

Loud!

"Your silence will not protect you." - Audre Lorde

CELEBRATING LATINO/A/X HERITAGE MONTH

41

By Edwin Roman, Rainbow Alliance Advisor

Numbers have remarkably played a part in fostering fear and superstition around the world. Western culture associates the number 13 and the date, Friday the 13th, with bad omens. Did you know that in Mexico the number 41 is considered taboo?

On November 17, 1901, the Mexico City police raided a private party and arrested 41 of the men in attendance, half of whom were in drag. "The Ball of the 41" as it came to be known, was the scandal of the century. Although the identities of these men, as well as an official account, are still a mystery, it is agreed that it was largely professional and prominent men in attendance. The subsequent newspaper reporting, editorials, sermons, fictional narrations that included a novel as well as illustrations by renowned political lithographer José Guadalupe Posada, fostered a mythological connotation. Robert McKee Irwin, in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, notes that, "...male homosexuality in Mexican culture does not necessarily suggest a highly structured system of interactions that is based on rigid gender roles and prescribed sex acts. Because it is forbidden, it is associated with the chaos of the fiesta and the transgressing of social standards. This explains the over-the-top, giddy tone with which the story of the 41 was reported ... after all, the ball of the 41 not only subverted gender roles but also broke down barriers of social class and age."

Since 1901, the number 41 in Mexico has come to signify male homosexuality:

"In Mexico, the number 41 has no validity and is offensive... The influence of this tradition is so strong that even officialdom ignores the number 41. No division, regiment, or battalion of the army is given the number 41. From 40 they progress directly to 42. No payroll has a number 41. Municipal records show no houses with the number 41; if this cannot be avoided, 40 bis is

used. No hotel or hospital has a room 41. Nobody celebrates their 41st birthday, going straight from 40 to 42. No vehicle is assigned a number plate with 41, and no police officer will accept a badge with that number." – Francisco L. Urquiza

Sound familiar? Like fear of the number 13? Interestingly, 41 men were officially arrested, but there were rumors of a forty second man, Ignacio de la Torre y Mier, son-in-law of then Mexican President Porfirio Díaz.



Hoja Suelta, José Guadalupe Posada, 1901

I saw *Dance of the 41* on Netflix this past summer (Ignacio de la Torre y Mier is a character) and the film explores power structures in Mexico at the turn of the century, portraying the scandal in its climax. Remarkably, same-sex sexual relations were not a crime in Mexico in 1901. In *Historical Perspectives: Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History* Hector Navarro explores "Creating Masculinity and Homophobia: Oppression and Backlash under Mexico's Porfiriato." Navarro notes:

"In Porfirian Mexico, masculinity, in terms of self-discipline, morality, femininity, and homophobia, was constructed to both solidify social control over indigenous and lower-class men as well as contest the authority of

elites. Men with political power and social status bought into European ideas of self-mastery and cleanliness as a way to distinguish themselves as the rightful leaders of the "modern" nation. Stoicism, a strong physique, and European dress were markers of morality in the face of lower-class men who fell short of such codes of manly conduct. To uphold this power structure, politicians, physicians, and Porfirio Díaz himself consulted racist ideological frameworks that described indigenous men's degeneracy, passivity, unrestrained violence, and hypersexuality in gendered, feminine terms. However, as Díaz's reign lengthened, lower class men and the press that catered to them used gendered discourse of power to combat social

Continued on the next page.

domination. Especially after the Dance of the Forty-One, opponents of the Porfiriato reworked the concept of femininity to mean dandyism, excess, effeminacy, and homosexuality in Mexico's bourgeoisie. The social and political climate on the eve of the Mexican Revolution, which in many ways constituted an anti-colonial and anti-elitist struggle, marks a key moment in which modern Mexican homophobia sprouted; and since most of Mexican society still views Porfirio Díaz as the definitive antagonist of the country's modern history, homophobia - in the dandy, effeminate context - and machismo remain as cultural foundations of Mexican popular culture today."

What happened in 1901, is part of a long history of using LGBTQI+ people to stoke fear and bigotry. We see this today in the way some American politicians demonize trans individuals. While the number 41 has been burned into Mexican culture as a pejorative, the number is now considered a badge of courage and a symbol of strength for gay Mexicans. In 2019, the 41st annual Mexico City LGBTI Pride Parade paid homage to the Ball of the 41. Alberto B. Mendoza, the executive director of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, who spent

his teenage years on the U.S.-Mexico border being teased by peers who called him "41" learned about the story as an adult and started Honor41 (honor41.org), a non-profit organization that celebrates the stories and accomplishments of the LGBT Latino community in the United States. As James Baldwin once wrote, it takes strength to remember.

