houston Authority Chair, Janiece M. Longoria; HISD Interim Superintendent, Dr. Grenita Lathan; HCC Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, Dr. Janet Wormack; UHD Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs & Provost, Dr. Eric Carl Link*

# GOLD STATUS CST BUILDING UPDATE

**The new 105,000-square-foot** College of Sciences & Technology Building will house 14 labs for classes in chemistry and the life and environmental sciences. An additional 14 labs will support a wide range of undergraduate and faculty research programs across these disciplines. The building will also have three computational labs for classes and independent study and meeting areas for collaborative learning and informal instruction among students and faculty.



**“The College of Sciences & Technology Building has great significance to the University beyond the natural sciences. With science on display as its architectural central theme and environmental sciences and sustainability highlighted on the lobby floor. This building will create excitement and appreciation of the role UHD plays in generating the scientific workforce for Greater Houston,”** said Dr. Akif Uzman, dean, College of Sciences & Technology.

In the fall semester, UHD faculty will move into research labs and teach courses in biology, microbiology, environmental science and chemistry. Full move-in will be completed by spring 2020.

**“This marvelous new facility will significantly advance our teaching and research capabilities in the sciences and greatly enhance our opportunities for building constructive partnerships throughout the community with industry and other academic institutions,”** said Dr. Philip Lyons, UHD Department Chair of Natural Sciences.

The Gold LEED-certified Building—the first-of-its-kind in the University of Houston System—has attracted the attention and support of Green Mountain Energy Sun Club with a grant of more than \$250,000 for sustainability initiatives within UHD’s Center for Urban Agriculture & Sustainability, which will also be housed in the new facility. This funding will be used to install a panel solar array to power environmental labs and for research-grade photosynthesis equipment for teaching and research in plant and environmental sciences.

**“This building has amazing features of sustainable design, which will save energy and water. The focus on sustainability is also critical in training the next generation of scientists,”** said Dr. Lisa Morano, director, Center for Urban Agriculture & Sustainability and professor of biology and microbiology. **“It’s important to model for students how we can create a state-of-the-art building while considering social needs and the environmental impact.”** **UHD**



# Faculty Bites

**CLASS OF 2019** Professor of English and former Houston Poet Laureate, **Dr. Robin Davidson**, was named to the 2019 class of Texas Institute of Letters (TIL) inductees. Only the state's most distinguished authors, poets, screenwriters and artists are accepted into the Texas Institute of Letters. The organization's members are a who's who of literary voices and creative spirits and acknowledges those individuals who have produced acclaimed volumes of work. Other 2019 inductees include Oscar-nominee Wes Anderson, journalist Patrick Cox, theater critic Robert Faires, musician Tish Hinojosa, poet Carrie Fountain, filmmaker Jesús Salvador Treviño and others.

**FULBRIGHTER** **Dr. Candace TenBrink**, assistant professor of strategy, is the first faculty member in the Marilyn Davies College of Business to be honored with a Fulbright Scholarship. The Fremont, Michigan native has traveled the globe—40 countries and counting. Her next stop is Poland's University of Gdańsk, where she will join the Faculty of Management for six months in early 2020. She will be teaching innovation entrepreneurship, and strategy, which according to TenBrink is still essential in Poland's transitioning economy, which became free of communism only a mere 30 years ago in 1989.

**EQUALITY FOR ALL** Assistant professor of history, **Dr. Jonathan Chism**, has a few more names to add to the list of Civil Rights heroes in his book, "Saints in the Struggle." Chism documents through archival research and oral histories the grassroots activism of how Black churches (regardless of denomination) in Memphis advocated for equality during the Civil Rights Movement.

**ANOTHER BANG** heard throughout the literary world. The assistant professor of creative writing, **Daniel Peña's** debut novel, "Bang," has earned rave reviews for his story of undocumented brothers who are stranded in their home country of Mexico that is far different than the one they left. "Bang" received honors from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) Texas Chapter. The book also earned the Tejas Foco Fiction Award that recognizes works which address topics related to the Mexican-American experience in Texas. **UFD**





## DEAN OF College of Public Service Named



### **IT'S OFFICIAL. DR. JONATHAN SCHWARTZ IS THE NEW DEAN OF UHD'S COLLEGE OF PUBLIC SERVICE.**

Before joining UHD on July 1, Schwartz served as the associate dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Houston's College of Education and as a faculty member in the College's Department of Psychological, Health & Learning Sciences.

Schwartz holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology and a Master of Arts in counseling from New Mexico State University and earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from State University of New York at Buffalo.

He is a nationally-renowned scholar in the area of men and masculinity, prevention and intimate violence. In 2017, he won the Lifetime Achievement Award in Prevention from the Prevention Section of the American Psychological Association's Society of Counseling Psychology.

**“Dr. Schwartz brings to the role years of administrative experience and considerable accomplishments both as an administrator, scholar and teacher, and his vision and leadership. This is a great moment for UHD and for the College of Public Service, and Dean Schwartz will be a transformative and innovative leader who will help position the College for great success for years to come,”** said Dr. Eric Carl Link, senior vice president of Academic & Student Affairs & Provost.

Schwartz will succeed Dr. Leigh Van Horn, who has served as the College's interim dean since 2015. The College of Public Service is home to UHD's criminal justice, urban education and social work programs. **UHD**

# TO ART *with love*

By Sheryl E. Taylor



Artist: Sen2 Figueroa



The husband and wife duo are self-described community art advocates. **Elia** and **Noah Quiles** (pronounced 'key-less') have dedicated their lives to creating civic pride through civic art with UP Art Studio.

