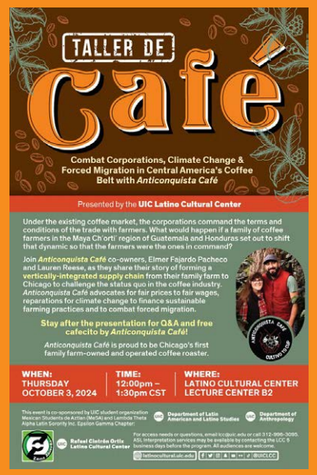

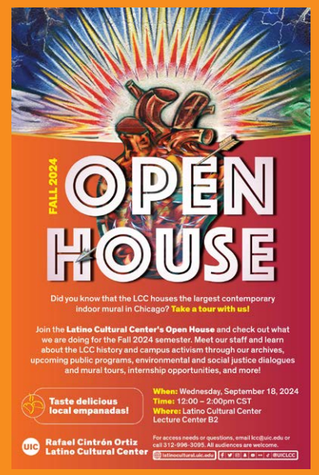

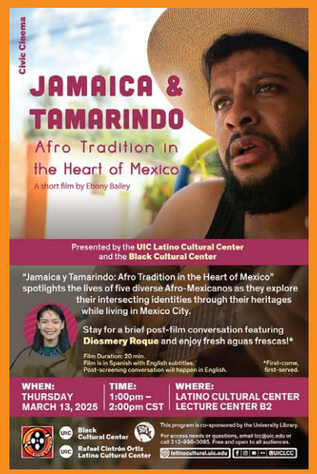

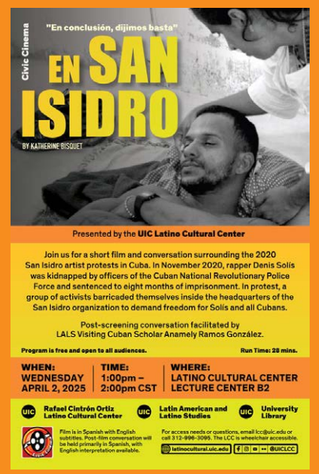

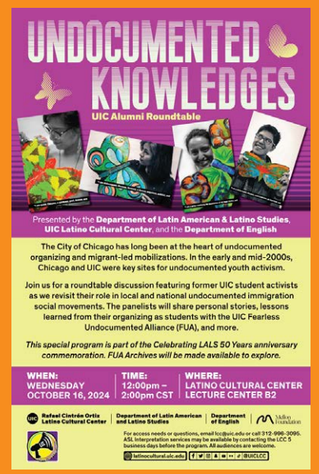

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RAFAEL CINTRÓN ORTIZ
LATINO CULTURAL CENTER

OUR MISSION is to engage the UIC campus and local communities to deepen understanding of the diverse cultural heritages and identities of Latines, issues affecting their lives, and creative solutions they are using to improve community life.

The Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Latino Cultural Center (LCC) continues to be a reservoir of cultural knowledge, artistic practices, and campus advocacy to support the academic, professional, and personal growth of our students through engaged co-curriculum opportunities that center Latine experiences and recognize diversity as an asset for collective action. The LCC (est. 1976) is an essential campus resource that helps our students shape a sense of belonging to reach their graduation milestone and navigate an increasingly complex world.

OUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

from Summer 2024 to Spring 2025 in collaboration with students, faculty/staff, and community partners:

- **Toolkit for Educators** as part of the **Cultural Immersion in Monarchs & Milkweeds Advancing Science Education (CIM²AS)**, supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) was developed to help attract more Latine students to science utilizing culturally relevant theme-based modules that educators can incorporate in their classroom curriculum. Access the toolkit at https://latinocultural.uic.edu/programs/gbp/cimas

- The **Climates of Inequality (COI) Local Story & Traveling Exhibition** concluded its Chicago tour and community engagement programs featuring the voices of local leaders, artists, and residents, about local environmental & climate harms, and the community responses creating a more just future. Exhibition locations included: Chicago Justice Gallery, Neighbors for Environmental Justice (N4EJ), Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO), and 18th Street Casa de Cultura. More on this project at https://latinocultural.uic.edu/coi/our-local-story