Sources

Irwin, Robert McKee. "The Famous 41: The Scandalous Birth of Modern Mexican Homosexuality." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 6 no. 3, 2000, p. 353-376. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/article/12144.

Sifuentes-Jáuregui Ben. *Transvestism, Masculinity, and Latin AMERICAN Literature: Genders Share Flesh*. Palgrave, 2002.

Navarro, Héctor (2017) "Creating Masculinity and Homophobia: Oppression and Backlash under Mexico's Porfiriato," *Historical Perspectives: Santa Clara University Undergraduate Journal of History*, Series II: Vol. 22 , Article 8.

THANK YOU DONNA PAROFF-SHERMAN

Donna Paroff-Sherman, in August of 2021, retired from her position as a counselor in the Office of Personal Counseling. In addition to her work there, Donna also coordinated Safe Space training and led the LGBTQI+ Support Group, both of which she did before and after the LGBTQI+ Resource Room opened. Her colleagues, Dr. Emalinda McSpadden and Edwin Roman, would like to convey their appreciation for all the work she has done as an ally for BCC's LGBTQI+ community.

DR. EMALINDA MCSPADDEN

Working with Donna on LGBTQI+ programming and the Resource Room, I had a chance to see just how much care and compassion she really has for our students, particularly those in the queer community. She has given of her time and talents in overwhelming abundance to support the students who frequented the Resource Room each week, offering everything from a friendly smile and a listening ear to the latest LGBTQI+ relevant newspaper article or theater review, or even an orange plucked from a bag that she brought in for everyone each week. (Yes. Every week.) Working alongside her to expand the Safe Space programming at BCC was a genuine pleasure, as was co-leading weekly support group sessions with her for students in need of loving community and healing, both before and during the isolation of the pandemic. **Whatever the need or task, Donna's encouragement and dedication have always been steadfast and unwavering.** Personally, I owe her my deepest, most profound thanks for serving as my clinical supervisor while completing a mental health counseling degree during our work together in the Resource Room. I hope I can be as warm and affirming a clinical presence to our students as she has been in the Resource Room, maintaining her legacy proudly for the new students that come to the Safe Space she helped build.

Thank you so much, Donna... as a counselor, mentor, and colleague, you have truly made a whole world of difference.



EDWIN ROMAN

One of the earliest lessons I learned about the workplace was that true leadership is never self-serving but should be seen as a platform to foster growth and provide great outcomes. I have always looked for the true leaders. Leaders may not necessarily be in the supervisory positions, but that does not make them any less influential or effective. Donna Paroff-Sherman is a true leader and I feel very fortunate to have worked with her.

For the last six years, Donna and I have worked closely on Safe Space training. She cared very much about this and always worried about everything going smoothly. My favorite memory was during the second year, when Donna was worrying aloud and Elyse Gruttadauria, from Health, Physical Education & Recreation, playfully said to her, "Donna, stop being a Jewish mother!" Donna replied, "I can't help it, I am a Jewish mother!"

Perhaps I learned the most from Donna after the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando because she helped me to productively channel my grief and anger into two events with love.

On the day I retire, I will look back on my time at BCC and remember Donna as someone who played a significant role in my professional development. **Everything Donna did came from a place of love**---she genuinely cared for everyone, and she showed me that you can indeed **bring love to the workplace**. Thank you, Donna. I am eternally grateful.

In the News...

Countries urged to offer refuge to LGBTQ Afghans

"As Afghanistan falls to the Taliban, members of the LGBTQ community are among those at greatest risk of suffering under Taliban rule," tweeted the Organization for Migration, Refuge and Asylum on Tuesday. "The international community must act quickly and decisively to aid all those fleeing persecution." **Read more at:** <https://bit.ly/3hKglrk>

South Korea's lack of anti-discrimination laws takes toll on LGBT youth, activists say

South Korea's failure to pass national laws banning discrimination is taking a toll on citizens, particularly LGBT youth, a new report said on Tuesday, as activists see pending legislation as the best chance yet to extend protections. U.S.-based Human Rights Watch said its research showed the lack of protections had led to a range of discriminatory practices and were exacerbating harassment for young LGBT people. **Read more at:** <https://reut.rs/2XuqcuE>

Cuba publishes draft family code that opens door to gay marriage

Cuba published a long-awaited draft of a new family code on Wednesday that would open the door to gay marriage if approved, in a move that LGBT rights activists applauded cautiously as they remained wary of whether it would actually be implemented.

The new code defines marriage as the "voluntary union of two people" without specifying gender, as opposed to the current definition as the "union of a man and woman." **Read more at:** <https://reut.rs/3CnL7ht>

California recall: What exit polls tell us about the state's LGBTQ voters

LGBTQ voters voted against recalling Gov. Gavin Newsom by a greater margin than the state's voters overall. The poll found that 7 percent of California recall voters identify as LGBTQ. Of those voters, 83 percent voted "no" to the recall and 17 percent voted "yes." **Read more at:** <https://nbcnews.to/2XCwHeD>

THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM FALL 2021 EVENTS THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM CELEBRATES LATINO/A/X HERITAGE MONTH

Dance of the 41 (El baile de los 41) is a Mexican drama directed by David Pablos, written by Monika Revilla and produced by Pablo Cruz and El Estudio. It portrays the events leading up to and around a 1901 party of gay men, half of whom were dressed in drag, known as the Dance of the Forty-One (El baile de los cuarenta y uno). It stars Alfonso Herrera as Ignacio de la Torre y Mier, the gay son-in-law of then-president of Mexico Porfirio Díaz, Mabel Cadena as Amada Díaz, his illegitimate daughter, and Emiliano Zurita (son of Christian Bach) as Ignacio's fictional lover, Evaristo Rivas.



Friday, October 15, 2021
3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
<https://bit.ly/3klD1Qm>
Meeting ID: 862 2990 4343
Passcode: 673537

THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM CELEBRATES NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY



National Coming Out Day raises awareness for individuals within the LGBTQI+ community and champions the idea that homophobia thrives in silence ("Your silence will not protect you." - Audre Lorde). On this day, many people who identify as LGBTQI+ will "come out" to friends or family about their sexuality, which is a very special moment! The history of the LGBTQI+ movement and its champions are also honored on this day.

Tuesday, October 12th, 2021
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM COMMEMORATES TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE



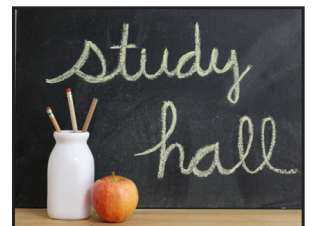
Transgender Day of Remembrance is an annual observance that honors the memory of the transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence.

Thursday, November 18, 2021
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM PRESENTS FINALS STUDY HALL

Join Professor McSpadden for a study hall in preparation of finals. All students are welcome!

Tuesday, December 14, 2021
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>



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MISSION

The LGBTQI + Resource Room at Bronx Community College works to foster an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. The LGBTQI + Resource Room aims to sustain visibility and a sense of community by providing education, programming, and support services on campus.

Weekly !

**THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM, LOCATED IN THE
ROSCOE BROWN STUDENT CENTER IN ROOM 301,
IS OPEN EVERY TUESDAY FROM 1:00 P.M. TO 4:00 P.M.
MASK PROTOCOLS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING MUST
BE FOLLOWED PER BCC POLICY.**

**THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM IS AVAILABLE VIRTUALLY
VIA ZOOM TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, AND THURSDAYS
FROM 1:00 P.M. TO 4:00 P.M.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

- MONDAYS

Rainbow Faith 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Explore and discuss the intersection of being LGBTQI+ and an individual of faith.
Via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

- TUESDAYS

LGBTQI+ Support Group 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Share. Express. Support. Let's come together to express thoughts, hopes, and feelings with other like minded people. Meets virtually through Zoom.

To gain access please email emalinda.mcspadden@bcc.cuny.edu .

- FRIDAYS



Rainbow Alliance Club 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The Rainbow Alliance, the oldest LGBTQI+ club on campus, provides cultural and educational extracurricular activities that address the needs of LGBTQI+ students as well as the greater campus community. This group meets virtually via Zoom. Please email edwin.Roman@bcc.cuny.edu for information.

LAVENDER GRADUATION

If you missed the 2021 virtual Lavender Graduation, the video is available on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/OuAtfPbf6jk>

