

Testimony to New York City Council Committee on Higher Education

Submitted by Dr. Brenda M. Greene

Medgar Evers College

March 8, 2011

Good Afternoon Council Members, colleagues from Medgar Evers College and CUNY, and community leaders and residents. I am Dr. Brenda Greene and I have been a professor of English at Medgar Evers College for the last 30 years. Currently, I am also Executive Director of the Center for Black Literature. I have spent my professional life as an educator, teaching students and engaging in the work of the College as Department Chair and Director and Coordinator of writing and literary programs that impact students at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, our high schools and the larger population.

Kevin Warren, in an essay recently written in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, suggested that African American Literature had come to an end. His rationale was that African-American literature was the literature of a distinct historical period, namely, the era of constitutionally sanctioned segregation known as Jim Crow. The problem with Warren's argument was that he defined African American literature in a very narrow way. This is tantamount to arguing that because the holocaust is over, the literature that has emerged as a result of this atrocity has come to an end. This argument presented a static view of literature and ignored the continual impact of history and memory on literary works. I cite Warren's flawed argument as an illustration of what has occurred at Medgar Evers College under the current leadership. The current leadership has a very narrow and static view of education. It has ignored the legacy and tradition upon which this College was founded and has been dismissive of those programs that enrich and supplement the success of students in the classroom, in their communities and in the world.

The mission of Medgar Evers College is grounded in the concept that we must provide a holistic education for our students. This mission is guided by the philosophy of many historically black colleges, those that were created to serve students who were under-represented and who did not have access to higher education and entrance into majority institutions. Historically black colleges speak to the value of empowering Black

students for success by creating and surrounding them with an educational and culturally rich, nurturing environment of faculty, staff and administrators. These colleges emphasize the importance of activism and service. Medgar Evers, a predominantly Black college, has a similar mission.

Medgar Evers College's Centers are essential to fulfilling the College's mission of improving students' understanding of self, past and present societies, preparing students for leadership roles in a changing world, developing non-degree educational and co-curricular social, economic, and cultural programs and interacting with community representatives. Our Centers, in addition to serving a broad population of community residents, actively engage students in learning and recognize that a broad range of experiences is necessary for student success.

The leadership under President Pollard and Provost Johnson lacks integrity with respect to the fulfillment of the College's mission. The current leadership has dismantled programs and shown a lack of respect for the work of our Centers. It has dismantled rather than expanded student support services, co-curricular programs and academic programs that supplement student instruction. It has only responded to critical issues cited by faculty, students and staff when the media, community and elected officials have called attention to these issues. And rather than conducting an informed assessment of the college, this administration has distorted data, demoralized faculty, violated shared governance and undermined the infrastructure necessary to ensure that our students receive a balanced education surrounded in an intellectually and culturally stimulating environment.

We are losing our institution because we remain embroiled in a battle to maintain the integrity of its mission. We need leadership who value and understand the integrity of our mission, who will build upon rather than dismiss the past and who respect our centers, shared governance, faculty and students. We call upon you to help us to change the leadership of Medgar Evers College.

A Resolution to the Situation at Medgar Evers College

Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Kevin Powell, Danny Simmons,

Cornel West & Others Respond

As writers and educators who have participated in literary programs at Medgar Evers College, we have viewed from afar its situation with deep concern. Medgar Evers College has long been known for its tradition and legacy of providing an educational and cultural haven for the preservation, study and celebration of the heritage, arts and traditions of Black people throughout our country and the world. Those who find it necessary to advocate on behalf of preserving this legacy and mission have the right to do so. The practice of active engagement in a cause based on one's principles is to be celebrated not denigrated. This practice of activism forms the bedrock of our institutions of higher education.

Professor Ragland's insinuation in the Amsterdam News that this struggle to maintain the mission and integrity of Medgar Evers College is all about Dr. Greene's teaching schedule is bizarre to say the least. Dr. Greene's work as the founder of the Center for Black Literature, as the Director of the National Black Writers Conference and as an educator who has demonstrated her professional commitment to Medgar Evers College and the community throughout her career is well documented. The critical issues of leadership which have been cited by the many involved in the struggle to preserve Medgar Evers College's mission are broad and demand attention

There must be a resolution to this situation. Medgar Wiley Evers died advocating for the civil rights of Black citizens throughout this country. The mission of a college named in honor of his legacy and founded on the principles of activism and engagement must be preserved. We commend the broad constituency of educators, students, clergy, elected officials and community citizens from across the city of New York for their courage, conviction, commitment, tenacity and willingness to advocate for a resolution to the events and actions which have negatively impacted on a College built on a foundation and tradition grounded in the struggle for social justice. This is democracy in action and should be respected.

Amiri Baraka, Writer/ Activist/ Prof. Emeritus, SUNY Stonybrook, N Y, Marita Golden, Writer Haki Madhubuti, Poet/ the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Professor at DePaul University and Founder & Publisher of Third World Press, Kevin Powell, Activist/ Writer, Ishmael Reed, Writer/ Prof. Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley , Quincy Troupe, Poet/ Writer, Editor, Black Renaissance Noir, Sonia Sanchez, Poet/Writer/Activist/ Professor Emeritus, Temple University, Danny Simmons, Artist/ Writer, Chairman RUSH Philanthropic Foundation, NYSCA Chairman, Crown Heights Resident, Cornel West, University Professor, Princeton University, John Edgar Wideman, Writer/ ASA Messer Professor, Africana Studies and Literary Arts, Brown University

Setting the Record Straight on What is Happening at Medgar Evers College

**Updates from Medgar Evers College
Coalition for Academic Excellence
and Mission Integrity**

Setting the Record Straight on What Is Happening at Medgar Evers College

The Medgar Evers College Coalition for Academic Excellence and Mission Integrity

In the latest in a series of efforts to obscure the facts and address the charges against the administration by the Medgar Evers College Coalition for Academic Excellence and Mission Integrity (Coalition), the administration has issued a glossy and costly newsletter designed to yet again, confuse and obscure the facts for students, faculty, elected officials, the community and the media. It clearly misrepresents the charges leveled at the administration and skirts the critical issues about which the Coalition is concerned. The administration cites progress in areas such as the library, new science building and pool, initiatives which were underway when they came to the institution. However, issues such as the mission of Medgar Evers, reduction in student and faculty support programs, a lack of shared governance, interference with faculty research and the lack of a current master plan are still outstanding. We certainly believe in academic excellence and ensuring that our students and their parents have an opportunity for a higher education. We do not believe in dismantling academic support services, disregarding shared governance and eroding the mission of a college based on the principles of the historically black college and founded as a result of collaborative efforts by the community, elected officials and clergy to provide a unique educational experience to the residents of central Brooklyn.

A senior student who wishes to remain anonymous because of fear of retaliation made the following statement re: the fact sheet.

Medgar Evers College has a lot of room and opportunity to grow but Medgar Evers College's resources cannot be cut in the process. Students see services being cut and are afraid to speak out because of fear of retaliation. We need transparency. Without this we have low morale among students. It is very disheartening when there is a disconnect between students and the administration. We need to build bridges. What will the legacy of this administration be? Can this administration bring Medgar Evers College to the next level?

THE FACTS

Mission of Medgar Evers College

The mission of Medgar Evers clearly focuses on the importance a quality liberal arts education, the importance of knowledge of self and culture, the importance of leadership and service and the importance of building bridges and making connections with the community. The actions, elimination of Centers, dismantling of student support services and a lack of recognition of the value of civic, social and cultural needs for students, are evidence of the fact that the College is not committed to the mission. In fact the current administration has made statements at public meetings about their desire to change the mission, to re-evaluate the open admissions policy and to set new priorities for which students come to Medgar Evers College.

Elimination of the Writing Center

There continues to be No Writing Center. The only place where students can go to obtain tutoring in writing is the Learning Center, a center that primarily serves as a drop-in service that provided tutoring for the entire college community. Medgar Evers College is the only college in CUNY without a dedicated writing center for its students and because it has always served as an open access college (the majority of our students who enroll need basic writing skills and extended

support for tutoring in writing as they move through their college years), it is a travesty that the College does not have a Center dedicated to this support and staffed with a core of faculty and tutors who had expertise in the writing pedagogy and research. The writing coordinator expanded the Center in the Spring 2009 semester and began to write grants to obtain additional support for the Center. In the Spring 2010 semester, the administration took away the space that was dedicated to a Writing Center and closed it, thus eliminating a dedicated writing center for students at Medgar Evers College. In response to the fact that the Writing Center was eliminated, after sustained pressure from faculty, students and community, the administration recently asked the English Department to develop a proposal for a Writing Center.

Elimination of the Center for Teaching and Learning

There has been no Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence (CLTE) since the Spring 2010 semester. The CLTE was developed to provide an institutional structure to: stimulate faculty commitment and discussion related to assessing, analyzing and revising curricula and pedagogy at the College, to promote effective student learning and to provide information on current research trends in postsecondary curricula and instructional methods. It has not functioned for the last year. A Center for Teaching and Learning is a necessary component for promoting student success and supporting faculty at the College.

Reduction in Tutorial Budget for the Learning Center

It is clear that the current tutoring budget for the Learning Center is not commensurate with the increase in the students serviced. As a result of the increase in student enrollment, the Learning Center had to provide additional tutors to accommodate the additional students in basic skills labs and thereby the overall tutoring budget has been cut. In fact, at the beginning of the Fall 2010 semester, the administration did not sign the paperwork necessary to hire tutors and the Learning Center was temporarily closed. Hundreds of students signed petitions forcing the administration to reopen the Learning Center.

Reduction in Staff for the Library

College assistants and library staff have been reduced, thereby decreasing the service offered to students. The administration has not done its due diligence to service students needing library service. Expansion of library services was part of Dr Jackson's master plan and had not pressure from external sources been in place the College may have lost that under the present administration.

Committee of the Whole of Faculty

As a result of the nullification of the Faculty Senate Elections held from October 5-7, 2010, the faculty at Medgar Evers College formed The Committee of the Whole of Faculty at a meeting on November 17, 2010. Over 60 faculty signed a petition to support a Committee of the Whole of Faculty. A Committee of the Whole (C of W) is based on the process frequently used by the U.S. House of Representatives that allows the whole membership of a legislative body sitting as a committee to consider the details of a bill. In this case, all members of the faculty employed at Medgar Evers College, as defined by the Bylaws of the University, are members of the faculty body.

On December 8, 2010, 89% of faculty present (63 total, 6 negative votes and one abstention) at a specially called meeting approved a Vote of No Confidence against the current administration and specifically in the Office of the President, Dr. William A. Pollard and in the Office of the Provost, Dr. Howard Johnson. This was significant since for the last two elections, 2009 and 2008, only 35 faculty voted in the Faculty Senate. And in the 2010 vote that was nullified, less than 27 people voted.

The Master Planning Process

Institutional planning is based on a master plan which focuses on overall capital improvement and on an academic strategic plan which guides the college in the development of degree programs, departments and curriculum. Both of these processes should be informed by an assessment of the College. There has been no assessment plan and despite requests from faculty to convene the College's Master Plan Committee, the current administration has not called a meeting. The administration has used this as a rationale for not supporting degree programs and for reducing support in areas such as computer labs and psychology labs.

