

“The History of Latinx Students at Duke University”

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## Thesis Abstract

This thesis uncovers the history of Latinx students at Duke University since the arrival of the first Latinx students in 1926 to the protests and demands in 2015 that led to the creation of La Casa, a space dedicated to Latinx students. This thesis investigates how Latinx students racially identified themselves since their arrival at Duke and how the Duke University administration identified them, at a time when Duke felt encapsulated in a Black/White racial paradigm. Since their arrival to Duke in 1926, Latinx students were racially identified as “other.” This distinction that was neither Black nor White, allowed Latinx students to attend the racially segregated university. From 1926 to the late 1950s, Latinx students organized under different identities, as part of the Alien, Cosmopolitan, Pan-American, and International Club. In the 1980s, Latinx students began to embrace a “Latin” identity and organized themselves as a community based on a common ancestry. Overall, from 1926 to 2017, Latinx students organized shared a common “otherness” as Latinx minorities in the U.S. and at Duke. This thesis will trace how at first the small number of Latinx students, mostly from Latin America, came to organize themselves as a “Latinx” community that protested eighty-nine years later.

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## **Introduction**

### **The History of Latinx Students at Duke University**

When I was a first-year at Duke University, I was sought out by Latinx-identifying students who were involved in Mi Gente, the Latinx Student Association. The Latinx students mentored me; they showed me how to become an active community member, one that fought for social justice on campus in the form of supporting other marginalized students on campus. I was part of Mi Gente meetings since my first year at Duke, where I saw older students discuss chalk-full agendas, take turns to speak, direct a budget of over \$20,000, and organize educational, political, and social events on campus. I was in awe of how efficient the students were, but as I continued participating in Mi Gente, I realized that the students did not know very much about the history of Latinx students at Duke University. They had a few Mi Gente documents from 2005, a few constitutions, a list of demands that were written in 2005, a list of contacts through the Latino alumni group, Duke University Latino Hispanic Alumni Association (DUHLAA), and a few pictures of past student events.

But that's it.

I wanted to know who were the students that founded Mi Gente and why. I wanted to know if there were Latinos at Duke before Mi Gente. When did the first Latinx student come to Duke and why? I went to the university library, asked, and was directed to a skinny folder about Mi Gente and Spectrum, an umbrella organization for identity groups on campus that organized in the 1980s. The library nor the administration knew much about the history of Latinx students at Duke University. I made it my mission during my time at Duke to find the history of Latinx students at Duke University, but it wasn't until I met my advisor, Sarah (Sally) Deutsch, when I realized that I could materialize this curiosity into a written work.

In this thesis I uncover the first Latinx student, Andres Rodriguez-Diago y Gomez, who came to Duke in 1926 from Colombia.<sup>1</sup> I organize the history of Latinx students into two eras—the first era from 1926 to 1954 and the second from 1980 to 2015.<sup>2</sup> In the first era, all the Latinx students at Duke University were from Latin American countries and U.S. possessions, most of them were from wealthy family backgrounds, and all of the students were white-passing, enough so that they could attend the racially-segregated Duke University before de-segregation in 1963. Latinx students joined clubs with Asian and European international students who had arrived at Duke since the late 1880s.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1960s, Black students were admitted to Duke University and in doing so, transformed the university into a space where marginalized students could protest discrimination and racial violence. Their activism influenced the university administration to actively recruit more Black students *and* Latinx students. Therefore, the second era of Latinx students at Duke stretched Latinx origins—from Latin America and U.S. possessions, to now the mainland U.S. These students were no longer just from wealthy family backgrounds, but they were also from low and middle-class backgrounds. Many of the Latinx students in the second era were migrants, children of migrants. They were brown-skinned; they experienced discrimination in the U.S. and at Duke University.

Latinx students in both eras organized themselves through student clubs in order to minimize their “otherness” on Duke’s campus. Latinx students from 1926 to 2015 felt a sense of “otherness” at Duke University because there were not as many students from their home

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<sup>1</sup> *Chanticleer*, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> There is a gap between the two eras of Latinx student history from 1954 to 1980 because I was not able to find sufficient information about Latinx students at Duke nor Latinx student clubs during this period.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Soong (1863-1918), Articles about Duke University History, Duke History, University Archives, Duke University.

countries. Not many students spoke their native language. Not many students at Duke understood their native culture. And finally, they were treated as “other” both by the university administration and their peers. Furthermore, as an institution located state in the U.S. South., Duke effectively deemed Latinx students as “cultural minorities,” in one sense as national foreigners but also as minorities in North Carolina. These students resided in a state that did not have many Latinx people from the 1920 to the 1980s, and where the Latinx identity disrupted the Black-White racial structure in the Jim Crown era. Latinx students had to learn to navigate race relations in the Jim Crown South, ultimately, opted to pass as White-Anglo students in order to study, live, and thrive at Duke University.

For most of this eighty-nine year old saga, the term “Latinx” is an anachronism. The term “Latinx” was created in 2014 and was chosen for this thesis because it is a term that is meant to include communities outside of the mainstream Latino/Latina identity. The term “Latinx” includes indigenous, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities.<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, “Latinx” will mean “otherness,” an otherness that is rooted in being a “cultural minority at Duke,” as well as an otherness shared by students from Latin America, which includes Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Central America and South America. The term Latinx will also refer to students who lived in the U.S. and had parents, grandparents or guardians who were from Latin America. Thirdly, “Latinx” will include students who identified as part of a Latin American community, in the U.S. or abroad. The history of this term will be used throughout this thesis to unite this complicated group of students, whose identity, for most of their history at Duke University, was and is largely misunderstood by their Duke community.

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<sup>4</sup> Ramirez, Tanisha Love, and Zeba Blay. "Why People Are Using The Term 'Latinx'." Latino Voices. April 07, 2017. Accessed September 24, 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-people-are-using-the-term-latinx\\_us\\_57753328e4b0cc0fa136a159](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-people-are-using-the-term-latinx_us_57753328e4b0cc0fa136a159).

This history of Latinx students at Duke University is the first of its kind. It is one of the first historical works that explains the history of Latinx students in the U.S. South since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most U.S.-born Latinx students in the 20<sup>th</sup> century studied outside of the U.S. South. Most of the historiographies of Latinx students have been compiled by the administrations of universities in the Southwest and West.<sup>5</sup> This thesis is the first academic work to research and study the history of Latinx students at Duke University or any university in the U.S. South. This research is founded on articles in the university's independent student newspaper, *The Chronicle*, the student-led yearbook, *The Chanticleer*, the university administration's records, and on the interviews of alumni Latinx students at Duke University. These primary sources explain the social and political dynamics of private universities in the American "South." This thesis will also contextualize the history of Latinx students with the history of U.S. foreign policy, the history of Puerto Rico, Cuba and other Latin American nations or possessions, and the national political tensions that permeated university campuses. This thesis utilized every *Chanticleer* yearbook from 1928 to 2017, in order to collect a list of Latinx students. *The Chronicle* articles were used in order to build a narrative of student organizations, events and debates that were being had about Latinx issues and culture. Latinx student interviews were used in order to understand the racial tensions on campus and how students navigated the university's Black and White racial paradigm.

Unraveling the history of Latinx students in higher education is important because Latinx college students have always been more than just a student demographic at their respective universities. Latinx college students have changed the course of their universities and have organized in response to national social and political movements. In response to the Civil Rights

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the University of California system, University of Texas system and at universities in Arizona.<sup>5</sup>

Movement and the Chicano Movement in the 1960s, hundreds of Mexican-American students, also known as Chicanos, held a nationwide conference at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1969. They organized a conference called “Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA),” also known as the “Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán.”<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this conference was to promote Chicano unity and empowerment through political action. Since 1969, MECHA has met annually and has organized national boycotts, political statements and created a national coalition for farmworkers.<sup>7</sup> MECHA is an example of how the history of Latinx students in the South and Southwest can be meticulously documented and how that history can be influential in regional senses of pride, as well as official university decision-making.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on how the first Latinx students, Andres Rodriguez-Diago y Gomez and Rodolfo Rivera, navigated their racial and cultural identities at Duke University in the 1920s and 1930s. I explain how these students identified themselves and how, in turn, the Duke University administration misidentified them. Latinx students felt alienated on Duke’s campus by the university administration and by their peers through microaggressions, seemingly innocuous discriminatory remarks made in passing, and through official documentation at the administrative level. The university administration “othered” their Latinx students by inconsistently labeling them as “foreign,” “other,” and “alien” in their registrar records.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, I argue that the first Latinx students at Duke passed as White-Anglo at Duke University in order to be able to attend the racially segregated university. By

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<sup>6</sup> "History." MEChA Official National Website.

<sup>7</sup> "History." MEChA Official National Website.

<sup>8</sup> The term “othered” is created to establish a pattern of mistreatment, isolation, and alienation of Latinx students by the Duke University administration.



passing as White and attending Duke, Latinx students were complacent with the practices of racial discrimination of Black people at Duke and in North Carolina.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will describe the student organizations that Latinx students joined and founded from 1926 to 1954. Diago y Gomez and Rivera joined the Cosmopolitan Club at Duke and coped with their feelings of “otherness” by taking steps to socially legitimize themselves as a respectable organization on campus. I argue that Latinx students were influenced by national and international political events which shaped in turn the way they choose to identify. The Good Neighbor Policy in 1933 influenced students to identify as “Pan-American,” placing them in a U.S.-friendly political position as students from Latin American. Latinx students coped with this “otherness” at Duke by attempting to educate their Anglo community and by finding refuge among other Latinx students.

