

BOLETÍN

BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION OF LATINO FACULTY AND STAFF

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CELEBRANDO NUESTRO LEGADO



**BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**
ASSOCIATION
OF LATINO FACULTY & STAFF

CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY

Letter from the Editor: Professor Nelson Santana

The Bronx Community College Association of Latino Faculty and Staff (BCC ALFS) thanks you for taking a moment to read our official newsletter: Boletín. This fall 2022 issue of Boletín includes interviews with some of the Association's members including Dr. **Grisel Y. Acosta** (Department of English), Dr. **Melissa Coss Aquino** (Department of English), Mr. **Edwin Román** (Transfer Services), and Association Chairperson **Leidy Pichardo** (College Discovery Program).

In this issue, we provide updates on faculty and staff accomplishments since our spring 2022 issue. Some ALFS members have published, been granted tenure and/or promotion, and are the recipients of numerous grants, fellowships, and other important awards. Dr. **Andrea M. Ortuño** (Department of Art and Music) provides readers with an update pertinent to the Hall of Fame Gallery and art gallery programming during this semester. On September 30, members of the ALFS worked diligently to present the first annual Latinas in Higher Education Conference: Our Journey...Our Legacy ~ Nuestra Trayectoria...Nuestro Legado. The event proved to be a success, with attendees clamoring for next year's conference.

Additionally, this issue includes a list of events that will be taking place in the coming weeks, including the exhibit, "Transnational Dominican Activism: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements through ESENDOM." This exhibit is a culmination of the work by photographers, writers, artists, and activists who have captured transnational Dominican activism between 2009 and 2020.

This issue of Boletín also pays tribute to one of the Association's most beloved and dynamic members: **Leidy Pichardo**. During her tenure as chairperson of the Association, the ALFS underwent significant expansion, which includes the addition of scholarships as well as the growth of the Association's social media platforms, to name just two areas in which we celebrate our LEGADO.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Boletín.

Abrazos,

Nelson Santana (Library)

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The BCC Association of Latino Faculty & Staff was honored by Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson on Thursday, October 20 at President Gibson's first Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration



Latinas in Higher Education Conference: Our Journey...Our Legacy ~ Nuestra Trayectoria...Nuestro Legado

On Friday, September 30, 2022, Bronx Community College held the first annual Latinas in Higher Education Conference: Our Journey...Our Legacy ~ Nuestra Trayectoria...Nuestro Legado. The Association of Latino Faculty and Staff, in collaboration with the President's Office, and Womxn Up! Resource Center organized the first iteration of what Association Chairperson Leidy Pichardo and Vice-Chairperson Luchy Martich hope to be the first of several more conferences to come. The mission of this historic event was to celebrate and highlight the scholarship, service, and contributions of Latina faculty and staff. The conference attendance and call-for-proposals were open to colleagues across the City University of New York and Bronx community-based organizations.

Dr. Daisy Cocco De Filippis, president of Eugenio María de Hostos Community College of The City University of New York, delivered the morning's Keynote address, while Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta, professor of English at BCC, delivered the afternoon's Keynote.

Watch the **welcome and morning Keynote address** delivered by President Daisy Cocco De Filippis by visiting the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wotbuonrvYO>

Watch the **closing session** and **closing Keynote address** delivered by Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta by visiting the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05q_wakXH8U

To check out all our videos, please visit our official YouTube channel at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_oFkmGA5ikHAhKuKP_7Rnw/videos

Conference photos, taken by Deivid Valdez, can be viewed at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bronxcommunitycollege/albums/72177720302518410>



President Daisy Cocco De Filippis



Vice-Chair Luchy Martich & Chair Leidy Pichardo



FACULTY & STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS [LOGROS]

PUBLICATIONS

Reynoso, Nelson, and **Sharon Utakis**. "Superando Barreras: Case Studies of Three Resilient Dominican Students at an Urban Community College." *Caribbean Studies* vol. 49, no.2, 2021, pp. 53-74. doi:10.1353/crb.2021.0018. (Journal Article).

Salazar, Salvador. *La pausa. Relatos de la Cuba inmóvil* [The Pause. Tales of Immobile Cuba]. Berlin: Iliada Ediciones, 2022. (Book).