Merger of the Nursing Department

Faculty in the Nursing Department have cited grave irregularities on the merger between the Department of Nursing AAS/PN and the Department of Nursing BSN. The proposal for the merger was submitted to CUNY without approval by faculty in the Department of AAS/PN. Nursing faculty had to go to 80th Street to obtain a copy of the proposed merger. The merger was approved by the CUNY Committee on Academic Policy Program and Research (a subcommittee of the CUNY Board of Trustees) despite a request by faculty for a stay of the vote so that the proposal could be returned to the campus for appropriate approval by faculty. The proposal is scheduled to be voted on at the February 28 CUNY Board Meeting. This represents another example of a violation of shared governance.

Removal of Chairpersons

Dr. Donna Wright served as Chair of the Education Department from July 2007 to May 2010. She was duly elected for another three year term in May 2010 as Chair by the majority of the faculty in her department. In August 2010, the President removed Dr. Wright as Chair and appointed Dr. Nancy Lester. Faculty were told that there was a need for a Chair who could lead the department as they prepared for their NCATE review. However, the Administration currently has plans to hire an NCATE Coordinator. This decision by the administration raises questions re. the removal of a duly elected chair. It reveals a lack of respect for shared governance and disrespect for the right of faculty to elect their own chairperson per the CUNY Bylaws.

Interference with Faculty and Student Research

The Office of Academic Affairs has neither the professional background nor skills to provide the leadership or oversight for faculty research or to have the responsibility to review such projects. For example, the Provost refused to authorize the submission of a grant proposal to the National Institutes of Health for a project to support undergraduate student research and student stipends at MEC, delayed for several months the signing off on a STEP grant, thus causing the grant to be submitted very late and refused the authorization of at least two grants multimillion dollar grants that involved the Center for NuLeadership expertise in re-entry programs. Faculty are responsible for research, scholarship and program development. Center directors develop programs which impact on students and on the community residents in Central Brooklyn. The administration should not interfere with the faculty member's responsibility to engage in research and to develop programs nor with the Center Director's responsibility to provide programs that advocate for and provide social, cultural and public policy services and activities to students and to the residents of the Central Brooklyn Community and beyond.

Testimony of
Hon. Major R. Owens
U.S. House of Representatives, 11th District (Retired)
before the
Committee on Higher Education, City Council of New York

March 8, 2011

Members of the Council and fellow participants in this hearing, I am here today to make one point perfectly clear to the decisionmakers within the City University of New York and beyond regarding the mission and heritage of Medgar Evers College, located within my former district, and an institution I am partially responsible for creating. That point is the following:

Undergraduate "academic centers" promote creative and impactful teaching and learning, and this is a key component of the Medgar Evers experience.

Academic centers can greatly extend and expand the impact of traditional undergraduate college teaching and they have done so at Medgar Evers College. Faculty participation in Academic Centers should not be viewed by administrators as an escape from teaching responsibilities. On the contrary, such involvement must be praised as innovative teaching and going beyond the call of duty. At Medgar Evers College, this model is implemented effectively and efficiently without any special bloated budgets.

I will be the first to say that an Academic Center that is merely a playpen for high-level scholars deserves support and recognition but does not belong in cash strapped public institutions. To be relevant to the all-important mission of undergraduate education, an Academic Center must not be an adjunct or auxiliary activity. It must not operate as a public relations ornament or a luxury favoring a selected few. Allow me to be more specific.

At minimal to no cost, the Medgar Evers Center for Black Literature hauls in writers and thinkers who have a value far beyond even the best-written textbooks. The power of role models has been repeatedly validated by education research and effective education requires inspiration and motivation. The Center for Black Literature understands this.

Securing a weekend of sessions and lectures with Toni Morrison, the only Black female Nobel Prize winner for Literature, was the acquisition of an invaluable teaching resource. The opportunity to see, touch and hear Toni Morrison resulted in immeasurable amounts of inspiration and motivation.

Within the context of the great New York City mosaic, which CUNY is pledged to serve, Academic Centers are positioned to perform a dual function by providing targeted role modeling. All college students should study poetry, novels and plays. Success in reaping the greatest intellectual benefits from such studies is more likely when the material is matched with

the appropriate ethnic or cultural group. Both research and democratic politics have confirmed the power of ethnic appeal as one of the major factors in human response.

Thus the textbooks that emphasize universal values, theories and philosophies need to be supplemented. Creative linkages with concrete and everyday experiences should be made when possible. The rule of law in America begins with our Constitution; however, the Medgar Evers Center for Law and Social Justice offers a more effective learning experience by focusing extra attention on the Bill of Rights and its relationship to New York's "stop and frisk" laws – laws whose implementation is not foreign to some of Medgar Evers' students but laws which have been recently condemned as unproductive.

Beyond the recently popularized reading of the Constitution, this Center keeps hope alive among students that relief from oppression, discrimination and harassment is still most likely to be achieved in the courts. In Black ethnic studies, the Center magnifies the importance of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments – essential concepts and lessons for all Black college students expected to serve as leaders.

At Medgar Evers College, the controversial Center for Nu-Leadership offers an opportunity for the brainpower of the College to be utilized in the effort to resolve a problem that continues to balloon toward an uncontrollable crisis. Reducing the amount of incarceration and assisting offenders returning from prison would greatly benefit the Central Brooklyn community and New York City. There is a need for intense and large-scale social engineering. Statistics clearly show that the State's largest concentration of persons in the criminal justice system is located in the neighborhoods surrounding Medgar Evers College. National statistics clearly show that this incarceration growth is definitely a Black ethnic-related problem. *Every* public college in New York should be mandated to serve a transformative role for its local community. Confronting this pinpointed problem at Medgar Evers College should serve as a flagship challenge and be embraced, not dismissed.

Other examples of the enhancing power of Academic Centers and their roles in constructively addressing ethnicity could be cited but time is limited and thus I will close with a general plea and warning.

The attack on undergraduate Academic Centers should cease immediately. A factory time-clock approach to the work of professionals was long ago discredited. The failure to understand the extraordinary enhancing value of undergraduate Centers is a symptom of a larger, more dangerous flaw in CUNY policy. The mandate to educate the children of working class families requires the abandonment of ancient Ivory Tower approaches.

CUNY must encourage *creative* approaches that achieve results for students disabled by an inept public school system. Faculty snobs that serve nine to five schedules and have contempt for "slow" students should be weeded out. Advocates for Academic Centers at Medgar Evers College are being labeled "villains." Nothing is further from the truth. Advocates for Academic Centers that enrich and enhance education are the academic heroes.

Testimony on status of Ethnic Studies Centers in CUNY

March 8, 2011

Distinguished councilmen, colleagues, and friends. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in this most important hearing that, I hope, will just be one step in the process of focusing on the roles of ethnic studies institutes and centers in CUNY.

To briefly introduce myself and where I enter this discussion, I'm a the son of a City College alum, graduate of City College, currently a doctoral candidate in English at the CUNY Graduate Center and I've taught at several CUNY campuses. My mother could not enter the CUNY system because she faced discrimination of being a working class, Black, immigrant woman. My father graduated from City at a time when he was one of a handful of Black and Puerto Rican students on campus. That is the legacy I represent and some of my words are for ancestors who cannot speak.

As time is short, I'll briefly make 2 key points. The first is what the African Diaspora Research institute at the CUNY Graduate Center (known by the acronym IRADAC) means to my ability to do research; the second is frame the importance of these institutes in terms of what they mean to the central mission of CUNY.

My research focuses on an area of literature, culture, and activism known as the Black Arts Movement and runs from the late 1960s to mid 1970s. My doctoral dissertation is on a Harlem-based artist collective. This is an area of scholarship that until recently couldn't be done in universities—including this one—because it was not seen as “real” scholarship.

IRADAC provides the type of intellectual home necessary to do this work. It does so by providing a community inside the university where students and faculty interested in serious scholarship of the culture and lives of people of African descent can collaborate, share the best ideas, and find the resources that they need.

One example is a conference held last January in collaboration with the Schomburg center on the past, present, and future of Black Studies that drew over 400 people and included community members, current students, faculty members, and scholars from across the country, including some of the founders of the discipline of Black Studies. Events like this are crucial for developing the knowledge of students who want to do serious research and also important in the education of the general public who may not have access to universities. Without IRADAC and centers like it, conferences like this would be much more difficult to stage.

I would now like to turn your attention to the second area I promised to address, which is the centrality of centers such as IRADAC to the mission of the university.

At a May 9, 1969 meeting, the CUNY trustees (then the New York City Board of Higher Education) agreed to several items to resolve the student strike that spring that largely integrated a university that had been essentially segregated until then.

For context, I point to a 1967 CUNY survey that revealed that 87.3 % of matriculated CCNY students were white; 4.9 % Puerto Rican, and 4.2 % African American; “Others”

5.8. CCNY had the highest percentage of Black and Puerto Rican students among the 4-year undergraduate and degree-granting institutions (Opie 82).

It's worth quoting the Board's statement itself and I will do so here. "[W]hen considering the great body of knowledge and the critical importance of these studies [meaning Black and Puerto Rican] to the urban problems which the City University considers its prime commitment, it is our considered judgment that further efforts should be made and made promptly."

"We therefore state that it shall be the policy of the City University and its constituent colleges to encourage the development of programs of Black and Puerto Rican [S]tudies within the university and to give the funding of these programs special priority. We further state that in view of our commitment both to the urban setting and to educational excellence the University *should establish as a goal the attainment of national preeminence and leadership in these fields.*" [Emphasis mine.](2)

I also know, however, that in hard economic times and when weighing the practicality of what can be done with very limited resources, moral imperatives are often not enough.

CUNY is, however, a municipal public university and has the unique situation of having one of the largest concentrations of people from the African, Puerto Rican, and Dominican diasporas on the earth. It is also a uniquely comprehensive system among its peer municipal institutions, with its own undergraduate through postgraduate schools. The combination of a large indigenous base of students of color and the facilities to educate them is a precious resource.

When looking at areas of excellence that can distinguish the university, the areas of ethnic studies need to be taken seriously, as they are areas where others are ill-equipped to compete. I believe that this can be done relatively inexpensively, but can have a exponentially large impact on the national—and possibly even international—stage and the functioning of centers focused on these areas are of prime importance in this effort.

In what the UN has declared as the year of people of African descent, this study by the City Council's Higher Ed Commission could not come at a better time. I thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Henry Williams
hewilliams@ccny.cuny.edu

**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Higher
Education**

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

My name is T. Rasul Murray. I am a community and cultural activist in Brooklyn.

Fredrick Douglass reminds us that power concedes nothing without a demand.

In the beginning there was race based chattel slavery.

The passage from that time to this has been forged by the sacrifice and demands of the African descendant community. Concomitant with the struggle to end slavery and segregation, and its remnants, have been the efforts to assure educational opportunity for Africa's children in America.

One consequence was the development of the historically Black colleges and universities. Those institutions assured the successes of the movement to end segregation.

