

PROFESSOR STEPHEN T. ZAMORA: A VISIONARY AND GENEROUS SOUL

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On July 8, 2016, Professor Stephen T. Zamora suddenly passed away in Mexico City. His good health, active lifestyle, and clear mind never gave the slightest sign of such a terrible event. He died “con las botas puestas”—with his boots on, as the Spanish idiom has it. He was full of energy and had many projects in progress.¹

Professor Zamora was the Leonard B. Rosenberg Professor of Law at the University of Houston Law Center, which he joined in 1978. An international authority in his field, he received the Decoration of the Order of the Aztec Eagle Award from the Mexican Government in 2006—the Mexican government’s highest award given to a foreign national in recognition of his dedication to Mexican law, education, and the promotion of U.S. and Mexican cooperation.

Professor Zamora’s paternal family originated from the Spanish Basque in a fishing village known as Lekeitio, which is a province of Biscay in Spain. Emigrating to the U.S., the Zamora

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¹ I came to work with Professor Stephen T. Zamora in August 2015, joining the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law as an Affiliate Scholar to undertake and develop research projects in comparative law between the U.S. and Mexico in the fields of energy, health, immigration, and corporate law, among others. From our first meeting, I was taken by the intellectual capacity, warmth, energy, and good will of Professor Zamora.

family settled in Los Angeles, California, where Professor Zamora was born in 1944. He was the second of seven children and always remained close to his family in California. He also constantly maintained his bonds with his cousins in Spain—whom he often visited—feeling proud of his Hispanic-Basque origins; pride that he projected in his beloved Mexico.

Professor Zamora was fascinated by Mexico and its complex history and society—especially by Mexico City, also known as the City of the Palaces, with its rich pre-Hispanic and colonial culture.² He particularly loved the *plaza* and *iglesia* of San Jacinto in San Angel, a neighborhood in the southern part of Mexico City where his remains are today, and where, for twenty years, Professor Zamora and his wife had an apartment they loved. To walk the area of San Angel, with its ancestral cobblestone streets and colonial buildings, beautifully preserved in the middle of frantic Mexico City, is like being tele-transported in time to the Mexican past. Just as Professor Zamora was proud of his Spanish roots and an admirer of ancient cultures and popular traditions, he was also immersed in modern Mexico. San Angel was the perfect spot for him, replete with historical echoes and family memories, his beloved wife Lois, his children, and friends.

Professor Zamora enjoyed spending time with his friends at the Chapel of the Capuchinas near San Angel, a chapel designed by the Mexican architect Luis Barragán that truly is an architectural gem and was designated by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. This chapel may also be said to reflect Professor Zamora himself. The set of lights is amazing: light enters the chapel from above and mixes golden and red shadings on the walls, creating an imposing effect in a space of pure light

² CHARLES LA TROBE, *THE RAMBLER IN MEXICO: 1834*, COLL. HISTORY OF COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA, Ed. British Library, 2011. In this very instructive text of manners from La Trobe—an expert in that type of anthropological works—we can appreciate in a very descriptive way the customs and the everyday life habits in Mexico City. Besides these descriptions, La Trobe mentions recurrently in several passages the numerous and outstanding palaces existing in Mexico (*see* § 109, 118, 122 or 127, among many other examples) after which he named the city.

and line.³ So, too, Professor Zamora's personality was imposing but clear, radiating a charismatic aura that inspired students, colleagues, and friends to share his vision of international understanding and cooperation.

I. PROFESSOR ZAMORA: A VISIONARY

A visionary is a person with the capacity to project himself or herself into the future, to foresee possibilities with broadmindedness and intelligence.⁴ Such a person intuits what *needs* to be done, what *can* be done, and *how* to do it. Professor Zamora was a visionary, and also a realist. He knew what steps had to be taken, day by day, year by year, to realize his vision: "lo cortés no quita lo valiente," or, "courtesy detracts not from bravery," as we have it in Spanish. Actually, this popular saying very well could illustrate another of Professor Zamora's character traits: He constantly combined courtesy and bravery, kindness, and expertise. His colleagues at the Law Center and in Houston's legal community remember this characteristic in particular: "he didn't even know how to be unkind";⁵ he was enthusiastic, listened to students and "offered them a helping hand whenever he could";⁶ "he was always natural, genuine, and never pretentious."⁷

Professor Zamora's fields of expertise were international trade and investments, international banking, conflicts of laws, international economic relations, Mexican law, and U.S.-Mexican relations. His book, *Mexican Law*, co-authored with José Ramón Cossío Díaz, Justice of the Mexican Supreme Court, and three other authors, was conceived as an introduction and overview for

³ Luis Barragan: Capilla en Tlalpan/Mexico. Fotografias de Armando Salas. Ed. Capilla y Convento de las Capuchinas Sacramentarias. Tipografias editoriales, p. 15.

