

# South Houston High graduate keeps her ‘book-smarts’ in the classroom

**F**ormer 1962 Miss South Houston High School, Harriet (Durr) Romo, has never left the classroom. In fact, her entire career centers around education.

Romo, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas-San Antonio, is well-known for her research concerning minority achievement in education. Her books are cited by policy makers, professors and have become required reading for many future teachers.

“I think looking at education from a sociological perspective is important in order to understand what we do as educa-

tors, why we do it, and the possible impacts of our efforts,” she says.

Romo’s books have brought a new thinking into the classroom. Through her research, Romo has shown that cultural learning patterns exist and can effect how students interact with their teachers. Understanding cultures, her books seem to testify, can help all educators create successful students.

Her book, “Latino High School

Graduation: Defying the Odds,” published in 1996, was a finalist for the C. Wright Mills Prize awarded by the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Her research offered schools strategies that they could implement to minimize dropout rates.



“The dropout rate for Hispanic students from U.S. and Texas high schools is extremely high,” Romo said. “There are many talented students who are not going on to college, but have the capacity to do so. This was my inspiration for writing the Latino High School Graduation.”

Romo’s passion for Latino culture and studies developed in college at the

University of Texas at Austin.

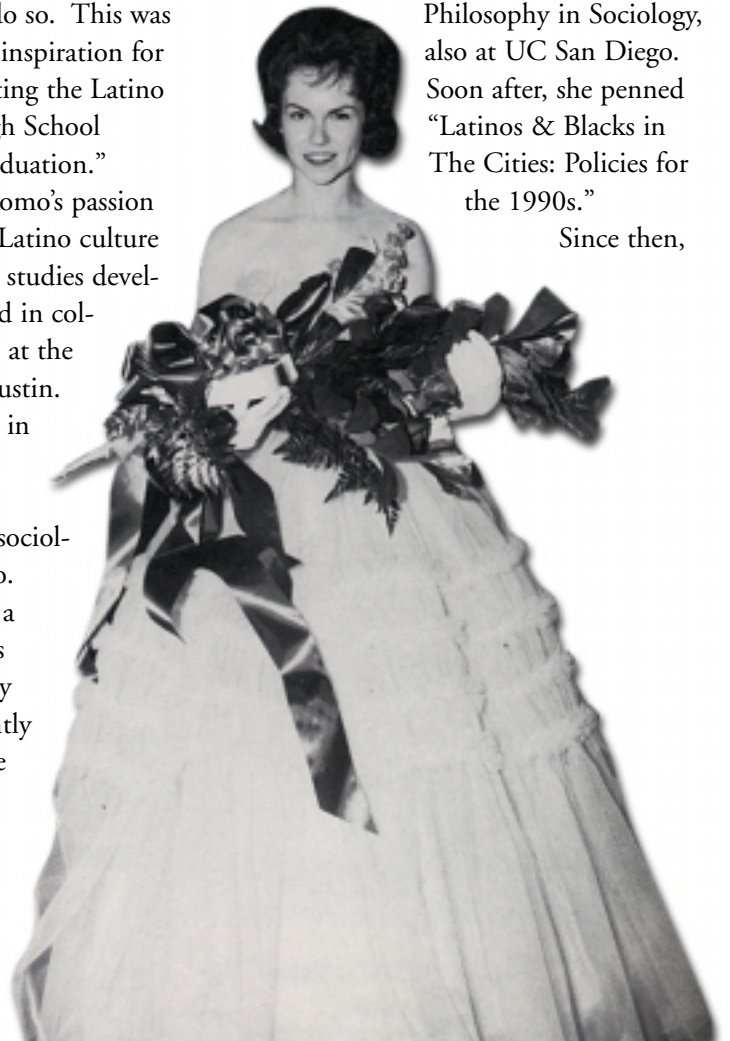
Her interests matured in California, where she earned an M.A. from UCLA and an M.A. in sociology from UC San Diego.