The third chapter of this thesis will explain how Black student activism in the 1960s and 1970s caused the university administration to increase the number of Latinx students on campus. In the 1980s, the growing number of Latinx students organized themselves as S.A.L.S.A., the Spanish American Latin Student Association. Students in S.A.L.S.A actively spoke about their experiences as a minority community on Duke’s campus.<sup>9</sup> S.A.L.S.A. members consisted mostly of Cuban American students whose families were negatively affected by the Castro dictatorship after the Cuban Revolution. This chapter will analyze why Latinx students organized themselves as an ethno-cultural group as opposed to a linguistic one, and why that trend continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>9</sup> Griffith, Kappy. "Latin Students Discuss Heritage." Duke University Libraries: Digital Collections. Accessed September 24, 2017. <http://contentdm.lib.duke.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15957coll13/id/43900/rec/2>.

The history of Latinx students at Duke University must be understood to show that Latinx people are not foreign to the U.S. South. Our contributions to the U.S. South have changed the history of this region and will continue to change it as we now make up about ten percent of the state's population. Latinx history in the U.S. South is not a monolith, but an ongoing negotiation of national/local politics and sentiment: Latinx have passed as White in North Carolina, but they have also been racialized as undocumented people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Likewise, the complete story of Latinx students at Duke University was not always one of anti-racist activism or unity. It was a complicated history that placed Latinx students in an ostracized category even before their arrival to Duke. Latinx students entered a racially tense segregated region of the U.S. where their identity was not completely legible. Eighty-nine years later, Latinx students have tried to make sense of their identity and its ramifications, utilizing the complexity (and complicity) of Latinidad as a means of achieving equity at Duke, and in Durham, in the words of Malcom X, for all of its members.

## Chapter 1 Foreign Students and Foreign Identities

### Introduction

As a young man in his late twenties, Rodolfo Rivera, a Porto Rican with a “ruddy” complexion, walked onto the brand-new, racially segregated Duke University in 1928.<sup>10</sup> In his first two years at Duke University, Rivera lived and studied in what is known today as East campus, originally Trinity College, while the entire West Campus was being built in the vision of Black architect Julian Abele.<sup>11</sup> After attending high school on the island of Puerto Rico, Rivera attended the Southwestern Institute in Louisiana and received his bachelor’s degree.<sup>12</sup> He began his doctorate degree in Latin American history at Duke University in 1928, being among the first graduate students at Duke University.<sup>13</sup> Rivera’s story at Duke encapsulates the history of the U.S. as an empire, explained the way Duke, a Southern university, understood race and described the type of elite Latinx that first studied at Duke University.

Rivera was the first Latinx graduate student to study at Duke University. Two years before his arrival, the first undergraduate Latinx student, Andres Rodriguez-Diago y Gomez from Colombia came to Duke in 1926.<sup>14</sup> During their time at Duke since 1926, Latinx students embraced different labels of identity at different times. Most of the time they identified with their

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

Rivera, *The National Archives*, 1940-1947.

Rivera, “Records of the Selective Service System,” 147; Box: 193.

Rivera was from Barranquitas, Porto Rico, a municipality located in the center of Porto Rico. During the Spanish conquest, Taino natives moved inland to Barranquitas, to escape slavery. Once Spanish settlers began moving to Porto Rico, poor settlers also moved to Barranquitas. The Spanish and the Tainos intermarried and their children were mestizos. Most people from Barranquitas were mestizo.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

*Duke Library*, “Julian Abele.”

<sup>12</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

*University of Louisiana*, “Name Changes.”

<sup>13</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

<sup>14</sup> *The Chanticleer*, 1929.

nationality, sometimes they identified through political and regional terms like Pan-American, and eventually they identified themselves as “Latin” in the 1980s. Meanwhile, the Duke University administration at times failed to keep records of the number of foreign students and their country of origin.<sup>15</sup> The university administration failed to understand and at times, misrepresented their Latinx student’s identity. In this chapter I chronicle the arrival of the first Latinx students at Duke University in the 1920s. I examine the ways the registrar documented its “other” students and how that affected its students. Finally, I reveal how students attempted to influence the university administration through policy changes and student organizations.

### **First Graduate Latinx Student at Duke**

From 1926 to 1969, the Latinx students enrolled at Duke were children of wealthy and powerful families. This pattern of students began Andres Rodriguez-Diago y Gomez and was continued by Rodolfo Rivera. Rivera’s father died before Rivera came to Duke University. Even though the family’s main provider had passed, the family had enough money to pay for tuition at the Southwestern Louisiana Institute and at Duke University.<sup>16</sup> In 1930, about ninety percent of families in the U.S. made less than five thousand dollars a year.<sup>17</sup> At the time Duke did not provide any scholarships to graduate students and tuition cost two hundred and fifty dollars a year.<sup>18</sup> Rivera finished his doctorate degree in four years, totaling his tuition costs at one thousand dollars.<sup>19</sup> Rivera’s family had enough money to get him to graduate school in the U.S. instead of having him attend a university in Porto Rico.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>16</sup> Name Changes, Name Changes & Presidents, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The full name of the school was Southwestern Louisiana Institute of Liberal and Technical Learning

<sup>17</sup> Department of Labor, *History of Wages*.

<sup>18</sup> Quick Statistics, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

<sup>19</sup> Tuition, plus the cost of room and board, totaled to over fourteen thousand dollars in 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Historia de la UPR. Puerto Rico, The University of Puerto Rico.

The years leading up to the Great Depression were some of the most prosperous for the university.<sup>21</sup> In 1924, Trinity College received a forty-million-dollar endowment from James B. Duke Trinity College became Duke University.<sup>22</sup> These funds were used to build the university, including its library. When Rivera came to Duke, the university library was receiving more books than it could catalog.<sup>23</sup> A top senior historian and director of the library, William Kenneth Boyd, was spending more time cataloging the university library than mentoring his graduate students. Even as the university was growing and prospering, the Great Depression still “[bore] heavily upon the fortunes of young academics.”<sup>24</sup> Even though Rivera came from a well-off family background, his family’s support was not enough to cover his costs through graduate school at Duke. Rivera needed to work at the university library in 1929.<sup>25</sup>

During the Great Depression, many students held part-time jobs at the university library and in the dining halls. The university library offered work to about thirty students.<sup>26</sup> As one of those students, Rivera specifically worked on a special Peruvian collection, “a fine repository of rare and valuable books and manuscripts dealing primarily with the history of Peru and neighboring South American countries: Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil.”<sup>27</sup> Rivera’s other job duty at the library was working as a reference librarian.<sup>28</sup> This included helping students with specific research questions and referring them to specific collections in the

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<sup>21</sup> Berton, *Great Depression*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Phelps, “*I Have Selected Duke University*,” 24.

<sup>23</sup> Phelps, “*I Have Selected Duke University*,” 24.

<sup>24</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

<sup>25</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

*Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

<sup>26</sup> Duke University, *The Chanticleer 1931*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

<sup>28</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

university archives. Rivera's ability to read Spanish and his interests in Latin American history aided him in organizing the Peruvian collection.

In his first year at Duke, he received his master of the arts degree and began his doctoral degree in the history department. In the summer of his third year at Duke, in 1931, the university library was closed and Rivera and his colleagues in the history department were having trouble finding employment. Rivera and his Anglo colleague Thomas Clark "walked miles commiserating with each other over [their] grim futures."<sup>29</sup> In their search for summer employment, Clark felt that he "had two distinct advantages over Rivera." Clark "was Protestant and spoke English with a Southern drawl, while he [Rivera] was Catholic and spoke with a Spanish accent."<sup>30</sup>

Clark's outline of his "advantages" over Rivera noted a culture of competition among the students in the history department. It also noted a feeling of insecurity among the students in their ability to find employment during the Great Depression. Clark outlined his Anglo cultural and linguistic superiority over Rivera to reassure himself that he was a better candidate. Later that summer, Rivera was offered a job teaching at Limestone College, a small Baptist school in South Carolina.<sup>31</sup> Clark described this opportunity as "a nibble of a job." Clark's belittlement of Rivera was in response to his jealousy of Rivera's success in finding employment. Clark later received a job offer to teach at the University of Kentucky. He quickly accepted the offer but it was withdrawn because the school learned that he did not yet earn his doctorate degree. Clark spent that summer unemployed.

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<sup>29</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

<sup>30</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

<sup>31</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 158.

In preparation for their general examinations, Rivera and Clark stayed at Duke during the Christmas holiday break. The two men asked two young Anglo women who worked at the university library on a double date to Raleigh. They took the women to a public restaurant and movie theatre. They drove the young women in a colleague's rusted Model-T Ford automobile. Until 1950, the state constitution of North Carolina prohibited marriage between Black and Native Americans with white North Carolinians.<sup>32</sup> As late as the 1940s, Black men were lynched in North Carolina for even making "a snide remark" at a white women.<sup>33</sup> The social acceptance for Rivera to have dated a Anglo woman in 1931 meant that Rivera was white-enough to date a Anglo woman.

