

# LOUD!

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**“Your silence will not protect you.” - Audre Lorde**

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## **COURAGE THROUGH COMMUNITY**

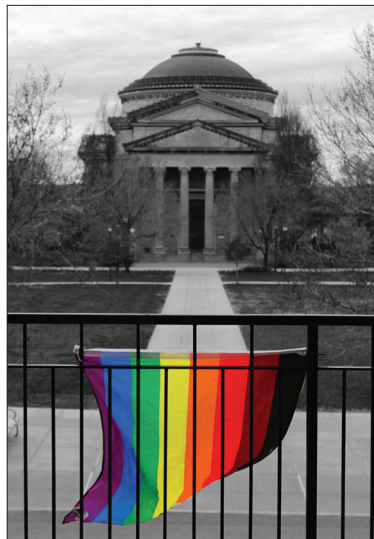
**By Dr. Emalinda McSpadden, LGBTQI+ Resource Room Director**

Every year, since 2022, the CUNY LGBTQI+ Council has organized a student conference for queer and allied students from across all of CUNY, moving to a different borough campus each time.

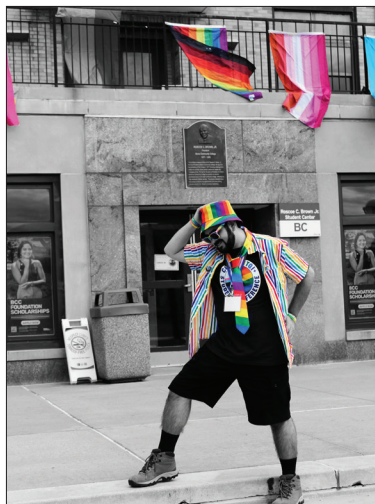
In a bold and affirming show of solidarity, Bronx Community College (BCC) recently hosted a groundbreaking LGBTQI+ Student Leadership Conference that brought together over 300 queer students, campus leaders, and over 30 local agencies in a celebration of identity, resilience, and community. In today’s politically charged climate, where LGBTQI+ rights are under increasing scrutiny across the country, this conference served as both a beacon of hope and a vital reminder of the power of collective action and visibility.

With the support of CUNY leadership, including the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor Maybank, BCC President, local government officials, and esteemed faculty and staff from across the university, the event centered student voices and amplified the lived realities of LGBTQI+ individuals pursuing higher education. These students are not just learners—they are leaders, visionaries, and change-makers within their communities.

For many LGBTQI+ students at Bronx Community College, the journey through higher education is layered with unique challenges. Intersectional identities—spanning race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, disability, and mental health needs—shape experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Queer students of color in particular often navigate a complex web of marginalization, making events like this conference not just meaningful, but essential.



**The conference was more than an event—it was a call to action. It affirmed that LGBTQI+ students, particularly those in the CUNY system and at community colleges, are ready to lead. Their stories, identities, and aspirations hold the key to creating more inclusive and equitable educational spaces.**



Workshops, panel discussions, and networking sessions offered a platform for students to engage deeply with peers and professionals alike, bridging gaps between lived experience and institutional support. The presence of over 30 agencies at the conference provided direct access to resources many students hadn’t encountered before, including affirming healthcare services, career development programs, social networks, legal aid, housing support, and mental health providers attuned to the needs of the LGBTQI+ community.

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In the face of mounting legislative attacks and social backlash, events like this serve as crucial counter-narratives, spaces where queer joy, leadership, and community are not only possible but thriving. This conference marked a milestone in the movement for equity in higher education, showing that when queer students are given the mic, they not only speak, they inspire.

The path ahead may be uncertain, but the students of Bronx Community College and their peers across CUNY are lighting the way. In building bridges across identities, systems, and futures, they are shaping a brighter, bolder New York City for all.

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# RAINBOW READING ROOM

with Edwin Roman

## MATH IN DRAG by KYNE SANTOS



"Math is like a drag queen: marvelous, whimsical, at times even controversial, but never boring!"