Salazar Navarro, Salvador. 2021. "Dollar Mambo. La reivindicación del cabaret" [Dollar Mambo, the Revindication of the Cabaret]. In Jablonska, Aleksandra & José Axel García Ancira (Eds.) *Nueve Miradas a la obra de Paul Leduc* [Nine Viewpoints on the Work of Paul Leduc]. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2022, pp. 171-189. URL: <http://dccd.cua.uam.mx/repositorio/libros.php?libro=NueveMiradas-PaulLeduc> (Book Chapter).

Santana, Nelson. "The Tancredo Martínez Assassination Attempt: Frances Grant and Communistic Discourses." *Memorias del autoritarismo*, special issue, *Estudios Sociales*, vol. 44, no. 165, 2022, pp. 191-200. <http://estudiossociales.bono.edu.do/index.php/es/article/view/1043/1000>. (Journal Article).

Santana, Nelson. "El intento de asesinato a Tancredo Martínez: Frances Grant y los discursos comunistas." *Memorias del autoritarismo*, special issue, *Estudios Sociales*, vol. 44, no. 165, 2022, pp. 181-190. <https://estudiossociales.bono.edu.do/index.php/es/article/view/1042/999>. (Journal Article).

Santana, Nelson. Review of *Between Norteño and Tejano Conjunto: Music, Tradition, and Culture at the U.S.-Mexico Border* by Luis Díaz-Santana Garza. *Choice Reviews*, vol. 59, issue 11, July 2022, pp. 59-3121. (Book review).

Viner, Kevin Martillo. "Spanish Imperfect Subjunctive Form -se: Possible Identity Marker for Spaniards? *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada/Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2022, pp. 149-172. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1075/resla.19042.mar>. (Journal Article).

Viner, Kevin Martillo. "Generational Differences in the Placement of Clitic se in New York City Spanish." *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 25, no. 5, 2021, pp. 1460-1472. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069211016546>. (Journal Article).



PERFORMANCES

Professor **Carlos Manuel Rivera** from the Department of World Languages and Cultures performed: "Perfume para antes o veneno pa' la gente" at Teatro Pal Barrio, Taller Libertá, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico on August 5, 2022.

Professor **Carlos Manuel Rivera** also performed the same piece in The Artaudian Encounter of Performance (Encuentro Artaudiano de Performance) at Nogorachi, Chihuahua, México on August 21, 2022.

Professor **Carlos Manuel Rivera** facilitated a Workshop on Spoken Words and Poetry in Action at Taller Libertá, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico on August 7, 2022.

FACULTY & STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS [LOGROS]

PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentation: **Salazar, Salvador**. "Referentes bibliográficos, teóricos y metodológicos para una historia de la prensa impresa cubana del siglo XX [Bibliographical, Theoretical, and Methodological References for a History of the Cuban Printed Press of the 20th Century]". Latin American Studies Association XL International Congress.

Academic Presentation: **Viner, Kevin Martillo**. Comment Clauses and Mood Choice in New York City Spanish: Generational Constraints and Innovations. 10th International Workshop of Spanish Sociolinguistics. Georgia Tech. Online. April 9th, 2022.

Santana, Nelson. "Exiliados en su segunda patria: Political Activism among New York Dominicans and Allies during the Trujillato (1930-1961)." XVI Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Conference La Politiquera: Recovering Politics/Recovering Political Voices, 9 Apr. 2022, Zoom. Panelist.

Santana, Nelson. "Decolonizing the Library: Building a Collection that Reflects the Student Body at Bronx Community College." Community & Junior College Libraries Section: "Program on Diversity and Collection Development, 18 Mar. 2022, Zoom. Panelist.

PROMOTION, TENURE, GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND MORE NEWS

Dr. Kevin Martillo Viner was awarded TENURE on 9/1/2021 at BCC.

Dr. Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco, a faculty at the Social Sciences Department was promoted to Associate Professor. She was granted a PSC-CUNY Award and CUNY Dominican Studies Institute Research Fellowship. In addition, she is the editor with Dr. Ernesto Sagás of the book "Dominican Politics in the Twenty-First Century: Continuity and Change" recently submitted for publication in Routledge.

Dr. Melissa Coss Aquino has a forthcoming publication, *Carmen and Grace: A Novel*, scheduled for publication in April, 2023.

