



# KARLA ADELINA GARZA (‘06, ‘07, ‘23)

**Karla Adelina Garza (‘06, ‘07, ‘23)**, the only Hispanic Ph.D. graduate in the 2023 Spring Cohort from the Department of Teaching, Learning & Culture at TAMU, has been honored with two outstanding dissertation awards. The first outstanding dissertation award came in April 2024 from the Narrative Research SIG of the American Educational Research Association (AERA); the second one bestowed on her was the John Laska Outstanding Dissertation Award for Teaching from the American Association on Teaching and Curriculum (AATC), which she received in October 2024. Garza’s original research, *Migrant Students Following the Crops, Teachers Following Their Students: A Narrative Inquiry into Two Migrant Children Who Became Teachers*, focused on Hispanic teachers from Eagle Pass, Texas who followed local border-community migrant youth to teach in an eight-week summer program. As migrants themselves, the teachers traveled with the migrant children from Texas to Princeville, Illinois (near Chicago) and back to the border town annually, following the migrant path of crop harvesting throughout the country.

Data collected for Karla Garza’s study included archival documents (photos, ship manifest lists, birth certificates, etc.) and multiple interviews with the two teachers who met and married while teaching and migrating within the local migrant community.

A compelling twist to the dissertation was that the teachers taught Karla Garza in Grade 5 in Eagle Pass, where she learned alongside migrant students during the school year. The impetus for this fascinating examination of an oft-unheard culture was her remembering her puzzlement about the ongoing disappearance of her Eagle Pass teachers and classmates during the summer months.

This Fall, Dr. Karla Garza, who has earned three TAMU degrees (‘06, ‘07, ‘23), visited from the University of Houston, where she works as Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, to present her dissertation research to Ph.D. students in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture. Their introduction to Dr. Garza’s exemplary research confirmed the importance of original topics and ‘finding gaps’ in the literature. The narratives or testimonios of the participants, told in their own voices, were interpreted and re-told by Karla Garza. Her research study has broad methodological impact on the field because it merges narrative inquiry, the study of lived experiences from the perspectives of the participants, with testimonios, a method that gives authority to the self-identity of Latinx individuals and communities. The TAMU Ph.D. students were also personally inspired to hear about the challenges Dr. Garza overcame as she broke new research ground and earned two highly competitive national awards for her dissertation study.

