

## Immigrant Advocacy Conference

BMCC Richard Harris Terrace

April 3, 2025 to April 4, 2025

9AM to 5PM

All programming will take place in the Richard Harris Terrace unless specifically noted.

## Overview

Times	April 3, 2025	April 4, 2025
9:00AM - 9:15AM	Breakfast; registration	Breakfast; registration
9:15AM - 9:30AM	Welcome & Introduction	Welcome & Introduction
9:30AM – 10:00AM	Breakfast	Breakfast
10:00AM - 11:00AM	<p>Dare to Dream</p> <p>Moderator: Shalom (Hunter College alum)</p> <p><a href="#">For CUNY Staff &amp; Faculty</a></p> <p>Each One, Teach One: How CUNY Faculty and Staff Can Better Support Undocumented and Immigrant Students <a href="#">at Hudson Room</a></p> <p>Moderator: Denise Vivar, Immigrant Student Success (ImSSC) Manager, John Jay College of Criminal Justice</p>	<p>Healthcare Beyond Borders</p> <p>Presentation by Mudjana Colin (CCNY student)</p>
11:00AM - 11:15AM	Coffee break	Coffee break
11:15AM - 12:15PM	<p>Dreams Unbound: Navigating Barriers and providing NEBO's for Dreamers</p> <p>Presentation: Akanksha (Hunter College student) and Margaret (KBCC alum)</p>	<p>Writing workshop by Dr. Mangual Figueroa and current CUNY students</p>
12:15PM - 12:30PM	Coffee break	Coffee break
12:30PM - 1:30PM	Enhancing Financial Aid Accessibility for Undocumented and Immigrant Students at CUNY	Expanding CUNY's Imagination: Conversation with Campus Leaders



## Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs

	Presentation: Mudjana Colin (CCNY student)	
1:30PM - 2:30PM	Lunch	Lunch
2:35PM- 3:35PM	KEYNOTE by Wo Chan	KEYNOTE by Laura X Moya
3:35pm - 3:45pm	Coffee break	Coffee break
3:45PM - 4:45PM	We Are CUNY  Video presentation and Q&A: Nyoman (Brooklyn College alum)	Art Exhibition, "The Surrealism of Being Illegal" and Artist Talk  Artist: Lupita Romero (Hunter College student)
4:45PM - 5:00PM	Closing	Closing

April 3, 2025

Dare to Dream

Each One, Teach One: How CUNY Faculty and Staff Can Better Support Undocumented and Immigrant Students

Dreams Unbound: Navigating Barriers and Providing Accurate Advice for Academic and Career Opportunities for Dreamers

Enhancing Financial Aid Accessibility for Undocumented and Immigrant Students at CUNY

KEYNOTE by Wo Chan

We Are CUNY

April 4, 2025

Healthcare Beyond Borders

Writing workshop by Dr. Mangual Figueroa and current CUNY students (co-authors)

Expanding CUNY's Imagination for Undocumented and Immigrant Students: Conversations with Campus Leaders

KEYNOTE by Laura X Moya

Exhibition "The Surrealism of being Illegal" and Artist Talk with Lupita Romero

April 3, 2025

## **Dare to Dream**

**Thurs April 3, 2025 from 10:00am to 11:00am**

This panel will begin with a short video, “Dare to Dream,” produced by Shalom, a Strategic Funds Fellow, narrating the complex and rich history of undocumented student-led organizing within and outside of CUNY, going as far back as the early 2000s. Following the video screening, Shalom will invite four panelists into conversation about their understanding of the roots of U.S. immigration policies; their experience as student organizers in New York City and Georgia; and what advice they may have for current and prospective CUNY students as they navigate higher education. and future CUNY students as they navigate higher education. This panel will conclude with a Q&A with audience members.

### Panelists:

- Christine Nabung, Community Organizer, RAISE (Revolutionizing Asian Immigrants on the East Coast)
- Debbie, BMCC alum
- Dr. Keish Kim, Mellon Assistant Professor in Global Racial Justice, Rutgers University Newark - English, Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice (ISGRJ)
- Maimouna Diop, NYSYLC (New York State Youth Leadership Council), Undocu Academy Coordinator

Moderator and filmmaker: Shalom



Shalom is a Strategic Funds Fellow at CUNY UISP and a law student at New York Law School. Originally from Nigeria, she is a dedicated advocate for immigrants' rights. At UISP, she is researching the history of advocacy within CUNY's immigrant and undocumented communities and examining how CUNY-adjacent spaces have supported them. She is developing an archival research video, which will be presented at the 2025 symposium, where she will also facilitate a panel discussion. Outside of work and school, Shalom enjoys crocheting and runs a small business, NODSArts, where she sells her handmade items.



## Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs

### Panelists:



Christine Nabung is a community organizer at RAISE where she works to support undocumented Asian youth across NYC through community events, political education, and leadership development. Outside of work, they enjoy playing basketball, reading, and baking treats to share with friends.



Dr. Keish Kim, Rutgers University, School of Arts and Sciences–Newark

Eun-Jin Keish Kim studies im/migration, diaspora, and feminist (dis)abilities focusing on queer and undocumented im/migration. She approaches history and literature through a transnational and multidisciplinary lens. Her work emphasizes social justice, women of color feminism, and undocuqueer episteme. Dr. Kim is committed to undocumented im/migrant communities and first-generation students of color. She earned her Ph.D. in American Studies at Harvard

University with secondary fields in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and Latinx Studies.

Dr. Kim is working on her manuscript, *Unsettling Citizenship*, which is about undocumented im/migrants in the United States and how they express their politics in the 21st century. *Unsettling Citizenship* addresses the limits and possibilities of bringing together (dis)ability and im/migrant discourse. This book emphasizes the migrant relationship to (dis)ability, presents new perspectives on citizenship, and rethinks paradigms of racial liberalism and Civil Rights by focusing on undocumented im/migrant networks of resistance to reorient assimilation narratives of im/migration. As a parallel project to her written research, Dr. Kim facilitates conversations with undocumented and formerly undocumented, or illegalized im/migrant artists, activists, and thinkers through a podcast titled, "A Revolutionary Love Letter." She aims to expand the digital humanities project to archive undocumented im/migrant activism transnationally.

## **Each One, Teach One: How CUNY Faculty and Staff Can Better Support Undocumented and Immigrant Students**

**Thurs April 3, 2025 from 10:00am to 11:00am, HUDSON ROOM**

This panel is specifically intended for CUNY Faculty and Staff Members to learn from each other on how to support undocumented and immigrant students at CUNY.

This panel discussion will be moderated by Denise Vivar (John Jay College of Criminal Justice), who will be in conversation with Dr. Ariana Mangual Figueroa (CCNY), Leslie Ramirez Carbajal (Brooklyn College), and Ethan Jenkins (NYU, formerly Queens College).

Topics of discussion may include: active listening and the role of faculty and staff in supporting undocumented and immigrant students; how to advocate on students' behalf; career advisement for undocumented and immigrant students.

### **Invited** panelists (final list pending):

- Dr. Mangual Figueroa, Associate Professor in the Ph.D. programs in Urban Education and Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Cultures at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York
- Leslie Ramirez Carbajal, Immigrant Student Success Office, Program Coordinator, Brooklyn College,
- Ethan Jenkins, Registrar Counselor, New York University

Moderator: Denise Vivar, Immigrant Student Success (ImSSC) Manager, John Jay College of Criminal Justice



Denise has made it her mission to create spaces that support the immigrant community. As an immigrant herself, she empathizes and understands the needs of this population. Denise migrated to New York when she was seven years old and remained undocumented until qualifying for a U-Visa, and then becoming a permanent resident five years later. She was the Special Assistant to the New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera, liaising between internal communications and community affairs.

She has a Master's of Public Administration with a concentration in Policy Analysis and Evaluation from Baruch College.





## **Dreams Unbound: Navigating Barriers and Providing Accurate Advice for Academic and Career Opportunities for Dreamers**

**Thurs April 3, 2025 from 11:15am to 12:15pm**

This presentation aims to shed light on the need for expanded opportunities, supported by research and survey findings that illustrate limitations undocumented students face.

Internships and fellowships serve as crucial opportunities for undocumented students to earn non-wage stipends while gaining valuable experience. However, a number of existing fellowships at CUNY provide compensation on a payroll, making them inaccessible to undocumented students. This present highlights the importance of NEBOs (Non-Employment Based Opportunities), for undocumented and immigrant students who are ineligible for part-time jobs. This presentation aims to provide guidance on how Colleges can navigate barriers and provide more non-employment based opportunities to students. Furthermore, this presentation will address the academic barriers faced by undocumented students, particularly the inaccessibility of certain majors, certifications, and licenses. It will aim to provide strategies to academic advisors on how to support undocumented students at CUNY.