Professor Nelson Santana (Library) was awarded two grants and a fellowship. His project, "Bronx Community College Library Virtual Info Lit Tutorial," is funded by the "COVID Library Relief Fund" by way of the American Library Association. This \$20,000 grant will allow Professor Santana to create information literacy learning modules for the benefit of BCC students. Along with his colleague, Professor Emma Antobam-Ntekudzi, Professor Santana was awarded a \$6,000 Professional Staff Congress of The City University of New York (PSC-CUNY) Traditional B Award to study the information literacy needs of BCC students. Lastly, a recipient of a City University of New York Dominican Studies Institute (CUNY DSI) Fellowship, Professor Santana will use this fellowship to tap into the history of Dominican migration in the United States by using the Dominican Archives at the CUNY DSI.

Black and Latinx Studies Option Reinstated at Bronx Community College

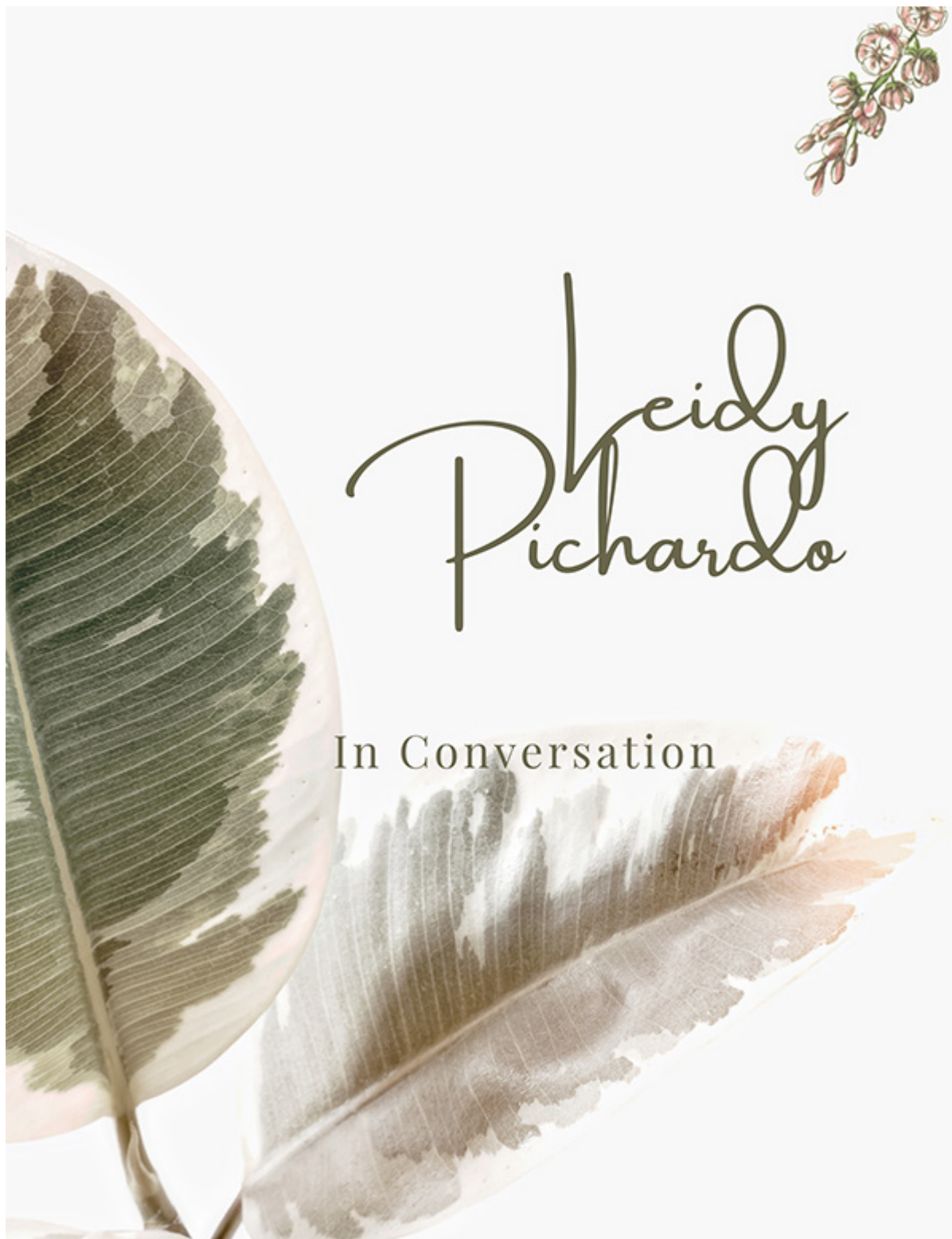
Prior to the fall 2022 semester, several announcements were made stating the Black and Latinx Studies Option was reinstated at Bronx Community College, receiving approval from New York State. Dr. Grisel Acosta, Professor of English, will serve as the option coordinator. This option is available to students in the AA Liberal Arts and Sciences program beginning this fall 2022 semester. Any questions regarding this option can be addressed to Dr. Acosta via email at grisel.acosta@bcc.cuny.edu.

