

the meridian

THE STUDENT VOICE OF LEHMAN COLLEGE

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the meridian

**250 Bedford Park Boulevard West
Student Life Building Room 108
Bronx, NY 10468**

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lehmanmeridian@gmail.com

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Writers: Shivani Boodhoo, Sydney Boryga, Abrian De Luna, Ashley Francis, Juan B. García, Yara Palin, Juan Rodriguez, Eileen Sepulveda, Jean Soto

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Lehman's Third President Opens 2016 Convocation

by Abrian De Luna

Lehman's 2016 convocation took place on Sept. 21 at the Lovinger Theatre. The college's new president, Dr. José L. Cruz, made a state of the college speech before awards were presented to staff and faculty for their contributions to the campus. Cruz said he was "humbled" to become Lehman's new president and felt "energized by the opportunity."

Cruz shared a childhood anecdote to illustrate the importance of caring teachers. On his way to elementary school, scared because he did not understand English, he decided to go back home and told his mother that he would never again attend. She insisted he go, and told him to tell his teacher that he was "sick in the morning" to justify his lateness. He ended up unintentionally saying that he was "a chicken in the morning," causing the classroom to erupt in laughter. Realizing his predicament, his teacher told him in broken Spanish that she would help him. Her open heart, he said, "shaped the trajectory of his life."

Cruz confidently stated that, "In the years to come, Lehman College would increase its impact, expand its reach and meet its full potential as an engine of opportunity...a driver of transformative change." Cruz laid out a six-point plan to further improve the campus. The first goal is to "clarify Lehman's vision" and "solidify its identity as the nation's ultimate serving institution." The plan also includes making an "innovative

enrollment management plan" to ensure healthy enrollment, and "redouble efforts" to increase graduation rates and reducing the time it takes to graduate, and narrow achievement gaps. Lastly, Cruz aims to "diversify revenue streams" in many ways including collaborating with alumni to "raise funds and build a culture of philanthropy."

Awards were given to Michael Sullivan, director of Campus Life, who co-founded the Herbert H. Lehman Center for Student Leadership Development in 2007, and to Elizabeth Mena, a CUNY office assistant at the Leonard Lief Library and stacks supervisor since 2008 who directly collaborates with student workers. Mena said, "I appreciate the recognition and the award. It just makes me do what I do even harder."

Sergeant Samuel González of Public Safety also received an award for protecting Lehman College for 23 years and counting. González is one of the first Lehman officers to be certified in ALICE training (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate). González says "Let's all keep doing what we do to keep Lehman the amazing institution that it is."

Maryam Bamshad of the Biological Sciences Department won the Teacher of the Year Award. Bamshad says "I'm honored to receive an award for something I love to do, teach." From her experiences of learning new technology so that she may improve her teaching,

Bamshad said the "hardest lesson of all" was to not only be an instructor, but to also be a guide that teaches students to think individually and collaborate with their peers.

G.D. Peters of the English Department won the Adjunct Teacher of the Year Award. Peters chose to share this award to his students, past and present, because they have been teaching him how to teach for a "long time." Peters says that he used to come to class with a plan and now wonders what his students will teach him. He says, "I think one of the best messages I can bring to my students is that their opinion matters."

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Lehman Celebrates Its First Awards Day

by Juan B. García



Past Lehman award winner Stefanie Nolli Gaspar protests in Washington, D.C. for the Supreme Court Case for DAPA and extension of DACA on April 18, 2016.

Lehman held its first Prestigious Awards Day on Sept. 9, 2016, in the Music Building. Attendees included Lehman students, faculty, staff from all departments on campus, and representatives from some of the country's most distinguished award-granting foundations. These included the Fulbright Fellowship, the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, the Schwarzman Scholarship, the Thomas Watson Foundation, and the Ford Foundation Fellowships. The event was held to direct students toward prestigious awards as well as to highlight the previous year's winners. In the last year, 25 Lehman students won prestigious awards to fund their scholarly pursuits.

I feel many students are misinformed about the investment that it takes to be successful," said event organizer Alice Michelle Augustine about the application process. "It's not something that you can just get up one day and say 'yeah, I'm going to do it' and put two hours and get it. It's something that

you've got to work on and work hard for a long time with guidance and also with support from your friends."

Augustine is the associate director of the Emerging Scholars Program and the Beyond the Bachelors Program, which prepares and advises students competing for prestigious awards. Housed in Carman Hall Room 188, it offers students the resources and support they need to write more compelling applications.

"A lot of us think we are not good enough and that's a fallacy. We will never know until we try," Augustine said. "I want students to try. I want students to invest because the process of applying for a prestigious award in itself is life changing."

One example of the program's success is Lehman Macaulay Honors student Cesar Andrade, who won \$200,000 in scholarship money for medical school and who credits Augustine significantly for having helped him. During the

awards day, past winners Lisa Dazzell, Hilliary Frank, and Stefanie Nolli Gaspar were invited to speak in a panel discussion.

"It was interesting," said Nolli Gaspar, a sophomore at Lehman, of her time studying in Argentina. She won a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to go to Argentina in summer 2016 and attend the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, where she studied Latin American cultures and gender issues of Latin America.

