



# New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association

NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2014

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## Another Record-Setting Holiday Fundraiser to Benefit the NMHBA's Scholarship and Educational Programs

2013 was another record-setting fundraising year for the NMHBA's scholarship and educational programs. The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Fundraiser and Silent Auction took place on December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Albuquerque with several hundred attendees. The Fundraiser brought in just shy of \$34,000 in net profit. That amount is higher than last year's highly successful event, which raised over \$30,000.



*Above: NMHBA Board Members at the 13th Annual Holiday Fundraiser.*

This year's fundraiser saw an increase in sponsorships and ticket sales. Thanks to the generosity of law firms and businesses, sponsorships totaled nearly \$18,000. The NMHBA Board of Directors, with the help of some its friends, sold 262 tick-

ets. The silent auction also netted more than \$2500 to help the cause.

The funds raised will go toward book and bar scholarships for law students, the NMHBA/UNM Law Camp for middle school students from across New Mexico, statewide high school outreach efforts, and other educational initiatives.

The NMHBA would like to thank everyone who purchased a ticket and sponsored the event. The NMHBA would especially like to thank Vidalia Chavez, Brian Colón, Tina Cruz, Donna Trujillo-Dodd, Yolanda Gallegos, Alma Loya, Robert Lucero and Jim McCue for their efforts to make this year's event such a success.



*Above: NMHBA Board Member Jorge Alvarado with Congresswoman Michelle Lujan-Grisham and guests.*

## Justice Edward L. Chávez Visits Las Cruces High Schools as part of NMHBA Events in Southern New Mexico

New Mexico Supreme Court Justice Edward L. Chavez visited two Las Cruces high schools on October 25, 2013, as part of the NMHBA's statewide high school outreach efforts.

Justice Chavez talked to students in several government classes at Ocate and Mayfield High Schools, encouraging the students to pursue their dreams and continue their education. The students had the opportunity to

ask Justice Chavez questions about his work at the Supreme Court and his background. This marked the first



time a New Mexico Supreme Court justice had visited Ocate High School.

Justice Chavez also served as a panelist in the NMHBA's CLE, "Top Ten Tips for Achieving an Ethical and Professional Practice," which took place in Las Cruces the same day. Judge Manuel Arrieta from the Third Judicial District Court joined Justice Chavez as a panelist. More than thirty local practitioners attended the program. Many of them also participated in the "meet and greet," which followed the CLE. Judges from



the Third Judicial District Court and the United States District Court in Las Cruces also attended the event.

### Save the Dates for these upcoming events!

- **Saturday, April 5th:** *MALSA's Fighting for Justice Banquet, Hotel Albuquerque*
- **Friday, April 11th:** *Las Vegas Meet and Greet, Plaza Hotel*
- **Thursday, April 24th:** *Roswell Meet and Greet, Pecos Flavors Winery*
- **Friday, May 16th:** *Luncheon and Ethics CLE, Artichoke Café*
- **Friday, May 30th:** *Farmington Meet and Greet (Tentative)*
- **June 8-13, 22-27:** *NMHBA/UNM Summer Law Camp*
- **July 17-19:** *State Bar Convention, Hyatt Tamaya*

For more information on these events, please visit the NMHBA's website: [www.nmhba.net](http://www.nmhba.net).

## Book and Moot Court Scholarships

At its December board meeting, the NMHBA awarded scholarships to first and second year law students at UNM School of Law. Nine students received \$1500 in scholarships to help with the cost of books. The scholarship recipients are: Dan Cornish, Hooman Heydayati, Christopher Jaramillo, Larissa Lozano, Olivia Mitchell, Adriel Orozco, Jaymie Roybal, Jazmine Ruiz, and Joaquin Sanchez.

The NMHBA also awarded \$500 in scholarships to Devon Moody and Hooman Heydayati who are competing in this year's HNBA moot court competition in Orlando.

Congratulations to the scholarship recipients! In May, the NMHBA will award its annual bar scholarships to graduating law students.



Scholarship recipients with Scholarship Committee members Carlos Pacheco, Denise Chanez, Elaine Lujan, and Robert Sanchez.