Interview with Chairperson Leidy Pichardo

Professor Nelson Santana interviews Ms. Leidy Pichardo as she reflects upon her time at Bronx Community College. Ms. Pichardo worked as Academic Support Coordinator in the College Discovery Program and also served as an active member of the BCC Association of Latino Faculty and Staff (ALFS), including in her most recent role as Chairperson of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff (ALFS).

The interview is available on YouTube via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBXfJzrk-Z4>



Thank You Video for Chairperson Leidy Pichardo

Chairperson Leidy Pichardo will be embarking on a new journey. Colleagues from the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff as well as colleagues from across the Bronx Community College campus, including the College Discovery Program, share a few words about President Pichardo.

The video can be viewed via the Association's official YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VthRJzh6Z1s>



Interview with Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta - Professor, Department of English



Can you provide us with some basic information? For example, how long have you been at BCC, what has been the most rewarding experience for you, and what have been your biggest challenges at BCC?

I have been at BCC since 2012, so 10 years now. The most rewarding experience has been partnering with folks both in and outside my department to work toward our goals. It has been great to work with folks in the Social Sciences, History, and Library Departments, as well as folks in Student Life, College Discovery, and beyond. There are wonderful Latinx/es, POC, and allies to work with throughout the campus and I've learned so much from all of them.

The biggest challenge has been encountering folks who don't understand my vision or the vision of other folks who have great ideas. I'm the kind of person who likes to put things in motion and not stay stuck. It takes a lot of bravery to continue looking pa'lante, despite any naysayers. I'm glad we have a community of gente that keep the vision alive.

To continue reading this interview with Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta, please continue to page 16.

ALFS AWARDS FOR BCC STUDENTS

The Bronx Community College Association of Latino Faculty & Staff have established several awards for Bronx Community College Students. These awards are given to students of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin who have excelled academically in his/her/their chosen major at BCC, and has made a contribution to the College or the community.

Funds can be used however you choose: to pay for tuition, travel expenses, books, or other expense.

Please feel free to click the following link below to learn more about these opportunities and read the description for each award:

<https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-life/student-life/campus-diversity/association-of-latino-faculty-and-staff/scholarship/#1647456814303-8fcdc457-9e6c>

Awards

ALFS Student of the Year Award

BCC GRIT Award

Dr. Lester Edgardo Sandres Rápalo DACA Student Award

Edelmira Alers Latinas in Nursing Award

Fatima Isekenegbe Service Award

Future Now Award

Leadership & Emotional Intelligence Award

Renacimiento en Fortaleza Award

Rev. Dr. Samuel Acosta Memorial Award

The Surviving Warrior Award

William Coss Award

Name of Award	Link to Award Application
ALFS Student of the Year Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/alfs-student-of-the-year-application-fillable.pdf
BCC GRIT Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bcc-grit-scholarship-fillable.pdf
Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo DACA Student Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/bccdr.lestersandres-rapaloawardfordacastudents-fillable.pdf
Edelmira Alers Latinas in Nursing Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/the-edelmira-alers-for-latinas-in-nursing-application-alfs-fillable.pdf
Fatima Isekenegbe Service Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/fatima-isekenegbe-service-award-alfs-fillable.pdf
Future Now Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/future-now-scholarship-application-fillable.pdf
Leadership & Emotional Intelligence Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/leadership-and-emotional-intelligence-award-application-fillable.pdf
Renacimiento en Fortaleza Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/renacimiento-en-fortaleza-application-fillable-1.pdf
Rev. Dr. Samuel Acosta Memorial Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/rev.-samuel-acosta-award-application-fillable.pdf
The Surviving Warrior Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/the-survivng-warrior-award-application-fillable.pdf
William Coss Award	http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/william-coss-memorial-award-application-fillable.pdf

Interview with Edwin Román - Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator, Transfer Services

How long have you been at BCC? Do you mind explaining what you do here?

This coming January will mark 20 years.

