Centro’s Dissertation Fellows Panel Highlights Research of Up-and-Coming Scholars

By Clarisel Gonzalez

Four PhD candidates selected as our Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellows program have been busy working on their research projects at Centro this summer. Their research interests range from reducing barriers for Latino males to transitioning to college to addressing the relevancy of ethnic studies in the 21st century. What the fellows all have in common: their research projects focus on topics that have an impact on Puerto Ricans.

On June 26, the four fellows shared the wealth of research they have been conducting at Centro’s second edition of the Dissertation Fellows Panel, which is aimed at giving support to the dissertation works of up and coming scholars by exposing them to Centro’s resources such as our famed Library and Archives and at cultivating an ongoing network of scholars who are doing research on Puerto Rican and Latino themes.
The goal of the presentations was for candidates not only to speak about their research projects, but also to get feedback from attendees who included most of Centro’s senior research team who asked the fellows questions, gave advice and challenged them to probe further.

Centro Director Edwin Meléndez moderated the panel. He told fellows he is optimistic about the future of up and coming scholarly research on Puerto Ricans. “There is evidence that Puerto Rican scholarship has not died, we are alive,” he said. “We are in good hands.”

Alejandro Carrión, who is currently a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), spoke on “From the BX to a BA: Latino Males from the Bronx and Their Transition from High School to College,” a qualitative study that follows 10 Puerto Rican and Dominican young men.

Carrión said he remembers being the only Latino student in a college classroom and he questioned himself why. That was the spark that led him to study Latino men from the Bronx and give them a platform to capture their stories as they are at the point of making the transition to college or not. “There’s a lot going on,” he said, adding he hopes to help expand the research there is on Latino males and the notion of college transition as well as highlight the positive things Latino male students are doing.

One thing is for sure, he says, “many Latino males from the Bronx reject the view others have of what a Latino from the Bronx is.” But it is also something they struggle with in school, their neighborhood, and their own families.
Like Carrión, Ricardo Gabriel, a PhD student in sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center, said his topic is rooted on his own experience in college and when he first realized the importance of ethnic studies. It was a wake up call. He spoke on his dissertation proposal titled “Post-Racial Ideology and Ethnic Studies in Higher Education: The Impact of Puerto Rican Studies on Academic Achievement and Civic Engagement.”


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