- The LCC continued its partnership with faculty in the Depts of LALS and English to further the **Undocumented Knowledges** oral history project, which aims to create a public digital archive of past UIC undocumented activist voices. The Co-PIs hosted a UIC Alumni Roundtable public program to introduce the project and completed their interview collection for the project with nine alumni participants. More on this project at https://latinocultural.uic.edu/programs/gbp/undocumented-knowledges

- The **Reimagining Climate Change Action through a Pilot Native Garden Demonstration Site** was established as a Heritage Garden satellite to demonstrate how native plant gardens can mitigate climate change and support biodiversity and pollinators. Located on the west plaza of University Hall, the native garden site features signage and tours led by HG interns to highlight the ecological and human benefits of native gardens and encourage sustainable landscape practices that can be adopted in communities across the city. More on the site at https://heritagegarden.uic.edu/native-prairie

- LCC staff presented in two conferences: the **Sustainability Research + Innovation Congress 2025**, with community organizations, LVEJO and N4EJ, highlighting cross-disciplinary collaboration, and showcasing grassroots, community-driven solutions for climate challenges; and the **National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE) 2025**, with the Arab American Cultural Center, demonstrating the role of storycollecting and storytelling to empower Arab & Latine folks on environmental and social justice.

(Left to right)
Alonzo Zamarrón, Graphic Designer; Lauren De Jesus, Senior Civic Engagement Educator; Sarita Hernández, Heritage Garden Program Director/Student Support; Dr. Rosa M. Cabrera, Executive Director; Natalie Ayala, Civic Engagement Educator; Jorge Mena Robles, Associate Director.

Visitors who experienced the LCC's interactive arts and cultural education programs reported new learning, greater understanding about environmental and social issues, and appreciation of diversity and inclusion at UIC.

OUR IMPACT reached **10,464** students, faculty, staff, community members, and the broader Chicago public through **30** public programs; **59** dialogues and mural tours; **2** internship programs with **20** student interns; **3** grant-based projects and research with faculty and community leaders; and collaborations with **17** community schools, organizations, and **17** with UIC student organizations.

How participants engaged with the LCC:

2,289 attendees at LCC public programs **21%**

1,127 environmental & social justice dialogues and tours **11%**

2,369 gallery space visits and used as study space **23%**

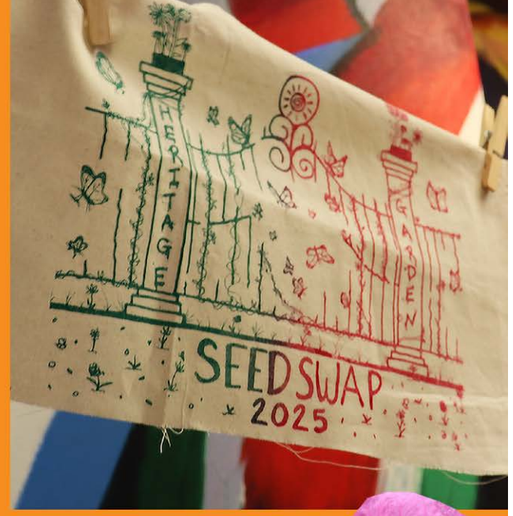
2,482 guest hosted for meetings/events via space reservations **24%**

2,197 additional guests via programs held at community partners' locations **21%**

CCUSC The Latino Cultural Center is one of seven **Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change (CCUSC)**, under the Office for Engagement at UIC. Founded as a direct result of campus activism, the Centers work collectively to produce knowledge and shift university culture, validating the multidimensional lived experiences of historically and currently excluded communities. Informed by social justice frameworks, the Centers support students, faculty, and staff as they build a strong identity and sense of belonging, becoming change agents for a more just campus and society. The Centers connect our communities and design intercultural and engaged-learning opportunities, student mentorship programs, cultural programming, advocacy, collaborative research, and community partnerships. Through these efforts, the Centers expand the educational and transformational mission of UIC.

A total of 1,127 attended the Environmental & Social Justice Dialogues and Mural Tours

UIC Courses & Seminars	Participants
Summer Semester 2024	
UIC CHANCE x2 – Future Leaders in Health (FLH)	35
UIC School of Public Health x2	35
TRIO FireSpark	20
Cultural Immersion in Monarchs and Milkweeds Advancing Science Education (CIM2AS)	22
Fall Semester 2024	
ART 190: Introduction to Socially Engaged Art	17
LALS 495: Climates of Inequality	15
EPSY 150: Human Development & Learning Academic Success	27
ED 151: College Connections I x4	76
UIC Latinx Heritage Month	54
ENGL 160: Academic Writing I: Writing in Academic & Public Contexts x3	78
UIC CHANCE Program	23
ANTH 595: Graduate Professional Practice	9
ENGL151: Introduction to Academic Writing x3	45
HON 121: Honors Core in Understanding Individual and Society and Understanding Creative Arts	24
LALS 495: Latinx Urban Inequalities	10
Spring Semester 2025	
UIC MLK Conference	19
BA 320 Civic Engagement x2	71
ED 307: Curriculum and Instructions x2	43
ENGL 160 x3	47
UI Health	9
ANTH 217: Chicago Ethnic Heritage Site	12
ENGL 151: Intro to Academic Writing x2	14
Mexican Students de Aztlán (MeSA)	8
US/PUBH 390: Sustainability Internship Program	15
UIC Heritage Garden Interns x2	26
Hull-House Faculty Fellows	26
General Public & Community Org | Tour & Dialogue	
L@S GANAS: Connecting STEM and Cultural Heritage Dialogues	51
Heritage Garden Tours, Classroom Engagement, and Workshops	94
LCC Archive Visit	47
Self-Guided Virtual Mural Tour Inquiries	20
General Public & Community Org | Tour & Dialogue	135
Total	**1,127**



OUR PRAXIS APPROACH supports student success through artistic practices and cultural responses to shape a sense of belonging on campus.

OUR PROGRAMMATIC PILLARS draw on the assets of cultural heritage and the power of art and storytelling to engage and support individuals and communities and collectively advance environmental and social justice.

Environmental and Social Justice Dialogues and Mural Tours Dialogues facilitated by LCC staff. Tours facilitated by LCC student educators. Reference page 2 for attendee breakdown.

ARTivism

REVOLUTION: Art Making for Love, Liberation and Revolution, February 13, 2025, Presented with the Heritage Garden. **Tatreez, bordado, embroidery: Stitching connections between Palestine, Mexico and Central America**, February 17, 2025, Presented with the Arab American Cultural Center.

Zona Abierta (Open Zone)

Taller de Café, October 3, 2024, Presented with Anticonquista Café, **Climates of Inequality Series**, October 8, 2024, Presenters: Carolina Macias (LVEJO), Melanie Minuche (LVEJO), and Paulina Vaca (CNT), October 22, 2024, Presenter: Citlalli Trujillo (PERRO), November 19, 2024, Presenter: Dr. Michael Mendez, **The Role of Environmental Exposures**, March 12, 2025, Presenter: Dr. Victor Florez-Garcia, **Mental Health Among Communities of Color**, March 19, 2024, Presenter: Dr. Abhery Das, **A Conversation Between Local Artists About Environmental and Food Justice in Chicago**, April 15, 2025, Presenters: Delilah Salgado and Melissa Gutierrez, **Reviving Local Democracy: New Conflicts in the Chicago City Council**, April 16, 2025.

Civic Cinema

Jamaica y Tamarindo: Afro Tradition in the Heart of Mexico, March 13, 2025, Presented with the Black Cultural Center; **Inside San Isidro**, April 2, 2025; **we are each other's harvest**, April 17, 2025, Presented with Young Cultural Stewards, Panelists: Stephan Hamer, Dulce Morales, Viviana Moreno, and filmmaker Ally Almore.

Noche de Poetas (Poetry Night)

Presented with Mexican Students de Aztlán (MeSA), Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS), Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Anakbayan, and African-Radical Focused Organization (AFRO); **Liberation**, October 29, 2024, Featured Poet: Briana Ureña-Ravelo; **Another World is Happening**, April 24, 2025.