My title is Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator, but I wear many different hats. I primarily provide transfer advisement for students, work with faculty on articulation agreements, manage academic information on the website, and work with Dean Ott, Octavio Melendez, and Therese LeMelle on the college catalog.

This school year also marks my tenth year as advisor to the Rainbow Alliance student club.

What would you say is the most gratifying part of working at BCC?

The students. I love celebrating their hard-earned achievements such as gaining admission to a college or winning a scholarship. It is also quite amazing that some students I worked with nearly two decades ago are now my colleagues.

When did you join the ALFS?

When it was first launched in 2003 or 2004.

You founded the Boletín newsletter about 20 years ago. Can you share with us how this came to be? What motivated you to start this publication?

A consistent publication is a great way to establish a presence and foster respect and confidence. I also publish newsletters for Transfer Services and the LGBTQI+ Resource Room both of which have been published for eight and five years respectively.

Your fingerprints are all over the Boletín. Why did you step down from your role as Chairperson for Marketing, Communication, and Research?

Time and quality control. I often had to do a lot for the Association during my free time, which I didn't mind, but I also have other responsibilities to the LGBTQI+ Resource Room that also takes up free time. When I am not at BCC, I am an artist and photographer and want time to do those things as well. Furthermore, as one of the few out Latinx LGBTQI+ people on campus, I wanted to devote more of my service to the college toward where I was needed more. It is important for LGBTQI+ students to see people like them. As an undergraduate at John Jay College in the 1980s, I didn't see that too much.

Do you mind talking about your accomplishments and challenges you have faced while working at BCC?

Last year, Dr. Emily McSpadden and I got a grant to launch the TransSending program which provides paid internship opportunities for trans students. I am also very proud of the work I have done with the Rainbow Alliance regarding the Holiday Sock Drive for homeless LGBTQI+ youth which will resume this year after the pandemic hiatus. I also take great pride in the two workshops I developed for Transfer Services on Transfer Planning and Scholarships. Assessment shows that students get a lot out of them.

With regards to challenges, I think I face the same as all of our colleagues, which is trying to concurrently navigate our individual campus culture within the greater university.

Interview with Dr. Melissa Coss Aquino - Associate Professor, Department of English

For new colleagues and students who may be unfamiliar with you and your work, can you provide us with some basic background information about yourself? (E.g. your discipline, years at BCC, your accomplishments or an example of your most rewarding experience, challenges you may have encountered, etc.)

I think my traditional bio gives a big picture, but there are two things that might be useful to point out. I received my undergrad degree at 22, but I did not go back to graduate school till I was 36, and I completed my MFA in Creative Writing at 40 and my PhD in English at 48. I had an earlier career in adult education in unions, and the whole time I have been writing. It has been a long journey, but a good one that I have enjoyed exploring and expanding along the way. Growing and defining my path as I grew older has helped me to feel confident that what I am doing is what I have always wanted to do, even if I didn't know quite how to do it when I started.

Carmen and Grace is a new book you have scheduled for publication in 2023. Congratulations! As a writer, can you walk us through the process of how this book project came to fruition? Did you draw from personal experiences? How long did it take you to write it?

Thank you! Carmen and Grace is my novel being published by William Morrow of Harper Collins in April 2023. This has been an incredible journey, and I just found out the book is also going to be published by Head of Zeus of Bloomsbury Group in the UK. Imagine my surprise to see a book that has been in my head and heart for thirty years, and in my hands being written for at least ten years, finally finding its way out into the world. I have a lot to say about it. But for now, I want to say that it is a story born from many parts of my life, the lives of my parents, and the lives of many members of my community, but it is a work of fiction. It is a special space in my mind that takes what I have seen, lived or loved and then seeks to understand it by expanding it. I was born and raised in the Bronx, I both live and teach here now, and there is a lot in the book that came from my desire to understand difficult journeys, characters who face hard choices and often make ones that look wrong, and produce pain and suffering, but still find ways to love and grow and persist. I write about underground worlds where choices feel limited, but there is always growth happening, especially in the hard places.



Dr. Melissa Coss Aquino

To continue reading this interview with Dr. Melissa Coss Aquino, please continue to page 13.

Dr. Andrea M. Ortuño
Director of the Hall of Fame Art Gallery
Fall 2022 Programming

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Hall of Fame Gallery at Bronx Community College is pleased to present the exhibition, *Caution: Collage and Papel Picado Ahead*, featuring works on paper by Bronx-based artist, Blanka Amezkua. For this exhibition, Blanka will present vibrant and colorful compositions of collage and cut paper inspired by the traditional Mexican art of *papel picado*.