### **BUT FIRST, MEET ELIA ... THE ART ADMINISTRATOR**

After her father took ill, Elia returned to Houston and began attending the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) part time. The UHD alumna met Noah in 2002 when she was a junior. When they met, Noah asked Elia if she was smart. She replied, "I'm on the Dean's List."

They married in 2003. And, a year later she graduated (with honors) with a degree in computer information systems from the Marilyn Davies College of Business. With her newly minted degree, she accepted a one-week temporary assignment with a commercial real estate company. The assignment turned into a 12-year career with a vice president title.

**"I always tell students that it doesn't matter what degree you get ... just get your degree," said Elia. "You never know what can be applied in a field that you never imagined being in."**

She decided to leave commercial real estate and make UP Art Studio a full-time endeavor.

### **AND NOW, NOAH ... THE VISIONARY**

Unlike Elia, Noah grew up in a rough neighborhood on the south side of Chicago in the 90s where he used graffiti as an outlet ... his way of staying unnoticed by the gangs. When he turned 18, his family moved to Houston.

**"I was accidentally born, raised and educated on the south side of Chicago," he said jokingly. "My vision of the world through art and the way I am is because of my upbringing in an economically challenged community. We were poor, but we were rich in culture."**

He also has always had an appreciation for the art world thanks to his Chicago roots, which continue to fuel his drive today.

**"My mission and my passion for what I do is like no other," Noah said "I eat, sleep and dream it."**

After meeting and marrying Elia, and becoming a father of two (Rex and Isabella), Noah worked as a commercial photographer. But, the industry and his passion soon waned.

"One day, he told me that he wanted to get back to his roots by helping fellow graffiti artists," said Elia.

The first UP Art Studio opened its doors as a gallery for artists in 2012 and hosted its first show later that same year. Through

this effort, Elia and Noah became immersed in Houston's art community. Within the first 18 months, they were hosting new shows, new artists, new murals and bigger crowds.

### **CIVIC PRIDE THROUGH CIVIC ART**

UP Art Studio was now coming into its own—specializing in public art projects, mural and art commissions, design services, project management, event planning and artist collaborations by bringing together some of the city's most talented creatives, including artists from around the globe.

A year and half later, they connected with French artist Sebastien "Mr. D" Boileau to fundraise and manage a mural project. In 2014, the award-winning "Preservons la Creation," which at the time was the biggest mural in Houston's history at 9,750 square feet and five stories tall premiered. The project introduced the Quiles to fiscal sponsorship, which involves teaming with nonprofits that serve as fiscal agents that accept tax-deductible donations on behalf of UP Art Studio and the project.



### **MINI MURALS COME TO HOUSTON**

In 2015, UP Art Studio initiated the award-winning Mini Murals Houston project that reimagines traffic signal control cabinets (also referred to as electrical or utility boxes) and converts them into works of art by local and visiting artists. Greater Houston residents can visit [minimurals.org/houston](http://minimurals.org/houston) to discover locations in their neighborhoods that may feature a mini mural. These mini murals are intended to help instill civic pride while beautifying neighborhoods and enhancing the urban landscape.



Later that same year, the Quiles presented the TEDHouston Talk, “Why is art crucial to developing civic pride?” in which they shared their thoughts on street art, how it seeds culture and the need to also support the emerging street artists.

**“I wanted to do more ... to provide art in the communities,” said Elia. “The mini murals project, which was being done for the last 15 years around the country and the world, was the answer.”**

So, Noah and Elia approached the city’s public works department with the Mini Murals project. And, to their surprise they loved the idea. With no funding from the city, they raised the funding to make it a reality.

Thanks to support from the City of Houston Public Works, Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs, Fresh Arts, East End Foundation

and the late Councilman Larry Green, the project’s pilot phase of 31 mini murals has now grown to more than 220 throughout Greater Houston. Now in its third year, UP Art is extending the project to Pasadena, La Porte and the state capitol, Austin.

Careful thought and research is given to each and every mural created in this city.

**According to Noah, “We ensure a project is the best for a particular community by canvassing it. We don’t go into the community and say, “This is what you get.”**

There’s proof in their mission and vision. At the intersection of North Main and Commerce stands a mini Gator mural representing the pride of UHD. The work, commissioned in collaboration with UHD’s Office of University Relations and UP Art Studio, was created by local artist Anat Ronen who is



*“Turtle Soup” | Artist: Adam Socie AKA Pilot*



Artist: Anat Ronen



Artist: Anat Ronen



Artist: Gelson D. Lemus aka w3r3on3

responsible for numerous murals across the city.  
*[See the Gator mini mural on pages 1-2 in this issue.]*

“There are very few people who do what we do in this region, state and country,” he said. “I like to think that we support artists, like Anat, who have unique and amazing stories. In this life, my purpose is to curate and create art.”

