

Un Testimonio on the Transformative Power of Becas Para Aztlán

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Abstract: In this testimonio I attempt to sketch out a chronological narrative that documents my experience as a Becario under the Becas Para Aztlán program. This experience unfolds in Mexico City (1980-85) where I had the honor of doing graduate work in applied linguistics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), befriending other Becarios from across the U.S., learning to love the homeland and deepening my commitment to La Causa. Nearly forty years later, and as I hope to illustrate in this testimonio, I believe I continue to fight the good fight. To this I owe to Becas Para Aztlán.

Key Words: Raza, Chicano, La Causa, Aztlán, transformation

Introduction

I am the youngest of six, with four brothers and one sister. When we were young my parents were migrants and were basically born and raised outside of the San Antonio, Texas area around Luling and New Braunfels. My parents' journeys took them to Michigan and that explains how we were all born in that state. Our ties to San Antonio, however, were strong since my paternal grandparents lived there along with other members of the clan. Around the age of three we moved from Michigan to San Antonio where we remained until I had nearly finished elementary school on the West Side. Then we moved back to a small working class suburb in Michigan. Consequently, I lived in Michigan from the sixth grade through my undergraduate studies at Eastern Michigan University.

In brief, I had essentially been linguistically and culturally assimilated into the margins of the local working class and Anglo culture between sixth and twelfth grade. My goal after graduating from high school in 1974 was to get a job working in one of the big automobile companies that make up the Motor City, though I ended up pushing a broom during the midnight shift at a large Wal-Mart like one stop shopping store. I did not originally plan on going to college but at the insistence of one of my brothers who had gotten involved with the Chicano Movement, I decided to try my hand at higher education. Consequently, and somewhat ironically, I ended up choosing Spanish as my major and bilingual education as a minor. As far as my proficiency in Spanish was concerned, I was starting from scratch, though I did study French in middle and high school!

Around 1978, Dr. Raymond Padilla was the Title VII director of a bilingual education teacher preparation grant at Eastern Michigan University and as a trainee the grant helped pay for most of my related expenses. It was through the required course work that I began to rediscover and recover my Mexican heritage and Spanish language. It was also because of this awakening that I took a College Work Study position with the Chicano Students Association so I too, like my brother before me, could advance La Causa.

In effect, the seedling of my journey as a Becario has its roots in the late seventies as a member of the Chicano Students Association at Eastern Michigan University. Over a three year period, we organized a series of guest lectures with some of the most prominent Chicano leadership in the country including Reyes Lopez Tijerina, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, Rudy Acuña and Jose Angel Gutiérrez. I should make clear that the biggest and most valuable insight I learned from my involvement with the Chicano Students Association was what it meant to be a Chicano. Anchored to the notion of *carnalísimo*, to be a Chicano meant being committed to advancing the Chicano community's welfare, to identify and address the pressing needs of the community, to question, to debate, and to confront those who might be responsible for oppressing the welfare of this community. It also meant to do so with integrity and ethics underscored by a communal rather than an individualistic stance.

It was at the talk given by Jose Angel Gutiérrez in 1979 that I learned about the opportunity to engage in graduate level study in Mexico as part of the La Raza Unida Party's Becas Para Aztlán agreement with the Mexican government through the Consejo Nacional de Ciencias y Tecnología (CONACYT). What happened in Crystal City was inspiring and gave us a tangible example of the possibilities to change things for our community. The idea of a new political party for the Sleeping Giant was also most inspiring. Timing, circumstances, and disposition had everything to do with my application for this scholarship. As I was about to graduate with a major in Spanish and a minor in bilingual education, I realized that my Spanish language abilities were rather limited and that I was not ready to take on the responsibility of teaching in a bilingual education setting in inner city Detroit. Similarly, my knowledge of my culture and history had only begun to be mended and reconstructed. However, my commitment to serving and committing myself to the Chicano community was unquestionable so this opportunity was a perfect fit.