Blanka Amezkua is an interdisciplinary artist, cultural promoter, educator, and project creator who has exhibited her work at MoMA/P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Queens Museum, El Museo del Barrio, the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, San Diego Art Institute, Wave Hill Public Garden & Cultural Center, the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Art Base, Brussels among others.

Caution: Collage and Papel Picado Ahead will run from October 17th through November 28th in Roscoe Brown Student Center 211.

Art gallery programming is supported in part by the Music and Art Fund, BCC Association Inc., the Art and Music Department, and the Office of Academic and Student Success.



Blanka Amezkua, Happiness is..., mixed media, 79 x 103 in.

Continued: Interview with Dr. Meliss Coss Aquino

For everyone reading this interview, what advice do you have to offer for anyone with an interest in writing, whether a book, novel, or any form of expression?

Write, write, write. Read, read, read. Write some more. Join groups. Go to conferences. Participate in the world where books or poetry like yours are being produced. Go to readings. Buy books. It seems so obvious but many people are confused by the fact that they think they want to write a book because they have an idea. That is just the start. Imagine a person who wants to design clothes because they have an idea for a dress. It is not enough. You have to take that idea and work at the skills that will bring it to light. If you want to write you have to really expose yourself to criticism, inspiration and skill building. Then go home and write. It can take years, in my case decades, but if it is the thing you love, you do it anyway. You can't do it because you want the end product. You have to want to be in the process of writing, which is often many hours alone at the expense of other activities. It is a lifestyle. However, I am the big cheerleader to all of our students here as faculty advisor for our literary magazine, Thesis. I had kids, family members I helped through illness, full time jobs, part time jobs, went to school, etc... Life can be very complicated, but if you love to write and simply give yourself permission to sit and do it, then slowly reach out to learn more, you will produce work you can be proud to call your own, and eventually share.

As a member of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff, you established two awards for the benefit of our BCC Broncos—our students. These awards are the Edelmira Alers for Latinas in Nursing Award and the William Coss Award. (Anyone interested in learning more about these awards can visit

<https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-life/student-life/campus-diversity/association-of-latino-faculty-and-staff/scholarship/#1647456948506-3d83a424-7f5c>)

Why did you establish these awards and how do they support our students at BCC?

The scholarships are named in honor of each of my parents, both of whom died in 2020. I was inspired by fellow association member Dr. Grisel Acosta who started one in honor of her father. My parents were people who lived hard lives. They were also young and beautiful and brilliant. They suffered, struggled and were not able to obtain a formal education. I was raised by my grandmother, and mostly did not live with my parents, except for specific periods. Their lives were marked by many challenges and on the surface look very different from mine. Yet, we were always connected and involved in each other's lives. Never easy, but the love was felt, and my father was very supportive and insistent about my education which made a huge difference in my life. As I got older, I understood all the ways I was built out of so much that was not able to be developed in them. It was in them, but never had the chance to grow. So the scholarships are meant to support students who need help and recognition as they do the hard work of trying to realize their potential.

Is there anything we did not cover in this interview you would like to share with our readers?

If people want to know more about me, my writing, upcoming events, and/or pre order my book they can go to my website. It is the best way to become part of this journey with me! Melissacossaquino.com

Transnational Dominican Activism: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements through ESENDOM

Exhibit Location: Online via dominicanactivism.org and on the first floor of the BCC Library

Dominican-descended people have established some of the most dynamic Caribbean and Latin American communities in the world. More than nine million Dominican-descended people live on Hispaniola—the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. More than 1.2 million people whose roots can be traced to the Dominican Republic call the United States their home. Since 2009, a group of independent writers, journalists, photographers, and videographers have been documenting the transnational Dominican population through the online project: ESENDOM.

ESENDOM is a cultural digital platform that blends the beauty of Dominican culture with current and past social issues that affect the Dominican community today, examining these areas of concern and putting them into perspective. Launching as a hobby by its founders—Emmanuel Espinal and Nelson Santana—this bilingual digital platform has been documenting Dominicans and the communities they inhabit through articles, interviews, oral histories, photographs, and video, providing commentary on the political landscape and popular culture as it relates to the transnational Dominican community. One aspect of Dominican society ESENDOM has captured pertains to grassroots social movements. Dominicans have played a pivotal role by challenging government corruption, police brutality, violence toward women, anti-abortion legislation, and more social causes. Among the social movements captured by ESENDOM one will find the worldwide anti-corruption Movimiento Marcha Verde, anti-femicide Marcha de las Mariposas, Dominican-Haitian solidarity, and #NiUnaMás movement. This exhibit explores the role the online Dominican-centric magazine ESENDOM plays in demonstrating how online journalism documents activism within the transnational Dominican community.