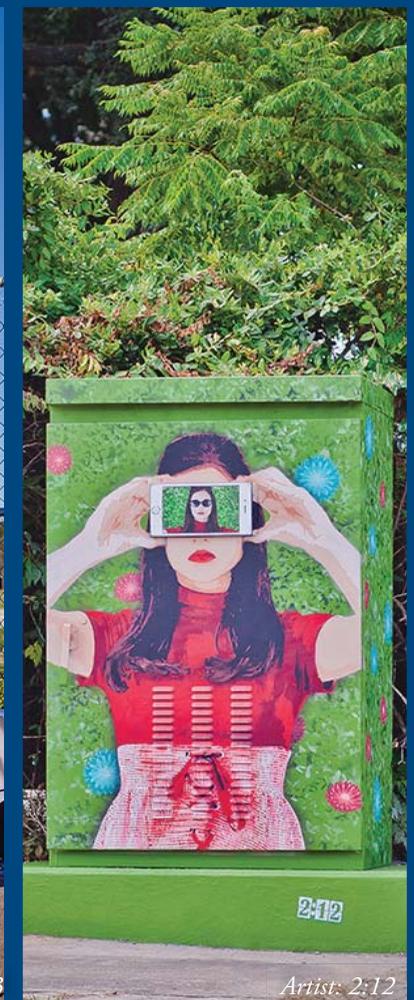
They have also worked on large-scale mural projects in the U.S., including commercial art for Pepsi and Mountain Dew, and in Miami’s Wynwood Art District during Miami Art Basel, where they have an ongoing relationship with the former mayor of Miami Beach.

UP Art also hosts community events, such as Meeting of Styles, featuring 100-plus artists painting live, music festivals, chalk artists and art shows.

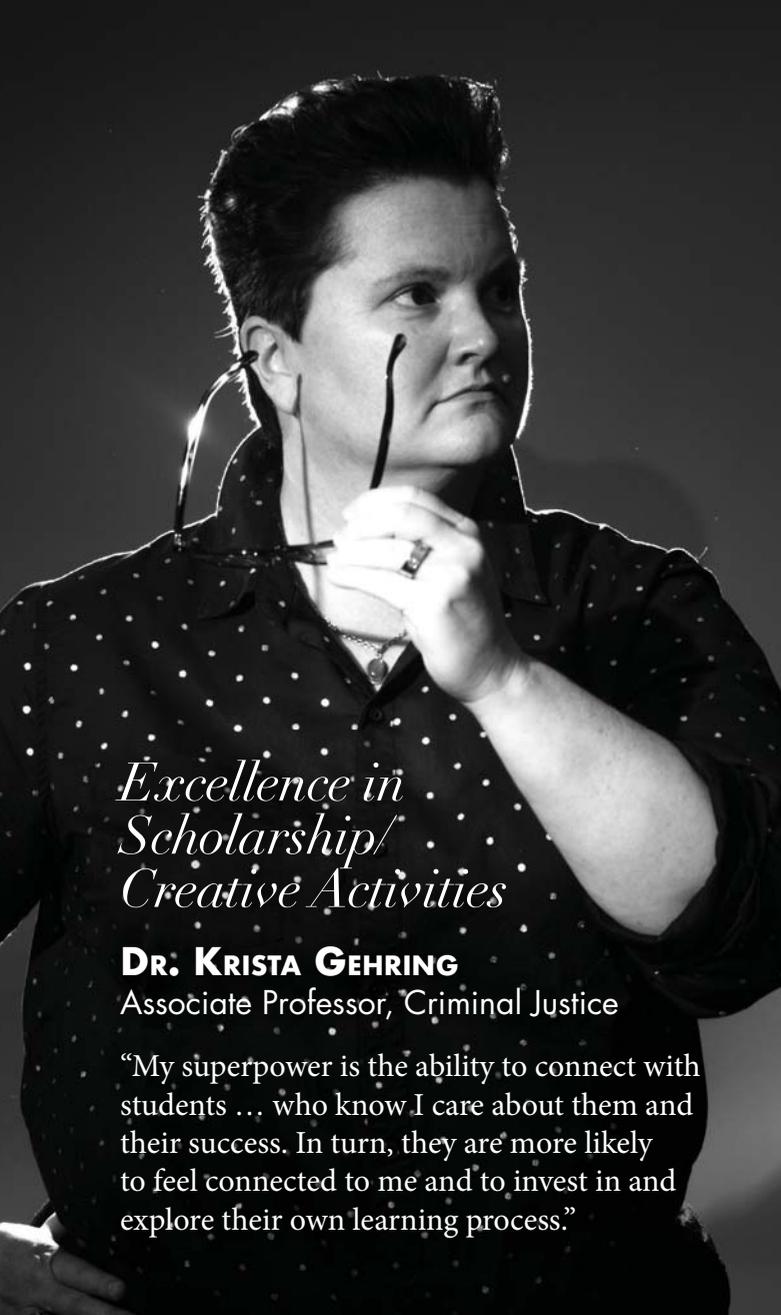
**“I get the most joy out of what we do by putting art into communities that are underserved where it’s accessible to anyone,” said Elia. “We are art advocates. We aim to give artists opportunities that they otherwise wouldn’t have. That’s what drives us.” UFD**