## NMHBA Hosts Lunch and Mediation CLE

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, the NMHBA hosted a luncheon and mediation CLE. Dr. Angelo Gonzales, executive director of Mission: Graduate, served as the keynote speaker during the lunch. Dr. Gonzales presented data demonstrating the challenges students face in education in Central New Mexico. He also provided information about Mission: Graduate, a community-wide effort aimed at closing the opportunity gap and encouraging more students to graduate from high school and college.

Denise Torres, Esq., presented the CLE on "Aspects of Mediation." She provided her tips for successful mediation both from a practitioner's and a mediator's perspective.

The event took place at Season's Rotisserie & Grill. The lunch was sponsored in part by Guardian Settlements.

*Below: Dr. Angelo Gonzales explains the Mission: Graduate program.*



## NMHBA FACTS:

- The NMHBA is the largest minority bar association in the State, and one of the largest Hispanic bar associations in the Nation.
- The NMHBA has five committees focusing on member services, education and mentorship, advocacy, fundraising, and budget and corporate compliance.
- There are four prior MALSA presidents serving on the NMHBA Board.

Visit the NMHBA online at [www.nmhba.net](http://www.nmhba.net).

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NewMexicoHispanicBar](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoHispanicBar)

## NMHBA/UNM Summer Law Camp Coming Soon!

The NMHBA/UNM Summer Law Camp will take place on June 8-13, 2014 and June 22-27, 2014. Students from across New Mexico who will be enrolled as 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Fall of 2014 are encouraged to apply. The camp is offered at no cost to students who are selected to attend. Applications are due on or before April 18, 2014. Applications are available on the NMHBA's website at [www.nmhba.net](http://www.nmhba.net).

Students who attend get a taste of college life by staying on campus at UNM's residence halls during the week-long camp. The students witness New Mexico's legal system in action by meeting with judges and attorneys and visiting the federal and state courthouses. Students develop skills in research, conducting a trial, critical thinking, team-building, leadership and techniques of persuasion and debate. At the end of the camp, the students put their new skills into action with a mock trial before a sitting judge.

In 2013, nine students were selected from Central New Mexico, eight were from Northern New Mexico and seven students came from Southern New Mexico communities. Fifty percent of the participants were from rural communities. The largest portion of students who attended the camp were Hispanic. Twenty percent of the law campers were Native American, along with four percent who were African American. Fifty percent of the students were from low-income, first generation households.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with Law Camp, or in sponsoring a student to attend the camp, please send an email to [nmhispanicbar@gmail.com](mailto:nmhispanicbar@gmail.com) or visit [www.nmhba.net](http://www.nmhba.net).



## Congratulations!

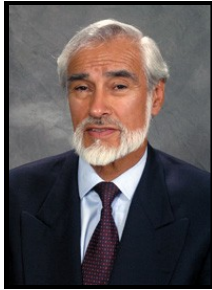
- **Jorge Alvarado**, NMHBA Board Member, was selected as the Chief Public Defender, the first Hispanic to serve in this position.
- **Rebecca Avitia**, past NMHBA president, was appointed as the Executive Director of the National Hispanic Cultural Center.
- **Margaret Montoya**, UNM Law Professor Emerita was honored by the Southwest Women's Law Center at its annual "Celebrating Women's Stories" dinner.
- **Keya Koul**, NMHBA member, was recognized as a finalist for the 2013 ABA Young Lawyers Division National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award.
- **Mariposa Padilla Sivage**, Sutin Thayer & Browne, was appointed to the NMHBA Board of Directors.
- **Antoinette Sedillo-Lopez**, is the new director of Enlace Comunitario.

*If you know of an NMHBA member deserving of recognition in future newsletters please submit the information to the NMHBA Secretary, Elaine Lujan, at [nmhispanicbar@gmail.com](mailto:nmhispanicbar@gmail.com)*

## NMHBA Accepting Judicial Endorsement Requests

One of the goals of the NMHBA is to increase the representation of Hispanics in judicial office; and thus increase the diversity of leadership in the legal community. A written request for a judicial endorsement must be received no later than sixty calendar days before the election for which the endorsement is sought. The NMHBA's Judicial Election Endorsement Procedures and Guidelines, and the Judicial Endorsement Election Questionnaire can be found [www.nmhba.net](http://www.nmhba.net). For more information, please contact Tina Cruz, Chair of the NMHBA's Judicial Candidacy Evaluation Subcommittee at [tina.cruz@cruzlaw-nm.com](mailto:tina.cruz@cruzlaw-nm.com).

