



## Luis Davila

January 23, 1938 - March 8, 2015

Luis Davila, 77, of Bloomington passed away on Sunday March 8, 2015 at the Meadowood Retirement Community. He was a Professor Emeritus in Latin American and Latino Literature at Indiana University, Bloomington. He was born in 1938 in San Antonio, Texas to Maria de la Luz Aguilar de Davila and Luis Davila Delgado, both natives of Mexico. After graduating as the Valedictorian of his high-school class at Central Catholic High School, Luis was awarded a full scholarship to attend St. Mary's University in San Antonio, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in Chemistry in 1960. Luis went on to pursue a PhD in Latin American literature at Ohio State University, where he met his wife of 47 years - Roberta (Bobbi) Dombeck Davila, while they were both graduate students.

Luis joined the faculty of Indiana University in the fall of 1969, where he taught in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese until his retirement as Full Professor in 2011. At IU he was deeply involved with the Latino community for whom he advocated tirelessly and supported in every way he could. In 2008, the Latino Alumni Association awarded Luis the Distinguished Latino Faculty Award in recognition of his outstanding achievements to Indiana University and the Indiana University Latino Community for over 30

years. He also tirelessly served the university community as a whole in many ways extending far beyond his pedagogical obligations.

Luis was considered one of the academic pioneers of Chicano and Latino Studies in the U.S. academy, founding the groundbreaking journal *La Revista Chicano Riquena* with Nick Kanellos in 1973. In 1976 Luis also inaugurated the interdisciplinary Chicano-Riqueno Studies Program at IU, dedicated to the study of Puerto Rican, Chicano, and other Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Additionally, he was the faculty advisor to the journal *Chiricu*, one of the few US Latino journals published from start to finish by graduate students. This multilingual journal of Latina and Latino literature and literary criticism continues to be published annually. The Chicano-Riqueno Studies Program, and the journals *Chiricu* and *La Revista Chicano-Riquena* brought recognition to Indiana University and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.

In addition to his academic pursuits, Luis was deeply devoted to his dear wife and two daughters. He also had a passion for gardening and landscaping. In the rare moments where you did not see him with a book or newspaper in his hand, he was taking care of his flowers. He had the patience and care to cultivate a breathtaking rose garden at the Davila residence. Every spring and summer would usher in new bouquets of flowers in the garden, which he had carefully planted and cared for months before.

Luis Davila is preceded in death by his mother and father, and his infant sister Maria Antonieta. He is survived by: his wife, Roberta (of Bloomington), his daughters Roxanne (of New

Orleans, LA) and Serena (of Washington, D.C.), his son-in-laws Marcello Canuto (of New Orleans, LA) and Mark Apolinar (of Washington, D.C.), his grandchildren Aura Canuto, and Amadeo, Arabella, and Dante Apolinar; his brothers Hector Davila (of San Antonio, TX), Humberto Davila (of Houston, TX), and his sisters Virginia Davila de Tamez (of Monterrey, Mexico), Angelica Staley (of San Antonio, TX), and Carmela Davila (of New Orleans, LA).

Funeral services will be held at 11:00 am on Friday, March 13, 2015 at St. Paul's Catholic Church. Friends may call on Thursday, March 12 from 5:00PM- 7:00PM at the Allen Funeral Home, 4155 S Old State Road 37, Bloomington, IN 47401, and one hour preceding the funeral mass. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made in Luis Davila's name to the American Diabetes Association. Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.allenfuneralhome.org](http://www.allenfuneralhome.org)

# Tribute Wall

GM

“ *Dr. Davila, I will never forget your kindness, humor, candidness, and academic genius. It was an absolute pleasure to be able to honor you in 2008 when I served as President of the IU Latino Alumni Association. When we thought of who to honor for our first Faculty Award, you IMMEDIATELY came to mind. You are a pioneer. We miss you.*

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**Gavin Mariano** - April 29, 2019 at 01:02 AM

CH

“ *Im very sorry for your loss. I didnt know Luis personally but reading about all his accomplishments is amazing. May you be comforted with wonderful memories of him & may you find peace & hope in the promise God gives us in Acts 24:15 & Psalms 37:29.*

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**Christina G** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

DM

“ *My sincere condolences Señora Davila and family. I am very sad to learn that Profesor Davila is no longer with us. I want you to know that he was instrumental in my academic growth. I knocked on his office door in 1988, shortly after my arrival in Bloomington. I was the only Latina in my graduate program and I wanted to create a minor in contemporary US Latino Literature, a field just beginning to be recognized. He listened carefully and very kindly--then we spent an entire year reading and discussing many many works that helped shape even my awareness of my own ethnic identity. Profesor Davila did not have to add me as his student; it was a lot of extra work for him, but he did, and I will always be grateful for the significant lessons he taught me.*

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**Dulce Maria Gray** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

JA

“ My deepest sympathy for the loss of Luis. He was one of the kindest and most compassionate people I've met in my professional life. I appreciated his warmth, his gentle sense of humor, and the principles that guided him. He will be much missed, although the lessons that he taught us will live on. I will hold his family close in my heart and thoughts over the next days and months.