Life in DF (1980-85)

In the Fall of 1980 I was on my way to Mexico City (El Distrito Federal or DF) to attend the Becas Para Aztlán orientation organized by CONACYT. I had studied at intensive summer Spanish language institutes in Cuernavaca so I was somewhat familiar with life in Mexico but more as a tourist than as a university student. The first semester was spent trying to find an appropriate program for my profession; in my letter of intent I clearly remember making the case for developing more culturally relevant teaching materials that could be used in bilingual education programs, since they were so limited and sorely lacking. The second semester (Spring 1981) I managed to get admitted into the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in what is called the Curso Propedéutico, an obligatory preparatory course for those students who planned to apply to the school in a given discipline, in my case anthropological linguistics. This was no summer program or Escuela para Extranjeros, and I managed to complete all requirements. It was an outstanding experience but one that did not take full root.

In early summer, I learned about another program at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City. By the Fall of 1981 I had been accepted into the Master's program in applied linguistics at UNAM housed in the Centro de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras (CELE). This two-year program was modeled after a program at Oxford and the faculty were from all over the world and no less impressive. More importantly, it was a better fit given my goals of returning to my community and being able to improve upon my abilities to promote bilingualism and biculturalism through schooling or bilingual education programs.

During these two years in Mexico City I could not have been in a better learning situation for me in terms of my Spanish language development as well as appropriating a deeper sense and appreciation for the other culture that was a part of my identity. Operating academically in Spanish was a huge challenge but somewhat buffered by the use of required course readings only available in English. On the other hand, I do recall that a couple of professors poked fun at my Spanish characterizing it as a kind of pidgin Spanish. Yet another professor referred to me as a

“Yanqui”. Academically I felt like I was truly being educated as the course content was ample and expectations were high.

Socially, I think I managed to interact quite well with my classmates most of whom were Mexicanos and a few *extranjeros* or foreigners. Moreover, and during this first year, I also came to meet and befriend a sizeable number of fellow *Becarios* from all over the U.S. However, and as I recall, I was the only *Becario* from the outskirts of Aztlán, Michigan in this case. The fact of the matter is, I never knew Chicanos were in Washington, Oregon and much less Utah. The hub for social interaction among the *Becarios* was a house rented by about six *becarios* that came to be called Casa Aztlán. Everyone was welcomed at Casa Aztlán: new *Becarios*, family and friends of *Becarios*, Mexicano friends, and other Chicanos taking crash courses in Spanish during the summer months at the UNAM.

After about a year in Mexico City, I managed to move into Casa Aztlán as a room became available. It was in this way that I suppose I managed not to get too home sick and still able to move forward with my studies, by straddling both the home country and a micro Chicano community embedded in the heart of Aztlán. Even so, I remember coming home from classes exhausted. It must have been the altitude and smog, combined with thinking in Spanish, and the all new input and stimulation. Casa Aztlán was also the sight of many philosophical and theoretical discussions about our community’ struggle and condition and by extension what it meant to be a Chicano *Becario*.

In brief, and consistent with my experiences at Eastern Michigan University, our primary purpose was to look out for our community and each other. It also meant being willing to stick your neck out, for the collective good of the community. As I recollect, there was a wealth of experiences with the *Movimiento* since the *Becarios* came from all over the U.S. I recall that some of the *Becarios* had some pretty intense experiences organizing farm workers or contesting conditions that negatively impacted our community. We were all upbeat about making a difference in our communities once we returned. Even so, we realized that making a difference might come at a cost.

In many ways my second year at the UNAM (1982-83) was a turning point in my academic preparation. As I successfully completed all of the course work for my Master’s degree in applied linguistics, I was forced to consider my next move, though I had not completed the program-required thesis. The following year (1983-84) I pondered my thesis topic, and I managed to obtain a visa to teach English as a foreign language at the CELE at UNAM. I also fell in love with a Mexicana from Mexico City and married her in October of 1983. Since we were just poor students, our wedding reception was actually held at Casa Aztlán but proved to be a very memorable event!

