



## 2015 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR: REV. RAYMOND GARCIA '00, MDIV '07

**REVEREND RAYMOND GARCIA GRADUATED FROM EASTERN UNIVERSITY IN 2000 WITH A MAJOR IN YOUTH MINISTRY AND MINORS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES AND COMMUNICATIONS.** He received his Master of Divinity from Palmer Theological Seminary in 2007. Rev. Garcia is the Founder and Executive Director of The Philadelphia Project and Pastor of Roxborough Church. His wife, Michelle (Thomas) Garcia '09, is also an alumna of Eastern University and serves with him in his ministries. They have three children, sons Isaiah and Nathan, and daughter Cadence.

The Philadelphia Project is a nonprofit organization founded in 2010 to serve the needs of Northwest Philadelphia through home repair ministry and children's after school and summer camp programs. The Philadelphia Project partners with Roxborough Church, where Ray is Pastor, to deliver its programs. Ray felt the call to help this community on his heart as early as 1995 and in 1998, as a student at Eastern, he began praying with his mentor for God to guide him on how to help. At Eastern, Ray learned how to ask the question, "how can we take our faith and

allow it to impact the way we live every day?" At Palmer Theological Seminary Ray started thinking theologically about "what it means to act justly in our own neighborhoods." He spent the next thirteen years as a youth pastor taking students on mission trips to help other needy communities. The plans for The Philadelphia Project began to solidify during this time.

In 2015, The Philadelphia Project will host 1500 teen and college age volunteers from across the



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country. Ray said of these volunteers, "we seek to equip those coming and serving with the tools and knowledge they need in order to be proclaimers of Justice, and advocates for the Gospel truth in all situations as they leave Philly and head back home." Ray stays connected with Eastern by mentoring Eastern students through his internship program and has been on campus to speak at the Homecoming Chapel in 2014 and Encounter Weekend in 2015.

Ray said of being named Alumnus of the Year: "Being selected as alumnus of the year is something that was extremely surprising and incredibly honoring. I know of many folks who have dawned the halls of EU and who are doing great things for the Kingdom and are making major contributions in their fields. To be considered amongst them for a reward like this is quite humbling and encouraging. The thing that really spoke to my heart and encouraged me the most was knowing that this was a peer elected award. Considering that these great women and men who also share with me the alma mater have considered my name for election is very encouraging and humbling to the core." †

by **DENISE MCMILLAN**

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