November 2003

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Gilberto Cardenas has served as Assistant Provost and Director of the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame since July, 1999. A Professor of Sociology, he holds the Julian Samora Chair in Latino Studies.

Cardenas has worked in the area of immigration for more than twenty years and has gained international recognition as a scholar in Mexican immigration. Los Mojados, The Wetback Story, was co-authored by Julian Samora, Jorge Bustamante, and Gilberto Cardenas and published by the University of Notre Dame Press in 1971. In 1986, the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Mexican American Studies published Undocumented Immigrant Women, a monograph he co-authored with Estevan Flores. Also in 1986, Cardenas served as co-editor of Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender Studies, University of Texas at Austin. In 1992, he co-authored, with Jorge Chapa, The Economy of the Urban Ethnic Enclave, LBJ School of Public Affairs, and with Amelia Malagamba, he co-authored Imagenes de la Frontera: Monotipia/Monoprint Images of the Border. Along with Antonio Ugalde he was co-editor of Health and Social Services Among International Labor Migrants: A Comparative Perspective, which was published in 1997 by The University of Texas Press. His articles on Mexican immigration have been published by such journals as the International Migration Review and The California Sociologist. He was also the editor of a multi-volume series on migration and border studies published by CMAS Books & distributed by the University of Texas Press. Cardenas is also editor of La Causa: Civil Rights and the Quest for Equality in the Midwest, an anthology of articles published by Arte Publico Press (forthcoming 2004).

As a photographer, Gilberto Cardenas has had his work published in journals, textbooks and brochures. Cardenas established and owns Galeria Sin Fronteras III Austin, Texas, a gallery exhibiting the works of Mexican American artists. He was the founding Executive Producer for Latino USA, a half hour weekly radio program produced at the University of Texas at Austin and distributed nationally by NPR.

He is a member of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships; the Advisory Council of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation "Gates Millennium Scholars Program"; the Board of Directors of The Mexican American Legal and Educational Defense Fund; the Smithsonian National Board for Latino Initiatives; and others. On three occasions he has been named by Hispanic Business Magazine as one of the 100 most influential Latinos in the United States. His keynote address is titled "Establishing a Latino Intellectual Presence in the Academy: Opportunities and Challenges."