Nolli Gaspar is focused on immigrant activism, a subject in which she became interested while attending White Plains High School, and wants to become an immigration lawyer who supports undocumented people. She is active in many school-based organizations like the CUNY DREAMERS program and the Lehman based D.R.E.A.M. Team Club, in which she assists potential students who are undocumented by preparing them for college. She emphasized that a lot of time and concentration were essential to the application process. Her application essay required her to detail a very personal account of her youth. "I discussed how when I was younger, I'd wake up at three in the morning to go help my dad with the newspaper or help my mom sell food," she recalled.

The event concluded with a workshop for Lehman faculty, staff, and administrators where they learned how to better support applicants to the prestigious awards as well as a feature on the history of the prestigious awards from foundation representatives.

"This program matters because it creates a centralized office to support students as they apply for prestigious awards and since its inception," said Augustine about the Beyond the Bachelors Program. "Many Lehman College students have won awards because of the support they received from the program."

Lehman Students Watch First Presidential Debate at Lovinger Theatre

by Yara Palin

On Sept. 26 approximately 200 students and faculty members attended an event in the Lovinger Theatre to view the first of three presidential debates between nominees Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Christopher Malone, associate dean of the School of Natural and Social Sciences and associate professor of political science, hosted the event which was being live streamed from Hofstra University.

“We believe it is important to support civic engagement and civic education on campus,” Malone said. “As a political scientist myself, I believe any opportunity to engage students in the political process needs to be taken advantage of. Presidential debates are part of that.”

Prior to the debates, Lehman junior Lisbett Rodriguez, 19, said, “I already know whom I am going to vote for,” and noted that she was still eager to watch the debate because she anticipated an exchange of “crazy remarks from both candidates.”

The debate began with Republican nominee Donald Trump and Democrat

Hillary Clinton stating economic proposals and policies, and soon turned into a back-and-forth exchange between both candidates.

Malone says, “Watching an event like this in a communal setting is a different experience than watching it at home by yourself or with a small group. We probably had 250 people there for the debate. With over 200 people in the audience, I expect them to react loudly---whether through laughter, booing, or applause.”

The next round of audible student reactions in the theater began when Clinton directed viewers to her website for fact checking in real time. Trump, taking offense to the comment, implied that his website was better before he launched an assault on the Clinton website. Trump said, “She’s telling us how to fight ISIS on her website.”

Clinton retorted, “At least I have a plan.”

Trump added that Clinton had “been fighting ISIS her entire adult life.” Clinton

simply encouraged everyone to go to her website.

Trump proceeded to blame Clinton for her lack of leadership on tax regulations. Clinton replied, “I have a feeling that by the end of this evening I’m going to be blamed for everything that’s ever happened.”

“Why not?” Trump said. The entire Lovinger Theatre filled with laughter at this remark.

Malone added, “I don’t think the laughter means [the students] are not taking it seriously. Precisely the opposite. Any laughter was probably due to audience members expressing their disagreements with what was said, or how it was said. It means they were listening attentively. I loved it and welcomed it!”

The debates continued with the vice presidential candidates on Oct. 4 and the second presidential debate on Oct. 9. Lehman also hosted the third and final debate in the Lovinger Theatre on Oct. 19.



Source: Wikipedia Commons

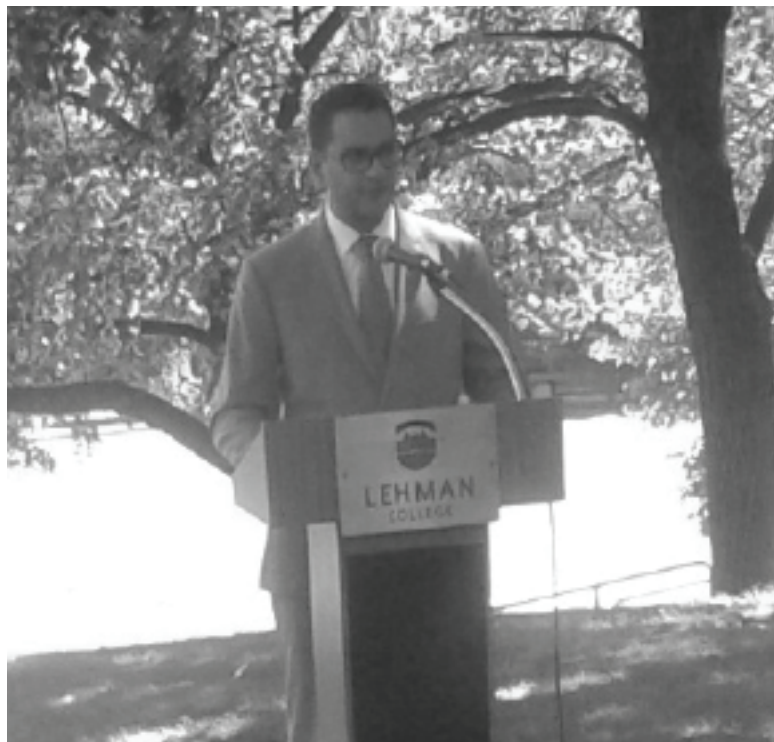
Lehman Remembers 9/11 Once More

by Abrian De Luna

On the morning of Sept. 12, Lehman held its annual commemoration to honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks, in order to foster a sense of community and camaraderie, reminding us that we can recover from tragedy and move forward. On that day fifteen years ago, four members of the Lehman community were lost: Stephen Belson, John D'Allara, Yvette Nicole Moreno and Alan Richman.w

Erica Matthews, class of '74 and member of the Lehman College Retirees Association, welcomed the attendees to the campus memorial outside Shuster Hall and emphasized how important it was to remember the lives that were lost. "We need to commemorate--we need to remember it," she said. "Things like this happen in some other countries all the time and we never thought it would happen here, but it did. So we need to be conscious and to raise the consciousness of other people that this day will never be forgotten."