Since the early 1900s, small numbers of Porto Ricans and their extended families migrated to North Carolina.<sup>34</sup> Both men and women worked a variety of low and high-status jobs, such as policemen, stenographers, bus boys, and stewards.<sup>35</sup> Inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriage between Porto Ricans and mainland-born U.S. citizens were common among Porto Rican migrants.<sup>36</sup> The makeup of these marriages depended on the racial identification of the Porto Rican spouse. Porto Ricans who racially identified as white, married non-Porto Rican Anglo spouses, whereas Porto Ricans who racially identified as Black, married non-Porto Rican Black spouses.<sup>37</sup> Even though there was a Porto Rican presence in North Carolina, on Duke

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<sup>32</sup> Lee, "NC Prohibits."

The term white is used instead of Anglo in order to address that miscegenation laws applied to white Latinx and Anglo people.

<sup>33</sup> *The Robesonian*, "Slipped Up This Time."

<sup>34</sup> Fred Fleagl. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Bureau of the Census, United States of America.

<sup>35</sup> Josephine Mangual. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Bureau of the Census, United States of America.

<sup>36</sup> Juanita Rios, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Bureau of the Census, United States of America.

Marriage where both spouses were Port Rican were also common at the time. 1930.

<sup>37</sup> Elias Torre 1909, North Carolina State Archives; Raleigh, North Carolina

University's campus, the Porto Rican identity was still not recognizable. Ethnic identity formation forms out of a genealogical distinctiveness with the dominant cultural group and requires at least three members to become a group.<sup>38</sup> Rivera's presence as the first Porto Rican and graduate Latinx student at Duke meant there were not enough Porto Rican or Latin American students for the community to be able to make any generalizations about them as a group.



Image 1: Rivera (second from the left) with his colleagues in his second year at Duke University in 1929.<sup>39</sup>

In the sepia-toned picture above, Rivera did not seem anymore darker skinned than his Anglo colleagues. Years after graduating from Duke University, Rivera married an Anglo

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There were no examples of interracial marriage among Porto Ricans in North Carolina. Such marriages would break anti-miscegenation laws and be privy to de-facto white supremacists' vigilante violence.

<sup>38</sup> Bernal, *Ethnic Identity*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> W. Porter Kellam Scrapbook, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.



woman and on his marriage license racially identified as “white.” Similarly, in his World War II draft papers, his complexion was described as “ruddy,” a healthy shade of red.<sup>40</sup> His phenotypical appearance did not out him as a brown person of color or as any different from his Anglo colleagues at Duke. It was his “Spanish” accent however, that was an obvious indicator of “otherness” in a community where the “Southern drawl” was prevalent.<sup>41</sup> To his Anglo colleagues and romantic interests, Rivera’s “otherness” was reconciled by his status as the son of a wealthy family and because of his educational status as a graduate student at Duke University.<sup>42</sup> These class and color distinctions compensated for the alleged “other” threat that he imposed, a specter of “brown threat,” one that while prevented full access to Anglo spaces, was nevertheless a “leg-up” over Black men. Rivera’s socioeconomic and racial privilege allowed him access the ivory tower of Duke University’s history department.<sup>43</sup>

Rivera achieved success in his academic and professional career at Duke University. He was fluent in Italian and Spanish and in just four years, Rivera received his doctorate degree in Latin American history. He was among the first Duke students to receive his Ph.D., just three years after the university awarded its first doctorate degree in 1929.<sup>44</sup> The Academy of History of Colombia was so impressed by Rivera’s dissertation about Francisco de Paula Santander, a liberator of Colombia, that they published his dissertation in their print journal, *Bulletin*.<sup>45</sup> In the same year that Rivera received his doctorate, he was promoted to the executive secretary-ship of

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<sup>40</sup> Rivera 1940, 147; Box: 193., United States World War II Draft Cards, The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>41</sup> Clark, *My Century*, 155.

<sup>42</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin*.

<sup>43</sup> Chavez, *Latino Threat* 5.

<sup>44</sup> Phelps, “I Have Selected Duke University,” 24. *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

<sup>45</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Assumes Duties.”

the university's Press because of his continued work in the library.<sup>46</sup> Two years later, in 1934, and on the tenth anniversary of the Press, he became the Duke University Press secretary, a prestigious and highly coveted staff position within the university.<sup>47</sup> His professional advancement through the university's Press was not circumscribed by his Porto Rican identity. As the university's Press secretary, Rivera decided which journals and books were to be accepted, edited, and published in the Press.<sup>48</sup> He was responsible for issuing ten periodicals and about ten books each year on varied subjects.<sup>49</sup>

Even as the University's Press secretary, Rivera stayed involved in Duke student groups. As a student himself in 1929, Rivera became the vice president of the graduate club, a student led group that included all the graduate students at Duke University.<sup>50</sup> The organization hosted intellectual conversations. That year as vice president, Rivera invited a zoologist from Syracuse University to give a talk to the students entitled, "The Interest of Lower Animals on Human Progress."<sup>51</sup> As a staff member in 1935, Dr. Rivera, organized and led a group of students called the Explorers club, on a hiking trip into the Carolina mountains. In 1936, Sigma Delta Pi, the university's student-run Spanish honor society organized the first annual Spanish fiesta and continued it a second year in 1937.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Rivera, along with university professors, were involved in this event by serving as judges for the club's Spanish declamation contest.<sup>53</sup> Dr. Rivera's knowledge of the Spanish language and of "Latin American" culture made him a consistent point

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<sup>46</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Rivera Assumes Duties."

<sup>47</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Rivera Assumes Duties."

<sup>48</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Rivera Assumes Duties."

<sup>49</sup> *Duke Chronicle* "Duke Press."

<sup>50</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Zoologist From Syracuse," 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Zoologist From Syracuse," 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Spanish Speech," 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Spanish Speech," 1.

of contact for the student organization and thus, gave him additional responsibility during his time at Duke.

One of the most revealing events in Rivera and Duke's history was in 1932, when Rivera presided over an organized debate at Duke University between students from Duke and students from the University of Porto Rico.<sup>54</sup> The topic of the match was whether the "U.S. should cease its policy of armed intervention in the Caribbean."<sup>55</sup> This collegiate debate was a microcosm of the national discourse on the strained relationship between the U.S. and Latin America.

Coming into its age of overseas imperialism in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the U.S. practiced military intervention in the Panama Canal, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, Chile, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. These imperialist practices established an international sense of tension and distrust among Latin America towards the U.S.<sup>56</sup> In 1932, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt was debating this same issue among its administration and on how to improve relations with Latin America to establish beneficial trade.<sup>57</sup>

The match at Duke was not between Duke students and representatives from a sovereign Latin American country. Instead, it was with students from a U.S. possession. Since the U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898 and under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, the U.S. acquired the island of Porto Rico as a commonwealth.<sup>58</sup> In 1920, the U.S. passed the Merchant Marine Act, also known as the Jones Act, which legally recognized and solidified the U.S.'s

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<sup>54</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Debaters Meet."

Before coming to Duke, Rivera had been part of the University of Porto Rico's first forensics team, the school's student debate team

<sup>55</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Debaters Meet."

<sup>56</sup> Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy*.

<sup>57</sup> Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy*.

<sup>58</sup> Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy*.

permanent navy on the island and forced all countries to trade with Porto Rico through the U.S.<sup>59</sup> To many Porto Ricans, these U.S. policies were acts of aggression. The Jones Act had granted U.C. citizenship to Porto Ricans, but this privilege was undermined as Porto Ricans were not given a choice on whether they wanted to either become a U.S. state, become a sovereign nation or remain a U.S. colony. This national political argument was the background for the debate at Duke University in 1932.

In the debate, according to *The Chronicle*, the Porto Rican students made a “typical Latin American argument:” Caribbean countries should have the right and privilege to rule themselves without foreign intervention.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, Duke students argued that it was “necessary and harmonious” for a strong and stable power like the U.S. to exercise supervision over the Caribbean. In describing the Porto Rican student’s argument as “typical,” *The Chronicle* devalued the contention by connoting that it was common, unimaginative and incorrect. Meanwhile, the Duke student’s argument was imperialist and patronized the Caribbean, including Porto Rico, by arguing that the U.S. had “the self-assumed right” to intervene. *The Chronicle* failed to characterize the Duke argument as “typical,” and revealed that among Anglo American Duke students, there was a shared understanding of “Latin American” political opinion: Latin Americans wanted self-government free from U.S. intervention. In 1932, Porto Ricans had already been given U.S. citizenship, yet, the Duke student’s support for U.S. military intervention in the Caribbean revealed that Anglo American Duke students did not recognize Porto Rico or Porto Ricans as their equals.

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<sup>59</sup> *Bankhead-Jones Act Amendment*

<sup>60</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Debaters Meet.”

At the end of the debate, Rivera intentionally did not choose a winner. The match itself revealed how U.S. imperialist ideology was ubiquitous among Anglo American Duke students. It also revealed the racist and paternalistic ideology the students shared towards people and students from Latin American, the Caribbean and especially Porto Rico. This debate what the backdrop of the social and political climate Latinx student would enter as they came to Duke University. While Rivera was a white Duke student, this match was emblematic of how as a Porto Rican, the legitimacy of his American identity was up for debate.