As opportunities were achieved to create a place for students of African descent in the previously segregated, or near segregated, institutions of higher education, African descendant scholars and students demanded and won Black Studies programs; programs designed to bring to historically white institutions a perspective that encompassed an Afrocentric view, transcending the bounds of the traditionally Eurocentric academy. These scholars reflected a perspective traditionally excluded from, or marginalized by, the academy.

Black studies programs emphasized the importance of the history, culture and values those students brought to their institutions. They provided students with a supportive environment as they navigated their academic life and the sometimes hostile, or uncaring, environment they found. These programs were hard won by the demands placed on power.

It was these Black studies programs that gave rise to the concept of Ethnic Studies that, until recent times, enriched our academic communities.

The needs of Brooklyn's African descendant students moved the community to demand an institution that could fulfill the needs met, until then, only by the historically Black colleges and universities.

This was ethnic studies writ large, a Black college in Brooklyn, designed to serve the unique needs of a student body of color.

Black Studies did not emerge from the benign good will of the academy. It was the consequence of demands that the African descendant worldview be reflected in the academy.

It began with Black studies. And Medgar Evers College, named for a hero of that history of Black resistance, grew out of the demands of the African descendant community for an institution that was responsive to its particular needs and priorities.

Some would argue that the election of a president of African descent, somehow introduced a "post racial society", eliminating the need for Black or ethnic studies, much less an institution that addressed the particular needs of students of color.

There are few persons of African descent whose life experience would suggest that the needs that gave rise to Black studies and Black colleges have been left behind in our national progress.

In spite of this, today, as we see the elimination of Black studies programs at college after college in the City University system, we are witnessing a systematic effort to dismantle Medgar Evers College.

Today, demands must, again, be made to power to reverse the assault on college programs, the reduction of services to students, the systematic disregard and disrespect for the Medgar Evers' faculty and students. The progress of the past half-century cannot be eroded.

As a consequence, we demand the removal of the President and Provost who have instituted that systematic dismantling of the mission of the college.

We demand an administration committed to creating academic excellence and dedicated to providing students of color with an education that meets their educational and cultural needs, while serving the needs of the broader Brooklyn community.

Respectfully submitted,

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Statement before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education

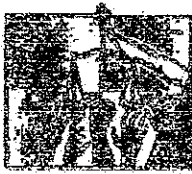
Presented by: Ricardo Gabriel
Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College
Howard Samuels Center, City University of New York, Graduate Center

Date: 3/8/2011

Re: Examining the Academic Impact of CUNY's Institutes and Centers on Ethnic Studies

Good afternoon and thank you for this important opportunity to speak about the impact of Ethnic Studies at CUNY. My name is Ricardo Gabriel and I speak to you today as a proud alumnus of Hunter College's Africana and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies Department. I am also a current research assistant at Hunter's Center for Puerto Rican Studies and a PhD student in sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. This is an issue I care deeply about because it was the ethnic studies department and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College that sparked my passion for higher education. I transferred to Hunter after two years at a private university because I was so excited that there were these programs and institutions that actually spoke to and validated my -and my family's- history and experiences as working-class Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the U.S. The Center for Puerto Rican Studies quickly became my "intellectual home" as I used its resources for numerous academic projects, as well as for personal interest, and developed supportive relationships with librarians, researchers, and affiliated faculty. It gave me a point of reference and allowed me to develop a better understanding of the world. That grounding helped me develop the confidence to know that I did belong in academia and helped me excel in all of my classes.

As someone who now does research on access to higher education, I can tell you that it is exactly these kinds of experiences that make ethnic studies centers so invaluable. In order to retain underrepresented students at CUNY, or anywhere else in the country, it is extremely important to have culturally relevant coursework, faculty and advisors that relate to the students, and institutions like Centro, like the Dominican Studies Institute, like the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora that give students a sense of belonging. These centers also produce high quality academic work that become valuable resources for students, policymakers, educators, and New Yorkers of all backgrounds. In closing, let me say that if public higher education in New York City is to remain true to its historic and noble mission of inclusion and access for all, these centers of diversity must be enthusiastically protected and supported. Thank you very much.



Center for Law and Social Justice

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TESTIMONY OF

THE CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

OF MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE, CUNY

BEFORE THE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2011

CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
Medgar Evers College, CUNY

Esmeralda Simmons, Esq.
Executive Director
Temporary telephone (347)

Good Afternoon, Members of the City Council. My name is Esmeralda Simmons and I serve as Executive Director of the Center for Law and Social Justice, a unit of Medgar Evers College of The City University of New York. The Center for Law and Social Justice is a community-based legal advocacy and research institution that focuses on racial justice, and other civil and human rights issues facing the residents of New York City. The Center for Law and Social Justice has advocated for many New York City racial justice issues litigated numerous cases, including major voting rights cases, to protect the rights of New Yorkers. I am the founding Director of the Center and I resigned from my position as the First Deputy Commissioner for the NYS Division of Human Rights under Gov. *Mario* Cuomo to create this center from the ground up. The Center for Law and Social Justice is the only local institution in the city that focuses on fighting racial justice by legal advocacy and targeted research.

Thank you for holding this hearing on the status of centers and “ethnic” studies at the City University of New York. There is a connection between the two and with the creation and mission of Medgar Evers College. Africana, Latino, and Asian Studies Departments, and the staff of CUNY centers that focus on “ethnic”

studies and racial justice have a beneficial symbiotic relationship. Many CUNY centers that focus on issues or research on Latino, Black, or Asian racial and cultural groups in New York City were outgrowths of the ethnic studies programs that preceded them or vice versa (e.g., Hunter's *El Centro*). I, for one, am an excellent example. I am one of the first graduates of Hunter College with a major in Black and Puerto Rican Studies. As I student activist during the major student strikes of the late 60s and early 70s, I fought for open admissions so every New Yorker with a high school diploma would have access to a college degree, and I arduously struggled for the establishment of an academic department at Hunter College that would address the study of African people, our history, and our rich cultures both on the continent and in the diaspora, as well as the history and culture of the people of Puerto Rico. My teachers and mentors were Dr. John Henrick Clarke and Dr. Tilden LeMelle, Dr Frank Bonilla and a famous instructor from the Dance department named Pearl Primus.

Because of their guidance, I choose civil rights legal advocacy as a career. Because of my undergraduate studies, I was prepared to tackle racism in New York City society: in the public school system, the election system, policing practices, employment practices,

immigration system, and government contracting. Because of the Black and Puerto Rican Studies Department of Hunter College, a well prepared racial justice leader was created. One who could step into the leadership of a Center for Law and Social Justice.

The racial majority population of New York City need strong well funded Africana, Latino and Asian Studies Departments at CUNY. Although people of color constitute the majority of the population of New York City, we are still called “minorities,” and our academic studies are called “ethnic studies.” Every cultural group has ethnicity, yet the study of Europe, and its peoples and cultures are still primary and the norm in both the public school and CUNY. That cultural hegemony continues, for example, even today, European art is considered “high art,” while African, African American, Caribbean, and Asian arts are often categorized as “folk art” or “primitive.”

Strong, Latino, Asian and Africana Studies departments beget the strong, well-grounded, committed, knowledgeable and ethical civic leaders that our communities need to continue to develop. The demolition of Black Studies department already occurred at City College. The further diminishing such departments into “programs,”

or the cutting of new degree or course offerings based on rationales of budget deficits or structural reorganization cannot be justified. This is especially true when the multitude of Euro studies departments and courses remains unscathed, and so many are actually supported as “required” courses. At this time of budget restraint, if academic cuts need to occur, let the ax swing fairly and without “ethnic” discrimination.

Like many of the Black and Latino Studies departments at CUNY, Medgar Evers College was born (at the same time, in 1969) as the result of direct community advocacy. Bedford Stuyvesant community leaders advocated for CUNY to create a senior college in the heavily Black-populated area of Brooklyn to serve the overwhelmingly Black Central Brooklyn communities of Bedford Stuyvesant, Ocean Hill, Brownsville, Crown Heights and Flatbush “to meet the educational and social needs of the Central Brooklyn Community.”

For over five decades, Central Brooklyn has constituted the geographic area with the highest population of Black people in North America. It is the third highest black area on the planet, behind only

Lagos, Nigeria, and Bahia, Brazil. Thus, it was fitting that this community merited a higher education institution that would also serve as a site for community services and culture. The community leaders from Bedford Stuyvesant, who were the founders of Medgar Evers included: Al Vann of the African American Teachers Association (now Council Member), Jitu Weusi of the EAST, Charles Pinn of Brooklyn CORE, Hon. Lucille Rose Democratic District Leader, Chief Charles H. Joshua of the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council, and John Enoch of the Bedford YMCA who served as the head of the first MEC Community Council and the chair of the presidential search committee for the first president of Medgar Evers College. As the College's history reads, *"The sense of commitment and service to the community, which pervades throughout the College, may be attributed directly to the multi-faceted roles, which the Community Council and the community as-a-whole, have played in the establishment, growth and development of the institution."*

Thus, the establishment of MEC is directly aligned with the establishment of the several early Black or Africana Studies Departments at CUNY – to create an academic institution to service the needs of the New York City's Central Brooklyn Black population

for higher education that is attuned to their culture and heritage and for an institution to address the needs of Central Brooklyn's population.

The **Centers at Medgar Evers College** have been specifically sited at this specific college to address those needs, be they: cultural and academic, such as the **Center for Black Literature**; criminal justice and re-entry expertise like the **Center for NU Leadership for Urban Solutions**; research and writings on the Caribbean and its diaspora by the **Caribbean Research Center**; the **DuBois Bunche Center**'s focus on public policy issues current in the New York State of City legislatures; or legal advocacy and research provided, by the **Center for Law and Social Justice**, on a broad range of racial justice issues affecting people of African descent and other marginalized New Yorkers.

These centers provided the core of the service to the community that the mission of Medgar Evers College mandates; however, these centers are currently not secure at the College. Rather, two of the centers are already slated for extinction at the college:

- The **Center for NU Leadership for Urban Solutions** is being forced out by the College, after the president and the provost: 1) refused to forward its petition for recognition by CUNY; 2) turned away its major grant for a college alternative to jail program; and 3) served an eviction notice in December 2010;
- The **DuBois Bunche Center for Public Policy** had one paid staff member who MEC administration did not rehire last year. The college provost had its volunteer Director, former Assemblyman, now Professor *Roger L. Green*, served with a pink slip effective July 1, 2011. (Prof. Green is now fighting that termination as unlawful.)

Upon arrival at the College in the summer of 2009, the president and the provost publicly voiced its intention to eliminate centers. The centers have collectively requested a clear statement of support from the new administration at Medgar Evers College several times. At minimum, they want a policy statement on future procedures within the college for centers. None have been forthcoming. Instead, centers, that were doing good work in our communities, have been attacked, without cause.

Like the Asian, Latino, and Black Studies Departments, that are essential academic units of other CUNY colleges so they can meet their need for higher education that is relevant to their population of students, the centers at Medgar Evers College provide essential community services that are mandated by the College's very mission.

The Medgar Evers Centers need to be supported, not dismantled.