William Hill, associate director of financial aid, opened up with a story about a female student who sought help back in the third week of Sept. 2001. She had lost her job at the World Trade Center. He had asked her to share her story in which she "listlessly" described her experience. She and her friend escaped the initial bombings of the South Tower, but her friend wanted to go back to retrieve his school books. She couldn't convince him to escape with her, so she had to watch him go back and never saw him again. Hill realized she may have had post-traumatic stress disorder and contacted counseling services, career services, academic advising as well as the registrar's office; professors also joined in on the effort to help this student. Hill added that the student earned her bachelor's degree,



President Cruz encourages attendees to remain optimistic and stay strong.

and while she suffers a bit from anxiety disorder, she enjoys her job.

The point of this story, Hill explained, is to show how the past shapes the future. "We are of this era, of this current time, and this time is defined for us and this country by the events and aftermath of 9/11." Hill closed with a brief prayer in which the audience joined.

Lehman's new president, Dr. José L. Cruz, then reaffirmed how the world had been forever changed by this tragedy, and that the anniversary was also a day to celebrate and honor not just those who died in the 9/11 attacks, but those who lost their lives due to intolerance, xenophobia, terrorism and

war. "While the void in our hearts will never be filled, the distance of time affords us the benefit of optimism," he said, citing the creation of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and other memorials as examples of how New York has recovered since then. He optimistically urged the audience to recommit to the role of educators, and wished for the redoubling of efforts to expand opportunities and to reenergize work to "democratize knowledge".

One of the attendees, Miriam Medina of the sociology department commented, "I feel it's an honor and a necessity to remember the innocent people who lost their lives, especially those who belong to Lehman."

"Things like this happen in some other countries all the time and we never thought it would happen here but it did."

— Erica Matthews, class of 1974 and member of the Lehman College Retirees Association

The Get Down:

New Series Shines Light on the Bronx's Hip-Hop Beginnings

by Sydney Boryga

"The Get Down" is a Netflix Original series that premiered on Aug. 12, 2016. Dubbed a "West Side Story" with rappers and disco queens," and directed by Baz Luhrmann ("The Great Gatsby" and "Romeo and Juliet"), the show is set in the South Bronx in 1977. It revolves around Ezekiel "Zeke" Figuero (Justice Smith), a teenaged orphan who is being raised by his aunt, Shaolin Fantastic (Shameik Moore), a graffiti artist with a mysterious persona, and Zeke's longtime crush, Mylene Cruz (Herizen Guardiola), a beautiful church-going girl who aspires to be the next Donna Summer.

The series opens with a voice-over by Nasir Jones, better known as Nas, the legendary Queens-bred rapper and one of the executive producers of the show, paired with a rap superstar performing at Madison Square Garden in 1996, who turns out to be the future Zeke.

Each character in this show has a spark, a passion. Zeke is sort of the underdog here; he is in love with Mylene, but she is determined to leave the Bronx to pursue disco music, and does not want to be held back by a relationship. Everyone sees the potential in Zeke as a rising poet/MC except Zeke himself. One particular scene that stood out in this episode was when Zeke's English teacher, Ms. Green, asks Zeke to recite his poem in front of the class. Zeke refuses to do so, so Ms. Green keeps him after class to recite his poem privately. He raps about the death of his parents. I admit, I had first viewed Zeke as the somewhat dorky kid with the big afro, but that all changed when



Source: Netflix

he recited his verses. Smith's delivery and flow was so smooth and authentic; I was immediately charmed by his way with words.

Zeke's friends include Marcus "Dizzee" Kipling (Jaden Smith), Ronald "Ra-Ra" Kipling (Skylan Brooks), and Miles "Boo-Boo" Kipling (Tremaine Brown Jr.).

Shaolin Fantastic is a renowned graffiti artist in search of a rare vinyl, a task given to him by Grandmaster Flash. Zeke is looking for the same vinyl to impress Mylene. After a failed attempt to woo Mylene, Zeke and Shaolin become friends. Shaolin sees Zeke as the MC to his DJ. Shaolin introduces Zeke and the rest of the guys to the Get Down, an underground hip hop party.