In 1937, *The Chronicle* reported about a rumor circulating among inner circles in Washington D.C. that Dr. Rivera was a possible choice for President F.D.R.'s appointment to the office of commissioner of education in Puerto Rico.<sup>61</sup> In 1942, Dr. Rivera was appointed as the commissioner of education for Puerto Rico and ended his fourteen-year career at Duke University.<sup>62</sup>

### **The “Foreign” Concept**

Duke University's Office of the University Registrar was subject to national and international political affairs, which influenced the way Duke would label their foreign students. The office of the registrar was responsible for collecting the demographic data of all of their students at Duke.<sup>63</sup> From 1928 to 1950, the registrar's office took different approaches in recording the data on their students. For most of the 1930s, the registrar would record the geographical distribution of their “foreign” and domestic students on the same list.<sup>64</sup> Beginning in 1938 and continuing on through the 1950s, the registrar created separate lists of all “foreign”

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<sup>61</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Rivera Rumored,” 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Duke Chronicle* “Duke Press.”

<sup>63</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>64</sup> The word “foreign” is in quotes to signify that the university is labeling their students with this term.

students at the request of independent organizations. These organizations were an array of local, federal and international groups that had specific interests in documenting “foreign” students studying in the U.S.

From 1928 to 1935, nearing and during the Great Depression, Duke was growing as an institution as a wave of xenophobia influenced national immigration policy. By 1930, the state department under the Hoover administration, restricted foreign immigration to the U.S. by denying most foreign visas, increasing the number of deportations of Mexican migrants, and continuing to implement the quota immigration system.<sup>65</sup> These policies consequently reduced the number of foreign students that would have enrolled in U.S. universities. This wave of xenophobia came to North Carolina when crop prices fell and thousands of farmers were forced to file bankruptcy, migrate or sank deep into debt.<sup>66</sup> Duke University however, was in its prime time to grow as an institution.

Trinity College, the men’s college, was focused on growing as an institution and increasing its student enrollment. This focus on growth came in 1924 after J.B. Duke gifted forty million dollars to create the Duke Endowment, transforming Trinity College to become Duke University.<sup>67</sup> From 1928 to 1935, Duke’s undergraduate and graduate student enrollment doubled from a total of two-thousand eight hundred students in 1930 to four thousand three hundred students in 1935.<sup>68</sup> In 1932, the university’s West Campus officially opened and housed Trinity College. The university now had more dormitories, dining halls and classrooms to fill

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<sup>65</sup> Martin, *Making and Remaking*, 3.

The deportation of Mexican migrants peaked in 1933.

<sup>66</sup> Agriculture in North Carolina, Agriculture in North Carolina During the Great Depression, North Carolina Museum of History

<sup>67</sup> Phelps, *"I Have Selected Duke University,"* 24.

<sup>68</sup> Quick Statistics, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

with men. During the Great Depression, Trinity College's opportunity to grow allowed them to admit most of their applicants, including their foreign applicants.<sup>69</sup> The Women's College on East Campus received a large number of highly qualified domestic applicants and had limited space on East Campus to house students. This allowed the Women's College to admit students with a high degree of selectivity.<sup>70</sup> In proportion to the Women's College, Trinity College did not receive as many high quality domestic applicants and had a larger proportion of weaker students. Both Trinity College and the Women's College received applications from foreign students, but due to the high selectivity of the Women's College and the opening of West Campus, Trinity College was able to admit more foreign students.

When Rodolfo Rivera enrolled at Duke in 1928, the university did not have a specific policy about the admission of foreign students. Foreign students would submit their school transcripts, essays, standardized test scores and application just like domestic students.<sup>71</sup> The tuition and fees were the same for foreign and domestic students.<sup>72</sup> This administrative cohesiveness was also evident in the way the registrar recorded student's geographic distribution. In 1928 the registrar recorded all their student's home states on the same list where sovereign states such as Cuba and Japan were listed alongside U.S. states.<sup>73</sup> U.S. possessions such as Porto Rico and the Canal Zone were also listed next to U.S. states in most lists with no mention of being foreign states, countries or U.S. possessions.<sup>74</sup> The registrar did not take extra measures to document their foreign students until 1938.<sup>75</sup> This lack of documentation reflected the university

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<sup>69</sup> Durden, *The Launching*, 442.

<sup>70</sup> Durden, *The Launching*, 442.

<sup>71</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>72</sup> By not having a foreign student policy, this also meant that the university did not provide any resources to foreign students.

<sup>73</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>74</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>75</sup> Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

as a whole as Duke administrators were more focused on growing as an institution than documenting their foreign students and providing them with resources they may need as foreign students.<sup>76</sup> It also meant the university was not yet participating in the labeling of their students. In placing sovereign states next to U.S. states, the registrar did not label students from countries outside the U.S. as “foreign,” “other,” or “alien.” By not labeling the students as something different, the university’s construction of foreign student’s identity was that these students were part of the student body, were treated equally, and were given the same resources as domestic students.

The year 1929 was the only exception to the registrar’s documentation approach of foreign students. In 1929, Duke University was trying to expand to become a national school and document the number of students that had been enrolled from other U.S. states and regions. That same year, the university enrolled an unprecedented number of eight foreign students from Latin America, Europe and Asia.<sup>77</sup> The registrar recorded their student’s geographic distribution through a different approach by organizing students by U.S. regions. The regions were labeled: “New England,” “Middle Atlantic,” “South Atlantic,” “East North Central,” “East South Central,” “West North Central,” “West South Central,” “Mountain,” “Pacific Region” and “Other.”<sup>78</sup> The majority of students at Duke lived in the U.S, and were from North Carolina.<sup>79</sup> The registrar placed all eight of its students who lived outside the U.S. mainland in a regional

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The year 1933 was an exception because the Committee on Friendly Relations with Foreign Students asked Duke University to provide them a list of their foreign students. This exception does not alter the argument because 1933 was the only year in the span between 1928 to 1938 that Duke made a separate list of its foreign students.

<sup>76</sup> This overall focus on growth as opposed to focusing on their student education is also evident in the previous anecdote when Dr. Boyd spent more time cataloging the new books for the library than spending time advising his graduate students.

<sup>77</sup> 1929: Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>78</sup> 1929: Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>79</sup> 1929: Statistics 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.



category labeled "other" to signify that they were not from a U.S. region and instead, were from an "other" country or U.S. possession. The registrar labeled these eight students as "other" because they did not fit in the registrar's U.S. mainland-centric geographic framework used that year. The label was not intentionally used to identify the students as "foreign" or inherently "different" from the rest of the student body. After 1929 and for the next nine years, the registrar would document their foreign and domestic students on the same list without this "other" category.<sup>80</sup>

In 1933, independent organizations began to ask Duke University to specifically document their foreign students. Since the early 1900s, the "Committee on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students (FRC)" recorded the number of foreign students studying in the U.S. and provided them with resources to guide them through their education in the U.S.<sup>81</sup> They reported that over six-thousand foreign students were studying in the U.S. in 1917.<sup>82</sup> Of these six-thousand students, one-thousand were from Europe, Africa and the Philippines, one-thousand were from Japan, one-thousand five-hundred were from China and two-thousand students were from Latin America.<sup>83</sup> In 1933 and in 1938, the organization contacted Duke University to request a list of all foreign students enrolled at the university. The Duke registrar compiled a list of their "foreign" students that included students who were U.S. citizens born outside the U.S., U.S. citizens born in U.S. possessions, and non-U.S. citizens born outside the U.S.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Registrar most likely categorized Andres Rodriguez-Diago y Gomez as "other" or "foreign" in 1926, but I did not have the 1926 archival record to make that claim.

<sup>81</sup> Committee, *Educational Guide*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Committee, *Educational Guide*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Committee, *Educational Guide*, 18.

<sup>84</sup> FRC 1938 Statistics, 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

By including U.S. citizens in this list of “foreign” students, Duke University labeled them as “foreign” individuals even though they formed a part of the U.S. fabric. Duke’s compliance with the FRC to use the term “foreign” to label these students meant that Duke administrators understood these students to be external individuals coming into the internal fabric of the U.S. and of Duke University. It also meant that Duke didn’t recognize students from U.S. possessions to be part of the internal fabric of the U.S. The document Duke compiled for the FRC established the way Duke defined its “foreign” students and established the adoption of the term “foreign” to identify them.

From 1938, when they compiled their second list of foreign students, to 1949, Duke University continued to record “foreign” separately from domestic students, even when independent organizations didn’t ask for the separate information. Duke used the definition they had established in 1938 that defined “foreign” students as U.S. citizens living abroad, U.S. citizens from U.S. possessions and non-U.S. citizens living outside the U.S.<sup>85</sup> In the separate “foreign” student lists, Duke did not record if the student was U.S. citizens nor if they had a parent who was a U.S. citizen. The “foreign” students label was based on whether the student’s residential address was outside the mainland U.S. This meant that U.S. citizens born in the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, in other U.S. possessions were also considered “foreign” students and U.S. possessions were considered “foreign” countries, similar to sovereign states like Mexico and Colombia. This meant that the Duke administration recognized U.S. citizens living in the U.S. mainland as the only legitimate citizens among their student body. This set the precedent for

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<sup>85</sup> Registrar 1938: Statistics, 1925-1948, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

Duke administrators to distinguish between their citizen and other: “alien” and “foreign” students in later years.

