University of Houston Law Center unveils three new installations honoring Hispanic and African American legal achievements

HOUSTON, Oct. 13, 2023 — The University of Houston Law Center commemorates the remarkable achievements of its Hispanic and African American law graduates and faculty with the unveiling of three new displays. The installations serve to honor the contributions of individuals who have broken barriers and enriched the legal community.

The Michael A. Olivas and Augustina H. Reyes portrait, the Royce and Carol West African American Law Heritage Wall of Honor, and the Ezequiel Reyna Jr. and Livia Reyna Hispanic Law Heritage Wall of Honor were debuted at a recent ceremony with the honorees and their friends and family at the John M. O’Quinn Law Building.

University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes expressed his pride in this significant milestone, saying, “Today, we honor the vision, brilliance, and tenacity of those who have blazed trails and shattered barriers. Their contributions have not only enriched the tapestry of our legal community but have also paved the way for a more inclusive and just legal system.”

Michael A. Olivas and Augustina H. Reyes Portrait

The late UH Law Center William B. Bates Chair Emeritus and Professor of Law Michael A. Olivas committed his life to advancing civil rights and immigrant justice. The portrait of Olivas and his wife Dr. Augustina H. Reyes, professor emerita at the UH College of Education, is dedicated in honor of the couple who gave their time and talents to the university community as well as the local, regional and national community of scholars, academics, and lawyers. The portrait, created by the award-winning artist Luis Alvarez Roure, is displayed on the 5th Floor of the Law Building in the Olivas-Reyes Reading Room.

University of Houston Law Center Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson spoke about her late colleague and the dedication of the portrait.

“We are honored to have the artist with us tonight. This was a labor of love to make this happen. Thank you to the Hispanic Bar Association, Mexican American Bar Association, and many others for making this a possibility,” said Thompson.

Reyes spoke on her husband’s prolific scholarly publications including his most recent book “Perchance to DREAM: A Legal and Political History of the DREAM Act and DACA” as “the first comprehensive history of the DREAM Act,” available in paperback in June 2024.

Royce and Carol West African American Law Heritage Wall of Honor

State Sen. Royce West (J.D. ’79) and his wife Carol West dedicated the heritage wall to recognize the achievements and contributions of UH Law Center African American alumni and faculty.

“To whom much is given much is required. What we do, we do because it is the right thing to do,” Carol West said. “To help others accomplish their dreams. We want everyone to know that yes it is possible. Keep believing; keep dreaming.”
Royce West echoed this sentiment, saying, “It is so important that we who have been given so much give back. The reality is we owe this law school. But for what this law school has afforded us, we would not have the quality of life that we have.”

The Royce and Carol West African American Law Heritage Wall of Honor is located on the 2nd floor of the Law Building.

**Ezequiel Reyna Jr. and Livia Reyna Hispanic Law Heritage Wall of Honor**

Ezequiel Reyna Jr. (J.D. ’80) and Livia Reyna (M.Ed. ’79) designated their heritage wall to recognize the outstanding achievements and contributions of Hispanic alumni and faculty at the University of Houston Law Center.

"It is an honor to be here,” said Ezequiel Reyna Jr. “For you to understand how monumental it is for someone like myself, you need to know who I am and where I came from.”

Reyna Jr., who grew up as one of eight children, shared the challenges he faced during his educational journey, including overcoming language barriers in his early years. Despite these obstacles, Reyna Jr. not only completed college but also earned his J.D. from UH Law Center in 1980.

Expressing his gratitude to Dean Baynes, Reyna Jr. said, “You kept the vision and the courage to be inclusive. I commend you, sir.”

The Ezequiel Reyna Jr. and Livia Reyna Hispanic Law Heritage Wall of Honor is located on the 2nd floor of the Law Building.

Baynes concluded the ceremony by emphasizing the importance of unity.

“As we remember the Olivas-Reyes Reading Room and heritage walls that we have seen tonight, let us reflect on the strides we have made and the journey that still lies ahead. Together, we commit ourselves to fostering an environment where every aspiring legal mind, regardless of background, can find their rightful place,” said Baynes.

[Watch a video of the heritage wall displays.](#)

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About the University of Houston Law Center

The University of Houston Law Center (UHLC) is a dynamic, top-tier law school located in the nation’s 4th largest city. UHLC’s Health Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Part-time programs
rank in the U.S. News Top 10. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 15 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 47,000 students.