The Center for Law and Social Justice urges the City Council to move forward and protect the vital role that Centers and the various Latino, Asian, and Black Studies Departments serve within CUNY. CUNY's higher education role is to service New Yorkers. That sacred mission continues: CUNY must service the New Yorkers of the 21st century. Support Black, Latino, and Asian Studies Departments as a core aspect of today's CUNY. Support the Medgar Evers Centers are the providers of the community services that Medgar Evers College was created to provide. Keep in the College in the village, no ivory towers!

The City University of New York



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**Testimony of
Associate University Provost Julia Wrigley and
University Executive Director of Academic Financial Affairs and Planning
Anthony Rini
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee
“Examining the Academic Impact of CUNY’s Institutes and Centers on
Ethnic Studies”
March 8, 2011**

AUP Wrigley: Good afternoon, Chairperson Rodriguez, and members of the Higher Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about centers and institutes at The City University of New York (CUNY), and for the specific invitation to address the academic impact of CUNY's centers and institutes on ethnic studies.

After my testimony, and that of University Executive Director of Academic Financial Affairs and Planning Anthony Rini, you will hear from three directors who will be able to speak directly to your chief concern: Dr. Ramona Hernández, Director of CUNY's Dominican Studies Institute; Dr. Edwin Meléndez, Director of CUNY's Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO); and Dr. Anthony Julian Tamburri, Dean of CUNY's John D. Calandra Institute for Italian American Studies.

First, however, I would like to provide some background about the role of centers and institutes at CUNY. Executive Director Rini will then explain how our centers and institutes are organized, structured, and maintained.

At CUNY, as in most institutions of higher education, the traditional locus for instruction and research is the academic department. Adult and continuing education programs deliver additional instruction. At the same time, the University benefits greatly from the activities of centers and institutes, which play an important role in the University's endeavors. Centers and institutes are essential vehicles for interdisciplinary research and thematic research that unites sub-disciplines within an academic discipline. They may offer non-credit instruction more narrowly focused or of shorter duration than the customary curriculum. They may further provide non-instructional services to the outside

community based in their areas of academic expertise. In other words, they supplement and complement departmental activities. They do not offer regular courses, confer degrees, appoint faculty members, or confer tenure.

It may also be helpful to understand that at CUNY, a center is an organized unit of a single CUNY college whose mission is to sponsor, coordinate, and promote research, training, instruction, or service. For its part, an institute is an organized unit staffed, supported, and governed by several colleges of the University, under the leadership of a primary campus. There are currently more than 100 centers and institutes at CUNY.

Executive Director Rini will now address the administrative structure and policies of our centers and institutes.

ED Rini: Good afternoon, Chairperson Rodriguez, and members of the Higher Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

Although new centers and institutes at CUNY must be approved by the local-governance structure of the campus or campuses where they are housed, all centers and institutes are governed by the policies of the University's Board of Trustees. Campus-level examination includes a review of the academic merit of the center or institute, whether the entity satisfies an unmet need on the campus or in the community, start-up costs, and the feasibility of leveraging external private and public support.

Upon receiving campus approval, all requests for new centers and institute are reviewed in the CUNY Central Office of Academic Affairs. This review includes an examination of the academic merit of the entity, potential duplication of similar entities within CUNY as

well as a fiscal plan indicating the need for matching funds and a timetable for attaining all funding goals. Upon receiving this approval, new centers and institutes are added to the CUNY Board of Trustees agenda for ratification.

Every five years, as stipulated in CUNY Board of Trustees policies, the Office of Academic Affairs requires that the campuses review all centers and institutes and presents an inventory to the Board for approval. This process allows for an additional academic and financial review of center and institute activities and allows CUNY to close dormant groups.

The governing documents clearly stipulate that these units are “expected to operate with substantial external support to advance the mission of the University beyond what is possible to accomplish through the basic institutional budget”. Historically, tax-levy support from the University has been provided from organized research funds, which in recent times, has proved to be limited if not nonexistent.

As Associate Provost Wrigley explained, centers are based on a single campus. As such, they normally receive start-up funding from their home campus, which may include office space, communications infrastructure, and a percentage of faculty and/or staff salaries to support the center’s activities.

Institutes, with their multi-campus orientation, may receive University support stemming from State and City allocations. In these cases, support is normally limited in duration and extent.

CUNY's centers and institutes have proved very successful in generating substantial funding from federal, state, and city agencies, as well as from private foundations and donors. This funding has been essential to supplementing and complementing CUNY's academic mission and attracting new faculty and students to the University.

CUNY's Dominican Studies Institute provides one example of a CUNY institute with a significant academic impact in the area of ethnic studies. Its director, Dr. Ramona Hernández, will explain.



JOHN D. CALANDRA ITALIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

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The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute was founded in 1979 as a direct response to several key factors that came to the fore as a large number of Italian Americans were entering college during the 1960s and '70s. What they found was that the system was not prepared to meet their academic needs, learning styles, and psycho-educational issues. Through a study in the late 1970s by then New York State Senator John D. Calandra, it was also determined that there was indeed some form of bias against and misunderstanding of Italian Americans, and that the needs and concerns of Italian-American students and, in some cases, faculty were largely unmet.

First founded as the Italian American Institute to Foster Higher Education, the Calandra Institute is a university-wide research institute under the aegis of Queens College; it is funded primarily by the State (90%), with the rest coming from Queens College (10%). CUNY, in turn, offers space and basic utilities on 43rd Street in Manhattan. Any extra monies received have come from outside sources; i.e., non-profit foundations, individuals, and other governmental agencies or agents. For example, partial funding for our Oral History Archive of Italian-American Elected State Officials came from various members of the NY State Assembly and Senate, as well as from a local non-profit dedicated to the promotion of Italian language, culture, and history in the United States.

The overall goal of the Institute is to foster higher education among and by Italian Americans. This mission is carried out through various means that include: Counseling Services; Research; Academic and Cultural Programs; CUNY-Italy Exchange Program; *ITALICS*: The Italian American Video Magazine; Library; Speakers Bureau; and our collaboration with the portal *i-Italy.org*.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Currently we have five full time counselors placed at varied campuses within CUNY. Data reported from counseling personnel reveal that the number of Italian and Italian American students that have been provided counseling is estimated as approximately 8,000 per year. Each counselor develops individual strategies specific to their institution and placement, and student contacts are generally accomplished by:

- a) Individual Counseling Sessions;
- b) Career and Academic Development Sessions;
- c) Serving as Club Advisors on various campuses;
- d) Conducting Out-Reach on CUNY campuses and in High Schools.

Overall results thus far:

- a) Since the Institute's inception in 1979, tens of thousands of NYC high school, community college, senior college, and graduate students have been served by the Calandra Institute's campus and outreach counseling programs;
- b) Several thousand middle school students, parents, individuals wishing to enter CUNY, and survivors of the 9/11 attacks have also been served by the Calandra counselors.

Impact on student population:

As a result of the Institute's mental health and career counseling programs, students have gained:

- a) entrance into the colleges and programs of CUNY;
- b) support for academic integration, retention, and articulation;
- c) world-of-work counseling and selection of graduate school specialization;
- d) respect for diversity;
- e) leadership development;
- f) heightened ethnic identity awareness;
- g) examine acculturation issues, generational differences between student and family, and gender roles vis-à-vis to male stereotypes and non-traditional work roles for women;
- h) access to role models at CUNY, as many counseling departments do not have Italian American personnel on staff.

The work of the Calandra counselors is vital to the mental health and well being of all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, as they do not limit their student population only to Italian Americans.

RESEARCH

There are two basic categories of research conducted within and sponsored by the Institute.

- a) One is in the area of socio-demographic research, which also includes studies of a sociological, psychological, and political science nature. Past studies on dropout rates of Italian-American students led to a community organized effort to increase graduation rates;
- b) The other is aesthetic, social science, and cultural studies research that often examines how Italian-American culture is articulated through an array of expressive modes such as the more traditional forms of literature, music, cinema, and theater to, in turn, those more performative modes of expression such as religious festivals, socio-cultural rituals, alternative youth culture, and other aesthetic practices that may be alternative to the more traditional forms already mentioned (e.g., non-traditional music of Frank Zappa to hip hop, or new modes of literary expression such as the graphic novel);
- c) Institute publications, which include: the social science journal, *Italian American Review* and three book series: Studies in Italian Americana, Transactions, Historic Monographs.

ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS

Regularly scheduled programming consists of twenty-four events divided among the three series: Seminar Series, Writers Read, and Documentary Films. The Institute also holds an annual conference with a different theme for each year. Thus far we have hosted: "Italians in the Americas" (2008); "Land of Our Return: Diasporic Encounters with Italy" (2009); "Terre Promesse: Excursions Toward Italian Topographies" (2010); and "The 3 Fs in Italian Cultures: Critical Approaches to Food, Fashion, and Film" (2011). Also organized by the Institute are a variety of special events that range from book presentations to lectures commemorating special events, to film festivals of Italian and Italian-American cinema.

The Institute has also organized and held a number of exhibitions (e.g., "Sacred Emblems, Community Signs: Historic Flags and Religious Banners from Italian Williamsburg, Brooklyn" [2003], "Evviva la Madonna Nera! Italian American Devotion to the Black Madonna" [2003]) and film festivals (e.g., "New Italian-American Cinema" [2008], "New Puglia Cinema" [2009]).

We have an attendance that averages out to fifty people at each of our lectures and symposia. Our annual conference, in turn, draws approximately 100 people. A few special events have drawn more than 100 people these past two years. Many of our events are also filmed and then web-cast; some are webcast live. We also collaborate with a number of organizations: the Italian Heritage and Cultural Committee of New York; the Italian Consulate General; the Italian Cultural Institute; the American Association of Teachers of Italian; the American Italian Historical Associations; the Centro Primo Levi; the Casa Italiana of NYU; and others.

The Institute also has a history of teaching Italian language courses as well as those on the history and culture of Italian Americans. These courses are part of the Queens College Italian curriculum as well as the Italian-American Studies program, which was founded in 1937. Our current Distinguished Professor of Italian American Studies is Fred Gardaphé, who is in Italy this semester as a Fulbright Scholar/Teacher, divides his time between Queens College and the Institute, and chairs the Italian-American Studies program.

CUNY-ITALY EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The CUNY/ITALY program is a student exchange between The City University of New York/CUNY and selected Italian universities. The program is designed for highly motivated undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in CUNY who are interested in pursuing course work and/or research in the areas of international business, economics, law, and political science. Students may also take courses in areas of anthropology, archeology, engineering, history, literature, and sociology. Students accepted to the exchange program register at their home campus for twelve permit credits per semester. We also have an exchange program for faculty and research with the University of Perugia for Foreigners, which began this year.

ITALICS: THE ITALIAN AMERICAN TV MAGAZINE & OTHER MEDIA

Italics produces and distributes a television program, informational in nature, geared both to the Italian-American as well as to the community at large. Since its pilot program in 1986, over the years *Italics* has become the *de facto* cable television presence for Italian Americans nation-wide. In 1991, *Italics* was designated an "Official Quincentenary Project" by the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission in Washington DC. In the past two years *Italics* has added three webcast programs to its monthly TV program. In addition to regular programming, *Italics* has also produced four one-hour specials since 2006. Some special guests over the years have included filmmakers, actors, singers, writers, playwrights, and the like.

