

*Pregones* | Winter 2018

Dear Readers:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write my first letter as the Esperanza Bravo de Varona Chair of the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC). I am both humbled and honored by the privilege of leading the largest repository of materials on Cuba outside the island and the most comprehensive collection of resources on Cuban exile history and the Cuban diaspora anywhere. Five pioneering and visionary Cuban women began building this unrivaled collection as early as the 1960s, and today, under new leadership and a full complement of faculty and staff, we stand on their shoulders to uphold this significant legacy as we enter into a new phase of growth and outreach.

The CHC is a tremendously dynamic space! Over the summer we hosted several Goizueta Graduate Fellows, each a recipient of one of the CHC's signature endowed programs that supports research by graduate students drawn from leading universities across the country. Some of their dissertation topics explored the slave trade in Cuba and the Americas from an economic and entrepreneurial standpoint, to the role gender played in the Mariel boatlift and how that 1980 historical event contributed to the evolution of detention centers in the United States and changes in immigration laws.

This year our collections have strengthened through significant donations by authors and scholars, and by friends and visitors. Our book collection grew by more than 700 titles through pro-active acquisitions that ensure we collect and have available not only important historical volumes, but also the newest and most comprehensive list of publications from Cuba, the United States, and across the globe on the broadest spectrum of research areas. Under the stewardship of Archivist Amanda Moreno, the CHC archive and manuscript collections have been enriched through the additions of papers from Cuban and Cuban American luminaries, which affords our researchers and visitors unparalleled access to the many avenues that Cuban studies and the history of Cuba can be approached. We thank Ruth Shack for her generous gift of drawings, paintings, and other objects of the late Cuban American artist Enrique Riverón. We are also immensely grateful to the dedicated staff of the Padre Santana Foundation for donating over 40,000 letters, which are being preserved and processed in-house and will soon be ready for researchers.

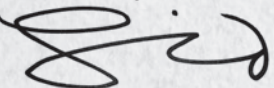
CHC Librarian Dr. Martin Tsang collaborated with UM Professor Kate Ramsey in a Mellon Foundation funded program that featured visiting scholar Solimar Otero, associate professor of English and a folklorist at Louisiana State University. During her visit in October, Dr. Otero gave an exhilarating talk titled *Archives of Conjure: Residual Transcriptions of the Dead* on the topic of *espiritismo*, or how Afro-Cuban spiritual séances create routes to collaborative spiritual-scholarly-activist work. Dr. Otero's approach to archival materials underscored our own understanding of our collection as a living entity; rather than residing as dormant materials in a repository, our photographs, historical manuscripts, papers, rare books, maps, and other ephemera come alive each time researchers, patrons, students, and visitors engage with them.

In the past months I have also witnessed other ways in which our collections spark conversation, invite creative and critical thinking, and connect patrons, researchers, and visitors from our community—in Miami and beyond—to their personal histories. Two recent examples come to mind: Los Angeles based, Cuban American rock star Rudy Sarzo visited the CHC at the invitation of Aldo Leiva, an executive member of our Amigos Board. After a tour of our current exhibition, Sarzo meticulously studied a display of materials from our collection tailored to his interest in the history of Cuban music, including rock and roll, from Cuba and the diaspora. His visit culminated in an engaging conversation in my office over *cafecito*, and a parting gift from our staff led to an emotional farewell.

Just as poignant was a recent visit to the CHC by the great Cuban American photographer Tony Mendoza, who discovered that we owned original black-and-white photographs of the *ingenios*, or sugar mills, that once belonged to his family in Cuba prior to 1959. I could not resist taking a snapshot of Mendoza bent over the stack of vintage prints marveling at the materials assembled, and he too captured these images of his family history on his phone. The acquisition of Mendoza's photographic work will be in dialogue with his family historical records as well.

Today the wealth and depth of materials that comprise the Cuban Heritage Collection is unparalleled. We remain a platform for rigorous academic research and the production of new knowledge, but we are also a space where people, history, and materials connect; a forum for sharing and creating new understandings and insights into the world in Cuba and Cuba in the world. I am invigorated by this process and committed to the thoughtful cultivation of the CHC in 2019 that will continue to strengthen over the years to come!

Warm regards,



**Elizabeth Cerejido**

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