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**James Mandrell** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

DE

“ Dear Bobbi, I was saddened to learn of Luis' passing. He was my professor in undergraduate and graduate school in the Spanish Dept. I also studied in Madrid, Spain with him when I had a Fulbright there. He was very kind and helpful to me when another professor was not. He explained how things sometimes worked in academe, and his wisdom had a profound effect on me. He was a gentle soul and he will be missed. Sincerely, Elena Tapia

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**Dr. Elena Tapia** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

MV

“ To Professor Davila's Family -

*I had the privilege of completing my doctoral dissertation at IU under Luis's direction. He encouraged me every step of the way, and when I went into labor early with my first son - just before my scheduled dissertation defense, Luis encouraged me not to postpone the defense, but to push forward and meet the deadline. Because of his support, I did what he recommended, and I am here today, an Associate Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of Language and Literature at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, in large part because of him. Luis truly was one of the kindest, most gentle and warm human beings I have ever met. I am just sorry that my last correspondence with him was several years ago, when he asked for my recommendation for his promotion to full professor. I was so pleased to hear of his successful promotion; he most surely deserved it. Your family will always be in my thoughts, and dear Professor Davila will surely live on in the hearts of his many students and colleagues. God bless your family.*

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**Michelle Johnson Vela** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

JL

“ We wish to express our deepest sympathy on the passing away of Luis. Although we have not seen Luis in several years, we have very fond memories of him from the time we knew him well. We remember him as always being gentle and generous. We are all at a great loss with his passing away. Our thoughts are with you during this very sad time.

*John and Lislott*

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**John and Lislott Richardson** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

ST

“ Dear Bobbi,  
On behalf of the Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, I would like to offer my sincere condolences on Luis' passing. He was a devoted teacher of graduate and undergraduate students, and a visionary creator and leader of the Chicano-Riqueño Studies Program for many years. As a colleague, he was welcoming to new faculty, including myself, and a wise voice of experience in the Department at faculty meetings. He will be keenly missed and warmly remembered.  
Sincerely,  
Steven Wagschal  
Chair, Department of Spanish and Portuguese

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**Steven Wagschal** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

CH

“ A real honest-t0-God good man. I will never forget his kindness, his sympathy to others and his gentle spirit. May God reward him generously in the next life.

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**Charles Felix** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

LA

“ Luis was a loving husband and father and a consummate professional. He was a role model and an inspiration not only to his younger brothers and sisters but also to all the friends and students whose lives he touched. Our thoughts and prayers are with Bobbi and the family, and may the good Lord grant him eternal rest.

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**Luis & Anna Vargas** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

JL

“ I'm deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Davila. Condolences are extended to his family I'm especially sorry that ,in life, I didn't have an opportunity to say Muchas Gracias!! He was an inspiration to me as an individual and in my capacity as the first President of what was referred to then, as the Spanish American Student Association. I attended IU in 1968 and graduated in 1972. He assisted in the recruitment of latino students from NorthWest Indiana, worked closely with University Division and interfaced with admissions per the GROUPS program. I took a class of his in latino studies in 1969 The book" Down These Mean Streets" comes to mind after these many years. I'm now retired but always reflect on the positive influences which Dr. Davila, and others had on me while attending the campus at INDIANA UNIVERSITY! God Bless and may you rest in peace.

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**JOSE A. LIRA** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

MI

“ Bobbi,  
So sorry to hear of your loss. You may not remember me, but I spent some time with Bloomington Professional Exchange as the president in 2008. My prayers are with you and your family during this time of loss.

Mike

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**Michael Johnston** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

NN

“ Bobbi, Randy and I send our condolences to you and to your and Luis's daughters and their families in this time of deep loss.

*So many, many times, as we added cilantro to a dish, Luis appeared suddenly in my mind's eye or in Randy's, and we talked about his love for this little plant. I wish I had communicated with him on some of the many occasions that he came into my thoughts over the past run of years.*

*Back in 1992, when I organized a meeting for Spanish teachers and students in Indianapolis with Elena Poneiatowska as our keynote speaker, Luis lent me his generous support and help, ferrying Elena from Indy to Madison where she gave a talk at Hanover College while she was in this area.*

*I will miss my wonderful fellow San Antonian with twinkling eyes and an ever-ready smile. His gentleness and his kindness are qualities that emanated from him with perfect naturalness. Que su espiritu quede que los que lo aman.*

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**Nancy A Newton** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

YT

“ My heartfelt condolences go to La Familia Davila. Dr. Davila will be missed by so many of his IU friends and colleagues. His intellect, his spirit, his heart will never be forgotten.

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**Yolanda Trevino** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

CH

“ My earliest memories of Luis were at Chemical Abstracts, where I first saw his friendly smile and was pleased to have found such a cordial colleague. It was wonderful to be able to continue that friendship with Bobbi and him here at IU. I will miss him greatly!