Presenter: Akanksha



Akanksha is a Dream.US fellow for CUNY UISP. She is a junior at Hunter College pursuing a major in Human Biology. She plans to pursue a healthcare career and aspires to be a Certified Nurse Anesthetist. During her time with CUNY UISP, she has researched ways to provide more non-employment based opportunities for undocumented students at CUNY and is currently helping plan the 2025 Convening. Through her experiences, she has found a passion and deep appreciation for advocacy. During her free time, she likes to read, write poetry, sketch, or paint!



## **Enhancing Financial Aid Accessibility for Undocumented and Immigrant Students at CUNY**

**Thurs April 3, 2025 from 12:30PM to 1:30PM**

Undocumented students face significant challenges in accessing financial aid, even in states like New York that offer programs such as the NYS Dream Act (NYSDA). This presentation will elucidate significant findings from my research project, which investigated the preparedness and expertise of financial aid offices regarding the NYSDA/TAP, the accessibility of NYSDA/TAP information for students on various home campus financial aid webpages, and the experiences of undocumented students seeking financial aid at CUNY. The discussion will highlight systemic barriers, communication gaps, and best practices for financial aid officers to better serve this student population.

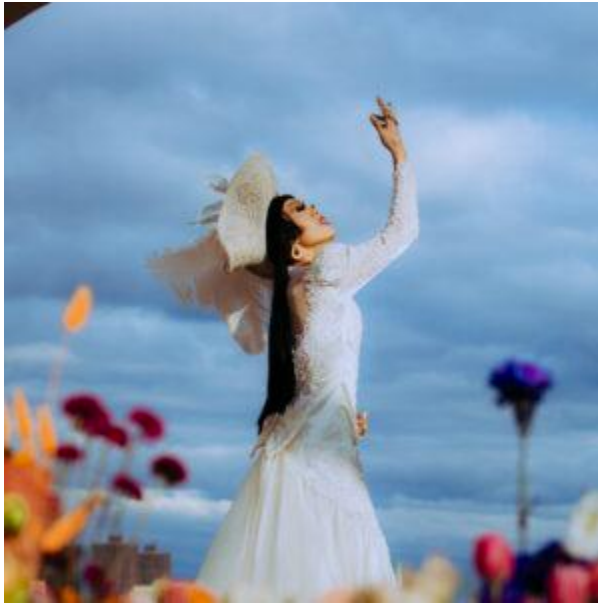
Presenter: Mudjana Colin



Mudjana Colin is a researcher, advocate, and storyteller committed to equity in education and healthcare for immigrant communities. At CUNY's Undocumented & Immigrant Student Programs, she leads research on financial aid accessibility while providing direct support to students. With experience in clinical research, policy analysis, and community organizing, she works to uncover systemic barriers and drive meaningful change. Outside of her advocacy, Mudjana enjoys writing poetry, using storytelling as both a creative and transformative tool.

## KEYNOTE by Wo Chan

April 3, 2025 from 2:35pm to 3:45pm



Wo Chan who performs as The Illustrious Pearl is a poet and drag artist. They are a winner of the Nightboat Poetry Prize and the author of *Togetherness* (2022). Wo has received fellowships from MacDowell, New York Foundation of the Arts, Kundiman, The Asian American Writers Workshop, Poets House, and Lambda Literary. Their poems appear in *POETRY*, *WUSSY*, *Mass Review*, *No Tokens*, *The Margins*, and elsewhere. As a member of the Brooklyn-based drag/burlesque collective Switch N' Play, Wo has performed at venues including The Whitney Museum of American Art, National Sawdust, New York Live Arts, and the Architectural Digest Expo. Find them at [@theillustriouspearl](#).

## **We Are CUNY**

**Thurs April 3, 2025 from 3:45PM - 4:45PM**

The panel will begin the screening of a documentary video, produced by Nyoman, a Strategic Funds Fellow. The video explores the journey of three immigrant students as they navigate the complexities of their college careers at CUNY. These three students share their stories in overcoming barriers related to finances, legal status, and finding community. Their experiences will aim to shed light on the nuances that immigrant students have to face at CUNY and to bring awareness on how every immigrant student, regardless of status, is able to have success during college and post-grad.