# Reflections on Critical Steps Toward Diversity in the New Mexico Bar: Leo Romero's Spirit of Excellence



There have been many champions of diversity throughout the history of the New Mexico Bar, but UNM School of Law Professor Emeritus and former Dean Leo Romero has been a cornerstone in this regard. The NMHBA had the opportunity to sit down with Professor Romero to discuss the history of diversity in the New Mexico Bar and his involvement in bringing about change. The fact that he was honored with a 2014 ABA Spirit of Excellence Award – which recognizes the accomplishments of attorneys who promote a more racially and ethnically diverse legal profession – provided an ideal backdrop for the subject.

When Romero joined the faculty at the University of New Mexico School of Law in 1972, Hispanics represented about 45% of the state population and Native Americans about 9%, yet their representation in the student body at the law school was less than 5% combined. The law school faculty was even less diverse. Romero and Mr. Cruz Reynoso (who later became a Justice on the California Supreme Court) were hired onto the law school faculty in 1972, and they were the first minority professors in the Law School's twenty five year history. Together with a student body demanding change, Romero and his colleagues set wheels in motion that had a remarkable impact on diversity in the New Mexico Bar.

## Step 1 – Diversifying the Law School

Concerned about the law school's diversity numbers, Romero immediately began working to help change admissions policies. The faculty was supportive of these efforts, and shared a belief with Romero that the only law school in New Mexico should have better minority representation. The result was a new recruitment and evaluation effort that placed less emphasis on the LSAT, and viewed applicants in a more holistic way – by considering their undergraduate grades, the high school they attended, the social and economic hurdles they had overcome, their letters of recommendation, and their work during college.

Romero also encouraged the Law School to get more involved in the Council on Legal Education Opportunity program ("CLEO"). CLEO provided an intensive pre-law summer study program for prospective law students designed to sharpen analytical and writing skills, and was aimed at expanding opportunities for minority and low-income students. Romero spent his first summer as a UNM law professor teaching the CLEO program, and was successful in getting the Law School to reserve six slots for CLEO students who demonstrated their aptitude for legal study through success in the program. Romero continued his dedication to CLEO teaching in at least four CLEO programs and serving as regional program director for two.

Romero and Reynoso were also concerned with the lack of diversity in the law school faculty. They spearheaded a faculty policy that committed 50% of new hires to women or minorities. As a result of these efforts, by the mid 1970's, the percentage of minority students at the Law School jumped to about 40%. By the 1980's, UNM had one of the most diverse law faculties in the nation and still does.

## Step 2 – Graduating a Diverse Law School Class

Admitting students and diversifying the law school was the first critical step, but it would be meaningless if students did not graduate. While CLEO provided a strong foundation for law school success, there were limited CLEO slots and only a handful of newly admitted minority students came with the benefit of the CLEO experience. In order to increase access to this valuable preparatory opportunity, Romero permitted "shadow students" – those who were not officially enrolled in CLEO, but could benefit from the program – to participate.

(continued page 6)

## Reflections on Critical Steps, Continued

As valuable as CLEO was, the program had a regional basis and was offered at UNM only once every few years on a rotational basis. Travel was difficult for many students – especially the shadow students who lacked the benefit of the program’s summer stipend. So, Romero and others at the law school developed a UNM CLEO equivalent, the Instituto Preparativo Legal, which was offered on a regular basis. The Instituto program was open to all, but was initiated specifically to build skills of minority and disadvantaged students. Romero also helped establish an academic success course for first year students which developed analytical and examination-taking skills for law school success.

These academic support programs helped, and UNM’s minority students graduated at the same rates as other students. The bar exam, however, remained the hurdle for many graduates.

### Step 3 – Bringing Fairness to the Bar Exam

Into the mid 1970’s the pass rate for first-time test takers was at about 70%. However, the pass rate alone does not demonstrate the disparate results for minority test takers. In 1974, the perception of unfairness to minorities was so strong that many participants in the swearing-in ceremony that year wore black armbands to show solidarity with their minority classmates who were not present. When the Supreme Court refused to swear in anyone wearing an armband, all but a few removed their armbands and were sworn in. Romero represented one of those who refused to take off the armband, an Hispanic graduate of the law school, and got him admitted to the Bar based on a first amendment argument that the applicant had the right to wear the armband as symbolic speech.

Romero worked to help change the bar exam procedure, resulting in a fairer exam and better bar results for minority students. In connection with that effort, he represented several Hispanic graduates before the Supreme Court of New Mexico and before the Board of Bar Examiners. The New Mexico Supreme Court held a full evidentiary hearing on the issue. The Court heard evidence on the examination process at that time in comparison to evidence from a testing expert that demonstrated New Mexico’s deviations from fair examination practices.

The court ultimately ordered the New Mexico Board of Bar Examiners to change the bar exam and the grading procedures to make them consistent with current, fair testing standards. The result was a much higher and relatively similar bar passage rate for minority and non-minority students.

### The Steps Ahead

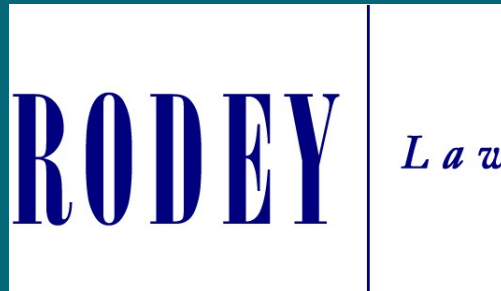
The actions of Romero, his colleagues, and the student leaders at the time had a real impact on the composition of the New Mexico Bar. Hispanic and minority lawyers have not only joined the bar in greater numbers, but have also distinguished themselves in the profession by serving the people of New Mexico as outstanding attorneys, as judges and justices, as presidents of the State Bar Association, as Attorney General, and as legislators at both the state and federal levels to name a few.

As Hispanic and minority lawyers, we stand on the shoulders of Leo Romero and those of like mind and effort, but our challenges are not the same. Part of our focus should always be to remember and understand our history, but Professor Romero also suggests a focus on “generational issues,” as the next steps toward more diversity and minority success in the bar. For example, minority lawyers should continue to pursue leadership positions within the legal community such as the Board of Bar Examiners, bar sections, and the Disciplinary Board. There is also still a large disparity in minority representation and leadership within the state’s largest law firms and in the local offices of large regional firms.

Romero himself serves as a role model here, having served on the first New Mexico State Bar Task Force on Minorities in the Profession, chair of the Judicial Selection Commission, and Dean of the UNM School of Law. He has also chaired the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and held leadership roles in the National Institute for Trial Advocacy (NITA). He credits his leadership positions in those organizations with allowing him to help develop policies that provided minorities and disadvantaged people with the assistance they needed to succeed.

# Thank you to the generous sponsors of the NMHBA's 13th Annual Holiday Fundraiser!

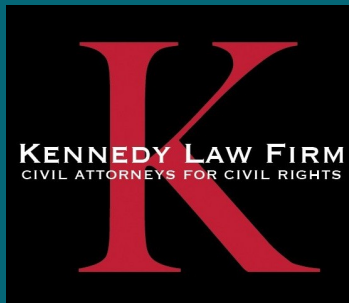
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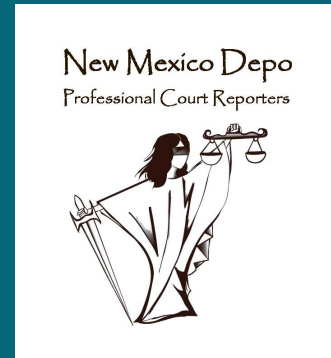
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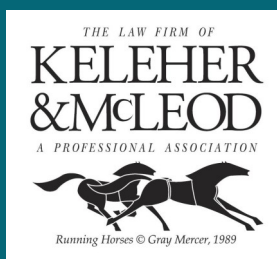
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