The Duke registrar changed its method of documenting its foreign students in 1949 when it started participating in the “Annual Census of Foreign Students in the United States.”<sup>86</sup> This census was organized by the Institute of International Education (IIE), a national organization founded in 1919 that worked to promote access to education for both domestic and foreign students.<sup>87</sup> The census was created to provide information for the IIE’s “Open Doors” annual statistical report that attempted to compile information on every foreign student in the U.S.<sup>88</sup> The IIE requested Duke University to fill out the census but did not include instructions in 1949. Therefore, Duke used the same definition of “foreign” they had used since 1938 to identify their foreign students. In the 1950s and under the directions of the U.S. government, Duke University briefly participated in the public alienation of their foreign students.

During the Cold War, in the 1950s, the U.S. federal government became afraid of the spread of communism through foreign individuals in the U.S.<sup>89</sup> The federal government became vigilant in documenting the number of “alien” people and “alien” students in the U.S.<sup>90</sup> In 1950, the office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service mailed Duke University three announcements and ordered them to be shared with the entire university community. The announcements mandated that every “alien,” a person who was not a citizen of the U.S., had to annually report their address to the U.S. federal government.<sup>91</sup> The government’s use of the term

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<sup>86</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>87</sup> Institution, *Open Doors*.

<sup>88</sup> Institution, *Open Doors*.

<sup>89</sup> Michigan State University, “Xenophobia.”

<sup>90</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>91</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

“alien” to describe “foreign” students and the requirement to make this announcement to the entire university body, served to remind foreign students of their immigration status, the U.S. government’s xenophobic Cold War position, and to publicly alienate them from the rest of the university community.

Duke University continued to participate in the IIE’s census and for the first time in 1954 the IIE included specific instructions about which students were to be considered “foreign” and which students were not to be included in the census.<sup>92</sup> The IIE’s noted that students who were the “children of U.S. missionaries, diplomats, and U.S. citizens living abroad” and students who were U.S. citizens born or living abroad should not have been included in the foreign student census.<sup>93</sup> This meant that the IIE recognized these students as part of the U.S. and not as outsiders of U.S. universities.

On the same list of directions, the IIE also instructed that students from Hawaii, Alaska, and students who were “American-born Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, etc who claimed U.S. citizenship” should not have been included in the foreign student census.<sup>94</sup> These directions may have been included in response to the national discourse around these hyphenated Americans.<sup>95</sup> By 1954 Chinese, Japanese and Mexican migrants U.S. citizens had been the targets of the most severe U.S. anti-immigration policies including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II

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<sup>92</sup> Admissions: correspondence, 1954-1960, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>93</sup> Admissions: correspondence, 1954-1960, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>94</sup> Admissions: correspondence, 1954-1960, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>95</sup> Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 13.

and the Mexican Repatriation Program that deported many U.S. citizens of Mexican descent.<sup>96</sup> By including these instructions, the IIE attempted to remind Duke that these ethnic U.S. citizens, who had been historically identified as “foreign,” were not in fact foreign students. Including these instructions also meant that the legitimacy of the student’s U.S. citizenship was still being questioned.

The IIE also included a section that addressed students from U.S. possessions: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. It ordered Duke to include them in the foreign student census with the nuance the term “foreign” was replaced with the name of their U.S. possession.<sup>97</sup> Including students from U.S. possessions in the foreign census mean that the IIE and Duke did not recognize these students as legitimate U.S. citizens and instead, saw them as outsiders of the U.S. and of Duke University. In the directions, the IIE said that these students would not be counted as “foreign” students. Instead, the list of these students was going to be used for national records and to check if the students were eligible to participate in specific educational programs.<sup>98</sup> Regardless of these explanations, by including these students in the foreign student census, the IIE and Duke University still identified these students as “foreign” and different from the rest of the student body. In 1956, Duke University stopped participating in the IIE’s “Annual Census of Foreign Students in the United States,” but continued to document their foreign students on separate lists throughout the rest of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and into

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<sup>96</sup> Balderrama, *Decade of Betrayal*, 20.

Nash, “Report, Army,” 1.

Inui, “The Gentlemen’s,” 1.

“Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Seventy-Eighth Congress, first session, on H. R. 1882 and H. R. 2309, bills to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts, to put the Chinese on a quota basis, and to permit their naturalization. May and June, 1943.” I, 284

<sup>97</sup> Admissions: correspondence, 1954-1960, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>98</sup> Admissions: correspondence, 1954-1960, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

the 1980s. Duke University continued to distinguish between U.S. citizens from U.S. possessions and U.S.-mainland citizens, bastardized their citizenship while at the same time, failing to provide them with specific resources they might have needed as “foreign” students.

Compared to other universities in North Carolina, Duke had more foreign students in its student body.<sup>99</sup> In 1954, Duke participated in a “foreign student directory” organized by the American Association of University Women’s Committee on Hospitality for Foreign Students and Educators.<sup>100</sup> The committee instructed all public and private universities in North Carolina to compile a list of their foreign students, their field of study, and their native country. The directory was compiled and returned to each university who participated. The universities with the most enrolled foreign students were North Carolina State University (NCSU) with 142 students, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) with 80 students, and Duke University with 68 students. At NCSU and UNC-CH the number of foreign students made up less than 2% of the student population while Duke’s foreign student population made up 5% of the student body.<sup>101</sup> In 1954, Duke University was enrolling about as many foreign students as its competing universities in the Raleigh-Durham area and its administrators were not taking extra measures to recruit foreign students to apply to Duke. The “foreign student directory” did not change the way Duke approached its foreign admissions nor serve as another catalyst for Duke to move resources into recruiting and enrolling more foreign students. The university continued to have a small but stable number of foreign students and predominantly accepted those who could afford to pay for Duke in-full.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>100</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>101</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>102</sup> Statistics, 1948-1969, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

In 1958, Duke administrators and faculty organized the Undergraduate Admissions Policy Committee to review the university's admissions policies.<sup>103</sup> They began to question who was in charge of overseeing foreign students and what resources were being dedicated to them. To their surprise, the committee realized that there was not a designated administrator nor specific resources devoted to foreign students.<sup>104</sup> The university finally began to question the needs of their foreign students and allocate resources to them seventy-eight years after the first international student came to Duke in 1881, and twenty-nine years after Rodolfo Rivera enrolled at Duke in 1928.<sup>105</sup>

Soon after the Duke administration began to organize the first resources for foreign students, the Woman's Student Government Association (WSGA) had established an exchange program in 1960.<sup>106</sup> The exchange program was for Duke women to study abroad and in exchange, students from universities abroad would come to study at Duke's Women's College for a semester. In 1963 the WSGA created a resolution that changed the name of their Foreign Student Committee to become the International Student Committee. The resolution argued that the word "foreign" had negative connotations and instead, recommended that the word be changed to "international" which had the connotation of being a two-way exchange.

The proposal also argued that their educational exchange program was more in line with the idea of an international exchange rather than a "foreign" exchange. The WSGA interpreted

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Admissions: Chancellor's Advisory 1979, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>103</sup> Admissions 1957-1958 Box 19, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>104</sup> Admissions 1957-1958 Box 19, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Soong (1863-1918), Articles about Duke University History, Duke History, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>106</sup> WSGA Legislature Proposals, Woman's Student Government Association Records, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

word “foreign” as a divisive term that established an unequal power relation by creating a separation between them as students and “others.” Whereas the term “international” connoted that all students belonged to a nation-state. This proposal was also intended to influence Duke’s administration to change their label of “foreign” students to “international” students. The WSGA did not convince the Duke administration to change the way they identified “foreign” students. Still, the WSGA continued to advocate for these students by continuing their exchange program, by allocating funds to educate students about the affairs of students studying abroad, by connecting students with the Y.W.C.A. and by later funding the international club in the 1963.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the number of Latinx students was very small from 1926 to 1980.<sup>107</sup> The beginning of the history of Latinx students at Duke University was made up of students from Latin American countries and possessions. Latinx-U.S. born students would not come to Duke until the 1980s. Until then, the majority of Latinx students that attended Duke were part of wealthy and elite families in their home countries. Their socioeconomic status made them accustomed to attending socially and economically segregated schools. When Latinx student first arrived on campus, their identity was not understood and was often misrepresented by the university administration. Some domestic Anglo students, like the women in the WSGA understood the weight of identifiers and took efforts to convince how the university identified their students. The first Latinx students at Duke had to learn how to navigate a community that did not understand their culture and saw them as second-class citizens as members of U.S. possessions. Latinx students felt “othered” in their Duke Community. In order to cope with their “otherness,” the first Latinx students organized themselves through student organizations at

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<sup>107</sup> In chapter 3, I will explain why the number of Latinx students increased in the 1980s.



Duke. The next chapter will reveal how Latinx students navigated the Duke community through Latinx student organizations.

## Chapter 2

### Creating Latinx Communities Through Student Clubs

“Go back to writing! The Duke Latinos from 1920 to 1960 are waiting for their story to be told!” – Roberto Lopez, Duke Class of 1996, Founder of the Rho Chapter of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc.<sup>108</sup>

#### Introduction

In 1926, the first Latinx undergraduate student at Duke University, Andres Rodriguez Diago y Gomez, joined Duke’s Cosmopolitan Club.<sup>109</sup> In its eighth year as a student organization, the Cosmopolitan Club was organized on behalf of students from Russia, Sweden, Korea, China, Japan, and the U.S.<sup>110</sup> Its chief purposes were to “develop social activities, to promote intellectual understandings, to establish international goodwill, and to encourage foreign students to come to Duke University.”<sup>111</sup> As a member, Andres had the opportunity to lecture his peers, however informally, about his home country, Colombia, and to attend cultural parties in the style of students’ home cultures.<sup>112</sup> During his four years at Duke, Andres continued to be an active member of the Cosmopolitan Club and upon graduating, Andres would return to Colombia, following in the footsteps of his politically powerful family, and become the mayor of Bogotá. For Andres and many other future leaders, the Cosmopolitan Club was a space for their intellectual and cultural growth and development.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Lopez, Interview.