The Institute and *Italics* also collaborate with the portal *i-Italy.org*, a website dedicated to everything Italian and Italian-American in the United States. In 2010 there were more than 450,000 real visitors to the site and more than 200,000 visitors to its web channel. Some staff members of the Institute also write blogs while others have video blogs.

LIBRARY

The Institute maintains a non-lending research library open to scholars and students, which consists of printed material, microfilm, and videos pertaining to the Italian-American experience. In all, there are approximately 21,5000 volumes and special collections dating back to the end of the 18th century.

SCHOLARS RESEARCH DATA BASE AND SPEAKERS BUREAU

The Institute maintains up-dated listings of Italian-American faculty at CUNY. As for faculty, academic scholars, and professionals at other universities, the Institute generated a Scholars Database in which there approximately 1,300 scholars nation-wide are included. The disciplines of those listed are varied, from the humanities to the natural sciences.

ITALIAN AMERICAN FACULTY AND STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Institute works closely with the IAFSAC, which consists of a representative from each CUNY campus and deals with issues pertaining to Italian Americans at CUNY. The Council objectives are to advise the college presidents and the Chancellor through the work of the Institute and its Dean on matters affecting the University's Italian-American community and to safeguard accountability for Italian-American personnel within the University.

Indeed, the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute is the only entity in the United States dedicated entirely to the study of Italian Americans and their history and culture. The Institute's successes throughout the years have placed it in a unique position with regard to both Italian-American Studies in particular and Ethnic Studies in general, thus also placing CUNY on a map that is not only nation-wide but also as far-reaching as Argentina in the Americas and Italy in Europe.

In these past five years, especially, we have tried to renew and expand the Institute's effectiveness to foster higher education among and about Italian Americans; for our challenge has been and continues to be twofold: on the one hand, we need to inform further the Italian-American community of its history of the past 140-plus years here in the United States; on the other hand, we also need to be sure that the US community at large, *mainstream* as we call it, is equally informed of our history and contributions to the US since, and even before, the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The recent proliferation of Research and Academic and Cultural Programs offered at Calandra has drawn a huge response from the Italian-American community at large to an array of learning opportunities offered in Italian history, immigration, language acquisition, loss of Italian language, work and family, adolescent/peer culture, art, music, religion, social activism, etc. Only this past January did one of our symposia entitled "Human Migration in the Third Millennium" attract the attention of Italy's Undersecretary of State, who flew over specifically for this event, which also included the Cardinal of Naples and the executive director of the Scalabrini International Migration Network.

All of our activities, I would submit, reach an audience of seasoned scholars, junior faculty, and, especially, graduate and undergraduate students. This increased effectiveness serves to assist, for example, graduate students with possible dissertation topics and research support. Finally, to return to one of the initial goals of the 1979 mission, such programmatic offerings contribute to documenting and preserving the history and culture of Italians in America.

Memorandum

Center for Puerto Rican Studies Hunter College, CUNY

To: New York City Council Higher Education and Cultural Affairs Committees - Joint Hearing
Fr: Edwin Melendez, Director
Re: Examining the Academic Impact of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY

This update on Centro's activities and impacts on students is organized following the categories of the information requested from us.

1. Number of students served

Centro serves students through course offerings, events that enhance the college experience, library and archives' services, through special academic initiatives targeting new curriculum and pedagogies, and through employment and training opportunities, as follows.

Participation in Centro Faculty Courses

Term	Professor	Course	Enrollment
Fall 2010	Melendez, Zavala	Neighborhood Lab 25 total, 3 groups of 8	25
	Zavala	Lectures: School of Social work 1) 21, 2) 22, 3) 10 Psych Dept. 1) 15, 2) 48	116
	Gonzalez	Media Production Independent Studies	7
Spring 2011	Melendez	Making a Difference (El Puente High School, College Now)	6
	Zavala	Latino/Puerto Rican Youth Identity and Psychosocial Health	45

Participation in Centro Events Sp & Fall 2010 (Excluding Sp 2011)

1. The Bronx: Mi Barrio, Mi Orgullo
2. Art Against the Grid
3. Signing In Puerto Rican (Targeting students with special needs)
4. Marantonio & Muñoz
5. Pioneros II--Hunter
6. Welcome to Florida at Centro
7. Pioneros II--Long Island
8. Carlos Arroyo
9. The Legacy of Pentecostal Minister Rev. Manuel Tomás Sanchez
10. Opera Ardiente
11. PR Literature of Migration
12. Klemente Soto Beles Film Documentary
13. Exhibition -If These Walls Could Speak & Forum- PR women in the Arts
14. 19th Century Puerto Rican and Caribbean Exiles
15. Open House
16. Planning and Development in Puerto Rican & Pan-Latino Communities

Centro Events Sp & Fall 2010	
Students participating as part of courses	308
Community & Others	1,090
Total	1,398
Events	16

Services Provided by the Centro Library and Archives in 2010

- 2,364 Library Visitors, of which about 77% or 1,824 were students.
- 1,495 Archival reference service provided to researchers (469 on-site, 360 email, 595 phone, 71 walk-ins)
- 5 archives/library orientations to groups of students from CUNY various campuses (Hostos Community College, Brooklyn, Hunter College, Baruch and Staten Island and Graduate Center.)
- Special 3-day group orientation/workshop for 10 graduate students from University of Texas Pan American.
- 10 Archives-Based Exhibits were presented at Hunter College (one at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Educational Center)—attendance to the events is included with the Centro Events data above.

Participation in Centro Cultural Competence Initiative (Financed through a FIPSE Grant)

The Centro Cultural Competence Initiative engaged graduate students from Hunter's professional schools in various activities aimed at supporting recruitment, retention and graduation.

1. Survey of students from the School of Public Health to determine interest in cultural content curriculum. Current (67), past (47) graduate students, and (25) other students (for a total of 139 students) participated in the survey. Among respondents, 62% indicated they would be interested in participating in a graduate cultural competence program if they had the opportunity to do so.
2. Five (5) graduate students in the SSW attended a 2-hour graduate workshop on "Latinas and cultural identity" led by Dr. Iris Zavala Martinez.
3. Urban Planning faculty and graduate students attended a lecture by NYU professor Arlene Dávila on "Latinos and Gentrification" in East Harlem.
4. Twenty five (25) current and/or former Hunter graduate students from the three professional schools and the urban planning department as well as students from the CUNY Graduate Center participated in the May 21, 2010 stakeholders' conference at the SSW. They participated actively in the concurrent roundtable discussions during which faculty, students and community practitioners/partners provided feedback on the research briefs and annotated bibliographies on cultural competence in the education, social work and public health research literatures.
5. Thirty (30) students from Urban Affairs and Urban Planning Department attended the Urban Planning Faculty/Student Dialogue: Community Planning and Development in Puerto Rican and Pan-Latino New York: Problems and New Approaches for Teaching and Practice,

November 19, 2010, SSW (sponsored by Centro and the Center for Community Planning and Development (CCPD) at Hunter College.

6. Five (5) graduate students from the School of Education participated in the videotaping of a recreation of a class discussion on Multicultural Education led by Prof. Yvonne DeGaetano (Fall 2010).

Employment of College Assistants

A total of forty-nine (49) undergraduate and graduate students worked at Centro this and last fiscal year. The salary range for students employed at Centro as college or research assistants is \$10 to \$20 per hour, with an average salary of \$15.24 per hour. These college assistants include the following:

- (6) Hunter graduates who remained employed at Centro after graduation.
- (19) students from CUNY and other colleges in the region.
- (8) Non-student NYC residents on the part-time payrolls.
- (4) Unpaid Centro Interns.
- (1) Work Study.
- (11) Grant funded CUNY graduate students.

2. Impact on student population

Centro's impact on students can be categorized into four substantive areas, as follows.

Intellectual and Academic Development. Centro's primary participation in the educational mission of Hunter College and CUNY is anchored by affiliated-faculty engagement on course and pedagogy development. The focus of our program at the undergraduate level is on leadership development and at the graduate level on cultural competence. At the undergraduate level, students are trained to understand social change and develop the analytical and leadership skills necessary to affect processes of social change. At the graduate level, students are trained to understand social disparities and public and community interventions that are sensitive to the needs of diverse racial and ethnic populations. Our courses promote project based and contextual learning pedagogies that engage students in the solution of real, practical social problems.

Centro also supports academic development through library services, research training, and the development of support networks. Our professional staff guides students through the relevant literature in the field of Puerto Rican Studies and our own collections of primary sources. We offer specialized courses to the general student body and train our college assistants in library search techniques and other research methods. Finally, our staff, including undergraduate and graduate assistants, are actively engaged in and play a leadership role in the vast number of networks active on-campus, and have become the de facto hub for Puerto Rican faculty and students.

Retention and Graduation. Centro offers a broad range of activities that enhance the college experience for disadvantaged students and promote their academic advancement and graduation. Centro Events are designed to maintain a connection of our faculty and students to the various constituencies that actively participate in the fields of Puerto Rican and Latino

studies. Research seminars and conferences provide forums to learn about current debates in the field and to discuss contrasting points of view in a safe environment.

Work Experience. Employment at Centro provides valuable work experience for dozens of students every year. Centro is an incubator of talent by sharpening the professional skills of undergraduate students who will be or are entering the job market.

Financial Support. Financial aid is a critical factor affecting students' completion of an undergraduate or graduate college degree. Centro offers employment opportunities that facilitate students completing their education. Our facilities are used by the students that we employ as a refuge, a familiar place where they can easily maintain a demanding academic calendar while earning some income to support their education.

3. How effective these institutes are?

Centro's programs are organized around four content areas, as follows. Effectiveness is measured here as impact on the mission of the college by programmatic area and external validation of programs (indicators in parenthesis).