Married and gainfully employed, for over a year I contemplated continuing with my doctoral studies in Mexico but was unable to find a suitable program given that they were scarce at the time. Looking stateside I became interested in a couple of programs that I felt would match my trajectory as an applied linguist with a background also in Spanish and bilingual education. I set my sights on a doctoral program in educational linguistics at the University of New Mexico

in Albuquerque and was accepted into the program in the Fall of 1985. One of the main reasons why I accepted this opportunity was because UNM was willing to accept thirty six hours of my graduate course in applied linguistics from the UNAM, thus cutting my course work in half. Moreover, I would have a graduate teaching assistantship and move to “Burque”, the “Land of Enchantment”. A few of the Becarios talked about how great New Mexico was so that sealed the deal. In fact, when my wife and I got to Albuquerque, a fellow Becario and his wife took us in, including our Labrador, Braco, until we got settled. I should add that our plan as a couple was to stay in the U.S. only until I finished my doctoral studies and to return to Mexico to live. We thought we could wrap this up in about three years and this was the selling point to her parents and family.

There was little doubt that I had been transformed by these four years in el Distrito Federal. I had studied at two of Mexico’s best institutions of higher education, and clearly felt more in touch with my two languages and cultures yet realized there was so much to learn. During this time there were many different opportunities to gain political perspective as well. I had never witnessed such large protests interrupting traffic on Insurgentes Sur, a sea of Raza generally protesting the poorly supported education system in southern Mexico or striking because of poor working conditions. As employees of UNAM, my wife and I also participated in a strike that closed campus for a few weeks. Unions or “sindicatos” were a way of life in Mexico. I learned also about the civil wars going on in Central America and the role of the U.S. in these activities. Indeed, my perspective on U.S. politics in Mexico, Central and Latin America came into clearer focus as I met people from Nicaragua, Guatemala and Chile. My expanding awareness was also due in part by regular conversations with fellow Mexicanos and Becarios who were dedicated to studying the works of Marx and Lenin or “Los Tomos”. Looking back, I was more than ready to return to the U.S. to fight the good fight.

Life in “Burque” (1985-1996)

As promised to the Becas Para Aztlán program, I set out to serve my community by working as a bilingual education and English as a second language teacher in Albuquerque, while I completed the doctoral program in educational linguistics at the University of New Mexico. My experiences in Mexico certainly provided me with a better skill set to meet the needs of the elementary school children I worked with who were primarily from the Northern states of Mexico. I knew more about daily life in Mexico, the struggles, the political and economic climate, and the precarious promise of the future. I also knew more about Mexican pop culture and the nuances of the language. On the other hand, the needs of these children in one of the poorest barrios in Albuquerque went well beyond what I could meet in any significant way. Yes, I was a dedicated bilingual education teacher but I never quite found a way to connect with the community, with parents, community based organizations, or political activity in the area.

My experience in the doctoral program was somewhat awkward. For some reason I was under the impression that “Burque” was “Pura Raza” which compelled me to accept this opportunity. As it turned out, I was the only Chicano admitted into the program at the time, and

I believe the first to complete it. However, it took me about eight years to do so on a part time basis. My previous studies in Mexico clearly helped me make a relatively smooth transition into the academic culture of the program. In this program, however, I was able to focus more on bilingual education in the U.S. context.

As I proceeded through the program I always sought out ways to integrate my commitment to bilingual education. I became very interested in issues of language shift and loss among the Chicano community and wrote the required program “state of the arts” paper on this very topic circa 1989-1990. This activity allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of cognition, economics, and language policy on Spanish language shift and loss within our community. Looking back, this paper was the beginning of my academic career though I had no way of knowing this at the time. I should add that our first daughter was born in 1989 while my wife also pursued her studies in the graduate program at UNM in Portuguese.