It is here that you realize the show's budget was well spent. Countless teens are seen hanging from the fire escapes and dancing in the alley to Grandmaster Flash's beats. The aesthetic of the scene excited me; these are the types of parties I had heard about from family members who grew up in that era. Zeke's friends encourage

him to freestyle, but he chokes up from nervousness and is booed by the crowd. Shaolin starts breakdancing to pump up the crowd again, and Zeke kills it on stage. After the success of Zeke's freestyle, the friends end up on a rooftop reminiscing about the night. They decide to call themselves the "Fantastic Four Plus One." They vow to become a family, and dream of embodying hip hop culture: breakdancing, freestyling, DJ'ing, and graffitiing.

All in all, the 90-minute pilot, though it starts off slow, shows promise by the end. As a proud Bronxite, I am thrilled about "The Get Down" and its success so far. The Bronx is often perceived as a crime-ridden, gritty borough with nothing good coming out of it. I hope that "The Get Down" educates viewers, whether they are from New York or not, on how historically-rich the Bronx actually is, and how it effectively earns its title, "the birthplace of hip hop." "The Get Down" is available on Netflix now, and the second part of season one will be released in 2017.

Jane Cleland Reveals Her Path to Success

by Shivani Boodhoo

Jane Cleland is the well-known author of the Josie Prescott Antiques Mysteries, as well as business writing books. She is anticipating the publication of the eleventh book in the series, titled “The Glow of Death,” on Nov. 29. Remarkably, her heroine, Josie Prescott, was born out of a rejection letter to her agent which read, “The plot and narrative isn’t interesting, but she can write. If she is interested in writing about a female amateur detective not based in New York, I’d like to see it.”

To be published, Cleland stated, “One needs a fresh idea.” Her first novel contained a male private investigator in New York, but the market was not looking for that type of character. At the time she received the rejection letter, she thought, “If you’re going to have an amateur sleuth, then it’s got to be someone with an organic reason to do research.” Lawyers and reporters are very popular lead characters in mysteries, but Cleland wasn’t any of those. She needed someone she already had information on. Having owned a rare and antique bookstore for four years, Cleland knew all about that side of the show. The character could be based in New Hampshire, the same location as the bookstore, and thus Josie was created. Now, with nearly a dozen books in the series, Cleland talked about how she continues thinking of new stories. First she chooses the antiques, which is the hardest part, because she must pick something her target audience would like, and the rest of the plot is developed over time.

Now a lecturer at Lehman, Jane Cleland was always interested in writing and business. Her mother was an author as well, writing murder mysteries, articles on how to raise children, and “Bound for Freedom,” a mystery novel about an indentured servant who



immigrated to America from England during the Revolutionary War. “Bound for Freedom” was made into a TV-movie to celebrate our bicentennial, the two-hundredth anniversary of July Fourth. Born and raised in Boston, Cleland made her way through various colleges and majors trying to find the right fit, ultimately earning an M.B.A. in marketing and management from Babson College and later an M.F.A. in professional and creative writing from Western Connecticut University.

After Babson Cleland went on to work in nonprofit administration, which she enjoyed. This led her to a career as a business trainer, which helped her write a book titled, “Business Writing for Results.” Lacking confidence in her ability to write fiction, Cleland found it much easier to write nonfiction, and she wrote four nonfiction books. Then her agent, who thought that she was good at using anecdotes and examples in her writing, asked if she would think about trying her hand at fiction. Her agent’s recommendation gave Cleland confidence to try what she had longed to do, and since then she hasn’t stopped.

Cleland’s eleventh Josie Prescott mystery, “The Glow of Death,” arrives in bookstores on Nov. 29, 2016. A launch party open to the public will take place at 6 p.m. at LIM College, and will feature a small presentation on Tiffany lamps, which are the theme of the book.

Cleland gives four pieces of advice to student writers. First, learn as much as you can about the craft of writing; it will save you time. Go to workshops, conferences, and take classes. Don’t feel shy about not knowing. As Ernest Hemingway said, “It’s none of their business that you have to learn how to write. Let them think you were born that way.” Second, write for your readers, analyze favorites in your genres, and study them. Thirdly, do not reject yourself. It is not your job to say, “I’m not good enough to send my work to this editor or that publisher.” Let editors and publishers decide whether or not your work should be rejected. Think instead, “My job is to get my work out there in the marketplace.” Lastly, be kind to yourself. Writing is lonely, hard, and filled with judgement and self-judgement. It’s important to celebrate your successes. When you write a good sentence, say, “Hey, that’s a good sentence!”

Cleland loves her Lehman students because she knows they are here because they want to be here. Cleland said, “They are sponges, which lets me really teach because I’m dealing with people who really want to learn. Nothing more gratifying.”

Cleland herself lives day-to-day by a quote from Aristotle that goes, “Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives---choice, not chance, determines your destiny.”

Laundromat Project Kicks Off Annual South Bronx Field Day

by Juan Rodriguez



Intervale Ave. mothers enjoy arts and crafts activities with their kids.

The Laundromat Project, a non-profit organization committed to fostering creative spaces in local communities of color through family-friendly arts programs, hosted their annual field days with three events in Hunts Point/Longwood, Bed-Stuy, and Harlem on Sept. 18, 24, and 25, respectively.