Research

- Centro Journal is the leading journal in the field of Puerto Rican studies and one of the top leading journals in the fields of Latino and Ethnic studies. (Impact factor, subscriptions)
- Staff publications reflect a wide range of topics and are published in top journals in the field. (Books, refereed articles)
- Centro has received external grants for research over the years, and more specifically over the last two years in the midst of the economic downturn. (External funding)

Education

- Centro has served as a development agent for critical curriculum areas, such as leadership and cultural competence, which were underdeveloped. (New courses)
- Development of academic partnerships with undergraduate and graduate programs. (Co-sponsored activities, cross listing of courses)

Library & Archives

- Centro library has developed the main collection of secondary sources for the study of the stateside Puerto Rican community. Centro Library holds and provides access to over 25,000 titles of books, 2,500 dissertations and master's theses, over 200 titles of historical newspapers and periodicals on 3,700 reels of microfilm, 600 audio recordings, and over 500 videos and DVD's containing information by and about Puerto Ricans. (Collections, services)
- Centro archives has the largest collection of primary sources for the study of the stateside Puerto Rican community in the world. Centro Archives hold over 250 collections and thousands of linear feet of materials. (Collections, scholarship, visitors)

Outreach

- Centro Events are organized in thematic areas and are designed to maintain a dynamic interaction among the field. (Number of Participants, diversity, consumer feedback)

- **Voices**, is an innovative on-line magazine devoted to the exchange of ideas and scholarship not regularly covered in the field of Puerto Rican studies. (Partners/sections, pages, visitors)
- **Centro Web Site** provides a unique outreach platform. Currently, it includes over 2,000 pages. (Visitors, number of pages)
- **El Boletín** is an electronic newsletter that reaches over 5,000 people every month and maintains an “open rate” comparable to the industry standard of 19%. (Mailing list performance)

4. What do the institutes do (goals)?

Centro supports the following Goals and Strategic Initiatives:

- **General:** Adopt and implement a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to sustain Centro’s leadership position in the field of Puerto Rican studies, and to strengthen our flagship standing at Hunter College and the City University of New York.
- **Research:** Adopt and implement research programs for the study of critical conditions that affect the Puerto Rican community in the United States and that will be adaptable to shaping public policy.
- **Education:** Develop and implement programs, curricula, and pedagogies that motivate Hunter, CUNY and other students, as well as teachers, to become involved in Puerto Rican Studies, provide the necessary supports for success, and encourage a sense of service toward others.
- **Library, Archives and Art Collection:** Expand the visibility and knowledge of library and archival resources that document the history, contributions and legacy of Puerto Ricans in the United States to promote its use for scholarship and to familiarize the community with the collections
 - **Archives:** Expand the collection of documents, photos, and other archival resources that record the history, contributions and legacy of Puerto Ricans in the United States, and promote its use as a basis for creating academic and educational products and as a resource for the general community.
 - **Art and Photo Collections:** Expand the collection of works-on-paper and the library and archival resources that document the artistic contributions and legacy of Puerto Ricans in the United States, promote scholarship and exhibits, and the broad dissemination of collections.
 - **Library:** Expand the library collections and reference resources to promote scholarship and the broad use of collections by professionals in the field and by the community.
- **Operations:** Expand and adapt capacity to achieve organizational goals while improving operational effectiveness.
- **New Technologies:** Develop Centro’s website as the new media hub for the field of Puerto Rican studies and as a service to the community.
- **Development:** Improve media relations and maintain and increase grant submissions and external funding.

5. Do these institutes prepare students for post-grad studies?

Centro's education programs, in a joint effort with other departments at Hunter College, seek to develop curricula and pedagogies that motivate Hunter, CUNY and other students, as well as teachers, to become involved in Puerto Rican Studies, provide the necessary supports for success, and encourage a sense of service toward others. Our academic programs would serve both undergraduate and graduate students at Hunter College, support the transition from college to graduate school, and are connected to other CUNY degree programs. We target students from low-income families and those first in their families to attend a four-year college.

Our program will be a complement to departmental programs, not a substitute to them.

Our primary goal is to strengthen the Puerto Rican Educational Pipeline at the undergraduate level. Currently, there is no more urgent need for Puerto Rican youth than completing a college education. There can be no advancement to post-grad studies unless students enter college, complete college and have the preparation and connections to apply, be admitted and succeed in graduate school. At the undergraduate level, we seek to create a multi-disciplinary (leadership) program modeled after the ASPIRA philosophy of learning through engagement and public and community services. We believe that what most motivates students to complete their undergraduate degree and to apply to graduate school is an understanding that they can make a difference in their communities and positively affect the lives and circumstances of others.

In addition to the work Centro is doing with institutions to improve the Puerto Rican pipeline, we also strive to maintain up to date policy developments as they pertain to the Puerto Rican pipeline.

What would be the impact of the \$220,000 budget cut of 2011 in the absence of CUNY's coverage?

Centro's programs depend on three main sources of income: the New York State (Tax Levy) allocation for full-time personnel and OTPS (which includes salaries for adjuncts and college assistants); the City of New York grant; and, other earmarked grants from various sources. The analysis that follows focuses on the City's grant and includes NYS allocations for college assistants and other OTPS, but excludes NYS allocations for full-time personnel and earmarked grants.

Assuming that funding from NYS for FY 2012 remains at the same level as in 2011 and that the City Council allocation remains at \$250,000 and is not restored to the FY2010 level of \$470,000, a budget simulation for FY 2012 projects that the most impacted areas would be Centro's Outreach and historical preservation programs. The number of students served is likely to decline as a result of the fewer college assistants (who are supporting faculty courses, library support services, and events and outreach). The number of college assistants is projected to decline from 31 to 18, and the number of hours allocated to each of the remaining college assistants would be reduced to about one day per week for those currently working three or four days a week. Outreach programs targeting students and the community will bear the brunt of the reductions in college assistants. The outreach programs would lose about half of the 14 college assistant slots currently allocated to them. The allocation for space costs, foods, marketing and other expenses associated with Centro's event would be cut to about 50% of current levels. Under this scenario, historical preservation small grants, exhibits and videos about our collections would also be cut about 50% of current levels.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL ON CUNY RESEARCH UNITS
THE CASE OF THE CUNY DOMINICAN STUDIES INSTITUTE

New York City Council, March 8th, 2011

Ramona Hernández, Ph.D., Director, CUNY DSI

Before I begin, let me thank the Honorable Council members for their willingness to listen to my comments about the Dominican Studies Institute. I also want to thank Vice Chancellor Hershenson for selecting me as one of the members of this important panel to provide testimony about the importance of institutes dedicated to the production of research and, in the process, enhance the scholarly productivity and the academic status of the entire University. The CUNY Dominican Studies is unique in every sense: It is the only Institute of research in the world dedicated to study and produce knowledge about Dominicans who live in the United States; we have the only library in which one can surely find all that has been written and published about this group; and of course, we also have the only archives in Dominican Studies that preserve the documents recording the contributions of the Dominican people to society, particularly New York City, where they have been the largest immigrant group for the last past few decades and where they have revived decaying neighborhoods with their hard work and their dreams of securing a better life for themselves and their children

The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute is a CUNY **research** unit, not an academic program or academic department with an **instructional** mission or purpose. Its function is to produce needed, scholarly sound knowledge about Dominicans. Knowledge produced by CUNY DSI is widely used by academics, researchers, teachers and professors and the public at large interested in learning about Dominicans.

The Library:

Let me briefly speak to you about our unique library: we have close to 4,000 bibliographical resources, and 70% of them have been donated by individuals or organizations. The rest 30% has been acquired with funding provided by the City University of New York. We seek donations aggressively. Every time someone finishes a Ph.D. dissertation, we write to the person and we ask to donate his/her dissertation. Because of this action alone, we house the largest collection of Ph.D. dissertations granted by U.S. institutions going as far back as 1939, the first doctoral dissertation about Dominicans. No other library possesses this unique collection.

You may ask, and many students does the Dominican Library actually serve?

Last year the Dominican Library served a little over 1,500 patrons, and close to 60% of them were students from CUNY. The rest was composed of students from other colleges and universities from New York City, from other places in the United States, and from around the world, including Japan, and Germany. Of course, much of the service provided to the international community is done via the internet and the phone with our librarian, Prof. Sarah Aponte, who is the only librarian, specialized in Dominican Studies in the U.S.

Two aspects should be taken into account when considering the numbers of patrons served last years. One is that it has been only slightly more than a year since the CUNY DSI's Library and

Archives re-opened after a three-year period of total overhaul and reconstruction that forced these units to offer limited services. We anticipate the more the word is out that the Library and the Archives are open again, the numbers will continue to increase.

Our library and Archives are open every day, including Saturdays, and offer extended hours two nights per week.

Let me now speak briefly about the Dominican Archives:

The Dominican Archives begun officially in 2004 with two collections of documents donated by two of the oldest community activists: Doña Normandía Maldonado and Don Juan Paulino. Doña Maldonado has been involved in the founding of a number of organizations dedicated to celebrate and preserve Dominican cultural legacy in our city. Don Paulino helped secure the only statute of Juan Pablo Duarte, founding father of the Dominican Republic. He passed away in 2008 but he left us knowing that the papers documenting the work he had done on behalf of the Dominican people and American society are well preserved in the Dominican Archives and available so that no one forgets how the Dominican community laid down roots in New York City.

Today we have accessioned over 150 collections, and have processed almost 60% of them. Processing one collection often takes months and hundreds of hours of work. The funding allocated to CUNY DSI by the New York City Council ensures continuation of this very important work. And this work must be done; because what is left of a people that has no memory of itself?

What do the archives do besides preserving the legacy of the Dominican people? It serves researchers who are interested in documenting the life of Latinos of which Dominicans are an essential constituency in the U.S.

Let me speak briefly now about our undergraduate and graduate students' research programs

Doctoral Fellows

CUNY DSI continues to attract young doctoral students who are interested in writing dissertation in Dominican Studies. We award fellowships for a year to qualified doctoral candidates who research also intersects with CUNY DSI's research agenda. The fellowship is competitive and provides an annual stipend \$20,000 and the opportunity to use all the bibliographical and archival materials currently held at the Institute's Dominican Archives and Library. It is important to stress that these are the only fellowships in the entire United States that support students conducting research specifically about the U.S. Dominican population.

Last year, we had 4 doctoral students. 50% came from CUNY's Graduate Center and 50% came from other universities, including Fordham and Rutgers.

Research Interns

CUNY DSI also accepts and supports students from different higher education institutions that come to us asking for research internships, and these function as a precious opportunity for these students, sometimes for the first time of their lives, to familiarize themselves with the field of Dominican/Latino studies, by exposing them to our daily work and to an entire staff whose only mission is to think, discuss, produce, and disseminate academic knowledge about a people.

These students come to CUNY DSI funded by their own institutions. Last year alone, we hosted students that hailed from states as far away as Texas, and countries as distant as Germany.

Federal Work-Study Students and Part-Time Students

CUNY DSI continues to rely heavily on Federal Work Study (FWS) students and other students who are offered part-time training opportunities as research assistants or library and archives assistants throughout the year. Depending on the availability of funds, some of the FWS students are offered part-time employment once their Federal Work Study awards are exhausted.

Our students are assigned to work in one of the three areas of CUNY DSI according to their undergraduate field of study or major. For many of these students the opportunity to work at CUNY DSI becomes more than a way to supplement their incomes, it becomes a place where they do homework, find support and encouragement, and expand their social and professional network.

Students from the Public School System

Similarly, we work very closely with the public school system by offering (1) teacher training programs to enhance and develop curriculum incorporating Dominican Studies and (2) by organizing workshops for young students in the same field. These programs are provided in the Library and facilitated by CUNY DSI Librarian, Sarah Aponte, the archivist, Idilio Gracia Peña, and the post Doctoral Fellow, Dr. Patricia Krueger, who is specialized in education and teaches in the Education Department at the City College of New York our Institute's home campus.

3. How effective is CUNYDSI you May Ask?

We think CUNY DSI has made and continues to make a major impact in New York City by making an increased contribution to the expansion and preservation of knowledge about Dominicans. My calendar as CUNY DSI's director may be one of the busiest calendars in CUNY since I am frequently invited to speak about research undertaken at CUNY DSI or about my own research in migration and poverty, at national and international venues. The rest of the staff also entertains invitations as well to do presentations about Dominicans at many of the local schools and community-based organizations. We have no doubt that CUNY DSI has gained a reputation nationally and internationally for the quality of work it does. Such a reputation serves

to enhance the overall academic standing of CUNY and makes it possible to attract more quality graduate students who are seeking to specialize in cutting edge fields of study.