Transnational Dominican Activism: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements through ESENDOM is a culmination of the work by photographers, writers, artists, and activists who have captured transnational Dominican activism between 2009 and 2020. This exhibit provides a glimpse into one aspect of Dominican culture as documented by ESENDOM's team of collaborators including Amaury Rodríguez, John Carrero, Lorena Espinoza Peña, Emmanuel Espinal, and Nelson Santana.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Professor Nelson Santana (Project Director and Curator), Deputy Chief and Collection Development Librarian, Bronx Community College Library; Professor Emma Antobam-Ntekudzi (Co-Curator), Reference & Instruction Librarian, Bronx Community College Library; Emmanuel Espinal, (Co-Curator, Graphic Designer), Editor-In-Chief, ESENDOM; Amaury Rodríguez, Editor, ESENDOM; John F. Carrero (Photographer and Videographer), IT Academic Applications Manager, The City College of The City University of New York; Lorena Espinoza Peña, LGBTQ+ and immigrant rights activist, photographer, and artist.

MARCHA DEL CIBAO

July 14, 2019
Santiago de los 30 Caballeros, RD



TRANSNATIONAL DOMINICAN ACTIVISM: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements

BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NORTH HALL & LIBRARY BUILDING
3RD FL LAW LIBRARY
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2022
12:00PM - 2:00PM



Opening Reception



Continued: Interview with Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta

For those not familiar with the Black and Latinx Studies option at BCC, what is it and what is its significance?

The Black/Latinx Studies Option under the Liberal Arts Major is a new option that allows students to specialize their Liberal Arts studies. Any student who is interested in Black/Latinx history, social movements, arts, literature, even Black/Latinx knowledges in the STEM fields, can take this option under the Liberal Arts Major. The classes will allow students to have specialized knowledge that can inform their work should they continue at a four-year institution. So, for example, if a student transfers to John Jay, they can continue on a Criminal Justice Track, but this option will support a Minor in Latinx Studies, which John Jay has. It could also inform continued studies in African American or African Diaspora history at Hunter, for example.

I should also mention that BCC students in the 1970s, demanded a Black/Latinx Studies Major, which we gave them but did not continue to support in crucial ways. We didn't hire faculty who could teach the classes, we didn't continue to support a coordinator for the option, and then when we moved to Pathways, we didn't move the major into the Pathways stream. We just let it die. Given that so many professions now demand knowledge of how to work with diverse populations, we've brought back this option at a crucial moment.

Many campuses across the United States have seen a decrease, and in some instances the disappearance of once budding and invigorating Black and Latinx Studies departments and programs. Can you discuss what measures are being undertaken to ensure the sustainability of such initiatives here at BCC and across CUNY?

Unfortunately, this is not just an attack on Black/Latinx Studies, although that is a big part of it. There is an attack on the humanities, in general. There are administrations across the country that do not believe that the humanities translate into jobs for students, which isn't true but many students and parents believe this, as well. For that reason, you'll find that anything that falls under STEM can easily be funded, but anything that falls under the humanities is being cut. The truth is, we need therapists, for example, as the entire world has acknowledged that our collective mental health has long been neglected. The truth is, we need historians that understand that our histories are a combination of experiences that are rooted in many different races, ethnicities, and religions. If we funded the humanities, more folks would be informed about the political current and how it was entirely created by past movements. Until the general population acknowledges that we need critical thinking skills, we need to know our history, we need to know about all the cultural movements in the U.S. in order to understand each other, we need to practice ethics in politics and business, and we need to understand the value that Black and Latinx populations have provided this nation, until we acknowledge this as a nation, we will continue to defund the humanities. Yes, we need doctors, but we also need historians, cultural workers, creatives, and truthfully, a populace that is culturally informed. This is the only way to address bigotry and racism, and it also makes for a more beautiful and fun world.