<sup>109</sup> *Chanticleer*, 1929.

<sup>110</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs.”

<sup>111</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs.”

<sup>112</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs.”

<sup>113</sup> *Chanticleer*, 1929.

Since the arrival of the first Latinx student, Andres Rodriguez Diago y Gomez, Latinx students continued to carve out their place in the social, cultural, and political spaces at Duke. The identity and cultural orientations of these Latinx students were projected through student organizations and student-led events on campus. In this chapter, I will chronicle the history of student organizations that were home to Latinx students from 1926, when Diago y Gomez joined the Cosmopolitan Club, to 1954, the last year that the Pan-American Club was active at Duke University.<sup>114</sup> I will also chronicle the cultural and identity-transformations Latinx students made in establishing their space on Duke's campus and among the student body. I argue that the Latinx student community existed primarily (and was nurtured) through student organizations. Through clubs, students organized Latinx-centered events, as well as built a community based on their international or Latin American "foreignness" at Duke, even if at times they comprised a small number of students. From 1925 to 1954, the Latinx identity was one that was "other[ized]" on Duke's campus. These international Latinx students in this era, while practicing cultures different than an implicitly Anglo U.S.'s., still attempted to fit at Duke by organizing with one another under club activities.

### **The Cosmopolitan Club and Its National Influence**

Before Diago y Gomez stepped foot on Duke's campus in 1926, universities across the country like the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania, were home to chapters of the Cosmopolitan Club.<sup>115</sup> These clubs attracted Latinx students, who at this point in the history of higher education were mostly international students, and students

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<sup>114</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Pan-American Club Elects New Cabinet."

<sup>115</sup> Chronicle article about UPenn/UChicago Cosmo Club *Duke Chronicle*, "Purdue Cosmopolitan Club." *Duke Chronicle*, "The University of Pennsylvania has a "Cosmopolitan Club". *Duke Chronicle*, "The Cosmopolitan Club at the University of Chicago."

who were interested in cultures, communities, and politics outside of the U.S.<sup>116</sup> In the 1910s and 1920s, U.S. universities, including Duke University, educated students from wealthy and powerful families.<sup>117</sup> The universities, and especially their Cosmopolitan Clubs, were led by Latinx and international students who would return to their respective countries of birth. There, these individuals often assumed positions of power or became important leaders in their communities, like Pedro Albizu Campos at Harvard, who would later become a leader in the Puerto Rican independence movement.<sup>118</sup> The Cosmopolitan Clubs, especially at Duke University, would become a cocoon, an insulated training grounds where students could grow in their leadership skills, debate strategies, and refine their critical thinking with one another. The clubs hosted events that ranged from debates, lectures by famous scholars, as well as political luminaries. These spaces allowed Latinx students to share their visions of politics, society, and social movements with one another.

At Duke University, the Cosmopolitan Club would go on to become a home community for international students, including Latinx students, for about twenty years after its inception.<sup>119</sup> During its formative years, the Cosmopolitan Club played a different role on campus. In order to understand the role of the Cosmopolitan Club, one must understand the way Duke's social sphere was organized. In 1919, over sixty percent of Duke's students were from North Carolina. The North Carolina student population was so large that among students themselves, they socialized through smaller organizations, specific to their high school or country. North Carolinian Duke students created high school clubs like the Rutherford College Club and the West Durham High School Club, where students who studied at those schools would convene

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<sup>116</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Many Clubs New and Old Organize for This Year."

<sup>117</sup> Winter, "Harvard and Homeland."

<sup>118</sup> Winter, "Harvard and Homeland."

<sup>119</sup> *Chanticleer*, 1937.

socially. North Carolinian Duke students also formed social organizations that brought together students from specific counties in North Carolina like the Wayne County Club, the Mecklenburg County Club, the Wake County Club, and many others.

The second largest population of Duke students were mostly from the U.S. South, including Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Students from these states also felt a need to create community with one another, insofar as they created state clubs like the Tennessee Club, where students from those states could come together, celebrate their state pride and talk about what it meant to study away from home. In the same year that the Tennessee Club was formed, the Alien Club and the Cosmopolitan Club were also chartered. Hence, there was a need for these non-North Carolinian social and cultural spaces on campus. The creation of the Alien Club meant that the U.S. state clubs and North Carolina county and high school clubs ironically alienated foreign students. The Alien Club was created to become a social and cultural space for foreign students.<sup>120</sup> Among the student body, there was an understanding of a social division and cultural differences (divides even) between students from the U.S. and “students from foreign countries” that was revealed in the name “Alien Club.” The students who created and formed this club saw themselves as a type of “alien” or outsider at Duke University because of their country of birth, culture, political, or social understanding.<sup>121</sup> While on other university campuses, the Cosmopolitan Club served as a home to foreign students, at Duke, the Alien Club convened students from foreign countries, leaving the Cosmopolitan Club to serve a different population of students in the beginning of their formation.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Many Clubs New and Old Organize for This Year.”

<sup>121</sup> This differentiation would not include a linguistic difference because all students from foreign countries would have had to understand, write, and speak English in order to study at Duke University.

<sup>122</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Many Clubs New and Old Organize for This Year.”

In the first year of its founding, the Cosmopolitan Club was home to a community of students “whose membership embraced all those students from states other than that had individual clubs.” In other words, they attracted students from the U.S. who were mostly likely not from the U.S. South.<sup>123</sup> These students, originating from the Midwest, the West, and the Northeast regions of the U.S., organized themselves under one “cosmopolitan” club. Such an amalgam reveals that there were not enough students from one specific U.S. region or state to have created a Midwest Club or a California Club.<sup>124</sup> The creation of the independent Cosmopolitan Club and Alien Club in the same year also revealed that these two student communities either were not actively communicating with one another and/or they disagreed on the idea that the two communities could come together under one student organization. This reveals that there were hierarchies of cultural and social alienation on Duke’s campus, one felt by students who were not from the U.S. South and another felt by students who were not from the U.S. Nothing is known about the activities of these two groups from 1920 to 1924, except that they both disbanded for unknown reasons. It wasn’t until 1925 that the Cosmopolitan Club was re-chartered and made up of both students from the U.S. and from foreign countries.<sup>125</sup>

In its second year as a re-chartered organization, the Cosmopolitan Club was praised by *The Chronicle*, reporting that the cosmopolitan club had made considerable progress by organizing students of all nationalities and installing a variety of programs.<sup>126</sup> The main objectives of the club were to “develop social activities, to promote intellectual understandings, to establish international goodwill, and to encourage foreign students to come to Duke

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<sup>123</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Many Clubs New and Old Organize for This Year.”

<sup>124</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Purdue Cosmopolitan Club.”

*Duke Chronicle*, “The University of Pennsylvania has a “Cosmopolitan Club”.

*Duke Chronicle*, “The Cosmopolitan Club at the University of Chicago.”

<sup>125</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs.”

<sup>126</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Many Clubs New and Old Organize for This Year.”

University.”<sup>127</sup> In its second attempt as an organization, the club was founded by eight students, Eiko Yonemura, Z.K. Zien, Y.S. Wang, Messrs Minoru Uwazumi, Fung Hui So, Chester Liu, Mike Lopato, and K. C. D’Affonseca. These students were from mostly Asian countries, including Russia, Sweden, Korea, China and Japan. Such a majority coincides with historical demographics of international students, since the first foreign students to attend Duke were students from Asia. Specifically, their history at Duke began in 1881, followed by European students’ arrival soon after.<sup>128</sup> When Latinx students arrived at Duke, they became a part of a community of culturally diverse foreign students, who like them, were from wealthy and elite families; who had to negotiate the university and region’s Black and White racial paradigm. Even among their wide array of cultural differences, Asian, European, and Latinx found community among each other’s student experience as an Other.

Through the club, foreign students were able to take ownership of their organization by orchestrating events about themselves, for themselves, and by themselves, a university environment where they perpetually seen as the cultural outsiders. Nevertheless, there is an important caveat to the Cosmopolitan Club: while most of the members and the leadership were students from foreign nations, a few members were also student from the U.S.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, the Cosmopolitan Club was different from other student organizations because it created different types of club membership. Students from foreign nations were labeled as “regular” members whereas students from the U.S. were labeled as “associate” members, as in connected or partnered with, but not fully part of the membership in itself.<sup>130</sup> This difference in membership may have empowered students from foreign countries by normalizing their membership in the

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<sup>127</sup> *The Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club,” 30.

<sup>128</sup> Duke University, “Charles Soong.”

<sup>129</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs.”

