

THE AREA'S ONLY BILINGUAL MAGAZINE

# tu

Revista Latina

Spring 2009

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## Don't judge a book by it's cover

Often times we allow our perception and viewpoints to be tainted by the media or by other people's opinions. We make up our mind without analyzing the reality of a situation or knowing the whole truth. We decide how we feel about something without having all the information which could ultimately alter our feeling towards it. We are all guilty of "judging a book by its cover."

Other times, we take a strong stance on an issue and it is only human nature to feel passionate about it. However, we don't often enough react positively to those strong feelings. It's real easy to criticize and assume that the opposition is mistaken. But there are always two sides to every story and we have to remember that our opposition feels the same way we do. That's why when we feel strongly about something, it is very hard to change our mind. That's also why, on some controversial issues, we are either very much for it or very much against it...period.

This issue explores stories that demonstrate why we should stop judging books by their cover and be more open to listening to the entire story. Like the story of Robert Duran, PhD which is truly an inspirational one. He proves everyday that with determination and hard work no matter where you come from, where you've been or what you look like if you want something you can have it. The Pendulum Swinging is another story about two different perspectives on tattoos and how society has changed its mind about them.

On a lighter side, I am excited to introduce our TTLC section! It has gotten such good response that we decided to expand on it a little further. In the summer issue we will be highlighting the best salsa in Las Cruces and your nomination is greatly appreciated.

We are thrilled to deliver our second spring issue to you! The main purpose of Tu Revista Latina is, and will continue to be, to provide you with relevant stories that are different from any you might see in other magazines. We strive to make them consistently authentic and real but at the same time entertaining. We hope that you will be able to use our stories and information as tools to help you stride towards a future that includes a strong sense of your past. Remember that your comments are always welcomed! E-mail me and tell me what's on your mind.

*Gloria*

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

#### Dave Edwards

works for the Doña Ana Arts Council and is currently the manager of the Rio Grande Theatre but his writing have been featured in New Mexico magazine, Ventanas del Valle, Sabroso, Living in Las Cruces, Las Cruces On the Move and The Bottom Line.

#### Wade Anthony Cornelius

holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in Communication Studies. He is presently a part-time professor at Doña Ana Branch & El Paso Community College, teaching English at the secondary level, grant writing, and completing a second post graduate degree in administration. He also teaches a Men's Bible study on Thursday evenings with his father, William Cornelius. They are both working on a future publication entitled, "Where art Thou?"

#### Oscar Ariel Gamboa Rubio

realizó sus estudios de Bachillerato en la Escuela Preparatoria Federal por cooperación "Don José María Morelos y Pavón" en la especialidad de humanidades. Recibió el Título de Licenciado en Educación Primaria al egresar de la Escuela Normal Experimental "Miguel Hidalgo" en la ciudad de Parral. Desempeña su labor docente en Cd. Juárez desde el año 2004 y actualmente cursa el Diplomado en lengua extranjera en la Escuela Alfa de Inglés de la Cd. de Monterrey.

#### Ruth Trujillo

is native New Mexican driven by her love of family, fun, and a simpler life. Hannah has dabbled in the arts and sciences and currently works as a therapist; trying to make the world a better place, one person at a time.

#### Heather Parra

holds a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. She is a native Las Cruces and is currently a Librarian at Mesilla Valley Christian Schools.

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received her Bachelor's degree in Spanish Literature from the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua and also a Master's at NMSU in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

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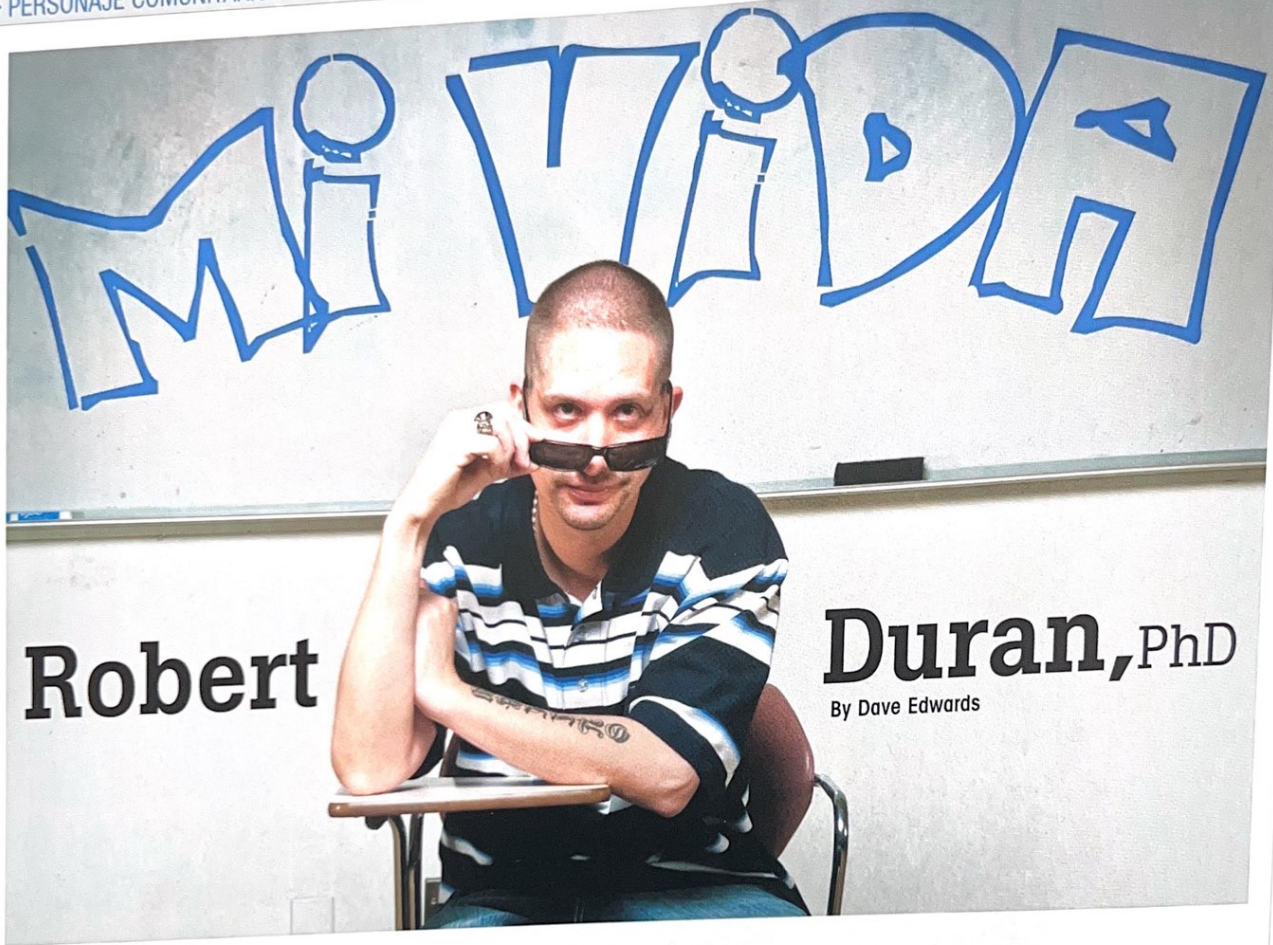
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Robert