Artist: Gelson D. Lemus aka w3r3on3



Artist: 2:12



*Excellence in  
Scholarship/  
Creative Activities*

**DR. KRISTA GEHRING**  
Associate Professor, Criminal Justice

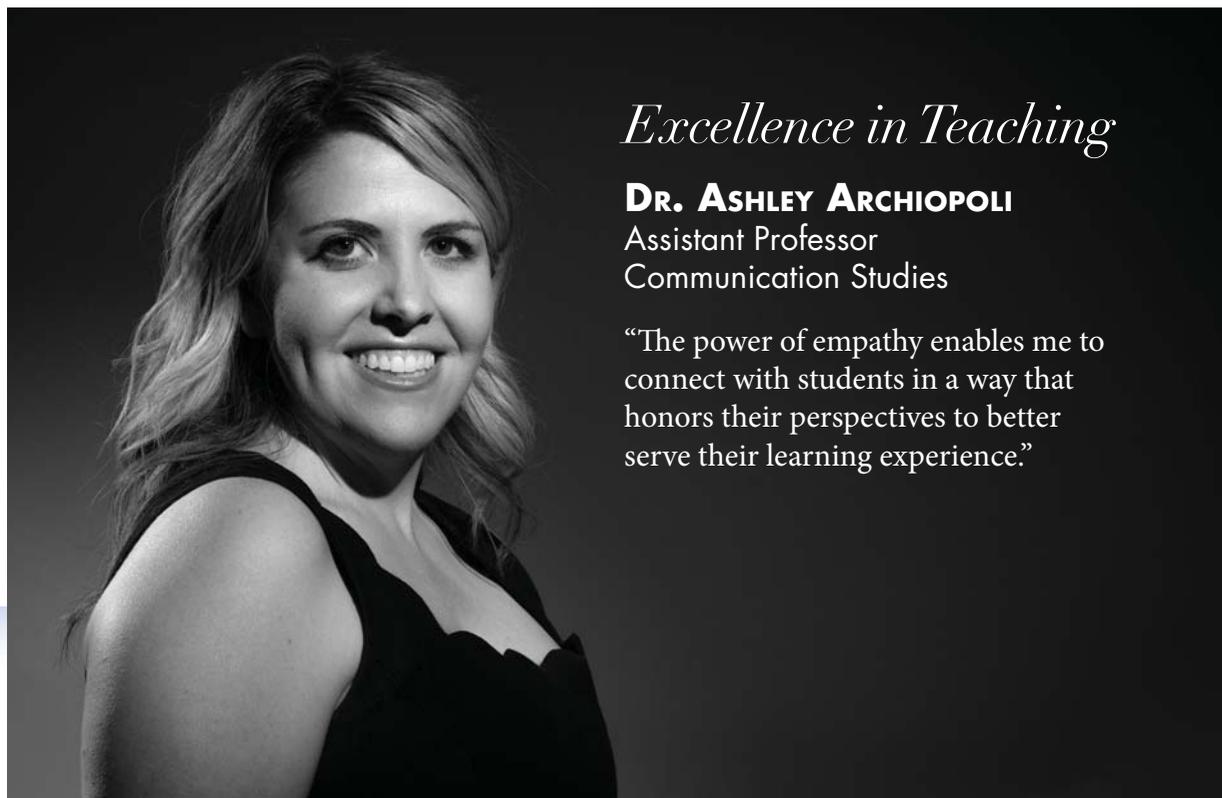
“My superpower is the ability to connect with students ... who know I care about them and their success. In turn, they are more likely to feel connected to me and to invest in and explore their own learning process.”

# THE MARVEL OF EDUCATORS

By Sheryl E. Taylor

Everyone is gifted with a special talent or skill. But what about a “super power”? In a world where people are enamored with characters who conquer villains to keep the universe safe, UHD faculty are dedicated to preserving the Gator Legacy so that every student who seeks success is armed for greatness.

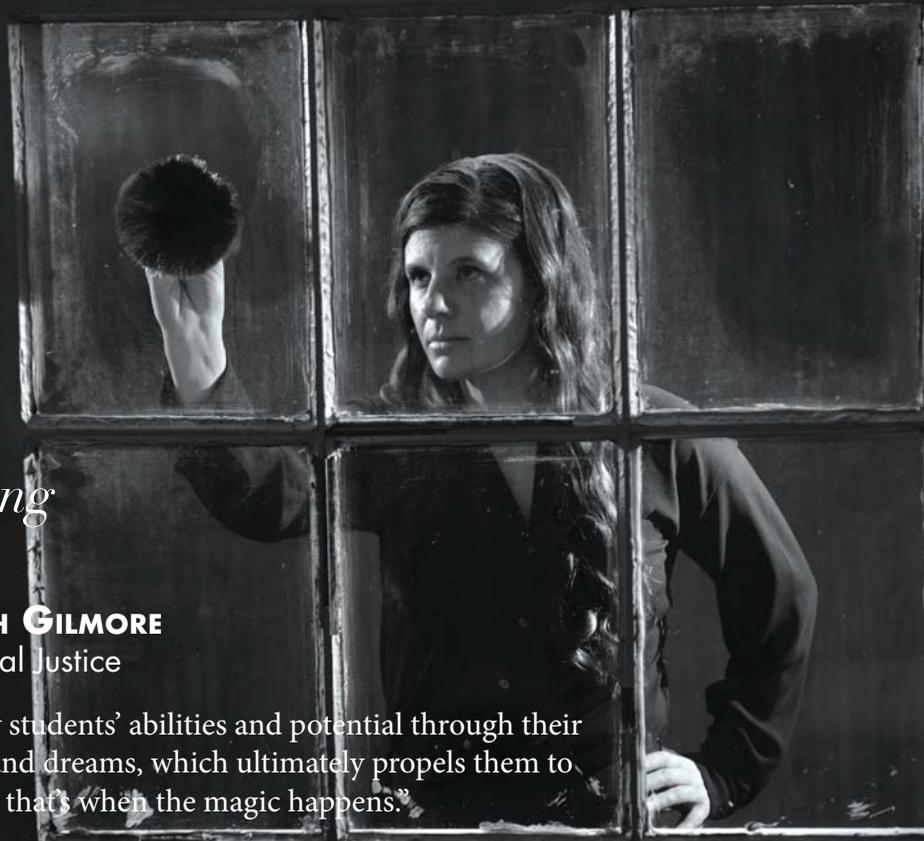
Meet our 2019 Faculty Award recipients who were posed the question: “If you could attribute your teaching style to a super power, what would it be? And, why?” **UFD**