Say It Loud: Empowering The South Bronx, one of several events at the field days, aimed to foster civic engagement through activities that focus on themes of “wellness, state/community violence to cross-cultural unity through creative exchanges.” Ivan Gaete, a creative change fellow of Say It Loud, recalled the Laundromat Project’s aims and

history. “The Laundromat Project itself has been around for about 10 years, and they support artists that have interest in creating artistic projects based on community building and social justice.” Considering that extracurricular music and arts programs are consistently underfunded in cash-strapped inner city public schools, if they are funded at all, arts-based community projects may provide a much-needed positive after-school activity for South Bronx youth.

Say It Loud was spread across three nearby locations, each of which offered distinct activities for local Bronx citizens. The first event, located in Hunts Point Plaza, presented an art piece in the making of Assata Shakur, a former Black

Panther Party member who escaped prison and fled to Cuba following her 1977 arrest for the alleged murder of a New Jersey State Trooper. The artwork was painted on sheets of paper taped over a large plywood canvas. Shortly after local graffiti artist Andre Trenier completed his piece, he removed the single sheets of paper and handed them out to observers.

The second event presented Say It Loud’s Libertad Urban Farm, a communal garden cultivated on a previously abandoned lot by the locals of Simpson Street. The garden yielded eggplant, bell peppers, onions, and other vegetables. The attendees were urged to help themselves to the collectively

cultivated produce. Dalaeja Foreman, another Creative Change Fellow, explained the significance of the event. "It's a garden aiming to bring healthy, free food into the community, without relying on a third party. We hope to encourage more communal engagement and solidarity through our efforts in the garden."

The third scheduled event, Mothers on the Move, welcomed the mothers and caretakers of Intervale Avenue to participate in various community arts and crafts activities with their children. The lighthearted activity also sought to inspire communal solidarity amongst South Bronx mothers. Maria Soledad, one of the attendees, praised the event. "Here, I can have a good time with my kids and socialize with other mothers that understand how hard it is to raise children in the city."



Local graffiti artist Andre Trenier works on his mural of Assata Shakur.



Say It Loud volunteers present the Libertad Urban Farm.



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A Target by Sight: American Muslim Lehman Students Endure Prejudice

by Jean Soto

One evening in early September, Ndeye Fatou Coundol was walking home from the Westchester Square subway station in the Bronx and heard a woman say, “Oh, you act like you belong here but you don’t.”

As she processed what she heard, she realized the comment was directed at her. Coundol, a Senegalese Muslim born in Italy, has been a resident of the Bronx for 13 years.

“It just made me feel...not wanted,” said Coundol, a current Lehman undergrad wearing an abaya and a pair of sneakers that match her light blue hijab. For the Muslim men and women who don the hijab or any outward representation of their religion and culture, the comment, certainly not the first of its kind for Coundol, is symptomatic of the day-to-day harassment they encounter. This is gradually diminishing their sense of belonging in New York City in a post-9/11 world. Recently, the frequency of these encounters has begun to take a toll on Coundol and her friends.

“I can tell you so many stories along with mine where...this stuff is really affecting us. It’s affecting our everyday lives,” she says, her voice cracking. “It’s affecting our mood, our confidence, our education.”

According to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting program, there was an 18 percent increase nationwide from 2012 to 2014 in the number of individuals involved in hate crimes motivated by anti-Islamic sentiments---after a 21 percent decrease from 2010 to 2012. In the state of New York, according to the “Hate Crime in New York State 2014 Annual Report,” the total number of reported hate crimes toward Muslims over the course of five years, 2010-2014, remained a steady 7-10 percent of all hate crimes and 7-9 percent in the Bronx specifically, showing a 1-2 percent rise in 2014. The impact of ISIS and the anti-Islamic rhetoric---so strident in this presidential election---on Muslim-Americans remains to be seen as the hate crime statistics for 2015 will not be released until November. Even so, these statistics only account for the number of crimes reported; they do not take into account verbal harassment or encounters unreported, which may be all too common.

Recently, Coundol reported a Lehman staff member who works in one of the food sections at the Underground Lounge cafeteria for rude and judgmental comments he made---but she almost did not.

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Recently, Coundol reported a Lehman staff member who works in one of the food sections at the Underground Lounge cafeteria for rude and judgmental comments he made---but she almost did not.

"There's a gentleman there," she said, "who every single time I get on that line to get food, he always has something to say." During the most recent encounter, she was about to ignore the comment and go about her day---the way she normally handled the situation---but she had a witness. Someone saw the interaction and helped her report it. Coundol acknowledges she could have spoken with the manager of the cafeteria but she "didn't have the confidence."

"I felt like I needed someone who was not Muslim," said Coundol, "who perhaps may not be the same skin tone as me to approve of what I'm saying. Why can't I just go up to the manager and say 'this person said this to me'? Why do I have to find some sort of credibility for him to listen to what I have to say? I should be able to speak for myself and not have someone who's socially acceptable to speak for me or to make what I say credible."

For some, like Kazi Sumon, former president of Lehman's Muslim Student Association, the experience of being a Muslim in New York has been slightly different. He can recall an encounter that occurred in the early 2000s. On the train someone looked at him, a then pre-teen Bangladeshi, and said, "Look at Osama." Since then, there have never been remarks directed at him.

