

Tricia Gabany-Guerrero

Prof. Dr. Barbra Erickson
Chair, Department of Anthropology
California State University-Fullerton (EUA)

In May 2014 we lost our friend and colleague Tricia Gabany-Guerrero after a valiant battle against cancer. Her long-term research about the Phurépecha people (an indigenous people of Michoacán, Mexico) used early colonial manuscripts written in the Phurépecha language, together with the iconography of Phurépecha artifacts and cliff paintings, to understand how the Phurépecha civilization changed over time and responded to different types of colonial rule. She had been conducting research in Michoacán since 1989, working on numerous projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Geographic Committee for Research & Exploration, the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, and the Fulbright Foundation. She loved doing research, and her approach to it was truly a “four-field anthropology” approach incorporating history, archaeology, language, culture, and visual arts, a combination that made her work unique.

Tricia joined the Department of Anthropology at California State University, Fullerton in 2008 as a cultural anthropologist, bringing a dynamic strength to the department with her extensive background in Latin American studies, indigenous rights, human rights, immigration, applied anthropology, and qualitative research, as well as a seemingly boundless supply of ideas for projects. She was a committed mentor for students: she served as the faculty adviser for the ETA Chapter of the Lambda Alpha National Anthropology Honor Society; was on the advisory board of the Latin American Studies Program at CSUF; and served as a mentor for EPOCHS (Enhancing Post Baccalaureate Opportunities for Cal State Fullerton for Hispanic Students). She particularly enjoyed teaching Anthropology of Religion, Anthropology of Non-Western Film, Applied Anthropology, Iconography, Globalization and Culture Change, and Human Rights. As a passionate advocate of human rights issues, Tricia's courses on such topics were an inspiration to students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Not long before her death, she had been elected to the Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association in Washington D.C., although because of her illness she was never able to participate as she would have so loved to do.

As a professor, Tricia had a reputation among students for being demanding and having high expectations. But she also had a reputation for inspiring students, and for working tirelessly to support their projects, helping them produce films, written works, virtual and actual museum exhibits, professional papers and posters. She wanted students to push themselves to excellence, out of their comfort zones. She quickly became known as Dr. GG, and I always knew when a student was talking with me and referred to “Dr. GG” that this was one she had gotten to, and maybe inspired. Tricia was also committed to providing students with useful research skills and hands-on experience, and to that end she continually emphasized the importance of learning

to use GIS, Dedoose, and other computer applications as research tools. She tirelessly encouraged students to expand their thinking, to take their own work to the next level, and to challenge themselves academically, professionally, and personally. Her graduate students included Vanessa Orozco and Juan Valdez. Vanessa's thesis was an ethnographic study of AB540 students in Southern California colleges, while Juan's thesis research was a study of the indigenous Phurépecha dance competition *Los Cúrpites* as performed in the Michoacán town of San Juan Nuevo Paranguricutiro, where Tricia did her field work.

During her years at CSU Fullerton, Dr. Gabany-Guerrero was continually active in planning and carrying out high impact projects, in which she involved numerous students. For example, in 2010 she organized a Workshop on Phurépecha Culture and Language, funded by Associated Students/Instructionally Related Activities, which she taught through Skype with the University of Michoacán, Mexico. In 2011 she helped students design and install an exhibit in the Anthropology Teaching Museum entitled "Cultural Treasures of Mexico: The Phurépecha of Paranguricutiro." The grand opening included a performance by traditional Phurépecha dancers on the quad, attended by Rep. Loretta Sanchez and a representative from the Mexican Consulate. In Fall 2012, Dr. Gabany-Guerrero organized a mini-conference called *Noche en el Museo* [Night at the Museum] with faculty from the Universidad Michoacán de San Nicolas de Hidalgo, co-sponsored by Lambda Alpha Anthropology Honor Society and Latin American Studies. Then in 2013, she facilitated a series of guest lectures on human rights. These are but a few samples of the many activities she organized, although during much of this time she was already ill.

Dr. Tricia Gabany-Guerrero was truly a good friend, a committed teacher, and a wonderful colleague, and she is sorely missed.

Recebido para publicação em 18-08-15; aceito em 20-09-15