⁴ Adjectives found in the definition of visionary, see <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/visionary>.

⁵ Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson, Alumnae College Professor in Law and Director of the Criminal Justice Institute at the University of Houston Law Center, <http://law.uh.edu/news/summer2016/0711Zamora.asp>.

⁶ Counsel Bradley J. Richards, Partner at Haynes and Boone. Prof. Zamora served as Of Counsel for Haynes and Boone for more than 15 years. See <http://law.uh.edu/news/summer2016/0711Zamora.asp>.

⁷ James W. Skelton, Jr., Member of the Advisory Board of the *Houston Journal of International Law*.

U.S. lawyers, and was published by Oxford University Press in 2005.⁸ Professor Zamora also wrote about Mexican constitutionalism and peso-dollar economics,⁹ NAFTA,¹⁰ and, most recently, about energy reform legislation initiated in Mexico in 2013.¹¹ Additionally, to cite a few of Professor Zamora's contributions to various areas of international law, there are his articles on international monetary law,¹² liability for damages in international transport,¹³ and judicial review in Latin America.¹⁴

Building international programs at the University of Houston Law Center was central to Professor Zamora's vision. When he was Dean from 1995 to 2000, he promoted a strong international dimension at the Law Center, considering this to be an essential part of today's legal education.

Professor Zamora created the North American Consortium on Legal Education (NACLE) at the time of the establishment of NAFTA in January of 1994. The principal objective of NACLE was (and still is) to promote professional cooperation and comparative legal education in North America. Thirteen law schools in Canada, Mexico, and the United States are member institutions of NACLE. This program is more relevant than ever and will continue to be promoted in the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, which Professor Zamora created in 2012.

The contribution to the internationalization of the University of Houston Law Center began much earlier, in 1979, when

⁸ STEPHEN ZAMORA, J.R. COSSIO, (*et al.*) *MEXICAN LAW*, Oxford U. Press, 2005.

⁹ Stephen Zamora, *Peso-Dollar Economics and the Imposition Of Foreign Exchange Controls in Mexico*, *AM. J. COMP. L.*, 32 (1984).

¹⁰ See Stephen Zamora, *A Proposed North American Regional Development Fund: The Next Phase of North American Integration Under NAFTA*, 40 *LOY. U. CHI. L. J.* (Fall 2008); see also, Stephen Zamora, *Rethinking North America: Why Nafta Laisser Faire Approach to Integration is Flawed, and What To Do About it*, 631 *VILL. L. REV.* 56 (2011).

¹¹ Tony Payan, Stephen Zamora & J.R. Cossio., *Estado de Derecho y Reforma Energética en México*, TIRANT LO BLANCH (2016).

¹² Stephen Zamora, *Sir Joseph Gold and the Development of International Monetary Law*, 23 *INT'L L.* 4 (1989).

¹³ Stephen Zamora, *Carrier Liability For Damages or Loss To Cargo In International Transport*, 23 *AM. J. COMP. L.* 3 (1975).

¹⁴ Stephen Zamora, *Judicial Review in Latin America*, 7 *SW. J.L. & TRADE AMERICAS* 2 (2000).

Professor Zamora was invited to join the Advisory Board of the *Houston Journal of International Law* (HJIL). He also became, along with Professor Jordan Paust, who had joined HJIL in 1978, a faculty advisor to HJIL. Professor Zamora believed in the relevance of international law in every U.S. lawyer's education, and thus aligned himself with the philosophy of John O. Brentin,¹⁵ as documented by James W. Skelton, Jr.—one of HJIL's most avid supporters and sponsor of HJIL's annual Skelton Lecture Series—in his text celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of HJIL.¹⁶ Professor Zamora joined this team and helped, among other things, to obtain articles and to receive them on time—not an easy task in the world of academic writing.