"I've been very fortunate," says Sumon, who attributes his good fortune to his academic environments, in which the open-mindedness of his peers and professors allowed for a positive experience. He is both an alumnus of the Bronx High School of Science '09 and the Macaulay Honors College at Lehman '13. Although Sumon admits he was sheltered from situations and encounters many other Muslims like Coundol face, he was not without discomfort outside his academic environments.

"It was a bigger stigma that I wore the beard, even in high school," said Sumon. "On the 4 train going to school, I could feel these white guys were looking at me." The beard, a common feature and outward

representation of Muslim men's faith, was a bigger stigma in the early 2000s than it is now since "everyone has a beard nowadays. At the same time...when you're brown and you have a beard, it's different."

Last year, while an intern at a medical school in the District of Columbia, police officers stopped him for questioning.

"They said someone made a complaint," said Sumon, who when stopped had a beard, a backpack, and was behaving "touristy," walking slower than others and taking in the new scenery. "Nothing else---and they asked for my social, they asked for my address, D.C. and New York. Which I felt was a little up there." He laughed with his hand raised, then paused. "First time it happened to me," he said, "and first time I felt the struggle of black people."

With those who may claim that anti-Muslim sentiments are not technically racist sentiments, as Islam is a religion and not a race, Kazi Sumon disagreed.

"It's racism," Sumon said, "because you don't dislike me, because I'm Muslim. I could say I'm Catholic. I could wear a cross on my chest and you will still want me to be burned. I could get rid of my Islam, but I can't get rid of my skin color. You're still gonna hate me."

"I have white Muslim friends with beards," he says, "white-looking Muslim friends from Afghanistan, but everyone treats them like they're white."

However, he acknowledged that for girls and women who wear headscarves, there is not the same distinction; they are associated with their religion regardless of their skin-tone.

"For Muslim girls in general who wear the hijab," he said, "it's more like you're wearing the symbol on your head. Just walking outside, having the hijab on is an automatic target."

"I'm honestly scared," said Coundol in her light blue hijab. "I don't like taking the train anymore. I try to avoid it. I don't feel safe. I'm three different types of minority; I'm woman, I'm black, and I'm a Muslim. So I always feel like I have to watch out for people that are racist."

Zahir, a freshman at Lehman, has never been threatened, but he has still felt the gaze of onlookers on the train. A Bangladeshi Muslim, he has lived in the Bronx nearly all his life and feels at home---unless he is wearing traditional or cultural clothing.

"Let's say I had a kufi on," he said, "then everyone stares at you like 'oh my god'."

"I remember it was Eid," recounted Zahir, "and I was wearing my traditional clothes on the train...going to the mosque to pray. I had my prayer mat and everything, and people were just staring at me. Not everybody, but certain people kept on looking and one was laughing. I'm like...the person that was laughing...was dressed in a really weird way, had tattoos all over them. Like, yo, you shouldn't be laughing. I don't know why you're laughing at me."

However, in areas with communities populated by Muslims, like Parkchester in the Bronx and Jackson Heights in Queens, he feels at home and not judged for wearing traditional attire. In fact, Zahir, Sumon, and Coundol all agreed that despite all the prejudiced encounters, the looks, and the comments, New York is still their home. Zahir's parents both emigrated from Bangladesh about 50 years ago and he was born in Brooklyn. Coundol and her parents emigrated from Africa 13 years ago and have lived in the Bronx ever since. Sumon immigrated with his parents to Queens from Bangladesh when his parents were in their 30s and he was 10 years old. There is no other place his parents and he would rather be.

"You think I'm not American," said Sumon, "but if I could be anywhere in the world, it would be Woodside, Queens. My mom and dad---if they could be anywhere in the world---Woodside, Queens. They bought property there, not in Bangladesh."

However, Coundol's feelings about New York are mixed. "I feel like this is home, but I'm not home," says Coundol. "Just this morning, this lady needed help with directions. I felt like I wasn't seen as how all minorities are seen, I was just seen as myself. So, that was a good boost. But I don't feel welcome anymore."

For Students Who Immigrate, Home Is an Ongoing Process

by Juan Garcia

In our global village, frontiers have become flexible as many migrate not only for exploration, but also for political and socioeconomic reasons. This is particularly true in the Bronx, where according to the New York City Census FactFinder, between the years of 2009 and 2013, 55.1 percent of people were non-U.S. citizens.

Like many of their peers, Lehman students Flor Reyes-Silvestre, Denise Vivar, and Tatiana Zarutskaya left their birthplaces to look for a better future. They moved to New York years ago and their life experiences have complicated their understanding of home.

“My home is where my family and I are,” says Reyes-Silvestre, 19, and president of the Lehman D.R.E.A.M. Team, an organization founded by a group of students to create a space for people who are or support undocumented students. “So right now New York is my home.”

Although she was born in Puebla, Mexico, she does not call Mexico home. She lived there for two years. Now all she has left of Puebla are vague memories and old photos.

By her third birthday, her family had moved to New York City. In order not to lose her Mexican roots, her parents enrolled her in bilingual classes in elementary school where she learned to speak Spanish fluently. At home, she now speaks Spanish with her mother and English with her siblings.