“I began my career as a teacher in inner-city Los Angeles, in a community that was described recently in the L.A. Times as one

of the poorest areas of the city,” Romo recalls in a recent Southwest Educational Development Laboratory article. (<http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v14n02/4.html>) “I first taught predominantly African-American students and then later, because I spoke Spanish, immigrants from Cuba and Mexico who arrived speaking no English. I also worked with the National Origin Desegregation Center for Language Minority Students (a Lau Center — named after the Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court Case) helping school districts provide successful programs for children who did not understand or speak English.”

In 1985, she received a Doctorate of Philosophy in Sociology, also at UC San Diego. Soon after, she penned “Latinos & Blacks in The Cities: Policies for the 1990s.”

Since then,



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Romo has authored and co-authored many books.

Most noted, she is the co-author of a sociology text book titled "Racial and Ethnic Relations in America," published in 1998.

"Writing the textbook, encouraged me to keep up with the experiences of all ethnic groups," Romo said. "I have always loved to read and learn about different ethnic groups."

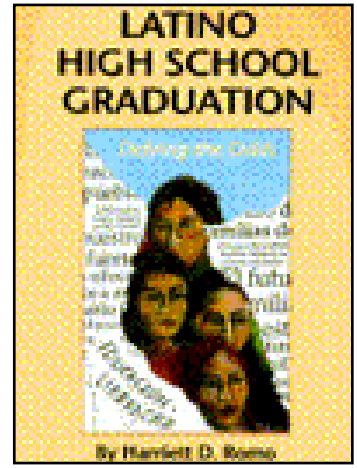
Overall, Romo's research has provided a springboard for her other success.

In 2002, she was awarded a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to study U.S. born Mexican-Americans and immigrants who maintain strong ties with Mexico in San Antonio.

She was nominated for the Athena Award in 2001, issued by the San Antonio Northwest Chamber of Commerce, for professional excellence, community service and assisting women in their attainment of professional excellence.

In addition, she was featured in the American Sociological Association Meet Critic Symposia and was a distinguished speaker at the University of Incarnate Word in 1998.

Along with her research, Romo, who was voted "Most Versatile" by her senior class, can also boost a successful marriage. Romo married Ricardo Romo in 1967 after a college courtship at UT Austin. Ricardo, an accomplished historian, is currently the UTSA president and presidential advisor on issues affecting



Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Together, they have traveled the world, dined with President Bush and maintained their Latin American ties through art and literature.

"Harriet's success comes as no surprise to me," said former classmate, Jenny (Greenwood) Lewis. "She was a very intelligent and dedicated student."

Romo graduated in upper five percentile of her class and was class historian and editor of the yearbook in high school.

At UTSA, Romo has written, and currently maintains and oversees several major grants including: a grant that allows UTSA to partner with San Antonio School District to build a child development center and community resource center, a grant sponsored by the Rockefeller

Foundation, designed to study San Antonio as a transitional community, and the Head Start higher education grant that focuses on educating teachers.

Looking back, Romo says her success stems from the education she received in Pasadena.

"I feel that I received a strong foundation in writing skills from South Houston High School and from Jackson Junior High," she recalls.

Consequently, through Romo's research, those writing skills will translate into a strong foundation for minorities in the classroom for years to come. ★

**LEFT PAGE:**

**far left: Harriet Romo 2003  
bottom left: Harriet Durr  
accepts a bouquet of flowers  
after being named Miss South  
Houston High School at the  
end of her senior year.**

**ABOVE:**

**left: Harriet Durr in High  
School  
middle: Harriet married  
Ricardo Romo. The couple lives  
in San Antonio, where Ricardo  
is the president at UTSA and  
Harriet is an associate professor  
of sociology.  
right: Harriet has written many  
books concerning minorities in  
education. One of her more  
acclaimed offerings has been  
"Latino High School  
Graduation: Defying the Odds."**

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