Professor Zamora's vision of strong international programs was grounded in experience. After clerking for Justice Raymond Sullivan at the California Supreme Court in 1972–73, he received a postgraduate fellowship in international law and arbitration at the University Consortium of World Order studies in Geneva, Switzerland. He shared wonderful memories from that period, and he pronounced the French he learned and refined during that time with an almost perfect accent. But it was Mexico that was closest to Professor Zamora's mind and heart.

Upon arriving at the University of Houston in 1978, then Dean George W. Hardy III. asked Professor Zamora to direct the University of Houston Law Center's Mexican Legal Studies Program—a summer program for law students from the University of Houston Law Center and other law schools which he then organized for fifteen years. This program not only provided hundreds of students an understanding of a different legal system and legal culture, but also contributed to building a solid reputation for the University of Houston Law Center. Today, under the leadership of Dean Leonard Baynes, the University of Houston Law Center is widely recognized in Mexico for its LLM

¹⁵ First Editor in Chief of HJIL.

¹⁶ James W. Skelton, Jr., *The Journal at 30: An Insider's View*, 30 HOUS. J. INT'L L. 618 (2008). In the words of John O. Brentin in his Editor's Foreword: "Given the phenomenal pattern of growth Houston has been experiencing in international business and commerce, the Journal will become an important medium of communication for practitioners, students, and scholars within the international community."

program for Mexican lawyers and diplomats, and for its programs offering internships to University of Houston Law Center students in Mexico, which the Law Center's current administration continues to develop. To this date, both programs have been in operation for more than twenty-five years. Thanks to Professor Zamora's vision and persistence, the University of Houston Law Center is more than a point of reference for American legal education in Mexico today.

Professor Zamora's initiatives over thirty-four years (at that time) have increased "the understanding of Mexican laws and legal institutions in the United States, and of U.S. laws and legal institutions in Mexico,"¹⁷ and in 2012, led to the establishment of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law (US-MEX LAW). Today US-MEX LAW is the only center in any U.S. law school dedicated to the independent and critical study of Mexican law and its interactions with U.S. law.¹⁸ The special standing of the University of Houston Law Center on the national scene with respect to diversity is enhanced by US-MEX LAW, as is its standing in the international legal community. I use the term "international" in relation to Mexico and the U.S., though the Center also envisions the integration of North America not only in trade, but also through intergovernmental cooperation in technology, employment, security, and immigration aspects. Supranational cooperation, distant from the international one, is advantageous to neighbors who are naturally inclined to find common solutions to close common issues. In the Center for US-MEX LAW, we are working in this direction, following Professor Zamora's legacy because "*L'Union fait la force*."¹⁹

Professor Zamora appreciated the fact that the University of Houston Law Center believed in the future of U.S.-Mexican relations. The Law Center facilitated his creation of externship programs with institutions in Mexico, including the *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores de México* (Mexican Foreign Ministry,

¹⁷ See Mission Statement of the Center for US and Mexican Law, <https://www.law.uh.edu/mexican-law/mission-statement.asp>.

¹⁸ See <https://www.law.uh.edu/mexican-law/mission-statement.asp>.

¹⁹ Translate "Unity is strength."

Mexico's State Department), Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), and the *Comisión Nacional de Hidrocarburos* (National Hydrocarbons Commission). Professor Zamora arranged summer externships in Mexico City for students at the University of Houston Law Center—an experience that is professional, cultural, and personal. Still today, University of Houston Law Center students spend up to two months during the summer working in Mexico City, learning about legal, political, and economic relations between the U.S. and Mexico. The program with the Mexican Foreign Ministry began in 1991, when Professor Zamora signed an inter-institutional agreement with the Ministry. It is to the credit of the University of Houston Law Center, as well as Professor Zamora, that this externship program has been ongoing for twenty-seven years. This agreement encourages Mexican diplomats and lawyers to take an LLM degree at the Law Center. Their residence in Houston varies from one to two years and results in a comparative understanding of two different legal systems and legal cultures. Similar agreements exist with PEMEX and the Hydrocarbons National Commission. International mobility of law students was a must for Professor Zamora. He wanted students at the University of Houston Law Center to have intercultural and comparative legal experiences in Mexico, knowing that this would lead to enhanced understanding among lawyers in both nations.²⁰

II. PROFESSOR ZAMORA: A GENEROUS SOUL

Generosity is manifested in different ways. It might be material help, an amount of time dedicated to others, an interest shown in them, or an intellectual generosity of shared ideas without expecting anything in return. A generous person is ready to give “something larger than usual or expected,”²¹ and one who is “characterized by a noble or kindly spirit.”²² Professor Zamora conforms to both of these definitions. He was moved by shared ideas and the desire to do good for others.