Reyes-Silvestre may not call Mexico home, but she still considers herself Mexican as well as American---specifically a New Yorker.



Denise Vivar helps build a library in a community called La Palmita, in Guanajuato, Mexico.

“That’s only because my roots are Mexico,” says Reyes-Silvestre. “I don’t know Mexico, but that’s where I came from. That’s the motherland.”

Unlike Reyes-Silvestre, Vivar, secretary of the Lehman D.R.E.A.M. Team, is more anchored to Mexico.

“[Homeland] is the place that makes you smile when you think of it,” said Vivar, 21. “For me it is my native country, Mexico, and New York. Both these places are my homeland.”

Vivar was born in Mexico City and moved to New York when she was seven. Her mother had a job offer in New York City. She went there and traveled back and forth three times between the two cities. By the third time “things were not getting better in Mexico,” said Vivar, “and my mother decided to bring us

[Vivar and her siblings] to New York.” As she grew up, Vivar became aware that she was undocumented.

“When I found out that I was undocumented my sense of belonging changed. I was trying to understand how my status defined my identity and where I belong,” said Vivar. “Yes, I love my culture and my country but unfortunately [New York] is the place where I was raised.”

“Sometimes I feel like that when I enter restaurants or stores that are not often visited by minorities,” said Vivar when talking about whether she ever felt like an outsider. “However, growing up in Sunset Park, a Mexican enclave, I always felt like I did belong. It was when I entered college that I realized that my kind [undocumented] is not welcome everywhere.”

She recalls her early years in high school as a “pretty scary experience” because she did not know how to navigate the hallways and did not speak the language.

Last Christmas she visited Mexico for the first time in thirteen years. Because she was a child the last time she was in Mexico, she could not create long-lasting memories and realized she actually belonged in New York. She calls herself a New Yorker and New York her home--the place where she formed long lasting bonds, where she forged her identity. She also considers Lehman part of her community because it is currently helping her to keep building her identity.

When Vivar transferred to Lehman, she heard of the D.R.E.A.M. Team and decided to join and support undocumented students.

“I just wanted to get involved with other people who understood what I was going through,” she said. Vivar currently works as a college assistant in the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute in Carman Hall and lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Unlike Reyes-Silvestre and Vivar, Zarutskaya considers herself neither a New Yorker nor an American.

“Homeland is motherland,” says Zarutskaya, 34, who has lived in New York for seven and a half years. “It is roots and history, the place where one comes from.”

Zarutskaya was born in Russia before the fall of the Soviet Union. She left Russia when she was 23. “It was a conscious choice. I was not forced out. I just wanted to get out of poverty,” she said. She lived in other countries before moving to New York at age 26 with the idea of making this city her last relocation. She married an American. Aside from Russian and English she also speaks some Spanish and Italian.

“At home I only speak English but I use Russian and Italian on a daily basis,” she said.

Like Reyes and Vivar, Zarutskaya sometimes felt like an outsider in New York, as she did everywhere else she has lived.

“In Russia I felt an outsider almost all the time,” she added.

“I do not feel I belong anywhere 100 percent,” explained Zarutskaya. “Having legal papers strengthened my feeling of belonging to the USA, but with the recent unfair propaganda against Russia,

my feeling of belonging to Russia also increased.”

Finding a home, or making one, is an ongoing process and like many Lehman students, Reyes-Silvestre, Vivar, and Zarutskaya are on a journey discovering theirs. Part of that discovery is realizing where the path they didn’t take might have led, and how their lives would have been different had they stayed in their countries.

In Vivar’s case, she recently made her second trip back to Mexico last summer thanks to the Summer Service Learning Program, a travel program for CUNY students offered by the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute to study abroad

in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. Vivar and other CUNY students went to Centro de Adolescentes de San Miguel de Allende, a center for adolescents that encourages community work in the rural small town of San Miguel Allende. “I fit in with the culture and the customs,” she recalled. “I felt like that’s where I belonged.” Her service project was helping to build a library in a community called La Palmita.

“Kids were helping us,” said Vivar recounting her days in La Palmita, “and seeing how they didn’t have enough money and toys, it made me realize that that could have been my childhood.”



Denise Vivar decorates the library with the help of other CUNY students.

Racial Profiling Takes a Toll on Lehman Students

by Eileen Sepulveda



Source: Wikipedia Commons

“Racial profiling shapes the way I talk, walk, cough, and even think as I navigate the streets of New York,” said Melquawn Curry, a senior and English major at Lehman. Curry, who is African-American, lives in the Tremont section of the Bronx. “I’m stopped and frisked daily in my neighborhood; it’s just the norm nowadays. It’s a different world for a black man in any inner city, it’s like the cops are playing cops and robbers and black men are the robbers by default.”

Curry is one of many Lehman students who report being targeted by stop and frisk. According to NYC.gov, the practice is authorized “When a police officer reasonably suspects that a person has committed, is committing or is about to commit a felony or a Penal Law misdemeanor.” Many have argued that stop and frisk is a form of racial profiling, defined by CivilRights.org as “The targeting of particular individuals by law enforcement authorities based not on their behavior, but rather their personal characteristics.”

