

Anthony Rivera, Jr. works as a Native American Consultant for an engineering infrastructure firm CH2M HILL located in Orange County, California. Rivera provides business opportunities to Native American Nations.

He fondly reflected on his first experiences at the Kennedy Center. Evoking his days as a missionary in Hamburg, Germany, Rivera went door to door in the center in search of a job to supplement and enhance his ancient Near East studies. "This time, it was office doors of professors instead of residences in Germany," he recalled.

To his dismay, Rivera found that the positions he was interested in were already held by other students. His disappointment was quenched by the warm reception of Professor Kent P. Jackson, then the chair of Near Eastern Studies at the center. "My experience as a research assistant to Dr. Jackson brought me many fond memories of research, conversation, and mentoring within the halls of the center," Rivera remembered.

He is quick to attribute much to his professors. "Classes on Near East modern history taught by professor Arnold Green helped me comprehend the depth and complexity of the culture and politics of this area of the globe," stated Rivera. He also cited courses taught by Dr. James Toronto as beneficial to his studies. "I was able to learn directly from Middle Eastern students what it is like to live in countries of great turmoil and to empathize with their struggles," he commented.

These experiences served as excellent preparation for graduate studies in 1993, when he entered Harvard Divinity School with a full scholarship to study with what he calls "some of the finest scholars in ancient cultures and religions." He also worked on the editorial staff of *Harvard Theological Review* before completing a master's degree in theological studies.

Rivera pursued postgraduate studies at UCLA in 1995 as one of the early recipients of the prestigious Hugh Nibley Fellowship of Ancient Studies. Rivera served for a time as faculty with BYU's Ancient Scripture Department and with Saddleback College's Anthropology Department. But Rivera found a new direction for his work.

"It was at this period in my career that the call came to me to serve my tribe, the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation of Orange County, California," Rivera stated. "I was appointed chair of the tribe's Cultural Resources Agency in charge of preservation of the tribe's artifacts, burial grounds, and traditional properties."

His service continued with an appointment as a council member of the Tribal Government. This role put Rivera in charge of governing the political affairs for his

people. Today, while working as a consultant, he remains connected with the Acjachemen Nation as chair of the tribe's Cultural Resources Agency and plans to campaign for governing chairman of his tribe in 2005.

Rivera deems his time spent at BYU an overwhelming success. "The Kennedy Center experience in studying international politics and cultures has provided the necessary training needed to serve sovereign tribal governments within the United States," he affirms. "I cherish the time spent at the Kennedy Center and apply the lessons learned at BYU and Harvard in the success of all my career and personal goals."

No Events