La Casa de Bernarda Alba
Repertorio Espanol

La Canción
Repertorio Espanol
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[This year] We sought to address the misinformation about Latin@ communities and histories in the United States by focusing on the contribution of Latin@s and Latin Americans to the arts, especially in theater, performance and film.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

ARNALDO CRUZ-MALAVÉ
2016-17 has been an eventful year for LALSI and for Latin American studies at Fordham and across the nation. Faced with a national climate of misinformation and hostility toward immigrants, especially Latin@s, LALSI faculty has responded by teaching courses on migration, ethnicity and race: Hugo Benavides a new anthropology course on Irish and Mexican Immigration in NYC, Greta Gilbertson a sociology course on Undocumented Migrants, Barry Goldberg a history course on Race, Ethnicity and Migration, Clara Rodriguez sociology courses on Latin@s in the U.S. and Latin@s in the Media, and Sal Acosta a history course entitled U.S.-Latin America Relations. In addition, this summer Sal Acosta of the History Department will be teaching a new LALS ICC course on Latin@s: Fact and Fiction.

The Institute has also promoted dialogue about these crucially important issues by organizing events open to the public. In the fall we joined American Studies and African and African-American Studies to sponsor a well-attended panel on Race, Migration and Ethnicity in the Presidential Elections, with the participation of Angelo Falcón, the director of National Institute on Latin@ Policy, Afua Atta-Mensah, Executive Director of Community Voices Heard, a member-led multi-racial organization that builds power to secure social, economic and racial justice in New York state, and Arlene Dávila, professor of Latin@ studies at NYU, author of Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latin@s and the Neoliberal City, and Latin@ Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race.

In collaboration with the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, the Institute sponsored a series on international migration and displacements, entitled Itinerancies, where noted Latin@ writer Maria Helena Viramontes and Spanish critic Isolina Ballésteros compared the representation of migration in Latin@, Latin American and European literatures and film, moderated by Carl Fischer.

In addition, the Institute participated in discussions about university policy on racial, gender and ethnic diversity as a member of the Senate’s Committee on Diversity and on the search for a scholar specializing on Mexican culture and race. As a result of this search, we are pleased to announce that Miguel García, a recent graduate of UC Davis who gave a talk on Eugenics in the Construction of the Modern Mexican Subject, will be joining the department of Modern Languages and Literatures in the fall.

We joined the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs, the Colombian Consulate General in NY, and the Alumni Association of the Colombian Jesuit Universidad Javeriana to organize a panel on the Colombia Peace Process, with the participation of the main negotiators of the Peace Accord, Gonzalo Hernández, Director of the Department of Economics at Universidad Javeriana, Mario Alberto Puertas, Advisor to the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Luis Fernando Álvarez Londoño, S.J., Vice President for Inter-Institutional Relations and Dean of the School of Governance and Public Ethics at the Javeriana, the Consul General María Isabel Nieto, and the extraordinary journalist Adriana La Rotta, Senior Director of Media Relations at the Americas Society in NY.

And our students had the extraordinary opportunity of participating in Fordham’s Community Health Program in Cali, Colombia, a service abroad program designed for students in the sciences with an interest in health issues in developing countries, organized by our LALS member, Dean Luz Lenis and led this year by Usha Sankar.

We also sought to address the misinformation about Latin@ communities and histories in the United States by focusing on the contribution of Latin@s and Latin Americans to the arts, especially in theater, performance and film. In collaboration with the FCLC Dean’s Office, the Institute sponsored a series of workshops on NYC theater and performance to complement my course on NYC Latin@ Performance and Theater with the participation of acclaimed Dominican-American author and performance artist Josefina Báez, Cuban-American director Leyma López, and Puerto Rican director Gil René who adapted Luis Negrón’s award-winning Mundo cruel to the stage for the Pregones Theater.
The Latin@ and Latin American contribution to film was well-represented in this year’s events. Our Institute’s distinguished visiting scholar, noted Latin Americanist Julio Ramos taught a course on Latin American Culture Through Film. As part of the course, Prof. Ramos organized a preview of the acclaimed Cuban filmmaker, Miguel Coyula’s latest film Nadie/ Nobody and a discussion of the film with the director and its principal actor, Lynn Cruz. Carl Fischer brought Puerto Rican filmmaker Cecilia Aldarondo and well-known film scholar Javier Guererro from Princeton University to his classes to speak on gender and Latin American visual culture. Clara Rodríguez, who taught a course on Latin@s in the Media, brought Gilda Mirós to speak about Spanish language Latin@ broadcasting in New York and Frances Negrón-Muntaner, director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race at Columbia University, to discuss the state of Latin@s in the U.S. media. Spanish instructor Vicente Rubio-Pueyo organized an extraordinary conversation with the Barcelona filmmaker Pau Faus on his film Sí se Puede, a documentary on the contemporary democratic popular movements in Spain today.

Poetry was another way of showcasing the creativity of Latin@s and Latin Americans and their contribution to the U.S. The Institute joined Poets Out Loud to sponsor a reading by the renowned poet, Sandra María Esteves, one of the founding figures of the Nuyorican literary movement. Esteves also gave workshops in Elisabeth Frost’s creative writing course and in Ronald Méndez-Clark’s course, Speaking for/as the Other. Our students were also fortunate to engage in a conversation with the distinguished novelist, poet and essayist, the Argentinian-Spanish author Andrés Neu- man on his latest book of travel essays, How to Travel without Seeing: Dispatches from the New Latin America.

We are especially proud of our faculty’s achievements this year and would like to recognize Sara Leh- man, Associate Director of LALSI, and Erick Rengifo, who were both promoted to full professors in the departments of MLL and Economics, respectively. We would also like to acknowledge Carl Fischer, whose recently published book, Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965-2015, was released to great acclaim. Barbara Mundy, whose outstanding The Death of Tenochtitlán, the Life of Mexico City has been awarded the Bryce Wood Book Award by the Latin American Studies Association, which is presented every year to an outstanding book on Latin America in the social sciences and humanities. Yuko Miki, who won a fellowship from the New York Public Library Schomburg Center’s Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery and from the American Philosophical Society’s Franklin Research Grant for research in Brazil, and Mark Street, whose film premiered at Havana’s International Festival of Latin American New Cinema last fall. Congratulations! You make us proud to be members of the LALS community at Fordham!

We are also very proud of our graduating LALS seniors and wish to especially acknowledge Jenni- fer Acevedo, who has won honors in Latin American and Latin@ Studies for her work as Social Justice Leader and Diversity Peer Leader for the Dorothy Day Center, and Martena Gutiérrez, this year’s winner of LALSI’s Bernardo Vega/Rigoberta Menchú Tum Award for Latin American and Latin@ Studies.

Finally, we want to call attention to a change in our newsletter. For the first time, many of the articles in El Boletín have been authored by our amazing students: Jennifer Acevedo, Daniel Alicea, Kristoff (Reese) Grosfeld, Renée Iglesias, Kayla Matteucci, Marisol Duarte, Josh Anthony, Diana Verde, Heath Hampton, Lily Richards, and Carson Thornton Gonzalez. And of course, the design is the creation of our extraordinarily talented Rossy Fernández, in collaboration of our able and supportive staff, our program administrator at RH, Isacc Tercero, and our new secretary at LC, Natasha Obeng, whose hard work, commitment and good humor make our community possible.
EVENTS,
COLLABORATIONS,
STUDENT REFLECTIONS & SERVICE,
INTERVIEWS
On the third of November, I attended the event “Race, Ethnicity and Immigration in the Presidential Campaign.” On the panel were three different professionals from varying fields: Afua Atta-Mensah, Arlene Dávila, and Ángelo Falcón. Each one had a different perspective and different ideas to bring to this informative event. The first question presented was about xenophobia and issues with the media’s response to Donald Trump’s wall between the United States and Mexico. My favorite response to this question came from Ángelo Falcón. Falcón suggested that at the beginning of the race for the presidency, the media’s coverage of Trump’s campaign was positive because companies found it important to not be associated with his xenophobic, racist and sexist comments. In the beginning, these companies showed their lack of support by condemning his language and his actions and chose to cut off all ties with the Trump brand. However, as time progressed, Falcón noted that the media was simply giving Trump free time on the air, inadvertently promoting his name.

The second question presented to the panel was in regards to the changing political map during the 2016 campaigns, and how communities of color were affected. Afua Atta-Mensah commented on how the campaign encouraged the Muslim-American community to be more proactive, and how it had bolstered Hillary Clinton’s campaign. Atta-Mensah went even further to suggest that the American political system has always created a group of “others” that are exiled from the American narrative. But now, in the age of Trump, that group of “others” has become much larger than we’ve seen in the past. This group now includes Mexicans, Muslims, people of color in general, women, people with disabilities, and many others. When the majority of a country turns into “them,” instead of “us,” it can only be destructive, she affirmed.

Prof. Dávila, who has written extensively on race, neoliberalism and gentrification, added that xenophobia and racism are exacerbated today by the fact that people are now living in more segregated spaces than ever. In many communities people do not have to interact with racially, ethnically different people in their daily lives.

This event was well thought out and featured important topics to consider always, but especially during the presidential campaigns. The panelists were informed and passionate about the subject, and shed light on important issues from their unique perspectives. The 2016 presidential election was one of the most controversial we’ve seen, and it was representative of the change Americans wish to see within their political system. It is important to have and continue having these difficult conversations to try and understand the discontent across the United States.

CARSON THORNTON GONZALEZ
This past November 1st, LALSI and the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs hosted a panel on the Colombia Peace Process, entitled DEVELOPMENT FOR A STABLE AND LASTING PEACE IN COLOMBIA. The panel, which was organized by Javeriana’s Alumni Association in New York and supported by the Colombian Consulate in New York, brought distinguished faculty and administrators from the Javeriana School of Government and Public Ethics (JSG) in Bogota, Colombia, who have participated in the Colombia peace process, including the high-level negotiations in Havana. The main speakers were Father Luis Fernando Álvarez Londoño, SJ, Vice-Recttor of Extension and Interinstitutional Relations; Mario Puerta, Member of the Peace High Commissioner Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia and Advisor for the Negotiation Rounds of the La Havana Peace Agreement, and Gonzalo Hernández, Director of the Department of Economics at Javeriana’s School of Economics and Management Sciences.

The panelists discussed the various proposals for a lasting peace in Colombia, the different political and economic models on which they are based, future political participation under each of these models, and possible amendments to the Havana Peace Agreement. The panel was part of the Javeriana School of Government and Public Ethics’s long-standing commitment to fostering a dialogue among the different sectors of Colombian society: government, academics and scholars, political actors and institutions, and the public at large, both in Colombia and the diaspora, in the hope of creating a consensus that will lead to a lasting peace in Colombia. Panel presentations were followed by a discussion moderated by the extraordinary Colombian journalist Adriana La Rotta. Remarks on the importance of these discussions for the development of a lasting peace in Colombia were offered by the Consul General of Colombia in New York, Dr. María Isabel Nieto, the Executive Director of the Institute for International Humanitarian Affairs, Dr. Brendan Cahill, and the Director of the Latin American and Latin@ Studies Institute, Dr. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé.
Trans-Atlantic Muslim Diaspora to Latin America in the 19th Century:

TALK & WORKSHOP

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (slavevoyages.org)
Philip Misevich, a history professor from St. John's University, recently came to Fordham to talk about his work on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. As he explained to Professor Yuko Miki's packed class, the Database is a comprehensive collection of information regarding all recorded slave ships which crossed the Atlantic between 1514 and 1866, a compilation that began in the 60's. The Database serves scholars and the curious members of the public alike by providing them with the raw statistics of the slave trade available to anyone with Internet access.

Digital media has become a popular (and often empty) buzzword in the humanities, but Professor Misevich's workshop vindicated the educational and scholarly potential of information technology in a powerful way. He began by playing an animation from the database, where the slave ships, represented by tiny black dots, traced their real-life routes from Africa to the Americas on a map, year after year. The trickle of dots became a torrent as the slave trade reached its peak, illustrating the massive scale of the slave trade in a novel way. He then lead the class through a tour of the actual Database, where anyone can search information on the ships based on time period, nationality, origin and destination, where the ships buy their slaves, and more. These searches can be displayed in charts, graphs, maps, and animations, helping the viewer understand the data in an interactive way not available before in the modern age.

Professor Misevich described the Database as a purely "quantitative project," but the data it provides raises questions that go far beyond the scope of statistics and numbers. It can easily tell a user who the largest slave traders were (the Portuguese), and from what area the Europeans bought the most slaves (West Central Africa). This, however, only renders the user curious about why and how these things came to be. Professor Misevich elaborated to the class how quantitative data leads to qualitative study by explaining his research on the influence of Islam in the Americas, using records of names of slaves, which are also available in the Database. His research raises many questions of the influence of African cultural heritage in the Americas, but is founded in the raw numbers of the Database.

The forced migration of an estimated 12.5 million Africans to the Americas across a 300 year span fundamentally altered the population, culture, and history of the hemisphere, leaving a powerful legacy. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database is a remarkable tool that brings to light the evil industry that fed Atlantic slavery through the power of today's digital technology, with vast applicability.
GILDA MIROS

SPANISH LANGUAGE BROADCASTING

and my role in it
A CONVERSATION ON SPANISH RADIO BROADCASTING IN NEW YORK CITY

Gilda Miros was a pioneer in her field of Spanish-language radio, television, and film. Her journey to become the first woman with her own radio program was not easy; she worked extremely hard to get where she did. It took learning Spanish properly, training and getting work throughout Latin America, and doing what she believed was right. During her talk, she inspired many to pursue their dreams and work hard for what we wanted. Students were fascinated that a Latin@ woman had managed to pave the way for so many others during a time where Latin@s in general did not have a lot of power over the entertainment industry in the United States.

DIANA VERDE
FILM SCREENING:

NADIE / NOBODY

MIGUEL COYULA

(Havana, 1977) An internationally acclaimed independent filmmaker from Cuba. He is the director of experimental feature films, Cucarachas rojas (2003), the award-winning Memorias del desarrollo (2010), and is the author of a science-fiction novel, Mar rojo, mal azul (2013). His work explores new ways of storytelling through digital technology.
On March 7th at a well-attended and lively event, LALSI’s distinguished visiting scholar Julio Ramos, who taught a course on Latin American film this semester, introduced the latest award-winning film by the Cuban filmmaker, Miguel Coyula. Dr. Ramos is professor emeritus at Berkeley and author of six books on Latin American literature and film, among them Divergent Modernities, a classic of Latin American cultural studies. Coyula, a Guggenheim Fellow recipient who studied at the prestigious International Film and Television School in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba, is author of the short films Bailar Sobre Agujas (1999), Buena Onda, (1999), Clase Z “Tropical” (2000), and the award-winning feature film Red Cockroaches (2003), described by Variety as “a triumph of technology in the hands of a visionary with know-how.” In 2009, he premiered his second feature film, Memories of Overdevelopment, a sequel to the Cuban classic by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Memories of Underdevelopment (1968), at the Sundance Film Festival. Like Memories of Underdevelopment, its sequel, which traces the earlier film’s protagonist’s life in exile in New York, is based on a novel by the Cuban Edmundo Desnoes. In 2010, the author released his third feature film, Corazón Azul (Blue Heart), and in 2013 he published his first novel, Mar Rojo, Mal Azul. His latest film Nadie/Nobody, is a documentary about the censored aging Cuban poet Rafael Alcides. In this stunningly lyrical and experimental collage of interviews with Alcides, the poet narrates his personal story of the Cuban revolutionary process, his belief in its revolutionary ideals and his disillusionment with Fidel Castro for betraying them. Poignantly, Coyula captures the poet’s attempt to transcribe his entire oeuvre, which is languishing in vanishing manuscripts, before it is no longer legible and completely disappears. The film, which has been controversial in Cuba, won the award for the best documentary at the Dominican Global Film Festival in Santo Domingo earlier this year. After the viewing a lively discussion ensued with Miguel Coyula and Lynn Cruz, who is also featured in the film, about the difficulties of independent filmmaking in contemporary Cuba.
ATTENDING REPERTORIO ESPAÑOL’S PRODUCTION OF LORCA’S LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA

The class trip of Dr. Kasten’s SPAN 2500, Approaches to Literature, class to see La casa de Bernarda Alba at the Repertorio Español was another excellent example of the unique experiences one can have while studying in New York City. The performance was in Spanish, but the Repertorio provides options that make the show accessible to non-Spanish speakers, such as subtitles in English and in Spanish on the backs of the seats. After studying the work itself and various productions of it, including other recorded stage performances and a film version, it was really exciting to see the play come to life in person. Being able to see that the art we had studied so diligently was appreciated in a real world context made the time we had spent with the text that much more worthwhile.

Photos courtesy of Carey Kasten and Repertorio Español.
On February 16, 2017, the acclaimed filmmaker Pau Faus visited Dr. Carey Kasten’s SPAN 3001, a survey of Spanish literature and culture, for a conversation on social and political change in contemporary Spain. The event, which was organized by the Spanish instructor Vicente Rubio, discussed the current unprecedented period of profound political transformation in Spain since the economic crisis of 2008, which some have heralded as a “Democratic Revolution.” Since then, the 15M or Indignados and Podemos movements and the so-called Municipal Confluences (now ruling in Madrid, Barcelona and other major cities in Spain), have emerged as a strong and transformative political forces. Pau Faus’s striking films provide an invaluable vantage point from which to witness and understand important aspects of these processes of change, offering a first-hand account of how common people organize to defend their rights, giving birth to innovative social movements such as the PAH (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages), as well new political forces like Barcelona en Comú (a progressive citizen coalition governing now in Barcelona). Students engaged the filmmaker in a lively discussion on art and activism in contemporary Spain.

Photos and sketches courtesy of Carey Kasten and Pau Faus.
ON THEATRICAL ADAPTATIONS, AND HOW PROPS CAPTURE THE CRUX OF THE STORIES
Before I saw the theatrical adaptation of Luis Negrón’s *Mundo cruel* in the Bronx’s Pregones Theater, the very first thing I asked myself was how could the various stories in Negrón’s work (that have no connection to each other) translate into a single cohesive play. I was honestly thinking about all the possibilities, even the most bizarre ones like the actors acting their respective scenes of different stories at the same time. Eventually, though, once I saw the play, I realized that I was definitely overthinking it because, more or less, the play paralleled Negrón’s short stories: it had completely different scenes that corresponded to the separate and distinct short stories of Mundo cruel. In spite of their similarities, though, there was one big difference: the play was obviously a visual experience. This visual experience was personally very helpful because, admittedly, while reading the stories it was difficult for me to picture, for instance, the religious fervor of the boy in “El elegido” or the narrator’s passion and loneliness in “El vampiro de Moca.” For this reason, I believe that the props in the theatrical adaptation of Mundo cruel were used perfectly to encapsulate the emotions of the short stories of Luis Negrón. For me, the most notable scenes with the exceptional use of props were the following: the scene of the narrator in “El vampiro de Moca,” and the scene of the boy in “El elegido.”

At the beginning of the narrator’s scene in “El vampiro de Moca” (in the play), I noticed a prop in the middle of the stage that resembled a type of wringer. I initially did not think much of this prop until, of course, the scene progressed. Once it did, the “wringer” was actually a window that clearly highlighted the seductive tone of the narrator. First of all, the stories themselves also show a seductive narrator where he craves for a certain type of masculinity: “Sus mahones grandes, mostrando bastante de esos bóxers que no se caían gracias a las nalgas bellas que le guardaban la espalda” (“His big jeans, showing his boxers, which don’t fall thanks to his beautiful buttocks that maintained his back”) (Negrón 22). Thus, in the original story of Negrón, the narrator has an obvious erotic desire. So if the story of “El vampiro de Moca” shows an obvious erotic desire from the narrator, then this desire actually gets even more intensified in the play via the window prop. To illustrate, the narrator was describing his love interest while using this device. This indicated to me that the window was used as a type of spying apparatus where the narrator was observing his idée fixe from a safe distance. For this reason, the window prop not only shows us the intensity of the narrator’s sexual desires, but it also concomitantly underscores the narrator’s loneliness in this scene of the play.

While the prop in the previous scene emphasized and intensified the narrator’s sexual desire and loneliness in “El vampiro de Moca,” the prop in the subsequent scene of the boy in “El elegido” stressed more of a religious sentiment. Specifically, the prop that the actor used in this scene was a glow-in-the-dark costume, which obviously means that the actor was surrounded by complete darkness on stage. As a theology major, this immediately reminded me of a biblical theme where the gospel in the New Testament is considered to be a light in darkness (cf. 1 Pt. 2:9, 1 Jn 1:7). With all this in mind, and considering that the main theme of Negrón’s “El elegido” is the contrast between the gay and the evangelical/religious lifestyle, this glow-in-the-dark costume suggests that the boy in this scene is a type of messenger for the gay lifestyle. Through this glow-in-the-dark costume, the play tries to underscore the boy’s eager desire to spread his own type of gospel and hence be a type of light for homosexuals. This prop thus visually expresses the boy’s religious fervor in this scene.

As a whole, I really enjoyed this theatrical adaptation not only because of the props, but also because of the comedy, the acting, and the music. The visuals and the illustrations of the play overall helped me further understand the essence of Luis Negrón’s short stories because they, as mentioned, can be a bit difficult to visualize. For all these reasons, I thought that my trip to the Bronx was worth it and I would thus highly recommend watching this play.

KRISTOFF REESE GROSFELD
LA CANCIÓN

A Spanish Hip-Hop Musical Debuts at the Repertorio Español

Photos courtesy of Marisol Duarte and Repertorio Español
In Candido Tirado’s play *La Canción*, Rafael de la Vega attempts to reestablish a connection with his familial roots though a song that mysteriously appears on his phone. He later learns that the song was written by his father, who dedicated it to his mother when they first fell in love. Rafael, who was raised as an orphan by his grandmother, begins to discover the history behind his parents’ love. By tracing his roots and connecting with his family, Rafael not only tells his own story but also that of the first generation of children born to immigrant parents in the United States. Tirado uses musical genres and cultural references throughout the play to communicate the modern Latin American life in New York.

Tirado moved to the Bronx from Puerto Rico at the age of eleven and currently works as a playwright for Teatro Vista in New York City. Much of Tirado’s work has been focused on addressing social issues in schools by writing educational plays for elementary and middle schools. These plays are designed to demonstrate to the young students that they can create change when they are made responsible for their own actions. Tirado explains that he wants his plays to make people aware of the current social issues in the world, specifically those of cultural integration and racism. He hopes they can inspire them to act through his writing. He focuses specifically on the Latin culture and how it influenced many other cultures. Tirado has witnessed firsthand the Latin American influence in New York City.

In his play *La Canción*, Tirado uses elements of Latin culture in conjunction with aspects of American music. By combining the cumbia, bachata, and reggaeton with elements of hip hop and rap, he blends the cultures and the slow process of cultural integration. While they exist as their own genres, they come together to create something new and unique in the New York area. This combination of hip hop and Latin music is important for Rafael’s character because it shows that although he is Latin by blood, he is also American. The play is both a comedy and a tragedy. Its comic elements are evident in the way it is written, especially in characters like Abuela and Poco Loco, as well as short pieces of comedic dance and rap. The play, however, focuses on the tragic story of the lost love of Jenny and Rafael Sr.

The play centers on the themes of family and home. Rafael struggles to define these themes while he also seeks to discover the truth behind his mother’s death and his father’s guilt. While this conflict is very personal to Rafael’s character, the theme of finding a home and his roots is one that can be applied to the entire immigrant generation born in the United States. Although this generation knows certain things about the Latin culture, it is as if they were orphans trying find their mothers as well as find a place in this new world. This may be a home on their native island, the United States, or in some combination of the two.

The play *La Canción* not only tells the story of Rafael de la Vega, but also the struggles of the first generation of Americans born to immigrant parents in the United States and how they strive to define their families and homes. The search for one’s roots is not only something that affects the protagonist, but also something that an entire generations of people have looked for. Being born in the United States but raised in another nation’s culture presents an issue with identity that has not been an easy fix. Our protagonist, however, finds his way through the play’s musical culture and finds that he can exist somewhere in the middle of two distinct families and cultures.

**RENÉE IGLESIAS**
Q & A WITH PLAYWRIGHT
marco antonio rodríguez

Dominican-American playwright Marco Antonio Rodriguez is a man with many talents and a passion for Latin@ Theater. Born and raised in New York City, he has written various plays including Barceló con Hielo (Barcelo on the Rocks) and La Luz de un Cigarillo. After reading and admiring his plays, as part of an independent study on NYC Latin@ theater that I am currently taking with Prof. Cruz-Malavé, I went to see his recent acclaimed adaptation of Julia Alvarez’s novel In the Name of Salomé.

I found it mesmerizing that Rodriguez, who was born and raised in NYC, could have such a command of Spanish and English, slang, popular and cultured speech, adapt other people’s fiction to the theater and be a playwright and an actor in his own right. I was so intrigued that I had to meet him and ask him some of the questions that were circling in my head. Through the meditation of Prof. Cruz-Malavé I contacted him, and he immediately agreed to meet me. I finally had the pleasure of meeting Marco Antonio in his office in his apartment in New York. As soon as you meet him he greets you with a broad smile and hug. He was sitting in front of me across the table in his office and the conversation just flowed with his contagious enthusiasm and his passion to share his ideas about theater in New York. Here’s an excerpt of that conversation.

Q. Being born and raised in New York City when did you realize you wanted to get into Latin@ theater and what did it mean to you?
A. New York City is this big “melting pot” of people from all over the world. Immigrants from the entire world are all brought together and forced to make some kind of community. In theater, you are able to draw from all of those traditions from all over the world and make fun of them as well. I grew up in this environment and it was that... that inspired me to focus on Latin@s and how they migrate and settle here and love day to day, as my own family did.

Q. Since you were born and raised here in New York how did you get your inspiration and knowledge to write about Latin@s who were immigrants and their lives before arriving in New York?
A. When I was two years old I moved back to the Dominican Republic and came back to New York when I was five years old. Spanish was my first language so when I came back I had to relearn English and all the customs as if I were coming to New York for the first time. I learned quickly from school and neighborhood friends, but I maintained my Spanish as well by watching speaking Spanish at home and watching Mexican soap operas and Spanish-language television. I was also my mother’s official translator. So I was a Spanish-English interpreter of sorts from my earliest memories.
Q. In your plays, La Luz de un Cigarillo and Barceló con Hielo, the language you use is very specifically Dominican, not only the references but the slang or popular expressions are Dominican. Do you feel that incorporating this language is key to understanding your work?

A. Language in all its versions, including Dominican slang and Spanglish, is extremely important for the characters in my plays. It is what makes them genuine. It gives voice to the worlds they inhabit. And it is also poetic. It gives beauty to their world.

Q. How do you think Latin@s from other countries and linguistic traditions, who are not familiar with Dominican slang or references, react to your plays?

A. The language might be specific, but the stories in my plays are universal, especially universal to families. Although the family in for instance La Luz de Un Cigarillo are Dominican, I think that everyone can relate to them as a family. We all have a tía Dolores or a caring yet traditional mom.

Q. You recently adapted Julia Alvarez’s famous novel En Nombre de Salomé/In the Name of Salomé to the theater to great acclaim. The novel, which is about a famous nineteenth-century Dominican poet, Salomé Henríquez Ureña, was filled with details and subplots that described each character. How did you decide what details or features to highlight or focus on in your adaptation?

A. I wanted to keep in the mind of the spectator the main conflict that was going on in the play. It was important for me, for instance, to highlight the relationship that Salomé had with her father to show as a way of showing her relationship to male society of the time. I wanted to show that she was able to be strong and pull through, despite all the obstacles. I wanted to show that she was in today’s language a great Nasty Woman of her time.

Q. In your plays you often address issues of sexuality and masculinity. Do you think that sexuality and masculinity are addressed enough in Latin@ theater?

A. Yes, it is extremely important to address these issues. That is why I address them in my plays. The older generation is not comfortable with all these issues. I feel it is important to break the taboo on and ignorance that many people have about those who are of different sexualities and beliefs. It is the giant elephant in the room in my plays, but it is never fully spoken about because I want to ease the audience into thinking about these issues rather than shock them. The younger generations are much more open and are moving toward exciting new ways of thinking about sexuality and masculinity, and my work is contributing to that.

Q. In your opinion how important is Latin@ theater in NYC? What do you hope it will be like in the future?

A. If you had asked me ten years ago, I would have said progress was going to be slow for Latin@ theater. Now I see that it is moving quicker than I had thought with the rise of Lin Manuel Miranda and all the different new shows that are coming out. I believe Latin@ theater is set to make a great difference in theater in NYC and opportunities for Latin@ theater will only improve.

Marisol Duarte with Rodriguez

Photos courtesy of Marisol Duarte, Marco Antonio Rodriguez and Repertorio Español.
On March 8, our director, Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé, introduced the acclaimed poet Sandra Maria Esteves, at an event cosponsored with Poets Out Loud, where Ms. Esteves shared the stage with poet Kevin Pilkington. Here is his introduction:

I first met Sandra María Esteves when I was a student at Yale in the mid-70s. I was an undergraduate then, had an insurgent afro and belonged to what we thought of as a militant Puerto Rican antiimperialist activist student group. Sandra María Esteves had been invited along with a group of then New York Puerto Rican or Nuyorican poets to read at one of our meetings. While all the other poets spoke to the large social concerns that we all shared, concerns for equality and justice, it was Sandra María Esteves who touched us most—who impacted us at a very intimate level that we were not expecting. She read in her forceful, confident yet unassuming soulful, silky voice not about the big things that concerned us then, but about what she called the small things, the everyday quotidian ambience or atmosphere inhabited by words that either summoned us to community or kept us apart. She spoke about what I would later come to know in reading her work as the rumor, the buzz, the hum and the jam that inhabits everyday life and words suffusing them with the power to creatively connect or to pulls us apart.

For the past over 40 years, Sandra María Esteves has been captivating and summoning us to community, as she did with my activist student group many years ago, by capturing that hum, that bilingual, multicultural hum or jam that inhabits the space between our words and our lives. No one has captured more eloquently than her the fractured, real lived NYC Spanish-English bilingualism—by which I mean not the school-taught bilingualism that I proudly impart and promote as a professor of Latin American and Latin@ literatures, but the hard-won bilingualism constructed by the children of communities whose right to their bilingual, bicultural inheritance has been denied, whose bilingualism has been suppressed and bears the peculiarly colonial mark of being considered, like them, “neither nor,” or less than. And yet no one has given us more powerful testimony of the creative possibilities of such fractures, of the beauty of being, as she has so eloquently called it in one of her poems, “not neither.” Situating herself in that space of rupture, in the humming and the buzzing and the jamming that inhabits the supposed less than, she has become the recognized master of the down beat, the syncopation that is also a syncope, the momentary loss of self and disappearance that is also a formidable summoning presence calling us to “Ricanstruct” and recreate ourselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce tonight in International Women’s Day the author of the books of poetry Yerba Buena (1980), Bluestown Mockingbird Mambo (1990), Undelivered Love Poems (1997) and Portal (2007), of the acclaimed spoken-poetry CDs DivaNations (2010) and Wildflowers (2009), the winner of the National Endowment for the Arts/Master Artist Fellowship at Pregones Theater, the one and only, the legendary, the Godmother of the Nuyorican Poetic movement, the real thing, Sandra Maria Esteves.
This semester, Nuyorican poet Sandra Esteves visited SPAN/LALS4100 Speaking for/as The Other, taught by Prof. Ronald Méndez-Clark, and discussed her work with our students. Here are some of their comments.

“I think my favorite poem we heard was the one about the airplane—her words were so beautiful and I can truly see how she was inspired to create art with her words by visual art. I also loved hearing what she had to say about her journey as a writer being reflective of how she discovered and cultivated her own voice. I hope to read more of her work in the future!”

-- Alyssa Rose

“Like others, what struck me the most about her personal experience was the fact that her voice was silenced while attending boarding school. Speaking in Spanish, which was her dominant language, would have gotten her in trouble... Art and poetry gave her a voice, a platform to express herself and it was inspiring listening to how she has used that voice to speak up for women and for Latin@s.” -- Daniela Colon

“Hearing the creator of the poetry read aloud her own words made the work come alive. The rhythm and smooth transition of thought was evident in her work as she progressed her way through each poem. This was made even more clear hearing her emphasize the repetition of certain words and pronounce more heavily or softly to create drama for a specific prose. Her freeing and vibrant personality directly translated to her poetry.” -- Jennifer Rhoads

“I remember she told the class that creativity is the antithesis of violence. I love that Sandra as the other in a white and male dominant society refuses to stay silent. Personally, it is inspiring to see how she focuses transformation and empowerment through the reflection of her own real life. She inspires me to find my own voice, refuse to stay silent, and be heard regarding important issues such as community, ancestry, and equality.” -- Leyry Romano

“She mentioned she went in the school as a dominant Spanish speaker and left as a dominant English speaker. I think this, which may have seemed like a bad thing at the time, was a pivotal moment for her life and career. She spoke about feeling the need to let out all these words that have been kept inside her for so long. When she read her poems to our class, her passion for her work was immediately apparent.” -- Michael Passalacqua

Besides her reading at Poets Out Loud, Sandra María Esteves also visited two of Prof. Elisabeth Frost’s courses, offered in FCLC and PCS. In the first, a Text & Context section called “Writing New York,” Esteves read from her poetry and discussed her emergence as one of the first Dominican Boricua women poets in New York. In conjunction with a unit on Nuyorican poetry in Prof. Frost’s class, Esteves recounted stories about several writers with whom she emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including Lorraine Sutton and Pedro Pietri. She talked about the founding of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, at once a wonderful and vibrant performance space and --at its inception-- a “boys’ club” that led Esteves to seek out her other communities of writers. In the second of Frost’s classes, a creative writing workshop called “Prose Poetry / Flash Fiction,” Esteves discussed some of her literary influences, from Ernesto Cardenal to Pablo Neruda. She engaged in a discussion with students about experimenting with poetic form (from repetition to punctuation and line breaks), as a means to find and nurture their own voices.

“I was also intrigued by the way the suppression of Spanish in school discouraged her from speaking in either language, and how she was able to use visual arts, and later poetry, to rediscover and reclaim her voice. All of her poems seem to deal with her attempt to reconcile the two sides of her identity and express herself in a way that was only made possible by her experience as the other as a child.” -- Isabelle Mann

“We were privileged to spend time with Esteves and to get to know a little about her. What stood out for me was hearing the way she spoke about optimism and happiness, her attitude and intonation, in which I think you could almost sense her inner authorial voice.” -- Christian Zombek

“I really enjoyed listening to Sandra Esteves read her poems in class on Friday, especially “Puerto Rican Discovery Number 14” about her experiences at the airport and on planes. Esteves has a keen eye: it is clear she observes things that others may not see. There is no doubt she was a visual artist before she became a poet. Esteves words paint pictures in the minds of her listeners.” -- Diane Crosson

“She said that poems just happen when they happen and that anything can trigger a poem. I found incredibly interesting Esteves’ views on location, and her ideas about how location influences writing. The airplane poem she read in relation to this discussion was my favorite.” -- Shelby Dwyer
New York has been lucky enough to be the home turf and creative inspiration of Josefina Báez for much of her career. As a class studying modern theatrical works in New York City, we were lucky enough to participate in a conversation with Báez, facilitated by Fordham’s Dr. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé. Among other things, Báez has poured her heart and soul into her efforts as a performance artist, writer, playwright and director, and educator. She is known for cultivating a style that bridges the gaps between languages and cultures. This goal is most clear in her performance of her 1999 book, *Dominicanish*. After our discussion of this work with the author, it became clear that Báez strives to remove us from the cultural contexts in which we live daily and induct us into a setting that transcends the division created by our various identities. The author deconstructs the traditional meanings of everyday gestures and phrases to produce something that breaks the invented discourses of dominant cultures. With the chance to meet the author in person after reading her work, we came to better understand what it means to Báez to be “Dominicanish.”

For Báez, as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, it was difficult to establish a positive relationship with the dominant language and cultures of the United States, attempting to incorporate her own identity at the same time. Speaking about this through the protagonist in *Dominicanish*, Báez finds herself unable to feel a true sense of belonging in the US. English words look and sound bizarre to her, and it is taxing for her to “poner la boca así,” or “move my mouth like that.” Speaking a language that is foreign to her, phrases become meaningless chants, repeated mechanically. “Trips to the airport, rest in peace! Trips to the airport, rest in peace!” Hearing this phrase for the first time, we think of the constant movement and transience experienced by immigrants in their search for a new home. However, after Báez say this many times, we experience the monotony of the repetition of a phrase that loses its meaning. The artist also incorporates a dance called kuchipudi, which shares its origins with Indian yoga. Báez uses this dance to introduce symmetrical and precise movements, aligning herself with minimal saxophone music and establishing a rhythm with spoken words simultaneously. Every unit of expression corresponds with a direction or an angle suggested by her movements. The dance appears almost like a form of martial arts, and its mixture with bilingual dialogue and music is striking. Absent the ease of receiving phrases that maintain their most common meanings and a dance performed traditionally, we find ourselves obligated to receive information in a new way. We are robbed of the comfort we feel when communication takes place in its most customary forms. Confused and captivated by the combination of her actions, we gain a small but important understanding of the feeling of disorientation experienced by immigrants.

According to Báez, her work has to do with our most basic instincts—those which carry us beyond cultural preconceptions—and the identification of exercises that activate our comprehension of them. One such exercise is meditation. The artist invited us to meditate with her and explained to us that meditation could provide us with the clarity necessary to think in terms of these most basic instincts. Báez often uses meditation to as way to center the actors cast in her plays and remove them from the expectations of the external world. This allows them to deliver pure performances, bringing to life a sincere connection with audiences.

It is because of this honest approach to her art that Báez continues to impact us. She does not ignore the inner force that guides her creativity and informs her work. It is dangerous to idolize those we admire, whether they are artists, activists, comedians, or astronauts. It is possible that they do not truly represent the values that we attribute to them. However, our conversation with Josefina Báez revealed to me that she is truly a pioneer of intercultural communication and a forger of hybrid identities, with a mission of connecting on a human level. Overall, the honesty of her artistic mission allows her to articulate what many of us are unable to express or that which we are afraid to say. When she speaks, I believe her. I can relate to her message, and I want to hear more.

KAYLA MATTEUCCI
Our class. *Introduction to Latin American Culture Through Film* conducted by LALSI Distinguished Visiting Adjunct Professor Julio Ramos, interviewed Mexican director Diego Quemada-Díez via Skype on April 18th 2017 about his 2013 film *La Jaula de Oro* (The Golden Dream, literally, the Golden Cage). *La Jaula de Oro* follows the story of three adolescents from Guatemala and Chiapas as they attempt to emigrate to the United States chasing after the dwindling ‘golden’ American dream. This interview seeks to contribute to this year’s issue of *El Boletín*, which focuses on transnational migration immigration from Latin America and cultural expressions such as film. Quemada-Díez’s film was particularly interesting in this regard because it involved the director in a decade long collection of immigrant narratives from sites across the heterogeneous and semi-permeable borders of Mexico, Guatemala and the United States.

Sara and Juan, the two Guatemalan protagonists, take ‘La Bestia,’ a commercial freight train, from the southern border of Mexico and eventually meet with Chauk who is a member of the Tzotzil people of Chiapas. Together they traverse the whole of Mexico, atop the iron and diesel beast. The film attends closely to the dynamics of ethnic distinction and romance between the three young protagonists. It also forces the characters and the audience to engage with the larger structures of economic and political pressure that push these adolescents from whatever home they’ve known into an exceptionally dangerous and uncertain future. The plot of the film itself is derived almost entirely from the collected stories of immigrants interviewed from Central America, Mexico, U.S. detainment facilities, and the back of the train, La Bestia, itself.

Q. Enlisting non-professionals as actors and extras seems to have been an interesting and risky choice for a production of this magnitude. Was it your intention to give the narrative a more realistic approach? Or to emphasize the film’s non-fictional storyline?

A. The idea was to insert our actors into a real situation. They didn’t know the screenplay or the story beforehand, they didn’t know what was going to happen to them. So we shot the film chronologically to the best of our ability, and the actors learn what happens to them moments before you go. 5 minutes before a scene I would ask “how would you say this to your friend” and we would go through ideas, and I would re-write the script to fit that. Which takes time, so sometimes the it was hard for the crew because they were not used to this technique, but it made the film much more neo-realistic. You hear them speak as they truly speak, and they were really living an experience instead of acting it. Chauk, for instance, found out he was going to get killed minutes before we filmed the killing. When Sara gets taken, they all found out that day, and from then on she was gone. The next day we were all so alone. So all this also generated a friendship in such a natural way.

Q. Were there ever instances during the filming where the dangerous realities of the region encroached on your process as you moved around?

A. You know, everything in the movie is much softer than the reality. The reality is that, the migrants would say, that every man or woman you try to defend is killed. And I couldn’t have my characters die. There are other decisions that must be made, as well. There are a lot of things that could happen. I had to decide if we wanted to travel with armed guards. We ended up saying no, because then we run the risk of using them and we didn’t want to do that. So we ended up travelling without security. The only security we did have in Guatemala was in slums, and that was the security from the neighborhood. The residents organized throughout their community- the inner circle- and acknowledged us as outsiders travelling unarmed who gathered to help us, and luckily nothing did happen.
Q. What is the experience with sexuality of a migrant, a female migrant in particular, on the journey?

A. Sara’s story was based on a particular testimony from a 17 year old girl who travelled to the United States when she was 11. Her mother cut her hair and dressed her like a boy for the journey. When she told me that story it was so eye-opening because although she did not admit particular details, she made it seem as though her mother had to sleep with people on the way, which happens to so many women. They know they will have to use their body in order to get to the United States. Many women assume they will be raped or have forced sexual relations- which is why we included the image of Sara taking the contraceptive pills- that is a common reality that many migrants face. It was very important to talk about the drama with females, and I suffered alot in the writing process trying to decide if I should tell the story particularly from a woman’s perspective.

Q. You mentioned briefly during your interview with Democracy Now! that cinema is useful in part because it makes otherwise anonymous people, numbers in a new report, visible; it gives them faces on a screen.

A. Yeah- film can give a voice to people who don’t have a voice. The media does not give them a voice, it is run by the same few people in power. it does not state the truth. If it does it is just numbers. When the cast and crew went to Italy [critics, audience, officials] were talking about the power of a film like this. You create a connection- it is no longer anonymous news. It is not the same thing to become a number in the media and to have a story, or observe a story with your own lives. So I made it because I felt the need to communicate to others all that these migrants told me. I hope to improve their lives.

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Q. Given the current political climate, then, how do you pitch the film’s relevance to an international audience today in an increasingly hostile era of migration?

A. My creation is a collective creation. We made a collective testimony, a collection of the truth. It spoke, it had a soul, it was a cry to humanity demanding that we are all equal. But there is a structure of power that separates us. That structure; to change it, I am not even sure what it would take. There is immense hypocrisy within the US and Mexican governments- they create the environment that provokes migration. They know what they are doing. The United States used to pay $350 for every migrant that was deported. Over 6,000 agents within the Mexican migration department are trained by the American services. It’s not new. Obama had over 500,000 people in prison simply because they crossed the border. We need to look at things objectively, and be weary of what the media reports. Art, at least, allows for a way to understand something- to see it in a new light that improves one’s life. It changes the world of the person who experiences it. But it definitely takes a lot to do something forceful enough to change the unjust structures.

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Q. What, then, is your attitude regarding the market for the film? Is it more important to extend visibility to these “others” whose story you were telling? Or to focus on the film being popularly accessible?

A. Actually there came a point after so many testimonies I thought “this is a horrible movie, people will not want to see it.” I had to make a movie that is watchable, so I had to include certain elements such as friendship, fun times, a love story, dance, to break up pain, pain, pain, suffering on and on, otherwise I really don’t think anyone would see it. Also, life has all those things, and despite the horrible things [the migrants] are optimistic, and very open to God’s help. And the kids were very touched and happy being a part of it.
This past spring break, I had the honor to be accepted into a Global Outreach project to Nicaragua where a group of 11 students and I were able to partner with the Center for Global Education and Experience. We were able to learn about the history and culture of Managua and the women’s movements in Managua and rural areas. Throughout the week we got to speak with amazing women who have founded organizations that provide different resources for women’s health. We visited Centro de Mujeres Acahual (Acahualinca Women’s Center), a grassroot organization working in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Managua, however, has provided independence to women with HIV/AIDS prevention, self-esteem workshops, family violence, etc. We also met with kid promoters from Batahola Norte Cultural Center which focuses on education, art and women’s empowerment. The kid promoters 15 years old or younger and were so knowledgeable about issues that plagued their community like machismo and create workshops to teach others about how to promote equality and respect for women. It’s important to recognize the power of art in the women’s movement as well and we spoke with young feminist women (Fernanda Siles, Jennifer Bello, Karen Rodriguez, and Eliet Escorcia) who use theater as a tool for social change in the political climate Nicaragua faces with abortion being illegal. My team had the honor of meeting with Maria Teresa Blandon who is one of the founders of the women’s movement and founder of the Association of Rural Workers. As the Director of La Corriente Feminista we had an enlightening discussion that left us all with so much knowledge and questions. Some of the most impactful things she said really got at the root of the struggle of feminism and the understanding that women’s problems are also men’s problems. The Among Women Foundation (La FEM) is a grassroots feminist group in Esteli as part of the inequality that was occurring in the countryside and what motivated them was having autonomy among themselves as peasant women. They provide economic, organizational and ideological empowerment and have supported one another through obtaining education as many of them are now studying and selling coffee domestically and internationally. Lastly, we went to Sontule, Miraflor where we met with New Dawn Women’s Cooperative and learned about from organized women living and farming organically in a protected area where there self-determination has allowed them to prosper. We were able to stay with the families for a night and learn about their household and their everyday routine in the farm. I was even able to learn how to make tortillas by scratch and watch cheese being freshly squeezed and made. This experience was very reflective and I learned so much about the history in Nicaragua and the United States’ role in the Contras War. I want to thank our host Anne McSweeney for giving us the chance to talk to these inspiring women organizations and my team for sharing this experience with me. It will be a driving force in my future goals and experiences with Fordham throughout.
On May 22nd 2016, I embarked on a journey where I traveled to Cali, Colombia—a new continent, country, and city where I was physically, mentally, and emotionally challenged. Before my departure, my mother and I were afraid of what Colombia had to offer and were skeptical about the violence, diseases, and poverty that the country was labeled has. The problem with the world is that too many people talk without experiencing hands-on, and with their eyes, what something truly is. With that in mind, Cali is one of the most beautiful cities that I have ever seen. When we arrived on the first night, we were automatically welcomed with love, friendliness, and Colombian coffee! Unfortunately, these virtues do not reflect some of the Colombian’s communities and living conditions. In some areas, there exists poverty and sadness. However, what makes them different from other people in the world is their continuous enthusiasm for life and their emphasis on hope for a better future. Their optimism and community building skills result in a country that focuses on helping each other. In all of the clinics and hospitals that we visited, all of the doctor’s main goals were to promote the importance of health on their patients while ensuring that they were comfortable and well informed about any of their conditions.

On May 26th 2016, the group went to the institute of the blind and deaf to observe the conditions of the children. Also, we learned what the employees and the doctors perform to help the children that are suffering. I believe that the children in the clinic, and all children in general, should never suffer. Although it is reality that there are times where suffering will occur in everyone, these children should receive the hope that in the end their suffering will end. Everyone, in the institute and in our own personal lives, have to show hope in these situations. I felt very bad and was very saddened when I saw these children—children who are unable to live their childhood the way they want too. With that reason, it brings me happiness when I see doctors, teachers, and other staff of this institution take their
time to mold the futures of these children. Also, the children influence us to spread the messages of the teachers and doctors—"If there is something that the children can hear or see, it is the hearts of the world." My message is that everyone needs to take the time to help the disadvantaged. The most important is that we need to offer many opportunities—of life, of education, and of expression. With these opportunities bring growth like a tree in the rain. We are the rain—we bring the necessary conditions for growth and the trees are the children— they are able to grow with the hope that they will be able to help others. Coming back to the U.S with this experience, I do hope to continue participating in the events, sponsored by the Project Sunshine committee, to visit children in different local hospitals and brightened their days one step at a time.

After my visit to Universidad Javierana, I feel as if the Fordham education, specifically the sciences, focus more on the performance of a student in terms of exams and quizzes and not on how they interact with others in both academic and personal settings. With this in mind, it is imperative to point out that many students who are pursuing a health related career need to acquire the skills necessary to be able to interact with diverse patients. If we are enrolled in an institution that values quantitative over qualitative skills, how then do they expect us to succeed in an hospital or in a clinic? Universidad Javierana offers their students that ability to visit local clinics and hospitals on specific days as part of their curriculum in order for them to graduate. Considering Fordham is located in the heart of the Bronx, there are many ways for students to travel to health facilities. With that in mind, Fordham should offer a community service requirement of about 120 hours that allows students the opportunity to not only explore the Bronx but also gain exposure in a hospital setting.

Visiting Universidad Javierana brought excitement to one day enter medical school and apply what they taught me in my journey. Moreover, interacting with the medical students provided me with the reassurance that this is the that I want to pursue. I believe that my first year of medical school will be a mere reflection of what the students in Cali, Colombia perform. The exposure of interacting with patients and doctors will be the missing piece to my puzzle since I will be coming from a university that focuses mainly on the academic portion of a student’s success.

Universidad Javierana offers the opportunity for students after high school to directly enter medical school. Although at first it appeared odd for students at such a young age to immediately enroll in medical school, where the average age of students enrolling in medical school in the United States is 25, the medical students were very intelligent and were able to answer any medical related questions. Their enthusiasm and drive to help others and to study was a sense of motivation to continue my pre-medical journey. There are times where it is hard and difficult to pursue such a high-demanding field since, as a minority, it is sometimes challenging to be on the same level as other racial groups. However, the voices of the medical students in my head to never give up and to always follow your dreams will forever be in my mind and in my heart as I continue my voyage on helping others and improving the healthcare system. Once I finally become a pathologist, my goal is to continue traveling the world and inform others about health. Moreover, I hope to continue influencing the lives of others by promoting the importance of service and helping others in need. I know that this journey is not the end but the beginning to be “empowered, in the Jesuit tradition, to both learn from and serve God’s people".
BOOK LAUNCH DR. CARL FISCHER
QUEERING THE CHILEAN WAY:
CULTURES OF EXCEPTIONALISM AND SEXUAL DISSIDENCE
(PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2016)

GUEST SPEAKERS

Ángeles Donoso-Macaya, BMCC
Licia Fiol-Matta, NYU
Macarena Gómez-Barris, Pratt Institute
Jeffrey Lawrence, Rutgers University
On February 15 at FCLC, a book launch was held for Carl Fischer’s new book *Queering the Chilean Way: Cultures of Exceptionalism and Sexual Dissidence, 1965–2015*, which was published in late 2016 by Palgrave MacMillan Press. LALSI, MLL and WGSS cosponsored the event. With over 40 people in attendance, four scholars of Chile and Latin America from different disciplines offered short talks that highlighted the book’s intervention and contribution. The invited guests were: Licia Fiol-Matta, who teaches at NYU’s Department of Spanish and Portuguese (and serves as coeditor of the “New Directions in Latin/o American Cultures Series,” where the book was published); Macarena Gómez-Barris, a sociologist focusing on Latin American culture and memory studies who teaches at the Pratt Institute; Ángeles Donoso-Macaya, who teaches Latin American literature, photography and visual arts at Borough of Manhattan Community College; and Jeff Lawrence, who teaches English and Comparative Literature at Rutgers University. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé acted as MC for the evening.

This book examines and critiques the fact that Chile’s claims to economic exceptionalism have been embodied, often quite aggressively, in a heterosexual, and primarily male, ideal. Despite the many shifts Chilean economics and politics have undergone over the past fifty years, the country’s view of itself as a “model” in contrast to other Latin American countries has remained constant. By deploying an artistic, literary, and cinematic archive of queer figures from this period, this book draws parallels among the exceptionalisms of Chile’s economic discourse, the subjects deemed most (and least) apt to embody it, and the maneuvers of its cultural production between local and global ideas of gender and politics to delineate its place in the world. Queering the Chilean Way thus sheds light on the sexual, economic, and aesthetic dimensions of exceptionalism—at its heart, a discourse of exclusion that often comprises a major element of nationalism—in Chile and throughout the Americas.
In December 2016, Michael Lee (Theology) was invited to the Jesuit Universitat Ramon Llull (Barcelona) to offer graduate seminars on liberation theology and Catholic Social Teaching and deliver the lecture, “La Denuncia de Monseñor Óscar Romero de la Injusticia Estructural en El Salvador” to the faculty. While in Barcelona, he also gave a lecture to the Catalan center for theological studies, Cristianisme i Justícia, entitled, “La Teología Latinx de los Estados Unidos.” He also delivered the lecture, “Hacia una teología política desde la perspectiva latino@,” at the Primer Encuentro Iberoamericano de Teología conference sponsored by Boston College on February 6-9. Professor Lee was one of 4 theologians based in the U.S. invited to speak at this Spanish-language conference of scholars from South, Central, and North America and the Caribbean.

Karey Casten delivered a conference paper in October at CLAC conference at Drake University entitled “Critical Service-Learning in the Spanish Language Classroom: Cultivating Agents of Social Change.” She also delivered a conference paper in March at NeMLA Conference in Baltimore: “Revising History: Screening the Civil War from the 1964 World’s Fair.” Casten was awarded NeMLA summer fellowship to conduct research in Spain in Summer 2017.
Professor Penry was on research leave in Spain during academic year 2016-2017, where she was co-editing a book on lay religious brotherhoods during the colonial era. The book will contain essays on Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and Paraguay. In December, Professor Penry traveled to Bolivia for a brief research trip in the National Archives, and to present a paper at an international symposium on reducciones, the resettlement policy for indigenous people. This is the second project on reducciones sponsored by the National Ethnology Museum of Osaka, Japan in which Professor Penry has participated. The results from the first project, Reducciones: La concentración forzada de las poblaciones indígenas en el Virreinato del Perú, were just published in Lima, Peru. Professor Penry traveled to Rome in March for brief preliminary research in the Jesuit archives for a new project she is beginning on indigenous literacy in the colonial Andes. Professor Penry received a Faculty Research Grant from Fordham University for this new project and plans to return to Rome for more extensive research. In April, she will travel to Madrid to present a co-authored paper on the 1521-22 Revolution of the Comuneros of Castile.

Cynthia Vich enjoyed a sabbatical leave to start her book project tentatively named: Cinematic Lima: Subject and Urban Space in Contemporary Peruvian Film. In this work, she analyzes a substantial number of Peruvian films produced since the year 2000, all of which explore the distinct urban subjectivities and spatial transformations of Lima as a result of massive migration, the end of the 20-year internal armed conflict, and the country’s embrace of neoliberal capitalism. In October, Prof. Vich attended a conference on the relationship between film and literature sponsored by the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. An extended article based on the paper she presented there (“De desadaptaciones y reiteradas violencias: la distancia entre el film Magallanes y la novela La pasajera”) will soon be published in a book dedicated to the topic of film adaptations. In late April, as part of her ongoing research, Prof. Vich will present another paper entitled “Ciudad rota, grietas humanas: fragmentación y discontinuidad en el cine de Eduardo Quispe Alarcón” at the 2017 Latin American Studies Association Conference in Lima, Peru.
Sara L. Lehman continued her role as Associate Director of LALS this year. In the fall, she taught the new course *Creative Writing in Spanish*, in which each student worked in semester long writing groups to create and peer edit one short story, one poem, one comic strip, and one biographical essay. In the spring, she taught one of the newly approved LALS introductory courses, *Latin American Themes*, as well as *Survey of Spanish American Literature and Culture*. This summer, she will offer the university’s first online Spanish course, *Approaches to Literature*. Sara presented some of her work on the Spanish Empire in the Pacific at the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference in Bruges, Belgium prior to the start of the academic year. The continuation of this work will be supported by a Faculty Fellowship next fall and she has also applied for an NEH grant. Finally, Sara is especially proud and pleased to announce that she has been promoted to the rank of Professor.

Yuko Miki (History/LALSI) won a Long-Term Fellowship from the New York Public Library Schomburg Center’s Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery, and the American Philosophical Society’s Franklin Research Grant for research in Brazil. The fellowship and grant will support Prof. Miki’s new project, *In Emancipation’s Shadow: Illegal Slavery in the Brazilian Atlantic*. Her book, *Frontiers of Citizenship: A Black and Indigenous History of Postcolonial Brazil*, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press (Afro-Latin America Series).

Clara E. Rodriguez presented at the International Sociological Society in Vienna, Austria on her forthcoming book, entitled *America: As Seen on TV* on July 14, 2016. She also presented a paper at the Eastern Sociological Society meetings on February 24, 2017 in Philadelphia on “Representations of “Difference” in US Popular Culture.” In addition, I have a chapter that is forthcoming (April 2017) entitled “Puerto Ricans: Building the Institutions for the Next Generation of Latin@s,” in *Latin@s in New York: Communities in Transition*, edited by Gabriel Haslip-Viera, Sherrie Baver, and Angelo Falcon, University of Notre Dame Press. I also made a few panel presentations at Fordham on my research, which included the Women, Gender and Sexualities Studies program and the Law School’s new Center for Race, Law and Justice.
Barbara Mundy’s book, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City*, won the Bryce Wood Book Award by the Latin American Studies Association, the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. It is presented every year to an outstanding book on Latin America in the social sciences and humanities published in English, judged on the quality of the research, analysis, and writing, and the significance of its contribution to Latin American studies. She will be at LASA’s international conference in Lima, Peru, at the end of April, to accept the award.

Erick Rengifo was promoted to full professor in the Dept. of Economics at Fordham. Prof. Rengifo is the founder of Spes Nova Inc, a nonprofit corporation whose main goals are to provide funding to microenterprises, assist in market creation, and provide insurance products for the working poor around the world. He is also the founder and director of the Center for International Policy Studies. Prof. Rengifo is an active scholar with interests in market development, microfinance, micro-insurance, market microstructure, behavioral finance, risk management, insurance, and econometrics. He is a private consultant in the fields of algorithmic trading, investments, risk management, microfinance and micro-insurance. Prof. Rengifo holds a PhD in economics with a concentration in finance and econometrics from Catholic University of Louvain-Belgium. His publications include “Aspectos Económicos de la Minería y la Legislación Minera en Chile, Colombia, Ecuador y Perú” (Thompson Reuters Peru, 2016), “Understanding Dollarization: Causes and Impact of Partial Dollarization on Developing and Emerging Markets” (Emre Ozsoz, De Gruyter, Germany. 2016). This year, he published a couple of book chapters: “Is Quality Investing Feasible in Frontier Markets based on Publicly Available Financial Information?” and “Impact of Remittances on Frontier Markets: Exchange Rate Stability,” in Frontier Markets, Academic Press, edited by Panagiotis Andrikopoulos and others. He also taught international finance for the IPED program at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Chile. He continues to mentor a significant number of PhD theses in his field of economics.
This last December Prof. Mark Street, Director of Visual Arts at FCLC and LALS faculty, and his wife and collaborator, the artist Lynn Sachs, were invited to screen their shorts at Havana’s famous International Festival of New Latin American film. They were part of a program of experimental cinema from the United States. Here are some of Prof. Street’s impressions of the festival:

Our own screening (shorts Lynne Sachs and I had made together) was in a program of micro cinema in the cafe Fresa y Chocolate (so named after the 1994 Cuban film). A very sweet space; questions were incisive and smart. To be expected in a country with such a sophisticated film culture—and one that has recognized the revolutionary aspects of formal innovations. The series was organized by San Francisco curator Dominic Angerame. This is the tenth year he’s brought North American experimental films to this festival. Overall I loved the populist appeal of the festival. Venues were teeming with people and ticket prices low so these grand old theaters (Charles Chaplin, La Rampa, 23 y 12, Riveral) were sites of participatory viewing. Having shown at North American festivals (Sundance, Tribeca) infested by commercial advertising and sponsors it was a relief to have a more direct relationship to the films at this festival. The only two ads I saw before movies were PSAs; one urging people to get tested for HIV the other about domestic violence.

Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé published a book chapter on a new anthology of critical essays on the Latin American modern master José Lezama Lima, Ase-dios a lo increado: Nuevas aproximaciones a José Lezama Lima, “Entre la épica y el consumo: Lezama y las revoluciones,” published by the well-known Spanish press Verbum. He gave talks at the Caribbean Studies Association and the Latin American Studies Association conferences and won a Faculty Fellowship to edit and introduce the complete short stories of the New York Puerto Rican author Manuel Ramos Otero for the first annotated edition of his short stories to be published by the renowned Latin American press Casa de las Américas in their series “Classic Authors of Latin America and the Caribbean.”

Dr. Cruz-Malave presenting at the Latin American Studies Association conference in Lima, Perú.
The 2016 presidential campaigns and the eventual election of Donald Trump brought Latin@ immigration and the overall Latin@ experience even more attention than they typically receive. As a scholar of Latin@ history, I was invited to participate in events that sought to provide information and perspective during these polarizing times. One week before the November election, I collaborated on a panel to announce to the press the production of Naomi Wallace’s play, The War Boys, a work that explores issues of race and masculinity amid immigration debates in the US-Mexico border. I had the pleasure to share the stage with the author of the play and with fellow Latin@s from journalistic and artistic milieus. Comments from panelists and audience members alike underscored the richness and importance of diversity in the past, present, and future of the United States. In mid-November, I joined experts in the histories of Europe, Gender in America, and Foreign Relations in a post-election round table organized by the History Department. We focused on how the election might affect freedom, women’s rights, immigration, and our relationship with other countries, among other topics. We also emphasized the importance and power of young people in shaping the future of the United States by becoming informed and engaged in the political process. Fordham graduate students assumed a proactive role in disseminating information immediately after the election. They have organized several Teach-In events under their larger Fordham SpeaksUp program. They invited me to speak on Latin@ immigration in February 2017. My interactive presentation, “Talking Points on ‘Illegal’ Immigration,” sought to provide facts that participants on immigration debates must understand and engage. These facts include, among others: (1) living in the U.S. without legal documents is not a crime under American law; (2) most Latin@s residing in the country are not only legal residents, but are in fact U.S.-born citizens; and (3) crime by Latin@ immigrants is actually lower than among the general population, and the rate is even lower among undocumented residents. In April 2017, the newly formed student chapter of The International Samaritan Organization invited me to begin planning on a future presentation of the documentary Harvest of Empire. The film connects the rise of the U.S. as an economic and military power to the incorporation and immigration of Latin@s within its borders and its sphere of influence. I look forward to that and other future collaborations with this altruistic student group. Overall, all of these extracurricular opportunities have allowed me to witness the genuine interest of young people in learning about Latin@s and in identifying and nurturing similarities among all groups.
Interested in knocking out a requirement for your Spanish major or minor this summer? Going to be away from New York City? Register for ONLINE Approaches to Spanish Literature SPAN 2550 w/ Dr. Sara Lehman, via the Summer Session office. Same readings, same practice, same preparation for upper-level classes, but you can do it at the beach (or while interning or while travelling...)!
Congratulations class of 2017!

Jennifer Acevedo - LALS Honors, FCLC
Daniela Colón
Marlena Gutiérrez - Bernardo Vega/Rigoberta Menchú Tum Award for Achievement in LALS, FCRH
Casey Grittner
Julio Lizarzábaru
David Nieto
Itzel Quijada
Alyssa Rose

Rossy Fernandez (FCLC ’18), the designer of this issue of El Boletín, began at Fordham University as a Computer Science major, but her love of the arts and computers converged and she turned to Graphic Design. Fernandez is currently pursuing a BA in New Media and Digital Design and a minor in Computer Science. She currently provides office support for the departments of History, African and African Studies, and the Latin American and Latin@ Studies Institute -where she has created and designed promotions for these program’s events. iamrossy.com
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