Aquinas Alumn Samuel Johnson recently presented at the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies (RMCLAS) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Joining him on his panel were Dr. Shelli Rottschafer, Assistant Professor of Spanish at Aquinas College, and Dr. Damián Wilson Vegara, Assistant Professor of Linguistics and the Director of the Heritage Language Program at the University of New Mexico. The nationally renowned annual conference was held April 3-6 this year and featured the work of over 200 scholars from around the United States.

Their panel was titled “Chican@ Sites of Resistance: Poetic, Linguistic, and Organized Resistance to Hegemony.” Sam’s presentation focused on the Brown Berets, a militant wing of the Chicano Protest movement born out of the divisive sociopolitical landscape of 1960s era Los Angeles, California. His essay titled, “Social Justice and Militant Activism in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: The Brown Berets in the Chicano Movement” was inspired by his studies of U.S.-Mexico borderlands history which he began pursuing in Spanish Literature and American History courses at Aquinas College.

Sam’s double major in Spanish and History at Aquinas college drove his interest in Latin America and the U.S. Southwest and has lead him to pursue an MA in Latin American Studies at the University of New Mexico. His liberal arts education at Aquinas College provided Sam with the skills to not only successfully gain entrance to his current graduate degree program but also to continue to develop his academic work by presenting at national academic conferences. Dr. Shelli Rottschafer, also an Alumna of the University of New Mexico, was grateful to be able to return to the Southwest and participate in RMCLAS in order to collaborate with her former student and advisee.

Samuel Johnson continues to study History and Spanish American Literature and Culture through the Latin and Iberian American Institute at the University of New Mexico. He looks forward to pursuing a career in academia following his Master’s program as he begins to look at PhD programs throughout the country.

-Sam Johnson
Aquinas Alum 2011

-Dr. Shelli Rottschafer
Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese
And UNM Alumna 2005