²⁰ See Dean Leonard Baynes words at: <http://law.uh.edu/news/summer2016/0711Zamora.asp>.

²¹ See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/generous>.

²² See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/generous>.

Professor Stephen Zamora was married to Lois Parkinson Zamora, a mirror of him in many aspects. She, too, is a professor at the University of Houston. Her field is Latin American literature and art, with a particular interest in Mexico—an obvious complement to Professor Zamora’s dedication to Mexican law and culture. Both were Deans at the University of Houston at the same time. As Dean Leonard Baynes points out, Professor Zamora’s “tenure as Dean was notable for two reasons: First, he was the University of Houston and the Law Center’s first dean of Hispanic origin; and second, at the same time his wife, Lois, was dean of the then-College of Humanities, Fine Arts and Communication at UH, making them quite unique in academia.”²³

They are the parents of two children, Camille and Peter, and grandparents of Nate and Landon. For Professor Zamora, his family was a high calling and he devoted the scarce time he had outside of his work to them. His family was always on his mind, as anyone knows who spoke to Professor Zamora for more than ten minutes.

Professor Zamora’s generosity also took the form of sharing his experience with others and giving useful advice. He spent time with my wife Marie-Sixtine and I after I accepted an affiliate scholar position with US-MEX LAW in February of 2015. After our meeting, we talked about our families, and I mentioned that my wife was outside waiting for me. He did not even think twice before he took us to a place near the Law Center for a cup of tea, and explained to us Houston’s residential areas, using a map of the city. This openness was quintessential to Professor Zamora. He spent time with us, knowing how to make foreigners new to Houston feel at home.

Professor Zamora’s global vision led him to build bridges,

²³ To know more about Professor Zamora’s life and legacy please read how the University of Houston Law Center colleagues remembered him: <http://law.uh.edu/news/summer2016/0711Zamora.asp>.

promote synergies and alliances, and seek ways to solve legal issues and controversies. He was never divisive but rather the opposite; working to get things done for the sake of the community as a whole. He was patient, persistent, and devoted to his students. His high academic profile in both research and teaching underpinned the supervision of his students. Far beyond the hours of class, he was always available to encourage them to excel. While he was Dean, Professor Zamora remained personally involved with HJIL, offering advice and direction to student editors and contributors.

From 1967 to 1969, Professor Zamora lived in a village in the coffee-growing area of Colombia with his wife in a Peace Corps program of “acción communal.”²⁴ The communal and generous spirit I have highlighted in Professor Zamora is reflected in this experience. Even today, the information of the program fits Professor Zamora’s personality: “The Peace Corp is a service opportunity for motivated change-makers to immerse themselves in a community abroad, working side by side with local leaders to tackle the most pressing challenges of our generation.”²⁵ Could we find a better description of Professor Zamora?

Professor Zamora worked to fund scholarships for Mexican LLM students through US-MEX LAW. Together with the Advisory Board of US-MEX LAW, he institutionalized financial support for these students. In his will, Professor Zamora designated a certain amount of money to this end. The Stephen T. Zamora Scholarship Fund has been created, and we look forward to raising funds year after year to allow Mexican students to study U.S. law at the University of Houston Law Center.

In US-MEX LAW, we are working to maintain Professor Zamora’s legacy. We are expanding our research projects, applying for multidisciplinary grants, increasing our internships agreements with Mexican institutions, and working toward legal and economic understanding between Mexico and the U.S.

²⁴ Translated as “rural community development.”

²⁵ See <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/>.

through seminars, lectures, and professional training programs. The task is not small, and the responsibility is great, but we are sure that the results will be positive. We strive to replicate the effort Professor Zamora so enthusiastically put into everything he did.

Thank you, Steve, for your example.