The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Américo Paredes, professor, anthropology and English, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
AMERICO PAREDES

Américo Paredes, professor of anthropology and English at The University of Texas at Austin, and a pioneer in the field of Mexican American studies, died in Austin on May 5, 1999. This is the day called El Cinco de Mayo, the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla in which the people of Mexico defeated the French forces of occupation and began their expulsion from Mexico.

Born in 1915 in Brownsville, Texas, Paredes became the foremost anthropological, folkloristic, and literary scholar of the community he referred to as "Greater Mexico," a term for capturing the present and historical movement of Mexicans across the U.S.-Mexico border. Paredes earned a PhD in English and Spanish from The University of Texas at Austin in 1956, and in the following year was appointed assistant professor of English at UT. His doctoral dissertation became the now classic book, With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero (1958) which, along with several articles, earned him tenure and the rank of associate professor in 1961. He was promoted to full professor in 1965. In 1983 he became the Dickson, Allen, Anderson Centennial Professor in Southwest Folklore, History, and Literature.

During his time at the University, Paredes founded the highly-regarded Center for Mexican American Studies, as well as the Center for Intercultural Studies in Folklore and Ethnomusicology in 1967. He worked with a group of younger scholars, namely Roger D. Abrahams, Richard Bauman, and Joel Sherzer, developing what has become known as the ethnography of performance. Paredes’s scholarly work included numerous articles, three additional academic books, including The Folktales of Mexico (The University of Chicago Press, 1970) and The Texas-Mexican Cancionero (University of Illinois Press, 1976), several novels, including George Washington Gomez (Arte Publico Press, 1990), and several books of poetry, including Between Two Worlds (Arte Publico Press, 1991). He received numerous awards and accolades, including the Charles Frankel Prize from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Orden de Aguila Azteca, Mexico’s highest honor awarded to scholars from other countries. In 1998, the Austin Independent School District announced the naming of a new middle school after Professor Paredes.

Professor Paredes’s work has also been the subject of numerous critical works in themselves. Foremost among those who have been engaged with his work include José Limón, Renato Rosaldo, and Ramon Saldívar. Paredes was dedicated to the proposition that cultures are not contained within historically contingent things that we call nation-states. And—expanding this idea of border-crossings as early as the mid-1950s—he believed that scholarly disciplinary activity in the realm of culture must continually be integrative to produce one encompassing and fluid portrait in which history, anthropology, folklore, literature, and cultural geography become as one.

Since 1987 the Center for Mexican American Studies has honored Professor Paredes through an annual Distinguished Paredes Lectureship, which serves to bring young scholars working in the Paredes tradition to the campus. Finally, in the summer of 2000, the folklore center Professor Paredes helped establish was renamed The Américo Paredes Center for Cultural Studies. It is through Professor Américo Paredes’s deep commitment to an integrative and interdisciplinary understanding of scholarship, as well as his commitment to knowledge in the service of community, that we find the link between him and the work of cultural studies.
This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Richard R. Flores (chair), David Montejano, and José Limón.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on January 5, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.