As I struggled to narrow down my dissertation topic, and as an ABD, I left the classroom for a lecturer position in bilingual education at Northern Arizona University where I had the privilege to work with the Native American communities of the region for two years (1990-92). My experience with the indigenous communities in Mexico was very limited. In effect, I only had the opportunity to observe these people from a distance as they sold their goods on the sidewalks of Mexico City or as I ventured out into Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Chiapas. I managed only to catch earshots of Náhuatl or Zapotec being spoken. In Arizona, in contrast, I heard the testimonies first hand of my students on how their language and culture were stripped from their psyches. One student described how at boarding school a teacher punched her in the mouth for speaking Navajo. I never really understood my Native American brothers and sisters’ situation until I heard these stories, read their essays and papers, and shared a little of their pain. As a Chicano, I knew I was connected to these communities north and south of the border since we shared similar struggles and DNA, but honestly, the damage mainstream society did to these communities particularly through schooling is irreparable.

After two years as a lecturer, I managed to secure a position as a research associate with the Evaluation Assistance Center-West based in Albuquerque (1992-96) and managed by New Mexico Highlands University. This was a federally funded office under the auspices of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs in the U.S. Department of Education. We basically provided technical assistance to states, school districts and schools (west of the Mississippi) that received Title VII funding for bilingual education programs. The focus of these technical support services was aimed at program evaluation and student assessment. Basically, the purpose of the Center was to help Title VII recipients understand and comply with all of the evaluation requirements that came with their federal funding. Briefly, this job allowed me to visit places where I never knew Raza existed, including Ogden, Utah, Dodge City, Kansas, Des Moines, Iowa and Little Rock, Arkansas. One of the deeper lessons I learned from this experience is how the modern day mainstream educational system resisted serving our community by not preparing bilingual education teachers, and resisted keeping track of our children’s academic development, a trend that continues to this day.

Returning to Albuquerque also allowed me to have more direct contact with my dissertation Chair and committee. In between family, full time employment, and travel, I managed to settle on a topic. New Mexico one was of the few states in the country that tested bilingual education teachers' ability to teach in Spanish. This was something I could directly relate to given my struggles to improve my Spanish as a bilingual educator. Testing in New Mexico was conducted through the use of a measure named the Four Skills Exam, and many teachers struggled to pass the test, especially the reading and writing portions. This led to questions as to whether or not the test was meeting its intended purpose. Moreover, it raised questions about the test's validity, which had never been carefully examined though the test had been used for several years. I managed to secure access to 217 of these tests and to examine what is called the unified validity of the test. I also had the privilege of being mentored by one of the most respected language testing experts in the country who was also on the faculty of the doctoral program, Dr. John W. Oller, Jr.

With the support and sacrifice of my family, dissertation topic in hand, and the guidance of my mentor, I managed to complete my dissertation in less than two years (1992-94). The findings from my dissertation essentially pointed to problems with the validity of the test. The findings also found their way to the New Mexico Education Legislative Studies Committee, and I was invited to share what I had learned about the Four Skills Exam with members of this committee. This exchange led to state funding to develop and maintain a new test aimed at improving the quality of bilingual education in the state of New Mexico. I was invited to be a member of the test development team and worked on the development of the new test for about two years, between 1994-96. The new test, "Prueba", is still being used today. This work also led to my receiving second place in the Dissertation of the Year Award sponsored by the National Association for Bilingual Education. It also probably figured prominently in my securing an assistant professor position in bilingual education at a research one university in Texas.

At this point in time my wife had completed her Master's degree in Portuguese at UNM. Our plan was for her to work towards her doctorate at UT Austin. I should make clear that I always believed that it was extremely important that my wife get the best education possible, so that she could always take care of herself and our children if need be. In our family, education was the great equalizer, or so we believed. My oldest daughter was fully bilingual by this time, around age six, as my wife spoke to her primarily in Spanish and I spoke to her in English. Our youngest daughter was born just as we were moving, at the age of two months. Our visits to Mexico were generally annual so that my spouse could stay connected to her family and so that our daughters could come to fully understand who they were. Raising them to be bilingual was not an option but a natural course of action. Unfortunately, we had disappointed my wife's family since our stay had far exceeded the three years we had originally planned on.