After the screening, Nyoman will invite the three students featured in the video for a conversation. The panel will conclude with a brief Q&A with audience members.

Moderator and filmmaker:



Nyoman Cerrens Widhianta is a NYC based cinematographer, photographer, and editor from Nyoman has worked on a variety of projects, ranging from short films, spec commercials, documentaries, and live events. Nyoman has a deep understanding of how to use lighting, camera angle to tell compelling stories.

Originally from Jakarta, Indonesia, Nyoman has experienced growing up as an immigrant and hopes to share his experiences to shed light on improving immigrant communities.

Panelists and interviewees:

- Yasser Moreno (BMCC and Baruch College), CUNY UISP social media fellow
- Kyra (John Jay), MA in Criminal Justice
- Guillermo (Hunter College), BA in Film and Journalism

# CUNY Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs

## Panelists:

- Yasser Moreno is a social media fellow for CUNY UISP and an entrepreneurial enthusiast running Yacollectibles16, a collectibles business focused on trading cards, comics, and Funko Pops. He is a student at Baruch College, pursuing his bachelor's degree after earning an associate degree from BMCC. Yasser is passionate about storytelling, technology, and business innovation, drawing inspiration from his experiences as a mentor and advocate. In his free time, he enjoys baking, watching basketball, and exploring movies and TV shows.



- Kyra Mitchell is a criminal justice researcher and advocate dedicated to exploring incarceration, reentry, and the unique challenges faced by undocumented individuals within the justice system. She holds an Associate of Arts from Kingsborough Community College and both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts in Criminal Justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.



Kyra has firsthand experience navigating systemic barriers in education, employment, and legal status. These experiences fuel her commitment to research that amplifies the voices of marginalized communities. Her work began in 2020, examining housing access for the formerly incarcerated, and has since shifted to studying the reentry experiences of elderly individuals released from prison and the role of rehabilitation in their reintegration. Kyra is preparing for her third application to John Jay College's Ph.D. program in Criminal Justice, aspiring to contribute to scholarship that informs policy changes in immigration and criminal justice reform. She is passionate about advocating for equitable opportunities for undocumented students and justice-impacted individuals. Through her research and lived experience, she seeks to drive meaningful reform that addresses the intersection of immigration and incarceration.

April 4, 2025

## **Healthcare Beyond Borders**

**Friday April 4, 2025 from 10:00AM to 11:00AM**

Undocumented immigrants in the U.S. face systemic barriers to both accessing healthcare and entering the health professions. Healthcare Beyond Borders is a research-driven multimedia project that examines these challenges through the perspectives of healthcare providers, admission officers, aspiring physicians, and undocumented individuals themselves. This documentary will share interviews from the project, including firsthand testimonies aimed at fostering a more inclusive healthcare system.

Presenter, researcher and director: Mudjana Colin



Mudjana Colin is a researcher, advocate, and storyteller committed to equity in education and healthcare for immigrant communities. At CUNY's Undocumented & Immigrant Student Programs, she leads research on financial aid accessibility while providing direct support to students. With experience in clinical research, policy analysis, and community organizing, she works to uncover systemic barriers and drive meaningful change. Outside of her advocacy, Mudjana enjoys writing poetry, using storytelling as both a creative and transformative tool.

**Writing workshop by Dr. Mangual Figueroa and current CUNY students (co-authors)**

**Friday April 4, 2025 from 11:15AM to 12:15PM**

Recognizing the importance of art in both educational and advocacy spaces, Dr. Mangual Figueroa (CUNY Graduate Center) and her CUNY student co-authors will lead a writing workshop for attendees based on her recent publication, *Knowing Silence: How Children Talk About Immigration Status in School* (2024). The writing workshop will encourage participants to reflect on instances when they would prefer to stay silent, and when they feel comfortable speaking out. The writing workshop will also explore the concept of community safety.

Facilitators: Dr. Mangual Figueroa, Associate Professor in the Ph.D. programs in Urban Education and Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Cultures at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York



(Photo by Graduate Center Alex Irklievski)

Dr. Mangual Figueroa was born and raised in a Puerto Rican family in New York City. She began her career in education as a public school teacher, returning from college to teach English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Heritage Language in the South Bronx and East New York. Dr. Mangual Figueroa obtained her master's degree in bilingual education from Bank Street College of Education and her doctorate in education from the University of California, Berkeley. From 2010 to 2019 she was a faculty member in the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education where she prepared teachers for certification in English as a



Second Language and World Language. In 2019 she joined the faculty of the Graduate Center at the City University of New York where she is currently an Associate Professor in the Ph.D. programs in Urban Education and Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Cultures.

Dr. Mangual Figueroa has focused her research on the ways in which discourses of citizenship circulate across home and school settings in mixed-status Spanish-speaking immigrant communities. Her first book, published in 2024 by the University of Minnesota Press, is called *Knowing Silence: How Children Talk About Immigration Status in School*. This longitudinal ethnographic study—an exercise in acompañamiento—focuses on the lives of six Latina students from mixed-immigration-status families, from elementary school into middle school and beyond, to reveal the complex ways that young people understand and negotiate immigration status and its impact on their lives. *Knowing Silence* makes audible the experiences of immigrant-origin students on their own terms, offering teachers and researchers a crucial framework for understanding citizenship in the contemporary classroom. The book is a recipient of the 2024 American Educational Studies Association Critics' Choice Book Award and the 2024 Outstanding Book Award from The Council of Anthropology and Education (of the American Anthropological Association). Dr. Mangual Figueroa's work has also been published in journals including *Educational Researcher* and the *American Educational Research Journal*, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* and the *Bilingual Research Journal*.



## **Expanding CUNY's Imagination for Undocumented and Immigrant Students: Conversation with Campus Leaders**

**Friday April 4, 2025 from 12:30PM to 1:30PM**

This panel will serve as a space for current CUNY students to learn from CUNY leadership about how they envision supporting undocumented and immigrant students.

This panel will be moderated by CUNY UISP student fellow (TBD), who will be in conversation with Dr. Nancy Cantor, Hunter College President; Kenneth Adams, LaGuardia Community College President; Deborah Cheng, Director of Fellowship Programs and Office of Student Success at Colin Powell School, City College of New York; and, Karely Amaya, a current CUNY School of Law student who has extensive experience advocating for undocumented and immigrant students in the University of California system. Topics of discussion may include: scholarship opportunities for undocumented and immigrant students; NYS DREAM Act; and Opp4All.

### **Panelists:**

- Dr. Nancy Cantor, President of Hunter College
- Kenneth Adams, President of LaGuardia Community College
- Dr. Deborah Cheng, Director of Fellowship Programs and Office of Student Success at the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at The City College of New York
- Karely Amaya Rios, CUNY School of Law student



President of Hunter College

**Dr. Nancy Cantor** is recognized nationally and internationally for her leadership in emphasizing the role of universities as anchor institutions in their communities, especially by forging diverse, cross-sector collaboratives and leveraging publicly engaged scholarship to advance racial equity and equitable growth. As chancellor of Rutgers University–Newark from 2014–24, she has led one of the nation's most diverse research universities, promulgating efforts to leverage the university's many strengths, particularly its exceptional diversity, tradition of high-impact research, and role as an anchor institution in Newark, New Jersey, through strategic investments in

five broad areas in which the university's strengths align with those of cross-sector partners: educational pathways from pre-K through college; equitable growth through urban

entrepreneurship and economic development; cultivating creative expression through the arts and culture; strong, healthy and safe neighborhoods; and science in the urban environment.

Prior to her leadership of Rutgers-Newark, Cantor was chancellor and president of Syracuse University, where the breadth, depth, and success of her efforts to foster mutually beneficial collective impact initiatives between the university and community earned her one of higher education's highest honors, the Carnegie Corporation Academic Leadership Award, in 2008. Previously, Cantor had served as chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan, after having served as dean of Michigan's Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies and vice provost for academic affairs; professor of psychology and senior research scientist at the Institute for Social Research at Michigan; and chair of the department of psychology at Princeton University. While at Michigan, she was closely involved in the university's defense of affirmative action in the cases Grutter and Gratz, decided by the Supreme Court in 2003. A leading voice on inclusion, diversity, and full participation, she speaks and writes frequently on these issues. She is co-editor with Earl Lewis of the *Our Compelling Interests* book series published by the Princeton University Press.

