

# THE Student CONNECTION

The student-run newsletter of Empire State College

[ESC Home](#) > [The Student Connection](#) | [Issues](#) | [Issue 110, November 17, 2016](#) | [Social Corner](#)

[All Social Corner](#)

## Latinos Celebrate Diversity through Art

*By Raul Manzano, assistant professor, SUNY Empire State College; co-advisor, Metro Art Club*



Raul Manzano with ESC President Merodie Hancock

For the past six years, SUNY Empire State College has been celebrating Hispanic Heritage month with an annual art exhibition open to current students and alumni at the Livingston Gallery in Brooklyn. This year's theme of "La Raza (the race): Embracing Diversity" brought together SUNY Empire graduates to share their views on that topic. For Latinos/Hispanics, race is part of their culture. La Raza is celebrated in honor of Latino/Hispanic ancestors. This annual celebration is a response to the growing Latino population of students in the Metropolitan location at SUNY Empire.

SUNY Empire State College's president, Merodie Hancock, welcomed the audience during the opening remarks and expressed the importance of diversity in the college and in our lives. Hancock said "Being SUNY's only statewide college, we benefit from the beautiful diversity that exists throughout New York. Faculty mentors work with their colleagues and our students to bring diversity to life in academic and social programming across the state and throughout the year. The Hispanic exhibition in Brooklyn is a perfect example of how the college embraces and celebrates who we are collectively and individually."

The new associate dean of humanities, Megan Mullen also stated in the press release, "I was thrilled to hear about the "La Raza: Embracing Diversity" exhibit. One of my great joys during

the early months in my position has been seeing the diversity of artistic and cultural expression taking place within SUNY Empire State College. I'm especially pleased with what's happening within my division, which encompasses the arts and humanities disciplines. La Raza represents something we all can celebrate and take part in."

The variety of art pieces (oil on canvas, acrylic on paper, mixed media on wood) were as diverse as the artists themselves who in their own visual language, shared a personal or collective experience. Ranging from social engaging images of child labor working in the fields in a 3-D installation by Patricia Cazorla to political and immigrant narratives in the paintings of Raul Manzano, both artists address the notion of art as a medium of communication. Focusing on working class people, Daisy Ferrer reflects on simple ways of living before and after the conquistadores and the transatlantic slave trade, while Gabriel Rivera conveys life's passages and the ever presence of death.

Educational studies professor Jim Wunsch contributed to the program with selected readings documenting the Hispanic experience in New York City. Venette White, a student, and Jared Stone-Rigg of the Brooklyn office, read from two first-hand accounts: Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), a memoir of growing up Puerto Rican in the city, and a report by the radical Mexican artist Diego Rivera on how and why his commissioned mural, *Man at The Cross Roads*, was covered over in 1933 before it could be displayed at Rockefeller Center. "The readings sought to integrate the literary memoir to the artistic forms on display by way of establishing the rich cultural context of Latino culture," emphasized Wunsch.

The event drew more than 100 guests and the different ethnic foods complemented an evening of art, culture and community gathering.

Since this annual event began in 2011, SUNY Empire and other institutions are partnering with [Latin American Cultural Week](#) (LACW), a festival that showcases visual arts, music, dance, film, literature throughout the New York City area. With promoting and sharing, this cultural event brings together the community at large.

Manzano extends a great deal of gratitude to the many people who contributed to this event: Janet Jones, invitation design and Susan McFadden, coordinating the production; print shop, mailing room and alumni office for a timely distribution of invitations and funding for this event; Hope Fergusson, editing/proofreading the press release; Jeanine Jones, Jared Stone-Rigg, Angelina Garner and work-study student Michael Pontrelli, assistance during the reception, greeting direction to the gallery; and Betty Wilde-Biasiny and Terry Boddie for their on-going support to SUNY Empire's art students.

Manzano is a visiting assistant professor and mentor, coordinator of exhibitions at the Livingston Gallery and co-advisor for the Metro Art Club.

The exhibition is on view through December 15, 2016. Visit the [SUNY Empire State College website](#) to learn more about the arts.