<sup>130</sup> *The Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club,” 30.

club. At the same time, by creating this differentiation, the students from foreign countries were responding to their Anglo peers' "foreign" perception by in turn, making the students from the U.S. "associate" and not "regular" members.<sup>131</sup>

The organization hosted events where regular members had the opportunity to lecture the group about their home country and students could ask questions about presenter's country and culture. The club also hosted annual banquet dinners where new officers and initiated members were celebrated. At its third annual banquet in 1926, the club celebrated its new president Mr. Lui, its secretary, Miss Eiko Yonumera, and its treasurer, Mr. D'Affonseca.<sup>132</sup> That night, the club members awarded honorary memberships to a select group of Anglo administrators and faculty, including Dean Wannamaker, Dean Baldwin, Dr. Soper, Dr. Flowers, the most notable President Few.<sup>133</sup> President Few, Dean Wannamaker, and Dean Baldwin were often invited to student organizations and were asked to be "guest speakers," however, it was not common for all of the top administrators and professors to attend club events.<sup>134</sup> Thus, it was considered an honor for the top university administrators and professors to attend the Cosmopolitan Club annual banquet that year.

Still, the club understood cultural productions of belonging proved just as important as more official programming. Cosmopolitan members hosted informal parties where they would play games from different countries and sing songs in their native language. In 1929 the Cosmopolitan Club was praised by the Dean of Religion, Dr. Elbert Russell, who invited the club

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<sup>131</sup> The club's first president was Miss Eiko Yonemura of Japanese heritage, who hosted a Japanese party for the club's members. The club held meetings at Dr. Soper's residence, a faculty at Duke who taught Methodist mission education.<sup>131</sup> Dr. Soper, an Anglo man born to parents who were U.S. citizens, identified with the foreign students in the club because he was born in Tokyo, Japan. He was also the only faculty at Duke in 1926 who identified as "foreign" in some way.

<sup>132</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Cosmopolitan Club," 5.

<sup>133</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Duke Cosmopolitan Club Elects Officers."

<sup>134</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Cosmopolitan Club to Vary Programs."



members to his home. *The Chronicle* reported that “several members of the duke faculty and their wives were also invited.”<sup>135</sup> In total, the event hosted people from seven different nationalities. Dr. Russell praised the members of the Cosmopolitan Club for helping the community at Duke “come to a true understanding of other nationalities and an appreciation of the latter’s customs and practices.”<sup>136</sup> Most of all, Dr. Russell commended the club for making personal connections with the faculty in order to better further the goals of the club.

By awarding honorary memberships to respected members of the Duke community, affiliating themselves with respected organizations, creating a culture of exclusivity by having an application process to join the club, and distinguishing between their members, the club took steps to socially legitimize themselves as a respectable organization on campus. To put it simply, they attempted to show that their social values were compatible with Duke’s mainstream values, rather than challenge a Eurocentric paradigm which amounted to an institutional failure to fully accept their differences.<sup>137</sup> These respectability policies were in conversation with their social standing and inclusion on campus, where as students from foreign countries, their own identity and nationality were questioned and deemed foreign by their Anglo peers.

In its third year as a re-charted group, in 1928, the club welcomed its new president, Rodolfo Rivera.<sup>138</sup> Rivera became the first Latinx graduate student to join the club in 1927 and the first Latinx president of the club.<sup>139</sup> At the time, Rivera and Diago y Gomez were the only known Latinx students in the organization.<sup>140</sup> That year the club also welcomed six new regular members and six new associate members. Among those initiated were students from China,

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<sup>135</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Zoologist from Syracuse Talks at Club Meeting.”

<sup>136</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Zoologist from Syracuse Talks at Club Meeting.”

<sup>137</sup> Frances, *Dark*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Cosmopolitan Club entertains at Camp Hollow.”

<sup>139</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “[Cosmopolitan Club takes new members.](#)”

<sup>140</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “[Cosmopolitan Club takes new members.](#)”

Poland, Germany, and Japan.<sup>141</sup> Students from some European countries like Russia, Poland, and Germany who were part of the Cosmopolitan Club had the unique experience of being both foreign students on Duke's campus and being racialized as white by national policies like the Immigration Act of 1924.<sup>142</sup>

During the 1920s, the majority of students from foreign countries at Duke University were from countries in Asia.<sup>143</sup> Before 1924, students from China and Japan were able to study in the U.S, as there were explicit exceptions in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Japanese Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which respectively allowed "non-laboring Chinese students" and the children of U.S. resident Japanese laborers to continue to immigrate to the U.S.<sup>144</sup> Asian student immigration to the U.S. changed with the Immigration Act of 1924 which installed a quota system that restricted "undesirable races" to the U.S. and distinguished people by "colored races" and "white" race.<sup>145</sup> "Colored races" included Chinese and Japanese students, who according to immigration historian Mae Ngai, "were made into permanent foreigners and guaranteed they would be but a small, marginalized population in America for nearly one hundred years."<sup>146</sup>

These policies, before and after 1924, were in part a reaction to the "Yellow Peril" in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, a xenophobic perception that Asian people posed a physical danger to Anglo people and threatened to invade the Western world.<sup>147</sup> At Duke University, such xenophobic perceptions were pervasive. In 1920, a few years before the creation of the Cosmopolitan Club, Anglo Duke students participated in debates about whether or not "the

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<sup>141</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "[Cosmopolitan Club takes new members.](#)"

<sup>142</sup> Impossible subjects page 28-29

<sup>143</sup> Registrar 1923, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>144</sup> <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Chinese+Exclusion+Act+of+1882>

<sup>145</sup> Impossible Subjects

<sup>146</sup> Impossible Subjects page 18

<sup>147</sup> Yang, "[The Malleable Yet Undying Nature of the Yellow Peril.](#)"

United States should abolish foreign immigration for a period of ten years” as part of a “regular meeting of the Columbia Society.”<sup>148</sup> Duke students were made to argue against or for the debate topic.<sup>149</sup> By having this topic as a subject of debate meant that in 1920, abolishing foreign immigration was a controversial topic of interest at the state, the national level, and most likely one in the student body. In fact, this same topic continued to be of interest at Duke when two years later in 1924, students in the “Hesperia Literary Society” debated the topic once more.<sup>150</sup> This debate was held in the same year that the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed, which prohibited Asian migration to the U.S. and set national quotas that severely restricted the immigration of non-Western European people.<sup>151</sup>

One of the most telling examples of anti-Asian xenophobia on Duke’s campus was in 1922. The *Duke Chronicle* showcased an article about James G. Leyburn, a student at Duke University, and who received his bachelor’s degree from Trinity College in 1920. At Trinity, Leyburn studied economics, a coursework he would continue as master’s student at Princeton University in 1921.<sup>152</sup> At Princeton, Leyburn wrote his thesis on “The Problem of Oriental Immigration.”<sup>153</sup> After he completed his thesis, he submitted it to a “graduate fellowship competition in Economics” at Princeton, won the competition, “secure[d] the fellowship,” and as a result, was eventually “selected as a professor at Hollins College.”<sup>154</sup> After working as a professor for a year, Leyburn had already been accepted to return to Princeton to pursue his doctorate degree.<sup>155</sup> The *Duke Chronicle* thus revealed an imbrication in national, state, and

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<sup>148</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Columbia Society.”

<sup>149</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Columbia Society.”

<sup>150</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Hesperia Debates Immigration at its last meeting.”

<sup>151</sup> Impossible Subjects

<sup>152</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “James Leyburn to Teach Economics at Hollins College.”

<sup>153</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “James Leyburn to Teach Economics at Hollins College.”

<sup>154</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “James Leyburn to Teach Economics at Hollins College.”

<sup>155</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “James Leyburn to Teach Economics at Hollins College.”

campus discourse of anti-Asian sentiment. Rather than reprimand racist rhetoric, the Duke community was proud of Leyburn, even celebrating him for his academic accomplishments which addressed, as they put it, “the problems of Oriental immigration,” through a scholarly and intellectual process in the field of economics. Given that his xenophobic thesis won him a top award at Princeton and an offer to teach at a college, it is safe to presume that “the problem of Oriental immigration” was a shared xenophobic belief with top academics at Princeton, certainly at least with those professors who selected him for the award, as well as with the professors at Hollins College in Virginia, who wanted Leyburn to teach his thesis at their all-women school.

Anti-Asian xenophobic beliefs were pervasive on Duke’s campus, they influenced in part a shift in the student population at Duke University. The foreign student population changed from being majority Asian students to majority Latin American students from 1930 to 1950.<sup>156</sup> This shift to a majority Latin American foreign student population was reflected in the creation of the Pan-American Club, a Duke student organization in 1933 that brought together “Spanish-speaking students”.<sup>157</sup> The Pan-American and Cosmopolitan Club would co-exist during the rest of the 1930s, with the Pan-American Club eventually outliving the Cosmopolitan Club into the 1950s.<sup>158</sup>

### **Pan-Americanism and Benjamín Franklin Boyd Diaz**

The Pan-American Club was created by students from Latin American countries in the same year as President Franklin Roosevelt implemented the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933. In so

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<sup>156</sup> Registrar 1930, 1933, 1935, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1945 1950, 1951, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>157</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Pan American Club.”

<sup>158</sup> *Chronicle Pan American Club* 1952

doing, the former gestured a direct reaction to the policy's call for unity.<sup>159</sup> In this moment in 1933, FDR called for "international good-will and cooperation" amongst countries in the Americas, calling on these nations to come together. Since the majority of nations in the Americas were and continue to be Latin American nations, Latin American students at Duke took this policy as an opportunity to organize themselves as an entity. These students, who had historically organized themselves under the Cosmopolitan Club, had grown in numbers, enough so as to diverge from the broader mission of the Cosmopolitan Club and create a group that focused on their shared affinity of being citizens from the Americas.