Special Public Programs

LCC Open House, September 18, 2024; **LCC Weekly Listening Party – Fall 2024**, September 26 – November 21, 2024; **Undocumented Knowledges UIC Alumni Roundtable**, October 16, 2024, Presented with the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies and the Department of English; **Día de los Muertos 2024: Honoring Liberation Fighters Past, Present, and Future**, Presented with student organizations: Mexican Student de Aztlan (MeSA), Union of Puerto Rican Students (UPRS), Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) with Anakbayan and African-Radical Focused Organization (AFRO); **Communal Altar Installation**, October 28, 2024; **Letters for Liberation**, October 29, 2024; **Musical Performance and Ritual ft. La Rosa Noir**, October 30, 2024. **Finals Week at the LCC**, December 9 to 13, 2024; **LCC Affiliated Student Organization Open House Spring 2024**, February 5, 2025, Featuring UIC Student Organizations; **LCC Weekly Listening Party – Fall 2024**, February 20 – April 3, 2025; **Finals Week at the LCC**, May 5 to May 9, 2025.

Heritage Garden

Presented with the Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change; **Volunteer Days Fall 2024**, October 18, 2024, October 30, 2024, November 15, 2024; **Dia de los Muertos 2024**; **Heritage Garden Harvest Fest: Metamorphosis**, November 6, 2024; **Volunteer Days Spring 2025**, March 21, 2025, April 2, 2025, April 4, 2025; **Seed Swap**, April 12, 2025.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS

UIC Campus Units

Anthropology Department; Arab American Cultural Center; Asian American Resource and Cultural Center; Black Cultural Center; Department of Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS); Department of Political Science; Disability Cultural Center, Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Division of Health Policy and Administration; English Department; Freshwater Lab, Gender and Sexuality Center; Gender and Women's Studies Program; GEO Local 6297; Great Cities Institute; Heritage Garden; Latin@S Gaining Access to Networks for Advancement in Science (L@S GANAS); Museum and Exhibition Studies (MUSE) Program; Office of Engagement; Richard J. Daley Library; Social Justice Initiative (SJI); Sustainability at UIC; UIC United Faculty; Women's Leadership and Resource Center.

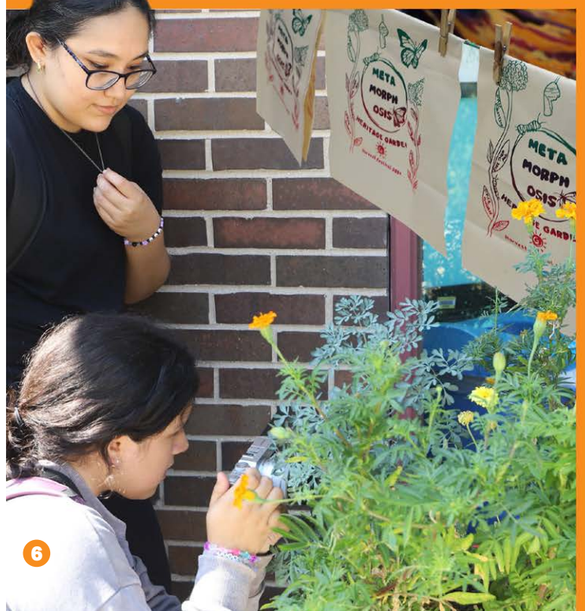
UIC Student Organization Co-Sponsors

African-Radical Focused Organization (AFRO); Anakbayan; Beta Iota Chapter of Omega Delta Phi Fraternity Inc.; Delta Chapter of Delta Xi Phi Multicultural Sorority Inc.; Epsilon Gamma Chapter of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.; Heritage Garden Student Group; Latine Student Coalition; Latine in Law; Latinos Unidos; Latinx Psychology Alliance (LPA); Mexican Students de Aztlán (MeSA); PRIDE at UIC; Sigma Chapter of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority National Sorority Inc.; Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP); Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); The Food Recovery Network at UIC; Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS).

Community, City-Wide, and Global Engagement

Alianza Americas; Anticonquista Cafe; Cedillo's Fresh Produce, Central Americans en Batalla Anti-imperialista (CEIBA); Chicago Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (CHRRP); Chicago Park District; Grow Greater Englewood; Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine; Field Museum; Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR); La Villita Farm; Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO); Malcolm X College; Neighbors for Environmental Justice (N4EJ); No Bad Fruit; People for Community Recovery (PCR); Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization (PERRO); Sanctuary For All UIC; Texas Christian University; West Aurora High School; Young Cultural Stewards.

Funders

Humanities Action Lab/ Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; National Science Foundation for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs); UIC Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement; and UIC Sustainability Fund.

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