She has served on national bodies including the National Science Foundation Committee on Equal Opportunity in Science and Engineering, The Century Foundation Task Force on Preventing Community Colleges from Becoming Separate and Unequal, the National Research Council Advisory Committee for the Office of Scientific and Engineering Personnel and as co-chair of its Committee on Women in Science and Engineering, the Congressional Commission on Military Training and Gender Related Issues, the advisory group of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Lincoln Project on Excellence and Access in Public Higher Education, the Aspen Institute Task Force on College Opportunity for High Achievers, and the Ford Foundation's Steering Committee of the project Building Knowledge for Social Justice.

In her role as a social psychologist, President Cantor is recognized for her scholarly contributions to the understanding of how individuals perceive and think about their social worlds, pursue personal goals, and how they regulate their behavior to adapt to life's most challenging social environments. She lectures and writes extensively on the role of universities as anchor institutions in their communities, along with other crucial issues in higher education such as rewarding public scholarship, sustainability, liberal education and the creative campus, the status of women in the academy, and racial justice and diversity. Her thought is informed by broad leadership experience at all levels within public and private universities, as well as national and international organizations, positioning her as a sought-after advisor and speaker on urban economic and community development. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the National Academy of Medicine of the National Academies. Among the boards and committees of which Cantor currently is a member are: the American Institutes for Research, the Ford Foundation's International Fellows Program Advisory Council, Presidents Subgroup of the Anchor Institutions Task Force, the New Jersey Performing

Arts Center, co-chair of the steering committee of the Presidents Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, and co-chair of the Newark Anchor Collaborative.

She has been honored with numerous awards, including the Ernest L. Boyer Award from New American Colleges & Universities, the Anchor Institutions Task Force Community Engagement Award, the Robert Zemsky Medal for Innovation in Higher Education, the Woman of Achievement Award from the Anti-Defamation League, the Making a Difference for Women Award from the National Council for Research on Women, the Reginald Wilson Diversity Leadership Award from the American Council on Education, and the Frank W. Hale, Jr. Diversity Leadership Award from the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education.



**Kenneth Adams** is the president of LaGuardia Community College. LaGuardia is located in Long Island City, Queens, and is part of the City University of New York (CUNY). Since taking the helm in 2020, President Adams has led the college's efforts to improve student success, strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and increase government and philanthropic support.

In 2021, he launched a bold [fundraising campaign](#) to raise funds to help LaGuardia students and Queens residents rise and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The "Tomorrow Campaign" reached its \$15 million goal in March 2021.

Before joining LaGuardia, President Adams was dean of workforce and economic development at Bronx Community College/CUNY.

Prior to joining CUNY, President Adams spent more than 20 years leading economic and workforce development organizations in New York State. He served as acting commissioner of the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, president and CEO of Empire State Development, and commissioner of the NYS Department of Economic Development.

He previously led the Business Council of New York State and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. He was also the founding executive director of [New York Cares](#).

President Adams is a director of the Queens Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the Long Island City Partnership, and the Research Foundation of CUNY. He has served on boards, commissions, councils, and advisory groups on behalf of five governors and two mayors.

# CUNY | Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs

President Adams received BA and MA degrees and an Ed.D. *honoris causa* from Middlebury College. He lives with his family in Brooklyn.



**Dr. Deborah Cheng** is the Director of Fellowship Programs and the Office of Student Success at the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at The City College of New York. Under her leadership, the Office of Student Success offers a range of co-curricular programs designed to enhance students' professional and personal growth. These include peer and professional mentoring, paid internships, and fellowships – all aimed at equipping students with the skills and experience to secure career-starting jobs after graduation. Dr. Cheng also oversees 11 public service fellowship programs addressing critical global and social issues, from climate change to racial justice to LGBTQ+ rights and international human rights.

Before joining the Colin Powell School, she served as Program Officer for the Mellon Mays Graduate Initiatives Program, based at the Social Science Research Council. Dr. Cheng holds a PhD from UC Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group, where her research focused on water access and privatization in her hometown of Manila, Philippines, highlighting her longstanding commitment to social equity and environmental justice.



**Karely Amaya Rios (She/Her/Ella)**- Karely Amaya Rios is a first-generation Latina pursuing a law degree at CUNY School of Law. Growing up in a low-income immigrant community in Southern California, she witnessed firsthand the impact of anti-immigrant policies on her family and community. Karely is a transformational leader committed to advocating for marginalized individuals and hopes to build bridges between policies and communities of color. During her undergraduate and graduate studies at UCLA, she focused on grassroots organizing to advance immigrant rights in California. One of her proudest



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achievements was co-founding the Undocumented Student-Led Network and spearheading the Opportunity For All Campaign, which aims to ensure equal access to campus job opportunities for all students, regardless of immigration status. Karely is passionate about the intersections of immigrant rights with health, labor, and education, and is committed to building solidarity across movements.