Specifically, at CUNY, we have the Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies Initiative, funded by the Mellon Foundation, that is allowing us to support the kind of work I've mentioned, but that is temporary funding. Our current leadership has vowed to support this work, but how that will actually play out will be seen in the next few years. Currently, there is a BRESI Ph.D. Steering Committee that is creating a new Ph.D. program in Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies at CUNY, which will be the only one of its kind on the East Coast.

As a member of the Black, Race and Ethnic Studies Initiative (BRESI) committee, what changes and improvements do you envision for CUNY through the work of the BRESI initiative?

The Ph.D. program is a big change and I know that will make CUNY an important spot for this work, as there are no others of its kind on the East Coast. I also feel that the work of the faculty and staff who have received grants for various projects will be exciting for their respective campuses. My hope is that CUNY will receive future funding to continue supporting such projects, but the truth is that this shouldn't have to continue to come from places like the Mellon Foundation alone. The truth is that states should properly fund public institutions like CUNY. Tech is not the only industry that inspires; cultural creation should be valued just as much.

Continued: Interview with Dr. Grisel Acosta

As a follow up to the previous question, can you talk about your role as a member on the BRESI committee?

I am incredibly proud that I have been part of nearly every aspect of the BRESI. I started on the initial BRESI Committee, where we provided CUNY leadership with recommendations on how to use the Mellon Foundation grant money. For that, I was Chair of the Student Experience Subcommittee. Then, I worked on the BRESI Grant Committee, specifically as Chair of the Student Research Grants group; there were many other grant groups, as well. Finally, I am currently on the BRESI Ph.D. Steering Committee, which is incredible. We are literally developing this Ph.D. that will, if all goes well, have its first cohort in 2024. We are still in the very early development stages. The voice I provide within the committee is geared toward ensuring that community college faculty will have the chance to teach, perhaps as visiting professors, in this program. I don't know where this will take us, but I keep sounding that bell.

You founded the Reverend Dr. Samuel Acosta Memorial Award. (Anyone interested in learning more about the award can visit the following link: <https://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-life/student-life/campus-diversity/association-of-latino-faculty-and-staff/scholarship/#1647456948506-3d83a424-7f5c>)

Why did you establish this award and in what ways does it support our students at BCC?

The quick answer, which connects with earlier comments, is that the social sciences need funding, but I have a longer answer, too. When I first started at BCC, I felt a little isolated in my department. I was one of three Latinx professors in the department and, because of our busy schedules, I didn't feel I had the kind of connection with other Latinx professors that I desired. I mean, I was working in the Bronx and I wanted it to feel that way, in terms of celebrating our students and each other, but I didn't find that right away. So, I searched our website and found the Association of Latinx Faculty and Staff. I reached out to the leadership to see what was what and to offer a suggestion. My father was sick with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's at the time, and I wanted to commemorate his incredible work, so I offered to fund a small scholarship. I wanted it to be through the organization and the Social Sciences Department, because my dad was a therapist who helped his community in Chicago quite a bit. Orlando Lopez and Nelson Reynoso were very helpful and set up the scholarship immediately. I soon found that several other scholarships were created afterward, as folks were inspired by what I did. My dad wasn't able to really know what I did, and he has since passed on, but I know that he would have been happy to have this work done in his name. Now, ALFS has a huge presence on campus—much larger than when I started at BCC—and I feel like I've found what I was looking for; I guess part of that was within me, too.

Is there anything we did not cover in this interview you would like to share with our readers?

I just want to thank everyone who I've worked with in ALFS, especially Leidy Pichardo, Gloria Rodriguez, Crystal Rodriguez, Monique Guishard, and Melissa Coss-Aquino, and the entire ALFS staff. They inspire me every day and make this work a pleasure. I hope the inspiration spreads to everyone on campus. We all need a little amor y sabiduría in our lives, and the ALFS has it in abundance.



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An Exhibition of Works by Blanka Amezkua
October through November 2022
On display at: Roscoe Brown Hall Rm. RBSC 211

Transnational Dominican Activism: Documenting Grassroots Social Movements: An Exhibit
Opening Reception Date: Thursday, October 27th, Noon - 2:00 p.m.
North Hall and Library Building, Law Library Room (3rd Floor)
Questions? Contact Professor Nelson Santana at nelson.santana02@bcc.cuny.edu
Exhibit will remain on display through spring 2023

Latinas in Higher Education Conference Our Journey...
Our Legacy ~ Nuestra Trayectoria...Nuestro Legado
Friday, September 30, 2022
Check out the entire conference and view video recordings of presentations by visiting the
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