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UTEP Reps Recognized at YWCA 'Justice' Event

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UTEP News Service

Representatives from The University of Texas at El Paso were honored with the 2012 YWCA Racial Justice Ambassador Awards for their efforts to promote equality, diversity and cultural appreciation from a local to a global scale.

The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region presented Maceo C. Dailey Jr., Ph.D., associate professor of history and director of UTEP's African-American Studies Program, and the University's Social Justice Initiative (SJI), represented by Lucia Dura, Ph.D., assistant professor of rhetoric and writing, with plaques and expressions of appreciation during a ceremony June 7 at the El Paso Holocaust Museum.

More than 50 people attended the ceremony that recognized Dailey and the SJI for their ongoing efforts to promote racial justice. The plaque's inscription reads in part: "for promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people." This was the 12th annual awards presentation.

"The YWCA works tirelessly to carry forward the mission of 'eliminating racism and empowering women,' and we feel it is important to recognize those individuals and organizations that strive toward the same goal," said Cemelli de Aztlán, Racial Justice program manager. "This level and intensity of work cannot be achieved alone, so it is important to recognize and support those who are passionate about their work in social justice."



Winners of the 2012 YWCA Racial Justice Ambassador Awards include, from left, Bobby Gutierrez, Lucia Dura, Maceo C. Dailey Jr., and Gabriela Morales. Dailey, Ph.D., associate professor of history, earned the individual award. Dura, Ph.D., assistant professor of rhetoric and writing, Gutierrez, senior communication lecturer, and Morales, who earned her master's in communication in May, were part of UTEP's Social Justice Initiative, which won the organization award.

Dailey, who founded the University's African-American Studies Program in 1996, has dedicated his life to fighting racism and the scholarly pursuit of social justice and equality, according to Sandra Braham, Ed.D., CEO of the El Paso YWCA region. In her nomination letter, she lauded his efforts to highlight the impact of people of African descent, such as his leadership of the University's Black History Month programming every February.

"He gives and gives of himself and works tirelessly to change negative stereotypes of all people," Braham said.

Dailey said he hoped that, as a scholar, his lessons on race in the classroom contribute to shaping informed students who stand as models of human dignity, especially when it comes to critical thinking and active compassion for the less fortunate.

"As the world becomes smaller and more intimate through use of the Internet and other forms of instant communication, the imperatives are greater now than at any other time in our history to promote respect, equality, diversity and cultural

appreciation, for our choice is no less important today to find a way, as (Martin Luther King, Jr.) noted, "to live together as brothers and sisters or perish as fools."

The YWCA was just as proud to honor the Social Justice Initiative because of its collaborations with international human rights agencies, de Atzlan said. The initiative is directed by Arvind Singhal, Ph.D., the Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Professor of Communication. He is assisted by Dura and Bobby Gutierrez, a senior communication lecturer.

"By striving toward global peace and by facilitating a global conversation about it, The Social Justice Initiative is a vehicle of change," de Atzlan said. "The world is a better place because of (SJI)."

The initiative, which is under UTEP's Department of Communication, was started in 2008 by a proactive interdisciplinary group of dedicated University students and faculty who wanted to work toward peace. The group, which includes students from the colleges of education, health sciences, and liberal arts, has expanded its scope to include partnerships with such organizations as Save the Children, the Pan American Health Organization, the Positive Deviance Initiative, Plexus Institute, Candlelighters of El Paso, and UTEP's Mother-Daughter/Father-Son Program and Center for Accommodations and Support Services. The students produce T-shirts, videos, publications, bookmarks and other items for their partners.

"We are very proud of how SJI has interfaced with students and faculty of various departments on the UTEP campus, partnered with various organizations – globally, nationally, and locally, and how we go from strength to strength through the engagement and enthusiasm of our students," Singhal said.

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