

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Photo courtesy of Alfredo A. Maldonado

Dr. Luz Maldonado Rodríguez

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Dr. Luz Angélica Maldonado Rodríguez is a Tejana from la frontera of El Paso, Texas. Due to an early focus on STEM through tracking in her middle school and high school education, Luz majored in Mechanical Engineering at Rice University. A critical part of her undergraduate experience included volunteering at local Houston high schools as a member of the university's chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE). These experiences cemented a desire to work in a classroom and upon graduation, she became a 1st grade bilingual teacher in East Houston. While completing her master's degree in Mathematics Education with an emphasis in Bilingual/Bicultural Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, she had the opportunity to participate in emerging research on dual language education in New York City public schools. By this point, Luz had started understanding the key role that classroom teachers play in the development of the mathematical identity of their students. She returned to Texas to continue her learning and research at the University of Texas at Austin, completing a Ph.D. in Mathematics Education, with a doctoral portfolio in Mexican American Studies. She is currently an associate professor of Bilingual Mathematics Education at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, in the department of Curriculum and Instruction.

"Early in my career, I interviewed a 6th grader on her mathematical modeling strategies and mathematics learning experiences as a bilingual student. She lamented that 4th grade was when they 'took my language away' as she was transferred from a bilingual to monolingual classroom. I remember her story often, and that although Hispanic Heritage Month was made official in the 1980s, too many Latine students are still not allowed to bring all of who they are to school. This month provides an opportunity to highlight Latines who are successful in thriving in spaces that were not always made for us."

Luz's scholarship intersects the fields of mathematics and bilingual education and addresses the critical need to examine and highlight the mathematical brilliance of emergent bilingual students. Her publications have explored the connections to translanguaging and mathematics teaching and learning, while revealing the raciolinguistic ideologies that continue to permeate mathematics education. An important aspect of her work is building relationships with pre-service and in-service teachers, particularly in documenting empowering teaching and learning practices. Luz's research with bilingual teachers and their students, along with mathematics professional development for elementary teachers in multiple states, constantly informs her undergraduate and graduate level teaching and compels her to understand how to better prepare elementary teachers for their future mathematics classrooms. As an elementary teacher educator for over 18 years, she implements and expands upon notions of equity, language, power, and identity in the math methods and bilingual education courses that she teaches. Luz is also a co-PI in a cross-site NSF Racial Equity in STEM grant that has an intentional focus on the experiences of preservice teachers of color, whose own racialized mathematics learning experiences have mostly remained unexamined.

Luz was part of a university wide committee that lead to the creation of a Latino/a Studies Minor at Texas State and serves on its Advisory Board. She has also served on the Board of TODOS: Mathematics for All, a national organization dedicated to advocate for equity and high-quality mathematics education for all students, in particular Latina/o students. She currently serves as the chair of the Professional Development committee and helps to share resources on teaching critical mathematics in K-12 classrooms.

Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at [LATHISMS.ORG](https://lathisms.org).

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