Discovering Drag Superstar, Kyne Santos, on TikTok was a revelation. Known as the Math Queen, Santos makes popular short form videos about math, and shows us that math is fun, artistic, and inclusive. She is an excellent teacher and while watching her videos I often think to myself, where were you in when I was in high school?

I have experienced what Santos describes as "math trauma" and remember when it first happened. It was in the 1970s during the fourth grade and the math curriculum shifted from a straightforward explanation (addition, subtraction, multiplication) to a "function machine" which is a metaphorical representation of math functions that (allegedly) acts as a visual aid that helps one understand how a function operates by thinking of it as a machine. After

the fourth grade I was lost for the rest of my life, essentially stuck at multiplication and fractions. I even took the equivalent of MTH 23 twice when I was a student at John Jay College. Last year, Santos published her first book, *Math in Drag*. In chapter seven, titled "Illegal Math", she explores why math is such a unique source of frustration which likely stems from the "...humongous set of rules, which can feel strict arbitrary, and confusing." and goes on to convey that we rarely get any explanation for why the rules exist.

She conveyed in a *Science Friday* podcast, "This is absolutely not a textbook but rather a simple drag queen's guide to the world of math" and went on to say, "...people think that these are two such separate worlds. We have drag, which is art, and art has no rules. Whereas people think that math is just full of arbitrary rules. But what the book tries to argue is really that math is about thinking creatively and working collaboratively and thinking innovatively and questioning our pre-held stereotypes and beliefs." She conveys a similar sentiment in her book: "You may embody the average in some instances, but no matter who you are, there's also sure to be something extraordinary about you." This dichotomy can be found throughout the book. She describes the Pythagorean theorem and how it is something we are forced to memorize and then goes on to note that geometry gives us the language to describe our world by measuring objects, calculating distances, and judging angles. Consider this the next time you are behind Meister Hall and look up at the geometric shapes that adorn the building.

Santos also discusses her life and the connection with math. "While it was much less theatrical, I found the quiet solitude of algorithmically solving equations quite satisfying. I liked how I could ace the tests and assignments by simply getting all the questions right, unlike in English class, where my teacher could deduct marks for what, I felt, were subjective opinions." Santos writes that drag artists, trans, and nonconforming individuals are concurrently the most visible and vulnerable part of the LGBTQI+ community and that freedoms are being taken away from queens and other queer people.

Santos concludes the book by declaring that "math is drag" that is "a carefully calculated self-invention and relies on courage and an open mind." She goes on to proclaim that if we are going to democratize math the way it is taught must be changed: "...instead of prioritizing correctness, memorization, and speed, we should be emphasizing the importance of creativity, collaboration, and deliberate, inquisitive thinking."

# STEM, PRIDE, AND PROGRESS

By Edwin Roman, LGBTQI+ Resource Room Advisor

*Math In Drag*, the book written by TikTok drag queen superstar Kyne Santos, explores many fascinating connections such as the role of statistics in her own experience on *Drag Race* as well as the association between LGBTQI+ pride and dividing by zero. The book also addresses common stereotypes regarding LGBTQI+ individuals in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Santos writes: "I grew up with the unfortunate stereotype that math is a boys' club, particularly a straight boys' club, and that any woman or queer person who wanted to be part of it must adapt to straight boy sensibilities." Santos graduated high school with the prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarship to study at the University of Waterloo, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Mathematics majoring in Mathematical Finance.

A *New York Times* Op-Ed from 2015 asked the question, "Why Is Science So Straight?" The author, Manil Suri, a professor of mathematics and statistics at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, noted that the institution "is very gay-friendly" and in 2013 the school's LGBT Faculty and Staff Association created a website to list faculty and staff who were comfortable being out to students. At the time, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences had 13 faculty members, while he was the sole individual from STEM departments. I checked the website in March of 2025 and found that there are now five faculty and staff representing STEM.

In 2015, Dr. Erin A. Cech presented the paper "LGBT Professionals' Workplace Experiences in STEM-Related Federal Agencies" at the 2015 ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition and noted that federal employee surveys found 20 percent fewer LGBTQI+ workers in government STEM-related jobs than should be expected and that they faced more negative workplace experiences within STEM agencies compared to their non-LGBT co-workers. In 2021, Dr. Cech published a study in the journal *Science Advances* ("Systemic inequalities for LGBTQ professionals in STEM") noted that STEM professional cultures often promote the lack of discussion regarding diversity and inclusion because it may threaten objectivity. However, the study also conveyed that underrepresentation and oppression of marginalized people in STEM are not only a problem regarding of access and opportunity but also are detrimental to innovation: "More diverse groups of problem solvers offer more creative, productive, and fact-based scientific and technical innovations than more homogeneous teams."

According to the organization Pride in STEM, 30% of physicists in the United States are told to stay in the closet and 50% of transgender and non-conforming individuals were

harassed in their academic departments. In April of 2023, Columbia University held a panel discussion that explored fostering inclusion and resolving disparities in STEM. The panel (which is available on YouTube <https://tinyurl.com/columbiastemconf>) focused on the role that universities play in cultivating community and belonging for LGBTQI+ individuals. Data was presented that noted the following:

- LGBTQI+ people are 20% less represented in STEM-related federal agencies than non-STEM-related agencies;
- LGBTQI+ people in STEM report more negative workplace experiences than do non-LGBTQ+ people in STEM;
- LGBTQI+ people in STEM are more likely to experience career barriers, harassment, and professional devaluation than non-LGBTQ+ people; and
- More than 40% of LGBTQ+ people in STEM are not out to colleagues

The panel noted that change takes a lot of time. Federal agencies also take a lot of time. However, universities do not need to wait for them to foster change.

Dr. Mary Hoelscher, in a GLSEN blog, wrote that people with skills in STEM sometimes change the way we view the universe and that LGBT inclusion in STEM has a real effect on students' choices: "We all have a desire to go to places where we belong, where there are people like us. Our choice in careers is not all that different from our choices in parties — we want to know who will be there and if we're welcome before we go."



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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.

# News and Arts

## CIVIL RIGHTS WATCH

### D.C. WorldPride Organizers Warn Transgender Visitors of Travel Risks



*The Advocate* reported that the Capital Pride Alliance, which is producing WorldPride 2025, released new guidance for international visitors. The guidance urges all travelers—especially trans and nonbinary people—to stay informed, travel cautiously, and understand the potential risks before coming to D.C. The festivities begin on May 17 and conclude on June 8.

“We recommend that travelers considering entry to the United States make an informed decision based on the potential risks involved, as we, alongside advocates and partner organizations,

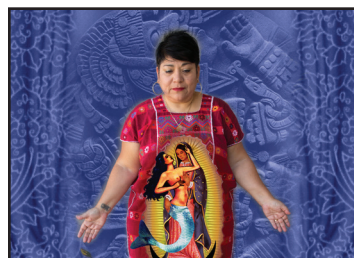
continue to actively navigate the measures being put in place by the current federal administration,” the group said.

Read more at: <https://shorturl.at/B7h3y>

## THE ARTS

### Get to Know Artist Alma López

Alma López is a queer Chicana artist, activist, and lecturer for Chicana/o Studies at the University of California. Her primary artistic mediums are digital collages and prints. Her art largely centers on the new explorations of Mexican traditions and history into contemporary, decolonial, feminist, and queer reflections of her own life. Many of her artworks feature social commentary on both historical legacies and current social issues. Much of her art has received a wide range of responses that mirror the perpetual tensions between tradition and lived experiences. López’s *Our Lady* is a contemporary feminist portrayal of the Virgin of Guadalupe and is her most well-known and controversial art piece. Many Mexican and Chicana/o artists have reimagined the Virgin of Guadalupe as a way of conveying their own relation to her, as well as the religiousness traditions she represents.



Last month Alma López, in *Daily Art Magazine*, discussed the art piece. “When I see *Our Lady* as well as the works portraying *La Virgen* by many Chicana artists, I see an alternative voice expressing the multiplicities of our lived realities. I see myself living a tradition of Chicanas who, because of cultural and gender oppression, have asserted our voice.”

Learn more at: <http://almalopez.com/>