*Excellence in Teaching*

**DR. ASHLEY ARCHIOPOLI**  
Assistant Professor  
Communication Studies

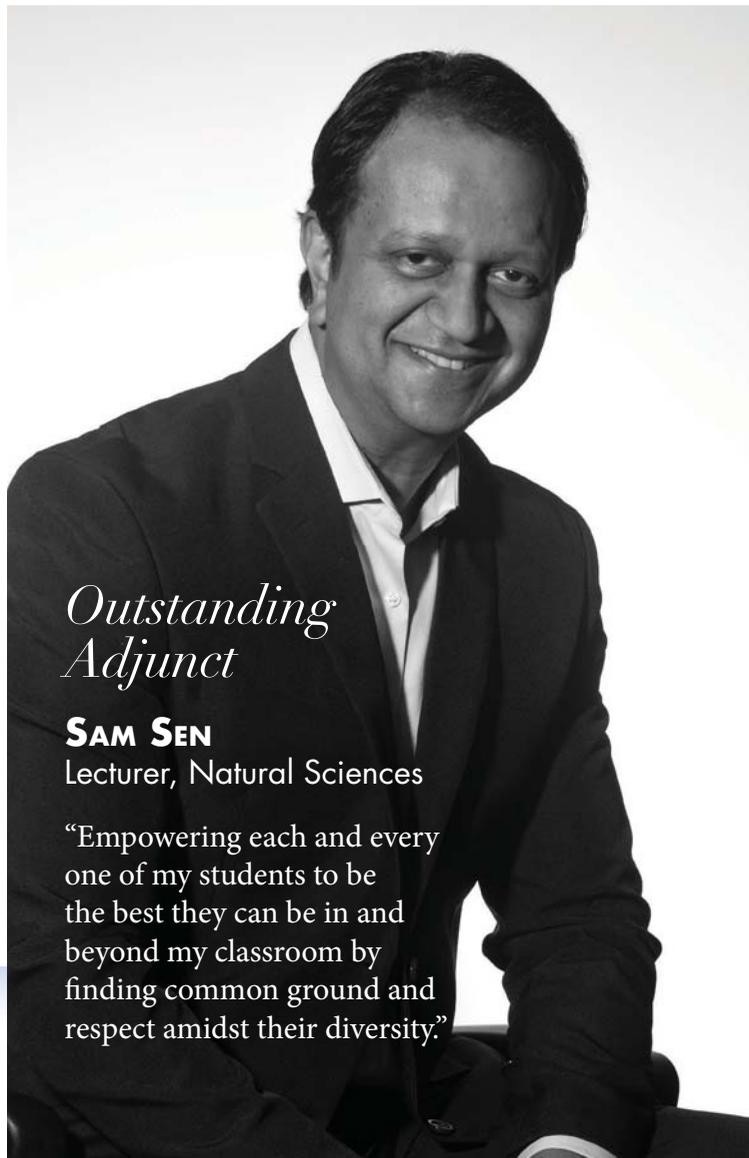
“The power of empathy enables me to connect with students in a way that honors their perspectives to better serve their learning experience.”