Let me touch on briefly on the research undertaken by CUNY:

Currently, there are 6 research projects sponsored by CUNY DSI. Please allow me to remind you that we undertake pioneering research, areas of studies and topics that have received little, if any, attention in the scholarly community. I will not abuse your kindness today and give you a list of research projects currently sponsored by CUNY DSI. Allow me please just to mention the last three research projects of 2010:

(1): **“The discovery of Juan Rodriguez as Dominican.”** Tracing some widely forgotten scholarship, CUNY DSI found archival records that show that Juan Rodriguez, a mulatto who settled along the Hudson River in 1613 and who became known as the first immigrant to settle in what we call New York City today, is of Dominican origins. Public recognition of that research—which is still ongoing as we speak—came when the Prestigious New York Historical Society asked our Assistant Director, Anthony Stevens, a historian trained in XVI century colonial history and leading researcher in the Juan Rodriguez project, to join the New York Historical Society’s historical research team. The first exhibit about Latinos in New York, as you know, was recently showcased at El Museo, began with the story of Juan Rodriguez now as told by the CUNY DSI. The award-winning- historian of New York City, Dr. Mike Wallace, also noted CUNY DSI research on his new book about Latinos in this great city.

(2) **“A comparative study of daily life of Dominicans residing in the boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx in New York City.”** This study provides the first analysis of the data from a survey of 636 persons of Dominican descent residing in Manhattan and the Bronx. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the Survey Research Unit of Baruch College. This is the first telephone survey ever targeting specifically the Dominican people and asking them their opinions on issues that range from their perception about access to local public services, participating in local politics, their desire to keep the Spanish language, to their views about returning to the Dominican Republic one day.

(3) **“The Forgotten People: Dominicans who came Through Ellis Island”**

This is one of the most exciting and rewarding ongoing research at the CUNY DSI. I am the lead researcher and my group, 5 students in total, is made up of undergraduates majoring in sociology, history, and anthropology. No one knew Dominicans also came through Ellis Island, that port of entry to New York City that has filled American imagination with countless stories of courage and hope. Over 5,000 Dominicans came through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924. We have spent two years on this research: first searching; then creating the database with the 5,000 names, and then analyzing the document completed by Dominicans at the time of arrival. We know now where these Ellis Island Dominicans went to live; we know their demographic profile: whether they were men, women; their ages; what kinds of jobs they had; whether they were single or married; who they married to once they here; and most importantly, we also know

how many of them came with the intention of settling permanently in New York City because they declared their intention to become U.S. citizens.

These five students are employed by your generosity; by resources provided to CUNY DSI by the New York City Council. Their participation in this research means the world to them and to us: Because it allows them to learn how to conduct high quality, sophisticated research, and manipulate primary data, and become authors in recounting the story of a people for the very first time. It also means that CUNY DSI gets the most committed, passionate, and inquisitive minds out there of young students who still believe that what they say can actually change the world for the better; and of course, their participation in this research means they get jobs: Four of the five students depend on this job to pay for food, transportation, and other necessities. These are young women and men who represent the future researchers, the future professors, the future of the Dominican people who rely on them to tell their version of the story.

Thank you!

Testimony of
Hon. Major R. Owens
U.S. House of Representatives, 11th District (Retired)
before the
Committee on Higher Education, City Council of New York

March 8, 2011

Members of the Council and fellow participants in this hearing, I am here today to make one point perfectly clear to the decisionmakers within the City University of New York and beyond regarding the mission and heritage of Medgar Evers College, located within my former district, and an institution I am partially responsible for creating. That point is the following:

Undergraduate "academic centers" promote creative and impactful teaching and learning, and this is a key component of the Medgar Evers experience.

Academic centers can greatly extend and expand the impact of traditional undergraduate college teaching and they have done so at Medgar Evers College. Faculty participation in Academic Centers should not be viewed by administrators as an escape from teaching responsibilities. On the contrary, such involvement must be praised as innovative teaching and going beyond the call of duty. At Medgar Evers College, this model is implemented effectively and efficiently without any special bloated budgets.

I will be the first to say that an Academic Center that is merely a playpen for high-level scholars deserves support and recognition but does not belong in cash strapped public institutions. To be relevant to the all-important mission of undergraduate education, an Academic Center must not be an adjunct or auxiliary activity. It must not operate as a public relations ornament or a luxury favoring a selected few. Allow me to be more specific.

At minimal to no cost, the Medgar Evers Center for Black Literature hauls in writers and thinkers who have a value far beyond even the best-written textbooks. The power of role models has been repeatedly validated by education research and effective education requires inspiration and motivation. The Center for Black Literature understands this.

Securing a weekend of sessions and lectures with Toni Morrison, the only Black female Nobel Prize winner for Literature, was the acquisition of an invaluable teaching resource. The opportunity to see, touch and hear Toni Morrison resulted in immeasurable amounts of inspiration and motivation.

Within the context of the great New York City mosaic, which CUNY is pledged to serve, Academic Centers are positioned to perform a dual function by providing targeted role modeling. All college students should study poetry, novels and plays. Success in reaping the greatest intellectual benefits from such studies is more likely when the material is matched with

the appropriate ethnic or cultural group. Both research and democratic politics have confirmed the power of ethnic appeal as one of the major factors in human response.

Thus the textbooks that emphasize universal values, theories and philosophies need to be supplemented. Creative linkages with concrete and everyday experiences should be made when possible. The rule of law in America begins with our Constitution; however, the Medgar Evers Center for Law and Social Justice offers a more effective learning experience by focusing extra attention on the Bill of Rights and its relationship to New York's "stop and frisk" laws – laws whose implementation is not foreign to some of Medgar Evers' students but laws which have been recently condemned as unproductive.

Beyond the recently popularized reading of the Constitution, this Center keeps hope alive among students that relief from oppression, discrimination and harassment is still most likely to be achieved in the courts. In Black ethnic studies, the Center magnifies the importance of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments – essential concepts and lessons for all Black college students expected to serve as leaders.

At Medgar Evers College, the controversial Center for Nu-Leadership offers an opportunity for the brainpower of the College to be utilized in the effort to resolve a problem that continues to balloon toward an uncontrollable crisis. Reducing the amount of incarceration and assisting offenders returning from prison would greatly benefit the Central Brooklyn community and New York City. There is a need for intense and large-scale social engineering. Statistics clearly show that the State's largest concentration of persons in the criminal justice system is located in the neighborhoods surrounding Medgar Evers College. National statistics clearly show that this incarceration growth is definitely a Black ethnic-related problem. *Every* public college in New York should be mandated to serve a transformative role for its local community. Confronting this pinpointed problem at Medgar Evers College should serve as a flagship challenge and be embraced, not dismissed.

Other examples of the enhancing power of Academic Centers and their roles in constructively addressing ethnicity could be cited but time is limited and thus I will close with a general plea and warning.

The attack on undergraduate Academic Centers should cease immediately. A factory time-clock approach to the work of professionals was long ago discredited. The failure to understand the extraordinary enhancing value of undergraduate Centers is a symptom of a larger, more dangerous flaw in CUNY policy. The mandate to educate the children of working class families requires the abandonment of ancient Ivory Tower approaches.

CUNY must encourage *creative* approaches that achieve results for students disabled by an inept public school system. Faculty snobs that serve nine to five schedules and have contempt for "slow" students should be weeded out. Advocates for Academic Centers at Medgar Evers College are being labeled "villains." Nothing is further from the truth. Advocates for Academic Centers that enrich and enhance education are the academic heroes.

Brooklyn College
ERIS/BMI

Uriah Brown
March 8, 2011

TESTIMONIAL

FOR THE RECORD

Eris/BMI currently serves as a breeding ground for some of Brooklyn College most intelligent students. This program has given support to myself and many others who have excelled on to greater heights because of the Eris program. Eris provides a traditional social community where students can feel at home and comfortable enough to get to know new students on campus. This program also supports high school students, allowing them to get a glimpse of college life through their own eyes by entering the Eris room. BMI allows students that are in a financial crisis to borrow textbooks they may need for an academic semester. Even more importantly the program managers always keeps the Eris members up to date concerning scholarships and other academic programs that may benefit the students. In essence Eris goal is to retain the number of young African Americans in college, and so far they have been doing a great job at that.

Eris also supports the students by allowing us to speak with professionals from all different type of professional backgrounds, anywhere from writers to musicians to businessmen, and admissions representatives from Harvard and Yale. If it was not for this program I would not even be in Brooklyn College. I was accepted to Brooklyn College as a BMI student because the college thought I would not excel academically on regular admissions. Now today with the Eris program help, allowing me to study in their room for hours and using their computer and borrowing their textbooks. I am currently on a Full Academic Scholarship for the next two years, with a current GPA of 3.2 and I owe most of it to the Eris/BMI program.

FOR THE RECORD

Speech for the Black Male Initiative Conference.

Recently I was thinking of transferring from Brooklyn College to go to school like Harvard, Yale, University of Chicago and others. I approached the members of ERIS; Mr. London, Mr. Patterson and Prof. Anderson. They were very supportive and though it was a good idea. Prof. Anderson and I sat to discuss my options. He promised to assist me as far as his means allow. Mr. London and Mr. Patterson would give me moral support and stand with me when I start to doubt myself. I was amazed by the concern and attention given to me. When I thank them, they would say "just doing my job."

All of the school I applied to asked why I want to transfer from my present institution. I couldn't find good enough reasons. I thought to myself that the grass is not always greener on the other side. Here at Brooklyn College, I have a program that stands with me, while giving me the kind of guidance that a gardener gives to a seedling. I am not sure that I will have such a support team at the other schools.

As many students, I started college as a pre-med student. Of course I am not anymore. I took calculus and realized it was not for me. Although I couldn't care less about calculus I still needed to get at A for it. I am the type of student who is never satisfied with a mediocre grade. I would show up at ERIS about three times a week and there was tutor sitting there three times a week. Sometimes I would go on days that the tutor isn't there, but I would still be helped by fellow students who have taken the class. I got a B+ for that class, one of the highest grades.

I am now a Political Science and Philosophy Law major; majors that I truly enjoy. Although I love the classes some of them can be pretty demanding. The classes are reading and writing intensive. The American dialect isn't my first; I am from the Caribbean where Creole is the dialect spoken. My essays needed to be proof read numerous times before I can hand them in. Where would I go? ERIS of course. Even if there is an English tutor there, I am able to meet with students senior to myself to proof read my paper. Mr. London himself would sometimes proof read it as well.

Through my constant presence at ERIS, it has become so much more than just a program. It has enabled me to take on a society that I am not familiar with. College was scary when I first started; especially since I just had arrived from Guyana. But with the guidance of ERIS I was able to rip the benefit of college. I am currently the Deputy Speaker of Brooklyn College Student Government, Treasurer of the Law Society, former Secretary of the SEEK Student Organization, and have a part time job that is building me to be a productive citizen. Could I have done this without ERIS, I strongly doubt that I could have. ERIS serves to support students such as myself so that we can succeed in a super competitive economy. ERIS has truly made a mark in my life, and I thank those who supported this program however they have.