Life in Central Texas (1996-2003)

I recall that upon being hired, one of the professors on the search committee took special note of the fact that I had been a becario. His response was favorable as he had been involved

with the dissertation work of another becario, Dr. Armando Trujillo, who was examining the politics of Crystal City and the La Raza Unida Party. Armando would come to Casa Aztlán from time to time to visit as he was pursuing his graduate work outside of the DF in Michoacán. My ties and contact with the Becarios overall began to loosen and became more sporadic. I did, however, maintain somewhat regular contact with Dr. Roberto De Anda as we shared a common experience: being on tenure track at a research one university. In retrospect, I was excited about being hired at such an institution given that I held the belief that I might be able to leverage the reputation of the institution to advance my agenda for improving the quality of education for our Spanish-speaking school age youth. I was truly inspired by the message engraved on the front of the Main building of campus: The truth shall set you free.

Briefly, the bilingual education department and programs were small and the number of Mexicano and or Latino students and faculty across campus was quite small as well. The students in the program were bright, energetic and committed to bilingual education and working with them was a great experience, especially at the doctoral level since I was always challenged to teach them something they may not know about the field. I also taught a great number of White students about second language acquisition and required them to do some tutoring with English language learners in East Austin schools which many of them considered an invaluable experience. Overall, I did what I could to add to these students' awareness of the condition of the school age youth served by bilingual education programs.

In my experience there was no real Raza presence or voice at this institution but rather a handful of Latino professors, some notably distinguished, that could be counted on one hand. The individualistic nature of these faculty was disappointing; that is, and in contrast to any semblance of Chicano values where the few might band together and support each other, it was "Cada change por su rama" at best. Moreover, securing any meaningful kind of mentoring from one of them was elusive. In effect, and in my experience, I was on my own to try to figure out what I needed to do and how to do it. Perhaps this was by design and simply part of the research one academic culture and not exclusive to this institution.

At this point, my activism basically took on the form of using my circumstances (i.e., publish or perish) to engage in research and to use publishing as a tool for continuing to serve my community. Drawing on my dissertation, I continued to forge my research agenda centered on the academic Spanish proficiency of bilingual education teachers and trying to bring to light the few opportunities they have to appropriate academic Spanish in the U.S. given this country's subtractive ideology surrounding bilingualism. My message was simple, bilingual education cannot work if the teachers cannot use Spanish effectively for instructional purposes. It is here that I began to identify and name the institutional structures (i.e., the K-16 educational infrastructure) that undermined the appropriation of academic Spanish among our community and PK-12 pipeline of bilingual education teachers. In short, my years at Austin gave me the opportunity to begin to develop a narrative on this topic and to share it nationally.

It is noteworthy that both of my daughters attended elementary school on the east side of Austin so that they would not have to endure what I experienced at their age, the near loss of one

of my native languages and cultures—my Mexicanidad. Both my daughters were enrolled in a bilingual program, which I believe served them well by providing them with a better sense of their two languages and cultures. Concurrently, my spouse was engaged in completing her course work in the doctoral program at the University of Texas at Austin in Latin American Studies. Albeit small, the family was fully engaged in solidifying their bilingual and bicultural way of life and to advancing La Causa. Geographically, and wedged between DF and Michigan, our ties to our respective families were rich in spirit but visits were sporadic at best.

Vamos pa' El Valle (2003-Present)

After being denied tenure at UT Austin, in 2003 I decided to take another position within the University of Texas system at the University of Texas Pan American in the Rio Grande Valley or “El Valle”. The lure of this position was that Pan Am is located in Edinburg, Texas about fifteen miles from the Mexican border, the homeland. As a family we were excited about the prospect of having such ready access to the border and Mexico as all my wife’s family lived in Mexico City. Taking a bus into Mexico from McAllen was a clear economic option as Monterrey was only three hours away. Flying out of Reynosa to DF was also economically attractive and the flight only takes about an hour and a half. The idea of going to Sanborn’s in Reynosa on Sunday for breakfast and shopping at Gigante was too much to resist. This idyllic vision was never to be, however, given the rise and persistence of drug cartel violence along the border.

My second and related reason for moving South was that the university and local communities were essentially all Mexican origin. I went from a sea of white to a sea of brown. English and Spanish are used everywhere for everything, except schooling, a point I will address below. As a Becario, this was the perfect setting as there is much work to be done especially in the field of bilingual education. Given that Raza occupied practically all of the key education positions, from President of the university, to Dean of the College of Education, to school superintendents, and on down the hierarchy, it seemed that the potential for transformation could not possibly get any better. I assumed that since we were mostly all Raza driving the education enterprise we could create some outstanding bilingual education programs that would really serve the needs of the children. I firmly believed that working together we could create a school system unlike any other in the U.S.

I should clarify that by this point in time in the U.S., research in bilingual education was relatively clear on the need for strong or additive forms of elementary bilingual education programs, particularly two-way and maintenance programs that valued the students’ native language and culture and not only English and assimilation. However, and unfortunately, these enrichment or additive programs are also the least implemented in our country. It is also important to understand that Pan Am prepared most of the bilingual education teachers for the Valley and the students in the teacher preparation program were practically all from the local schools. It should be noted that Pan Am’s teacher preparation program has often been cited as one of the largest in the country. Even so, the goal of the vast majority of the students in this program is to find a job locally. As I saw it, the potential for improving the quality of bilingual

education programs in this region was great because if we did a good job of preparing our teachers, they would likely remain in the area, and over time, offset the historical pattern of academic underachievement characterizing our community, providing we implemented additive forms of PK-12 bilingual programs.

As perplexing as it might seem, even when Raza has local control of the schools, including the preparation of school personnel, this does not translate readily into better educational experiences for bilingual children and youth. Stated differently, the quality of the bilingual education offered to students in the Valley has not systemically curtailed the drop out rate or the underachievement of the school age population who could benefit from additive forms of bilingual education. Effective bilingual education programs in the region are like the Chupacabra; some claim to have seen one, but there is no real evidence of their existence. Even so, one can find bilingual programs at practically every school in the Valley and college students readily pursue teaching careers in bilingual education. Nonetheless, the pattern of language shift and loss in this region is as predictable as the summer temperatures.

As a Becario, and someone who has dedicated his entire professional life to bilingual education as a parent, teacher, technical assistance provider, and faculty member, this situation merits careful examination and explanation. Over the last sixteen years in the Valley, I have continued to examine matters of language ideologies through my research and publication activities, and I believe that my thinking has begun to shift. Exactly what could so methodically and predictably impede the provision of Spanish language instruction in this border region even when Spanish is native to the region? How might one explain that even when Raza has control over the educational infrastructure, plus ready access to the Spanish language and Mexicano cultural capital, that English acquisition and assimilation remain the intended goals and outcomes? Perhaps our will is not our own. In our most recent papers, written with Dr. Maria Consuelo Guerrero, we posit the possibility of a condition referred to as benevolent colonization and colonial bilingualism. In this case the Mexicanos and Tejanos who are native to the region actively participate in their own linguistic oppression especially through the institution of schooling. In effect, they have come to replace the original oppressor.

My experience here has been bitter sweet, consequently. As a Becario we came to understand that the goal was to advance the quality of life of the Chicano community y punto. Personal advancement or gain was not the goal. Whether we pursued medicine, anthropology or Ballet Folclórico, the goal was never a Bimmer or pricey bottles of cabernet or to succumb to the allure of capitalism. This meant putting the needs of the community first, and going to work in communities that had been forsaken, and where the pay was likely less. It also meant that we would need to be well educated so that we could do intellectual battle with the mainstream or status quo. Nothing prepared me to do battle with “educated” Tejanos from this region. It is interesting because we seem to agree what the central problems are, and in this case regarding the lack of quality of bilingual education programs in the local schools, and how we prepare our bilingual education teachers and the educational leadership for these schools. However, other than a case of benevolent colonization, I am at a loss for explaining how so much educated Raza,

with so much control, can do so little for the quality of its bilingual education services. At best, we have become the La Raza (Des)Unida Party attempting to work within the system.