*Outstanding  
Lecturer*

**DR. ELIZABETH GILMORE**  
Lecturer, Criminal Justice

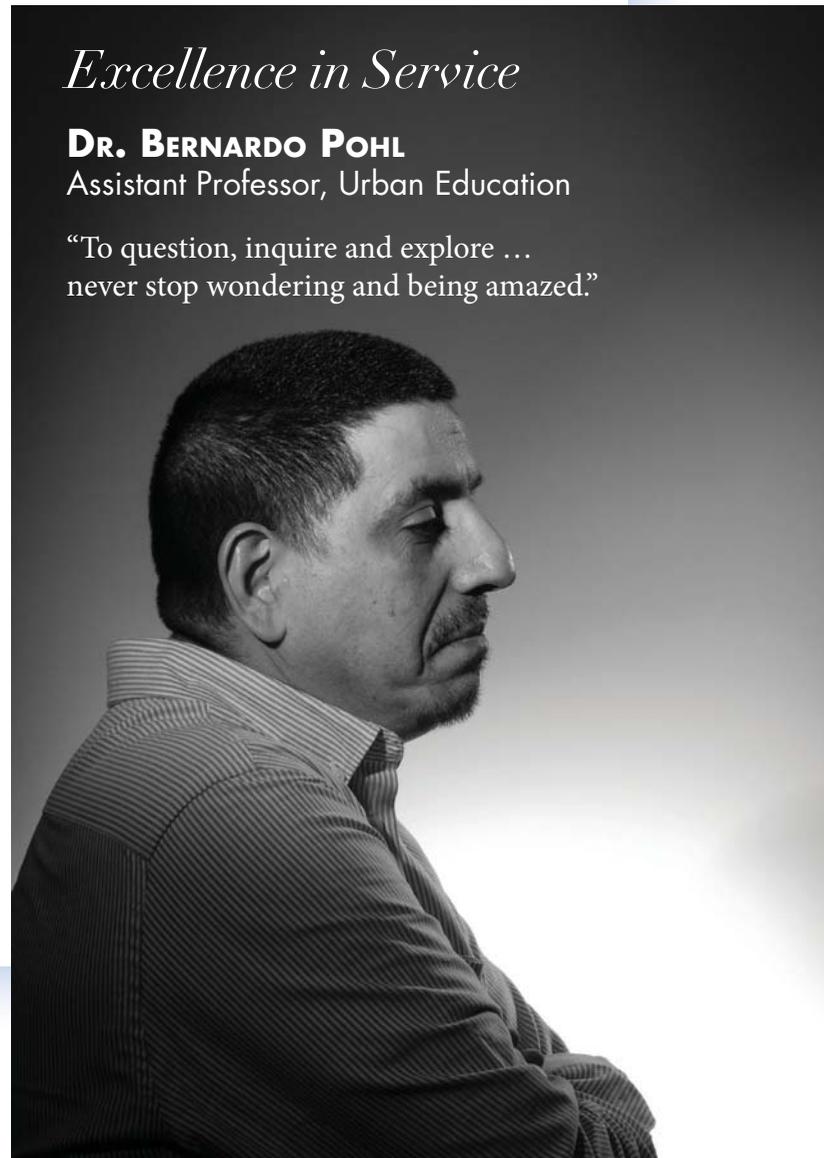
“Recognizing my students’ abilities and potential through their interests, hopes and dreams, which ultimately propels them to self-discovery ... that’s when the magic happens.”



*Outstanding  
Adjunct*

**SAM SEN**  
Lecturer, Natural Sciences

“Empowering each and every one of my students to be the best they can be in and beyond my classroom by finding common ground and respect amidst their diversity.”



*Excellence in Service*

**DR. BERNARDO POHL**  
Assistant Professor, Urban Education

“To question, inquire and explore ... never stop wondering and being amazed.”



# STORIES Not To Be Forgotten

By Sheryl E. Taylor

Nalani Ortiz

Tapping into one's passion can be a catalyst for making a difference. Nalani Ortiz took her passion for storytelling to help preserve a community's stories for younger generations.

## Making Connections

Ortiz is a program advisor for the Educational Talent Search Program at the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), which works with nine schools in total—seven high schools and two middle schools. The Program, funded through the Department of Education, partners with the University to provide advising services — from college applications to financial aid. The goal is to connect with students and help take them to the next level.

**“There was a need for our services in this particular area,” said Ortiz. “The majority of these students will be the first in their family to attend college. So they may not have the knowledge or resources to know what they will be facing when they attend college. This program steps in by working with their current needs and meeting students where they are.”**

At UHD, she also wanted to discover a way to connect with students, faculty and staff. Enter UHD's Center for Community Engagement & Service Learning (CCESL).

## The Proposal

Last fall, CCESL announced its inaugural Near Northside Project Grants. The Center committed to grants (\$2,500 per project) for community engagement projects in the Near Northside community spearheaded by UHD students, faculty and staff.

**“Our program is important because it engages students, faculty and staff in projects that they organize and implement; creates a partnership between UHD and its neighboring community; and raises awareness of the needs in communities and how a university can use its expertise and manpower to understand and fulfill the needs of the Near Northside,” said Dr. Poonam Gulati, Director of CCESL.**

Ortiz realized that there were histories of this vibrant community ... located a mere 10 minutes from campus ... that were being lost. This unique partnership between UHD and the Near Northside community is an effort to protect the cultural history and character of a neighborhood.

The former sixth-grade reading teacher's career history significantly centered on social impact and storytelling. So, she wrote a proposal. And, The Northside Stories Project was born.

**“I gravitated toward Northside Stories because we are working with a primarily Hispanic community, which is being gentrified and changed,” Ortiz noted. “A lot of these community members feel that the character of the neighborhood is being erased by all the new culture coming into their community.**

“As a teacher (at KIPP Charter Schools), I primarily taught black and brown students,” she said. “And I discovered that their love for reading was because I allowed them to select stories that were relevant to them.”

After recovering from her initial shock of taking on such a big project, Ortiz attended the neighborhood's community and coalition meetings to learn about stories that resonated and deeply connected most with residents. Back at UHD, she brought together a five-member team comprised of writers (staff) and illustrators (students) to create three children's books that will share Near Northside's most cherished stories.

**“I wanted to help them to tell their stories ... to preserve these oral histories and share them with the children of the community ... to pass on these stories to new generations in the community,” said Ortiz. “We learned about some amazing stories that we will tell with fidelity and truthfulness.”**

This fall, the Near Northside community’s local elementary schools will receive copies of the books.

her father preparing a pan dulce (Mexican pastry), Jackie was able to revive the business. Now two years later, the business is still thriving.

“Being able to tell my story as a children’s book is an honor. I hope my story will be an inspiration to the future of our community,” said Garza, who is completing her first year of college as a marketing major and working at her father’s bakery.

stood on their lawns after school to ensure children got home safely.

For UHD alumna Galleryy Martinez, who is the writer of “The Huelga Schools Movement,” she never thought that tapping into her creative writing talent could be used to assert her ideas into the world.