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**Charles Davis** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

AL

“ Dear Davila Family - I extend my deepest condolences on the passing of Profesor Davila. I remember him fondly from my student days (1981-87) as well as from my occasional visits to the IU Bloomington campus for alumni events over the years. He always had time to chat, and always greeted you with a smile! We were blessed to have him as part of our IU latino community for as long as we did. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Alba Franco - '85 & '87

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**Alba Franco** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

KR

“ I will always be indebted to Professor Davila for hiring me as his secretary in Chicano-Riqueno Studies, the same day my husband and I rolled into town, for my husband, an Air Force vet, to finish his bachelor's degree at IU. I'll never forget that when Professor Davila discovered that I spoke Spanish, he immediately switched to Spanish during our interview! That was a challenge for me--hadn't used my Spanish regularly for a year or so--but I guess I did okay, because he hired me. I learned so much in the two years I worked for him, and have since moved on to better positions, but I appreciate the chance Luis Davila took on a young, new Bloomingtonian. My prayers are with his family.

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**Krystie Herndon** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

CO

“ I will remember Luis for his kind spirit and desire to serve others. His legacy as an exemplary servant/ scholar will perdure. May he rest in peace.

Carlos J. Ovando  
Profesor Emeritus  
School of Transborder Studies  
Arizona State University

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**Carlos Ovando** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

MC

“ We want to express our deepest condolences to Bobby and the Davila family. Prof. Davila was an amazing colleague and friend. He will be missed by all us. Peace to his family and friend in this difficult moment.

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**Manuel Diaz Campos** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

DE

“ My sincere condolences to Dr. Davila's family. I was at registration my sophomore year when I learned about the class Dr. Davila was offering and I so wanted to take it. It required the professor's permission. Dr. Davila graciously met with me and allowed me in the class and that altered the trajectory of my college experience. I remember him with great fondness. He had such a gentle strength and encouraged students to explore, think and expand their world view. He will be missed in this world. May he rest in peace.

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**Debbie Melloan** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

SM

“ My deepest sympathies to his family for this terrible loss. Professor Davila was the most outstanding human being I have ever met in my life. He was a father to me for almost two decades. He was with me through thick and thin. He always had this soft spoken manner and his daily support would always provide energy, motivation and inspiration. His presence just warmed my heart. We kept in contact after graduation and I always considered him a very dear friend. He was truly a gem of a person, and the most outstanding intellectual in his field. He changed lives and impacted the world! God bless him eternally. Professor Davila, I will miss you and remember you every day. Till we meet again.

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**Sonia Mereles Olivera** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

GM

“ My most sincere condolences to the family of Dr. Luis Davila.

*I was blessed to be able to know him and to have been part of the group honoring his accomplishments at the 2009 IU Latino Alumni reunion as the winner of our first-ever Faculty Milestone Award.*

*Dr. Davila was not only a brilliant mind, but a down right nice guy. He truly cared about us Latino students at Indiana University. We were all so very lucky to have had him in our academic and personal lives.*

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**Gavin Mariano** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

RY

“ Dr. Davila will forever have a place in my heart as a wonderful mentor and guiding voice through graduate school. I enjoyed working with him on Chiricú. He will be missed. My prayers and condolences to his family.

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**Ryan Hallows** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

JA

“ *Serena, sorry for your loss. Thoughts and prayers for your family. I don't know why I remember this, but I remember talking with your dad, as a child, when we were at Rogers Elementary. I think we had went to a Spanish or French class.*

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**Jacki Jordan** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

GA

“ *Bobbi,  
I will always remember Luis best for his principled and eloquent stands on issues that came before the Bloomington Faculty Council. Mia and I were very sorry to hear of his passing.  
Gary*

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**Gary Wiggins** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

RE

“ *Dear Bobbi,*

*I am deeply saddened by the news of Luis passing. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. I am also sorry I will not be able to attend the funeral because I will be out of town.*

*With sympathy,*

*Reyes Vila-Belda  
Associate Professor  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese*

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**Reyes Vila-Belda** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

MC

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss of Prof Dávila. He was a very caring and loving person. He not only was a great colleague, but also a great friend. We will miss him. Peace to his family and friends.

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**Manuel Diaz Campos** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

MM

“ I was Director of Alumni Programs for the College of Arts and Sciences for 22 years. I often had to recruit faculty to assist with both alumni and student events. It wasn't always easy. But it was easy to ask Dr. Davila. He was always eager to help and jumped right into it helping to make my events more successful. I especially enjoyed the role he played at our Commencement Luncheon. He greeted each family when they came in, he teased the student often hinting at mischievous deeds with the student...a joke of course. They loved it. He was one of the nicest professors I ever worked with and he volunteered often. I was flattered when he asked me to write a letter regarding his service to IU in preparation for his full professorship. I last saw Dr. Davila at Belle Trace where my father was in his last months. I was so saddened to find out he was ill and at this same facility. I send my heartfelt condolences to you at this sad time.

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**Marsha Minton** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM

GE

“ *My deepest sympathies to his family for the loss of Luis.*

*I have fond memories of conversations with him when he visited San Antonio and I was General Manager of La Prensa bilingual newspaper.*

*He was without question a trailblazer opening new paths of knowledge and achievements collaborating with his students, academic peers and Latino community colleagues.*

*May he rest in eternal peace.*

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**Gene Rodriguez** - October 26, 2015 at 04:00 PM