Persistence, not giving up, and keeping the faith are lessons I learned as a Becario. I continue to fight the good fight every time I teach a class. Working directly with the student population has been the highlight of my service to this community. I also now teach my bilingual education courses in Spanish, recognizing that language acquisition is a lifelong process. I raise these same difficult questions in my classes with the hope that maybe the future generations of bilingual education professionals educated at this institution might be able to create PK-12 educational experiences that are truly transformational. I vividly remember all the school buses I would see as I waited for a pesero on Insurgentes Sur in San Angel in Mexico City. On the side of these school buses one could read, Escuela Bilingüe Español-Japonés or Escuela Bilingüe Español-Alemán, or Escuela Bilingüe Español-Inglés. It is indeed ironic that in a so-called third world country over thirty years ago, the Mexicanos were doing what we could do here but choose not to.

Adiós Pan Am (2015 to Present)

In 2015 the University of Texas Pan American was dissolved along with the University of Texas Brownsville. Basically, these two institutions were merged into one: the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. However, nothing has changed with regard to the programs in bilingual education though the administrative rhetoric was laced with an opportunity for curricular revolution and transformation. It is also noteworthy that one of the guiding principles of this new university is to advance the bilingualism, biculturalism and biliteracy of the region and to become a bilingual university. As a Chicano educational linguist I would have to say that the goal is feasible as the linguistic resources along the border region are available to bring about the transformation. Unfortunately, I fail to detect any serious related and required micro level education language planning and policy development. My sense is that this goal is driven more by marketing and branding and the commodification of the Spanish language.

Over the last three years I have initiated two projects that I believe have kept me sane and allowed me to continue to grow intellectually. Interestingly, I have had to look well outside the local milieu to feel that I am continuing to fight the good fight. One of the projects entailed conceptualizing and editing the 2017 publication of what could well be the first book about bilingual education written entirely and originally in Spanish. The book, *Abriendo brecha: antología crítica sobre la educación bilingüe de doble inmersión*, was an undertaking that brought together a cadre of prolific bilingual education researchers and experts from across the U.S. I should clarify that while I was lead editor on this endeavor, Dr. Maria Consuelo Guerrero undertook the brunt of the Spanish language editing. This book also represents a call to all bilingual education professors to publish their work in Spanish.

As Los Guerrero see it, and have tried to lay bare through recent publications and presentations, it makes little sense to rely almost exclusively on academic texts written in English to prepare bilingual education teachers but that is exactly the entrenched practice that has been perpetuated by the field for nearly fifty years. The irony runs a little deeper when one

considers that bilingual education professors spend a lot of effort trying to highlight the hegemony of standard academic English only to do so through the use of standard academic English. If a bilingual education professor truly desires to do something radical to advance the field, s/he should consider constructing new knowledge about the field in Spanish.

The second project, still underway, is the development of a set of national standards for the preparation of dual language immersion teachers. I co-authored the standards with a colleague from North Carolina, Dr. Joan Lachance, and they were published in 2018 under the auspices of a non-profit organization, Dual Language Education of New Mexico. No such standards existed and are sorely needed, as the proliferation of this kind of program is nation wide. The standards were actually written with the goal of having them formally recognized by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Programs (CAEP). The application process is lengthy and complicated but as we see it a worthwhile goal given that colleges and schools of education dedicated to preparing bilingual education teachers will be able to receive guidance from experts in the field on how to best prepare one-way and two-way bilingual education teachers.

In closing, and in my case, being a Becario was a once in a lifetime experience and one that has clearly made me the person, spouse, father, and professor I am today. The experience was the catalyst for my transformation moving from a state of no Chicano consciousness to a fuller state. For this, I will be forever thankful and changed. I doubt that my education and professional trajectory would have been the same had this amazing opportunity not been made available to me. In retrospect, I need to express my gratitude to the founders of the Becas Para Aztlán program and the Mexican government. I am hopeful that both sponsoring entities feel that I have complied with the goal of this joint and binational effort, to serve the Chicano community unselfishly, to fight the good fight, and to make a little bit of a difference in the quality of life of children and youth.