

María Elena Martínez-López (1966–2014)

by ROCÍO QUISPE-AGNOLI, LSN Program Track Co-chair | Michigan State University

and JUAN CARLOS GONZÁLEZ ESPITIA, LSN Program Track Co-chair
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Our colleague María Elena Martínez, renowned for her work on race, ethnicity, and issues of purity of blood in Spanish America and colonial Mexico, passed away on November 16, 2014. She was associate professor of history and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Her book *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2008) traced the origins and paths of the idea of purity of blood and the (re)creation of racial categories in the Colonial Atlantic Spanish world.

A native of Mexico, María attended Northwestern University, where she received her BA in Latin American studies in 1988. This was followed by an MA in 1992 and a PhD in Latin American history in 2001 from the University of Chicago. Soon after receiving her doctoral degree, she joined the University of Southern California. She was the faculty leader of the Colonial Latin American Seminar at the USC Early Modern Studies Institute and directed Chicano and Latin American Studies from 2009 to 2011. María Elena was also the cofounder and leader of the Tepoztlán Institute for the Transnational History of the Americas. In 2013 she received a USC Mellon Mentoring Award for her work with graduate students, and she was selected as a 2015 Stanford University Humanities Fellow.

She was an outstanding and passionate scholar in our field, a patient mentor, a wise colleague, and devoted friend. She is missed, but we will see her once and again in her relevant writings and contributions to colonial Spanish America and the Iberian Atlantic world.

María Elena Martínez was scheduled to participate in the 2015 LASA Congress as a panelist in “‘Race, Color, Casta’ and other Labels in Latin America and the Caribbean: Scholarly Dilemmas,” a special workshop organized by the Colonial and Nineteenth-Century Literary Studies Program track chairs. This workshop will be dedicated to her memory and will take place Saturday, May 30, 2015, at 4:00 p.m. ■