**“I am humbled to use my love for writing and my desire to make a**



Houston Public Library HMRC

*The Huelga Schools Movement*

### **When History & Literature Collide**

Preserving the local culture and character of the Near Northside through the creation of children’s books, the stories seek to tell of heroism fit for elementary-aged students. The project selected three stories that profoundly resounded within the community:

**[The Tweet That Saved “La Casa”]** When Jackie Garza overheard her father’s plan to close his bakery after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, she took the shop’s fate into her own hands. With a single tweet, and a video of

**[The Huelga Schools Movement]** When the local school district did not integrate schools in the late 1960s, Near Northside residents created their own schools. The schools were powered by volunteer teachers who taught more than 3,500 students at 16 campuses until the protest ended with districts agreeing to meet their demands.

**[A Safe Walk Home]** When 11-year-old Josue Flores didn’t make it home from his daily after-school walk, Near Northside residents created the “Safe Walk Home Program” and within weeks, 100 neighbors

**difference as a way of participating in this project,” said Martinez. “I’ve searched for ways to give back to my community, but I never thought I could make a difference through my writing. Academic writing challenged how I assert my ideas in the world, but it never occurred to me that creative writing could be an outlet for my ideas in the same way. I am inspired and honored to share my message with a generation that will change the world.”**

**UHD**

# Theory INTO Practice

By Mike Emery



*Jessica Ayala*

**P**ractice makes perfect. It's an adage that's quite fitting for University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) students, particularly those in the discipline of criminal justice.

Based within the College of Public Service, the criminal justice bachelor's program was UHD's first stand-alone degree. Its popularity led to a master's program in criminal justice and an online master's program, which is ranked among the best in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Both programs include courses focused on the most pertinent issues in the field and offer the skills needed for students in their careers or to continue on to a doctoral program.



**“This master’s program was UHD’s first graduate degree and its first online graduate degree,”** said Dr. Ashley Blackburn, chair of the Department of Criminal Justice & Social Work. **“It’s taught by our exceptional faculty and offers quality instruction and a distinctive learning experience. The program continues to produce prestigious alumni who serve in leadership roles across the criminal justice field in Houston and beyond.”**

Currently, graduate student **Jessica Ayala** is among the many students who are applying the lessons learned in UHD's criminal justice curriculum to a career in the field. After earning a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice in 2009, she returned to her alma mater for her graduate degree. She started her master's in 2013, then took a hiatus. She's back at UHD and is now enrolled in the online program.

“While I was an undergraduate student, I interned with the Texas Attorney General’s office,” Ayala said. “During that internship, I fell in love with victim services, helping those who had been victimized understand their rights and the services available to them. I thought I could be of more help to the community if I earned my master’s degree.”

Ayala presently works at the Harris County District Attorney’s Office serving as a victims assistance coordinator (a liaison between victims and prosecutors). The master’s degree, she said, will eventually help advance her career.

“I’ve been fortunate to be a part of this real-world research project,” Marques said. “Sometimes, you have to step away from the textbooks and experience what’s happening in the field. That’s what’s happening now. I am part of an actual effort aimed at understanding the rehabilitation effort of women.”

Born in Brazil, Marques has long had an interest in the criminal justice discipline. That interest has intensified through the years, particularly as she has become more engaged at UHD.



**“In a competitive workforce, I need to stand out and excel in my career,” she said. “I’ve been working in victim services for almost nine years, and it’s important that I’m educated in other areas of criminal justice.”**

Her fellow graduate student, **Beatriz Amalfi Marques**, wants to apply the knowledge gained at UHD to a career in academia. Thanks to research opportunities at the University, she’s certainly on the right track.

Marques has assisted faculty members, Drs. Lori Lovins and Rebecca Pfeffer in their research on increasing family connectedness during incarceration through the use of video visitation with family. As a research assistant for this project (funded through a grant from the Simmons Foundation), she visits a local correctional facility weekly to consult with residents and assist using FaceTime or Skype on iPads for video visitations with family members. Marques will further add to her curriculum vitae this fall when she presents preliminary results from this study with Drs. Lovins and Pfeffer at the American Society of Criminology annual meeting in San Francisco.

“I fell in love with criminology. And as a student, I appreciate exploring the balance between theory and real-world practice,” Marques said.

**“Our students benefit from our faculty and a rigorous curriculum,” said Pfeffer, director of the Criminal Justice Graduate Program. “Our graduate classes include students who are working in the field in local and federal law enforcement, victim services, corrections or in other areas. Their professional experience adds important perspective to class discussions, whether in a physical classroom or online. Having different insights in our classes and within the program is very beneficial for all of our students. It’s not just the course content but also the experience of respectfully listening to, engaging with and learning from people with different perspectives that prepares our graduates for success in criminal justice leadership positions.”** UFD

# THANKS *For The Memories*

By Mark Kramer

From his years in grade school, he remembers when political campaigns would stop in his hometown of Youngstown, Ohio. Volunteers enthusiastically passed out buttons by the handful, promoting those running for office, and collecting such items became a hobby for Dr. David Fairbanks.

However, it became more than just a hobby. Over the years, the retired UHD political science professor's collection has turned into a growing assortment of political and presidential memorabilia.

"In those days, candidates relied much less on television advertising and more on campaign pins and brochures to get their name and message out," Fairbanks said. "It was during the 1956 Eisenhower election when my interest began with buttons. I kept those in a box until the 1960 Nixon-Kennedy campaign when I picked up a few more. As an intern in the Ohio State Senate during the 1972 election, I had plenty of opportunities to add to my collection."