An analysis conducted by the NYCLU revealed “that innocent New Yorkers have been subjected to police stops and street interrogations more than 4 million times since 2002, and that black and Latino communities continue to be the overwhelming target of these tactics.” The New York Times reported in August

of 2016 that “In 2013, a federal judge ruled that the stop-and-frisk tactics of the New York Police Department violated the constitutional rights of minorities in the city.”

However, a detective at the 48th Precinct in the Bronx, speaking on condition of anonymity, defended the stop and frisk policy. “We need it and, yes, it is being utilized. But cops are now afraid to stop. The media calls it unconstitutional. It’s not unconstitutional. I’ve been in law enforcement for 25 years and now I’m a detective. No one goes out to target anyone. No matter what, law enforcement [officers] are risking their lives trying to save lives.”

Despite the detective’s claims that cops do not target anyone, Cherokee Stewart Hart believes that she was a victim of racial profiling. Hart, a junior at Lehman and a Sociology major, said that her first experience with racial profiling happened at the age of 16 when she was stopped by police as she was headed towards a grocery store in her neighborhood (the 163rd Street section of the Bronx). Cherokee decided to cut through a local park where she was surrounded and approached by six NYC police officers. They told her there were reports of a group of black and Hispanics loitering in the park, that the individuals fled the scene and that she fit the profile of either a black or Hispanic. Cherokee said

she was immediately given a summons for being in the park after dusk but luckily the summons was dismissed in court.

Cherokee said “It was my first time getting a ticket so I thought I was going to jail, I was crying, I was only 16.” Although she says she felt “pissed off” after the incident, she adds that a recent friendship with an officer has changed her outlook about NYC law enforcement. “Not all of them are bad. Racial profiling, it’s something they follow, period.”

Cherokee, who plans on opening up her own practice to provide affordable mental health care for inner city communities in New York City, believes her encounter with police would have been worse if she were a black or Hispanic male. “Of course, I’m pretty sure it would’ve been different.”

Recent academic research suggests that Cherokee’s experience will leave an emotional scar that will not be easily erased. Dr. Charles Cange, a Global Health Professor at Lehman and the lead author of a recent report on police misconduct for the No Boundaries Coalition of Central West Baltimore, believes that “the long-term impact of negative interactions with police upon the community should not be understated. Even in cases in which informants do not cite enduring physical or psychological trauma, it is clear that the marks of police misconduct do not diminish quickly or easily in time.”

Cange, who will continue his research on racial profiling here in the Bronx, added that many factors contribute to its negative impact. “From the material consequences of a wrongful arrest or conviction, to a loss of confidence in the legitimacy of the institution of law enforcement, the legacy of abuse is complex, deep-seated and emotional.”

Both Curry and Hart still feel this impact in their lives. Curry, who plans on becoming a teacher in New York City, said “What needs to be addressed is the assumption of dangers that are attached to a black man’s profile.”

Can the Lehman Lightning Soccer Team Overcome Last Season's Upset?

by Ashley Francis



The Lehman women's soccer team prepares for a matchup against St. Joseph's.

The Lehman women's soccer team may dominate this season following last year's defeat, despite the loss of former team captain Samantha Dias. In only her second season, Daisy Gomez has shown no remorse on the offensive end. On the defensive end, the Lightning has stopped opposing teams from scoring much. However, losses have put team weaknesses on display, signaling that members of the new roster, many unfamiliar to one another, may have some difficulty coexisting.

The Lightning is going to have a lot to measure up to following the team's extraordinary play on the field in the 2015 season that saw them achieve a 14-4 record. They dominated other city colleges, sitting atop the CUNY Athletic Conference in the standings, and remaining undefeated (6-0) against teams in the conference. However, the historic season came to a scorching end as they lost in the quarterfinals of the ECAC Tournament to New York University.

For the team to surpass last year's high point some adjustments had to be made, and it may take time to adapt to the changes. However, just two weeks into the new season, the Lightning already showed flashes of their dominance as they crushed St. Joseph's College (Brooklyn) 7-1 on Sept. 10. On the field, their potential was visible with the aggression with which they played throughout the game.

Some fans who attended the Saturday matinee on Sept. 10 expressed their hopes as they observed the team's play on the South Field. Lehman men's soccer player Randi Olea assessed what needs to be done. "They're having trouble adapting to it, but as the season goes on they'll do better," said Olea. He also added that the loss of defensive midfielder and team captain Samantha Dias will likely play a role in the team's progress.

Dias had a monumental playing career at Lehman with awards received ranging

from CUNYAC Defensive Player of the Week to CUNYAC First Team All-Star. Now an assistant coach, she is aware of last season's loss and is hopeful for the future. "Last season we did really well so I think that that helps us be motivated for this season." She also acknowledges what's needed to succeed. "They're going to be working hard, and I mean there's always things to work on, but we believe we could work through this," she said. Not playing on the field is something new to her, she added, but she loves that she plays some type of role.

Midfielder Lillian Barreto has been a positive so far this season in terms of offense and has given the team a much-needed lift. Her play demonstrates grit and leaves everything on the field, and her assessment of her team is different from that of the outsiders looking in. "I think we have a much better team than last season and we're really excited about this season," she said. "I think we can go beyond last season's team."