FOR THE RECORD

March 8, 2011

TO: Councilman Idanis Rodriguez
Committee on Higher Education
250 Broadway 14th Fl

FROM: Patricia Mathews-Salazar
Center for Ethnic Studies
Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
199 Chambers St. S-642
NY, NY 10007
212-220-1370 _ Center's Secretary
212-220-1221 _ Director

RE: Impact of Centers for Ethnic Studies

- The Center for Ethnic Studies at BMCC has steadily grown these past years. In the mid 1990s, we offered almost 30 courses and now we are offering over 45- to 50 sections per semester.
- Courses in Ethnic Studies are now required in new Programs such as Forensics, Business, and Criminal Justice.
- Courses at the Center reflect the diversity of our student body and we are trying to offer courses that inform people about different areas of the world.
- We have six tenure track lines and over 20 part time faculty [an increase of 100% over a decade].
- The Center serves almost 1,500 students per semester. We also have Study Abroad Programs that have taken students to Ghana, Senegal, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, etc.
- We have many testimonies from the students who comment on the impact these courses have had on them to become better citizens. Some of these comments point out at the importance of different groups to know their own history [*By knowing where you come from, you know better where you are going, you have a better understanding of the society you participate in and you want to participate in it actively*']. Other students who take courses learn not just about their own ethnic background but about the diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Learning about others or 'the other' is the basis to overcome racism and ethnic discrimination. These courses serve that purpose, to educate, to broaden the minds of New Yorkers, to become more tolerant and to be able to appreciate the benefits of diversity in the local and global community.
- One of the problems that the Center faces at BMCC, however, is that although we have full time tenure track lines, the Director attends college-wide P&B meetings but unlike other chairpersons, including those of programs with no teaching faculty, the Director has a voice but not a vote on promotions and tenure. This does not place Center for Ethnic Studies at the same level of other programs and departments in the College. We hope to find ways to modify this issue in the future by discussing this with other Centers throughout CUNY.

Rising Stars

The sky's the limit for two leaders-in-the-making.

David Thelemague and Wilson Acuna, this year's newest Kaplan scholars, credit their faculty mentors for encouraging them to work hard and focus on life after BMCC.

Thelemague, a math major, asked his African Civilization Professor Nicholas Ofaja for a recommendation to the Kaplan Educational Foundation's Leadership Program. "Professor Ofaja really changed the way I thought of myself, and my perception of the world. With every class, I learned more and more about my ancestors," says Thelemague. "He also gave me insight to the problems in my community today."

Likewise, Acuna, a science major, received solid advice from former science professor Melissa Nashat. "She helped me think about possibilities beyond BMCC and told me not to limit myself, to think big and possibly attend a college outside of Manhattan."

The Kaplan Educational Foundation's Leadership Program helps high-potential, lower-income and under-represented community college students reach their educational and career goals. Acceptance into this program consists of an extensive application process, including two rounds of in-person interviews. "For those accepted, the program is demanding and requires a lot of time," says Jennifer Benn, Director of the Kaplan Educational Foundation. "We're working to develop leaders."

In addition to maintaining their grades, as Kaplan scholars, Thelemague and Acuna attend weekly meetings at the Kaplan headquarters in Manhattan and receive advising, career guidance, test preparation and tutoring throughout their time at BMCC.

According to Sussie Gyamfi, BMCC's Scholarship and Special Services Coordinator, "There are few scholarship opportunities for community college students, which is why this Kaplan Leadership Program is so coveted."

Acuna, who is considering a career in environmental science, advises future Kaplan scholars to take advantage of everything BMCC has to offer, both academically and socially, from the Learning Resource Center to on-campus clubs.

Thelemague, a former football player, believes being forced out of the sport due to injury led to his improved grades and eventual acceptance into the Kaplan Leadership Program. "Starting now, the sky's the limit."

"It's satisfying, and an honor, to be called a 'mentor'. It makes me feel like I'm doing my job well. I'm still in touch with many former students, and hopefully David will be one of them after he graduates," says Nicholas Ofaja, Professor Emeritus, Center for Ethnic Studies.

March 8, 2011

Joint Hearing: Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
and Committee on Higher Education

Topic: Examining the Academic Impact of CUNY's Institutes and Centers on Ethnic Studies

Testimony: Joyce Moy, Executive Director, Asian American and Asian Research Institute
(AAARI), City University of New York

The Asian American and Asian Research Institute (AAARI) is a university wide institute,
working with all of the 20+ campuses across the City University and five boroughs.

AAARI's mission is to:

- 1) Conduct, support, and facilitate research on issues with a focus on the Asian American and world's Asian communities;
- 2) Disseminate the relevant research by convening symposia, conferences, seminars, workshops and other events open to the CUNY and non-CUNY academic, student and greater community;
- 3) Provide education about cultural, historical, social, economic other issues facing communities and populations and act as a resource to the CUNY academic and student community and the community at large;
- 4) Engage with the Asian American community, world's Asian communities, and other ethnic and cultural groups across disciplines and areas of commonalities and differences.

Like its counterparts within CUNY, AAARI plays a significant role in supporting, and has a broad academic impact on ethnic studies within CUNY. However, the academic impact of AAARI and other Institutes and Centers at CUNY on ethnic studies is not simply limited to supplementing or adding value to classroom learning or adding to the body of academic research. Our activities are open to everyone regardless of ethnic or other affiliation. In fact, the work of Institutes and Centers go well beyond the borders of academe to inform policies, practitioners, educators, businesses, and service sectors. I am going to interpret today's topic: *Examining the Academic Impact of CUNY's Institutes and Centers on Ethnic Studies* somewhat broadly, but I believe that my remarks will get at the issues that this Joint Committee wishes to examine.

To do so, I would like to refer back to the AAARI's mission to illustrate the academic impact of Institutes and Centers:

AAARI's research agenda has allowed us to work with senior faculty to mentor and support junior and new faculty, and graduate students through fellowships and research opportunities upon which they can build their careers. We offer opportunities for undergraduate students to work as research interns so that they can hone their research, analytical and writing skills.

By convening various fora for the dissemination of research, AAARI provides opportunities to not only learn about the substantive research, but for members of the academic community to come together to network, and form collaborative efforts. This gives junior faculty, students and

the broader community an opportunity to engage with national, regional as well as local experts, speakers and panelists. Students, faculty and staff at CUNY and non-CUNY academic institutions, as well as political, civic, business and community leaders often gather to address issues of common interest. For example, in 2010, AAARI convened a conference entitled: *Taking the Lead in Leadership: How NYC's 2009 Elections Has Shaped Asian American Civic Participation*, in which Kiran Ahuja, the Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Pacific Islanders, Congresswoman Judy Chu, and local representatives, Comptroller John Liu, Assemblywoman Grace Meng and Councilmember Peter Koo participated among scholars, community activists and students. This conference has also served to engage students and new New Yorkers in civic engagement and public service. It also gave elected officials an opportunity to hear first hand, about what was happening in our communities, and surfaced many issues which are now the subject of new areas of research or activity among community based organizations.

AAARI has acted as a resource, providing information and crucial insights to many sectors. We do not simply provide data, but we connect community, business and other sectors with experts in Asian American and Asian issues, many of whom are part of our academic community, as well as experts outside of academe. For example, we have provided cultural insights to medical facilities seeking to address issues of conflict arising from their service to elderly Chinese patients and their families about treatment. In response, we developed a training entitled: *the Chinese Perspectives on Illness, Dying and Death*, which helped to diffuse issues and actually resulted in better care, communication and satisfaction among hospital staff, patients and their families. To the corporate sector, we have provided information about culturally appropriate and effective vehicles for market penetration in the communities, and provided training for corporate staff. We have provided insights into the experiences of recent arrivals from specific Asian communities to help educators, guidance counselors and social workers better prepare to assist these populations.

AAARI and our counterparts also play a significant role in helping to promote understanding, collaborations on issues of common interest such as immigration policy, domestic violence, culturally appropriate education, poverty and other topics among cross cultural communities and disciplines. For example, it would not be unusual for the Institutes and Centers to convene a forum, conference or even informal discussions on the state of women. This allows the communities to learn from one another, share best practices, design strategies, collaborate on grants or otherwise empower one another. Out of these dialogues, come mutual understanding, opportunities to engage new New Yorkers and opportunities for communities see the relevance of education to their lives.

There are currently over 40,000 Asian American faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students at CUNY. Many of the Asian American students are immigrants and first generation attendees of college just like the other communities represented in the CUNY community. Asian Americans account for 12% of New York City's population, and that number is growing.

We at AAARI believe that one of the most important contributions to academics that Institutes and Centers make is to provide the linkage between the academy and the communities. The interactions enrich each of us. Our research is not only for the sake of expanding the body of research, but it is research in the service of community as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Joyce Moy
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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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ANTHONY TAMBURRI

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303 E 57th NY 10022

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/9/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Anthony Rini

Address:

535 EAST 8th St, NY, NY

I represent:

CUNY

Address:

535 East 8th St, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Edwin Melendez, Director

Address:

I represent:

Center for Puerto Rican Studies

Address:

CUNY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

Name: JOSEPH SCIORRA (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 63 DEWE STREET

I represent: QUEENS COLLEGE ALBANY INSTITUTE

Address: 25 W. 43 RD ST 17th 10036

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

Name: Ricardo Gabriel (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: CUNY Graduate Center

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

Name: Chris Owens (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 315 Flatbush Ave #522, 11217-2015

I represent: Harrisburg Owens

Address: 135 Eastern Pkwy 3-H 11238

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/9/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patricia Krueger

Address: 160 Convent Ave. NY, NY 10031

I represent: Dominican Studies Institute

Address: City College of New York.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Wingley CUNY

Address: 535 E 80th St, NY, NY 10075

I represent: CUNY

Address: 535 E 80th St, NY, NY 10075

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2011

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margarita Hernandez

Address: CUNY Dominican Studies Inst.

I represent: City College

Address: The City University of New York

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joyce Moy
Address: CUNY - 25 W 43rd St, NY, NY 10036
I represent: CUNY Asian American Asian
Address: Research Institute

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Brenda Greene
Address: Medgar Evers College
I represent: Faculty
Address: 1650 Bedford Ave. Bklyn 11225

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: T. Rasul Mutez
Address: 55 N 4th St PL 11205
I represent: COMMUNITY
Address: BRKLYN NY 11205

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 3/8/10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Coello

Address: 400 Myrtle Ave.

I represent: MEC Coalition

Address: Medgar Evers College

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patricia Mathews-Salazar

Address: 199 Chambers St 5-642

I represent: Center for Ethnic Studies

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2011

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kyung Ji Rhee

Address: _____

I represent: Center for Nulander ship

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/11

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: GLORIA DULAN-WILSON
Address: 491 DEKOLB AVE #2 ALBANY
I represent: THE ALBANY COMMUNITY & ME
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Henry Williams
Address: 2770 Briggs Ave. APT 6J BRONX 10458
I represent: IRADAC: African Diaspora Research
CUNY Graduate Ctr.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/8/2011

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: ESMERALDA SIMMONS
Address: 1150 Carroll St Bklyn NY
I represent: Center for Law & Social Justice
Address: 1150 Carroll St Bklyn

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms