

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### LORA ROMERO

(1960 - 1997)

A native Californian, Lora Romero was born in Chino in 1960. She graduated from Stanford and earned her master's and doctoral degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. Before coming to Stanford in 1993, Professor Romero had taught at Princeton University and at the University of Texas at Austin. She was a specialist in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American fiction, the American Renaissance, American Studies generally, gender theory, and Chicana/o cultural studies. On October 10, 1997, Lora Romero took her own life. She was thirty-seven years old.

Professor Romero's scholarship embraced the canonic authors of the American Renaissance and the African American and Chicana authors who challenged the canon. One of her most probing essays, published in the Yale Journal of Criticism (1993), discussed the role of "ethnic intellectuals" in American institutions of higher learning. By addressing what makes something worthy of studying, teaching, talking and writing about, the article seeks to understand the relation between a scholar's community of origin and the community of learning she inhabits. By bridging the ethical dimension of social life and the classroom, Professor Romero's scholarship attempted to throw light on the links between one's professional and political commitments, particularly the status of women and minorities in the academy. She did not live to see the publication of her first book, Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States (Duke University Press, 1997), a study of classic American novelists and less frequently studied popular women writers of that period. Concise, accessible and profound, Home Fronts has been greeted by scholars and students of American studies as an incisive analysis of the implications of the "separate spheres" theory of American women's and men's culture that has dominated critical discourse since the nineteenth century.

Professor Romero was the recipient of numerous prizes, including a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship and the prestigious Forester Prize awarded for the best article published in American literature in 1991. Professor Romero played a key role in the American Studies Association. She served as a member of the National Council, the Minority Scholars Committee, the 1996 Program Committee, and the

Electronic Projects and Publications Committee. In her election statement for the National Council, Professor Romero articulated her vision for the Association as interdisciplinary, critically multicultural and transnational, with a greater commitment to lesbian and gay studies as well. She called upon American Studies to assume leadership in the arena of cultural studies “by problematizing the simple and self-congratulatory equation of equal representation and equal rights.”

At Stanford, Professor Romero was a member of the Chicano Task Force, served on the Advisory Committee of the Gay/Lesbian/Bi-Sexual Center, and was resident fellow at Casa Zapata, the Chicano theme dormitory.

As an assistant professor, a resident fellow at Casa Zapata, a generous colleague, and a devoted mentor of numerous undergraduate and graduate students, Professor Romero touched the lives of many members of the Stanford community. The extraordinary care that she showed for friends, students and colleagues made her a central presence in the department and will make her absence profoundly felt. Those who were fortunate to know her personally, as well as those who knew her only through her leadership and her ideas, miss her warmth, wit, and passion, her canny intelligence and her urgent, incisive political convictions.

Lora Romero is survived by her parents, Alice and George Romero of San Anselmo, two brothers, a sister, and hundreds of students, colleagues, and devoted friends. Colleagues at Stanford and Texas have established scholarship funds in her memory. In Stanford’s Department of English, the Lora Romero Memorial Fund will support Chicano and Chicana literary studies. Home Fronts ensures that her work will live on through future generations of scholars and teachers of American studies.

Presented to the Senate of the Academic Council on June 11, 1998

Ramón Saldívar, Chair  
Sharon Holland  
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