Duran, PhD

By Dave Edwards

"All through my academic career people have questioned my even trying to succeed, mostly **BECAUSE** of the way I look,"

You know the Homies, right? Those little action figures that you see in vending machines at the convenience store or in the toy section of your favorite retailer. There have only been more than 140 million of them sold and they are not only toys but on clothing and, now, a video game. A recent search revealed Homies with names like BabyBoy, Shy Girl, Ice Cold and El Grumpy. And then, there in Series 5, was El Profe – a sort of nerdy looking fellow with glasses and a tie standing very erect behind a lectern obviously in front of a class of students. How popular could this particular character be in the Homie world? Especially compared to such colorful characters as Mr. Scarecrow or MastaBlasta. According to his bio he "has a Masters degree in education...and cares very deeply for the young Homies that come through his classroom." Most significantly, "he grew up in the same neighborhood as them, and knows the challenges they face."

Robert Duran has gone El Profe at least one better. The New Mexico State University "Profe" has a PhD in sociology from the University of Colorado. He has been an assistant professor of Criminal Justice at NMSU since 2006. He teaches courses that range from Introduction to Criminal Justice to The Nature of Crime, and Race, Crime and Justice. Now all of this isn't necessarily extraordinary by itself, but when one becomes aware of the path Robert took to get here it becomes a very compelling story. "I was the victim of a home invasion robbery," he recalls. "My girlfriend, now my wife, and I were tied up and threatened with guns. My one-year-old daughter was covered with a blanket." He realized that his gang activities were putting close family members in danger. He also felt the frustration of knowing who had victimized him but found that the police were unwilling to take action. "I wanted to take my life in a different direction."



He began taking classes at Weber State University but found it difficult to meet one essential requirement. "I just couldn't make it to class," he smiles. "Carrying books, doing homework, I just didn't have the skill set to make me successful." He did, however, find one class that really interested him – sociology. He eventually dropped out of Weber but enrolled in a small business college with the idea of getting an associate's degree in business with a minor in accounting and opening his own low-rider shop. "I felt more comfortable in that smaller setting and was able to succeed more academically." But he wasn't able to find work in custom cars so he gave the university another try.



Robert graduated from Weber State in 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, minoring in Criminal Justice and Psychology. He focused on Child and Family Services and worked as a peer mentor with children. He worked for a year in juvenile probation and another year at a youth correction facility where he proctored the detainees during activities and participated in observation and assessment. He also learned valuable mediation skills which he found to be a valuable tool in a number of situations. "Mediation really can be effective when settling disputes and not just between gangs. It was also very helpful when working with the youth in youth corrections most of whom weren't involved with gangs."


Robert was encouraged by a faculty advisor to get his PhD. After applying to several schools, he found that he could bypass getting his Masters and go directly into a doctoral program at the University of Colorado. "All through

my academic career people have questioned my even trying to succeed, mostly because of the way I look," he says quietly. "Someone who looks the slightest bit 'gangsta' isn't supposed to be able to have goals like I did. That just motivated me more." He worked alongside other ex-gang members in Denver who worked with current gang members to reduce violence. "These guys looked really ganged out but they were proud of it. It didn't matter how they dressed or how many tattoos they had. It was very empowering to know we could make a difference."

In addition to teaching, Robert continues to do research on local gang

issues, which are different than in Utah and Colorado. "The police here have a much less confrontational approach, which is helpful. It also helps that the police force is more balanced toward the Hispanic majority." He is particularly interested in the disproportionate representation of minority youth at various contact points in the juvenile justice system. "We also need to work for more resources for programs to give young people alternatives to gangs and develop mediation programs to deal with gang conflicts."

Robert Duran is excited about the future and being a part of positive change. "I am happy to be alive," he muses. "I never thought I would make it this far."

There is a small collection of Homies that look down on Robert's office from the small ledge above the door. They serve as a constant reminder to this life-size El Profe that he needs to keep in touch. 

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