## 'It's More Than Just Buttons'

Fairbanks, who joined UHD in 1976 and taught courses on the American presidency and urban politics, is quick to point out that his collection of thousands of items includes a variety of political memorabilia from state, national and even foreign campaigns.

"It's true that the buttons are a major part of the collection, but there is so much more than just buttons," he said.

Visitors to Fairbanks' home will find thousands of those famous buttons, as well as other pieces of memorabilia, dating back to President Martin Van Buren. His collection also features brochures, letters and correspondence from past presidents and politicians, postcards, posters, old newspapers, ties, scarves and life-size cardboard cutouts.

He also takes special pride in his collection of letters from political officials.

**"What greatly influenced my interest in politics and collecting were the contacts I started making with political figures in high school. I used any excuse I could to write congressmen and senators," Fairbanks noted. "I like showing off letters from Herbert Hoover and Lyndon Johnson. I also had family members pass on letters from Teddy Roosevelt and Bess Truman."**

Another one of his prized possessions is a large collection of campaign material from the 1904 Roosevelt presidential election when Charles Fairbanks was Roosevelt's vice presidential running mate.

"Obviously, I was drawn to this campaign not only because it was Roosevelt, but because of the distant family connection I had with his vice president," he said with a grin.

## An Expensive Hobby? Think Again ...

With all of the historical memorabilia, Fairbanks said adding items to his collection does not put a dent in the pocketbook.

"I've rarely paid over \$100 for an item. Many of my favorite pieces didn't cost anything at all," he noted.

Unfortunately, in the 1970s, most campaigns stopped producing buttons in large quantities, so there are far fewer buttons being given away today than when Fairbanks was younger.

**"It's amazing what you sometimes can find in the most unexpected places."**

## Sharing History With Others

Fairbanks and his wife have been hosting parties, on Presidents' Day at their home for more than 25 years. At these parties their entire home is transformed into a museum of presidential memorabilia. Many of Fairbanks' former students attend as well as his neighbors and colleagues from UHD.

"We had more than 80 people visit this past February over two days," Fairbanks said. "I really enjoy it when we have kids from the neighborhood who come by. It's not just something they are seeing in a textbook. **The great thing about collecting historic items is that you are keeping a heritage alive for future generations.**"

UFD



# Painting THE TOWN



By Paige Caldwell

Being an artist requires the courage to be vulnerable and put your work on display for the world to see, judge and hopefully enjoy. Vincent van Gogh asked the question, “What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?”

UHD art students **Brenda Chapa** and **Bobby Ramos** have once again courageously left their mark on the Houston art scene, and this time, it’s in honor of renowned artist van Gogh.

In the spring, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) brought together more than 50 masterworks by one of the most iconic artists in the history of western art. Vincent van Gogh: His Life in Art followed four key stages of his career, from early sketches to final paintings.

In conjunction with MFAH, Houston restaurant Liberty Kitchen served up van Gogh inspired dishes at all of their locations, and the restaurant’s creative and development director, Carl Eaves, commissioned Chapa and Ramos to transform the Heights location’s famous rooster in the style of van Gogh’s paintings.

Chapa, a KIPP high school graduate, is a senior at UHD studying bilingual education with an art minor. From a very young age, she loved creating art and developed a passion for realism, a style used by van Gogh in his early work.

At the age of five, Chapa and her family moved from Mexico to the Westbury area of Southwest Houston. Chapa’s work has been displayed in the new Saint Arnold

Brewing Company Beer Garden & Restaurant and UHD’s O’Kane Gallery. She’s also participated in the Via Colori Street Painting Festival three years and counting.

For Chapa, being a part of the burgeoning art community in Houston is a privilege.

**“Houston is my home,” said Chapa. “It’s amazing to have my artwork on display at different places around town because I feel such a connection to this city. My goal is to start doing giant murals and really go big so I leave an impact.”**

This past spring, Chapa began her first large-scale mural on a building near the intersection of Bellaire and Airport Boulevard.

UHD junior Ramos grew up in the Houston Heights and has seen the neighborhood flourish.

**“I’ve been able to be involved with lots of projects in my neighborhood,” he said. I have a huge sense of pride for where I come from.”**

As a youngster, Ramos helped build Donovan Park, but he didn’t stop there. Throughout his student years, he’s helped create multiple large-scale art pieces for the Heights running trail and much more. One of his most notable contributions is a giant work of art in the shape of a ball of yarn that appeared in Houston’s 2015 Thanksgiving Day parade. In addition to being skilled at working with large canvases, van Gogh is one of his favorite artists.

Both artists attribute a lot of their success to time spent in UHD’s Willow Street Pump Station studio honing their craft. The two have shared classes together for over a year, and when the opportunity came to work with Liberty Kitchen and the MFAH, they immediately thought of one another.

“Brenda is a very skilled painter and her color theory is great, which is why I like working with her,” said Ramos. “We definitely learn from each other.” **UHD**

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*"In The Swim" | Sabrina Hu | St. John's School*

UHD O'Kane Gallery's long-running juried art exhibition, "High Art," featured more than 150 works of art from 22 Greater Houston high schools. For over 20 years, the exhibit offers hundreds of high school students the opportunity to display their work in a professional gallery. Since its inception, sponsors and supporters Jim and Ellen Siegler created an endowment to ensure that "High Art" continues for years to come.



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