

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



Dr. Erasmo Gamboa, Professor of History in the Department of American Ethnic Studies and Director of the Chicano Studies Program at the University of Washington, is the recipient of the YVCC Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award for 1996.

Gamboa attended YVCC from 1966-68. "As one of our state's most eminent Pacific Northwest historians, he is single-handedly responsible for uncovering an exciting new dimension to the history of the Pacific Northwest in general and Washington State in particular. His ground-breaking research of the early explorers and settlers in this area has shown that many different groups of people, never before recognized, played a crucial part in establishing the economic and cultural foundation of this region of the United States," wrote Antonio Sanchez, Ph.D., research analyst for the House of Representatives in Olympia, in his nomination of Dr. Gamboa for the award.

"Dr. Gamboa has shown that significant cultural and economic contact occurred between Washington and Mexico and other Latin American countries. He notes that the first flag to fly over what is today Washington State was raised by the Spanish at Neah Bay as early as 1774," states Sanchez.

A specialist in the history of Hispanics in the Pacific Northwest, Dr. Gamboa has written three books, *Nosotros: The Hispanic People of Oregon*, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest 1942-1947*, and *Mexicans and Latinos: The Other Northwesterners*. His numerous articles include "Notes on the Music of Yakima Valley's Mexican American Community." He was born of Mexican parents in southeastern Texas. The family lived the migrant farmworker experience. "The family, all eleven of us, lived on the road...I registered and was in class one day; the following day I withdrew because the family was on the move again. Until high school I never attended the same school during an entire

year," said Dr. Gamboa in an article written by Sanchez for "Crosscurrents," a state humanities publication.

Determined to break the farmworker cycle, he managed to graduate from Sunnyside High School, served in the U. S. Navy for five years, and then worked at a tire repair shop while attending YVCC. A group of University of Washington students recruiting minority students "signed him up, and he began a course of study that led to a doctorate in history and an academic career."

Dr. Gamboa helped "found the first Chicano student organization and directly shape the Chicano Studies Program at the University of Washington. In 1978, he was offered an uncommon opportunity to teach at his alma mater and do research. Today, he not only teaches but also directs the very program of Chicano Studies that he helped found as a student," states Sanchez' article.