## KEYNOTE by Laura X Moya

April 4, 2025 from 2:35pm to 3:35pm



**Laura X. Moya Guerrero (they/she)** is a filmmaker and artist whose work intimately engages with the sensorial and the poetic. Through a contemplative cinematic language, they explore the self, the body, and place—how we belong to the landscapes around us and within us. Their films are immersive inquiries, tracing the intimate and the political, the seen and the felt.

With directing and editing credentials, Laura's films have screened at prestigious venues and platforms, including AFI DOCS, MoMA, BAMcinemaFEST, The New York Times, Rooftop Film Festival, The Shed, Mimesis, History Channel, and Telemundo. Their initiatives have garnered recognition in outlets such as *The Washington*

*Post* and *Variety*, and have received support from notable organizations including The Sundance Film Institute, NYFA, Catapult Film Fund, AXS Film Fund, and BAC. With over 15 years of experience in documentary and commercial filmmaking, Laura crafts narratives that resonate—whether in quiet, meditative moments or urgent, collective calls for change.

In addition to their directing work, Laura has built an extensive editing portfolio. They were an editor for Kartemquin's *Traces of Home*, directed by Colette Ghunim, and have edited a range of impactful short films, including *Shirley Chisholm: A Groundbreaking Legacy* for the History Channel, *Cinta Amarilla* about Beatriz Gonzalez at The Shed, and a Spike Lee Tribute for MoMA.

Currently, Laura is in production on *What the Pier Gave Us*, a feature documentary supported by The Sundance Institute and Catapult Film Fund, and is completing *Greyfields*, which investigates a seemingly abandoned mall in Ohio. Their debut film, *The Rights of Butterflies*, is a portrait of undocumented youth that became a catalyst for action—its screening tour contributing to the passage of the DREAM Act in Maryland and earning recognition from *The Washington Post*.

Laura is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where they earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film & TV Production on a full scholarship—an award granted to only two

students across the entire Tisch Arts department. Their commitment to the craft has also led to fellowships with the Sundance Latine Film Fellowship, Sundance Art of Editing Fellowship, Sundance Accessible Futures Intensive, and the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Diversity in the Edit Room Fellowship. They were also named Associate Artist-in-Residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts by Natalia Almada.

As an educator, Laura has taught graduate students at the New School's media department and led workshops for DCTV, reflecting their commitment to nurturing the next generation of filmmakers. They also prioritize education in their own projects, always integrating an educational component by providing training or workshops for the teams they work with. This approach fosters a culture of growth within the film community, enabling participants to learn new skills while engaging in meaningful, hands-on experience.



## **Exhibition “The Surrealism of being Illegal” and Artist Talk with Lupita Romero**

**April 4, 2025 from 3:45pm to 4:45pm**



During this artist's talk, Lupita Romero will be presenting a series of works, *The Surrealism of being Illegal*, that explore the experience of undocumented people navigating bureaucratic systems of exclusion and oppression. This series includes several paintings, collages, sculpture and video/audio pieces, inspired by the style of surrealism and its emphasis on imagination, vivid saturated colors, juxtaposition of images and symbolism, and techniques such as the use of collaging and mixed media. Lupita Romero will be speaking about the motivations, techniques, and process of art making for this series of works.

Artist: Lupita Romero

Lupita Romero is a visual artist, writer, and community organizer who seeks to depict her life, her community and her identity through her work.

She was born in Mexico on December 12, 1991. She migrated to New York City in 2001 and was raised in Queens, where she currently resides. She has worked as a political educator, community organizer, journalist, and as a legal worker. She is an active member in her union, ALAA - UAW Local 2325.

She was the highlighted artist for the CUNY-IIE UndocuEdu's Art Exhibition, *Belonging Beyond Borders: Nuances Exploring Immigrant Identity, Community, & Joy*. She was an artist fellow of the Bronx Speaks: Dreamer Project of the Bronx Museum. Her writing has been published in the Huffington Post, Punto Rojo Magazine, and Otherness Magazine. She earned her Associates Degree in Latin American Studies from LaGuardia Community College and she is now pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Studio Arts from Hunter College.