However, not all countries were represented in the Pan-American Club. The "Pan-American" students limited their de facto club membership to only include "Spanish-speaking students."<sup>160</sup> By identifying themselves as "Spanish-speaking students," these students were coming together under a colonized identity that included students from all nations that had been colonized by Spain in the Americas, including the Philippines and Puerto Rico, while excluding Brazil, Belize and Guyana.<sup>161</sup> By emphasizing the ability to speak Spanish, the Pan-American Club was differentiating themselves from students from these specific South American countries and Anglo students who may have lived in Latin American countries but attended U.S. schools and were not expected to speak the Spanish language.

Such an opting paralleled with burgeoning re-categorizations of U.S. demographics. Years later, in the 1940 U.S. Census, the term "Spanish-speaking" became a popular ethnic signifier among Latinx U.S. citizens who spoke Spanish "in [the] home in [their] earliest

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<sup>159</sup> Derwich, *Good Neighbor*.

<sup>160</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Pan American Club."

<sup>161</sup> I differentiate the Philippines here because it is not in the American hemisphere and along with Puerto Rico, were both U.S. colonies.

childhood.”<sup>162</sup> This meant that starting in the 1930s, there was a formally recognized linguistic connection that translated into an identity-marker across Latinx students from Latin American countries and Latinx U.S. citizens who also emphasized “Spanish-speaking” as part of their ethnic and cultural identity. FDR’s call for Pan-American unity did not translate directly on Duke’s campus. Instead it was used to catalyze Spanish-speaking Latin American students to organize with one another.

During the period of the Second World War, from 1941 to 1945, the official Pan-American Club experienced a hiatus and did not organize meetings or events as an organization. Still, during this time, the ideas of the “Good-Neighbor Policy” and of “Pan-Americanism” were in full effect. These ideas were championed by Duke students from Latin American, who even during the war years, continued to study at Duke University. In order to understand the type of Latin American student that was attending Duke, we must understand the context of the university during the epoch of World War II.

Throughout the World War II era, Duke University continued to be an expensive and elite university in the U.S. South. At the time, the cost of Duke University was higher than top-tier public universities around the country and less expensive than ivy-league universities. In 1941, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor cost \$100 a year, the University of Pennsylvania cost \$400 a year, and Duke University cost \$250 a year.<sup>163</sup> During the World War II era, young men who would have attended Duke were being drafted to the military in mass. Duke experienced a decrease in its male students, forcing them to fill their enrollment gap with more

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<sup>162</sup> 1940 Census Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Bureau of the Census, United States of America.

<sup>163</sup> 1940 Statistics, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University. Statistics, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

female students and students from foreign countries, both those of prominent families, as well as those of more modest means.

One of the newly enrolled students was a young white undergraduate from Panama named Benjamín Franklin Boyd Díaz. Boyd started his journey to Duke by taking a ship from Panama to New York and taking a train from Penn Station to Durham, North Carolina in 1942. Boyd was part of one of the most notable families in Panama at the time. His grandfather was a former president of Panama and founding father of the country, Federico Augusto Boyd López. Boyd enrolled at Duke University in 1942, challenging himself to graduate in three years, and succeed doing so by the year 1945 with a bachelor of the arts in medicine.

Despite his nationality, Boyd was prepared linguistically and culturally to attend Duke University. He had learned English from a young age at American schools in Panama. He also traveled extensively throughout Latin America during his youth on costly private planes. Thus, his elite upbringing was very similar to the U.S. South's high society culture found at Duke University.

In his first year at Duke, Boyd removed the accent in Benjamín, shortened, and anglicized his name from Benjamín Franklin Boyd Díaz to Ben Boyd. By wiping off the Latin and Panamanian surnames and tildes of his name, in an almost tabula rasa style, Boyd attempted to avoid any obstacles in his social life at Duke in the form of de-racializing (whitening) his name. It was important for Boyd to anglicize early in his Duke career, for it allowed him to build a community, avoid social isolation, and build the cultural capital pivotal to his career. Boyd's now anglicized name, his wealth, and white skin allowed him to attend and fit in at Duke. In his first year at Duke, he pledged the fraternity Lambda Chi Alpha and in his second year he earned induction in Tau Psi Omega, the national honorary French fraternity.

During his last year at Duke, Boyd felt comfortable enough to publicly write about Panama and Latin America for his Duke community. In his senior year, Boyd was “credited with being one of the best-informed writers on Latin America in the nation, and had his works printed many times in newspapers both here [the U.S.] and in South America” according to his peers at the Duke Chronicle.<sup>164</sup> Under the guidance of a local Durham student group called, Jaycee’s International Relations Committee, Boyd participated in the annual celebration of Pan-American Week and Pan-American Day.

Pan-American Week and Pan-American Day are holidays that have been observed by American countries since 1930 and have been proclaimed every year by presidents of the United States, from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1930 to Richard Nixon in 1974 to Donald Trump in 2017.<sup>165</sup> Pan-American Week has been observed from April 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> and Pan-American Day on April 14<sup>th</sup> since 1930.<sup>166</sup> On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, in celebration of Pan-American Week, Boyd was given the opportunity to write a daily column about “Pan-American Affairs” which would be called “A Good Neighbor Speaks” in the Durham local newspaper *Durham Sun*.<sup>167</sup> Boyd titled this column himself, thus intentionally invoking a politics of friendly ties in line with Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy of 1933 (See Chapter 1.)

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<sup>164</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Sun Runs Boyd Column on Pan-American Affairs.”

<sup>165</sup> “President Franklin D. Roosevelt Proclaims April 14, , as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, as Pan American Week,” White House, United States “

“President Ricard Nixon Proclaims April 14, , as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, as Pan American Week,” White House, United States “

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 14, 2017, as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, 2017, as Pan American Week,” White House, United States

<sup>166</sup> “President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 14, 2017, as Pan American Day and April 9 through April 15, 2017, as Pan American Week,” White House, United States

<sup>167</sup> <https://dukelibraries.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15957coll13/id/68283/rec/6>  
 Durham Sun April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945 Evening Newspaper Tuesday.



In his address of Pan-American Day in 1933 and as an emphasis on the Good Neighbor Policy, FDR called for “friendship among Nations, as among individuals.”<sup>168</sup> In response to the U.S.’s call for good neighbors, Boyd wanted to embody the “Good Neighbor” propagandistic ideal by referring to himself, as a “Good Neighbor Speak[ing].”<sup>169</sup> Boyd publicly endorsed the U.S.’s strategy to create a multilateral platform for cooperation among nations in the Western Hemisphere. His Duke and Durham audience could trust his reports and perspective of Latin America because Boyd positioned himself to be just like them. Not only did Boyd construct himself as a “Good Neighbor” to the U.S., but his financial capital, his fluency in English, his white skin, his gender, his position as a Duke student, and his Anglicized name allowed him to be a legible liaison for Anglo readers.

Boyd’s involvement in Pan-American Week extended beyond just writing his column. He spearheaded a contest for “members of the Durham Junior Chamber of Commerce and their immediate families” who had to read his column every day of Pan-American Week and listed all the countries Boyd had written about along with a two-hundred-word essay about why “you would like to visit Central and South America” addressed to Boyd. The winner of this contest would win a \$25 war bond sponsored by the Jaycees group and the letter would be published in the *Durham Sun*.<sup>170</sup> Boyd hosted the contest to incentivize daily readership of his column and to encourage his audience to become interested in Latin America.

In his week-long daily columns, Boyd wrote about his travels throughout Latin America, where he documented the people and events he encountered. Boyd started his first column of Pan-American Week by thanking Duke and Durham Anglo readers for their “wonderful

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<sup>168</sup> Good Neighbor Policy, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

<sup>169</sup> Derwich, Good Neighbor.

Durham Sun, “The Good Neighbor Speaks” April 9<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday Evening Newspaper.

<sup>170</sup> Durham Sun, “The Good Neighbor Speaks” April 9<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday Evening Newspaper.

hospitality” in the U.S. and in turn, inviting them to travel with him to his home, in which he invoked all of Latin America.<sup>171</sup> In doing this, Boyd was representing himself as a token who could speak for all 20 countries in Latin America.<sup>172</sup> In his first column, he directly referenced the language of FDR’s Good Neighbor, echoing the former president’s claim that the relationship between the U.S. and Latin America was “a fraternal union of all nations, a union arrived at on the bases of understanding and good-willed cooperation.” Boyd argued in his first column that the American continent would “remain stagnant in [good neighbor] efforts if people did not learn more about each other’s customs and ways of life.”

In his two-hundred-word columns, Boyd attempted to introduce Latin America and its twenty nations at the expense of oversimplifying the countries, cultures, and political issues he addressed. Boyd compressed an understanding of Latin America into bite-sized pieces that did not address serious issues, but instead, invited readers to participate in a voyeuristic journey to Panama, Cuba, Mexico, Costa Rica and El Salvador.<sup>173</sup> Boyd took a creative writing approach and briefly mentioned that he would take the reader on a journey through the countries in a Pan-American Clipper, a luxurious small airplane that had a lounge, a dining area, and chefs onboard.<sup>174</sup>

The Pan-American Clipper was the preferred form of travel for the wealthy during the 1940s that romanticized air travel.<sup>175</sup> This class signifier was reiterated when Boyd added that in his column, “let us visit most of all, the average people, the masses, since they are the soul and

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<sup>171</sup> Durham Sun “The Good Neighbor Speaks” Sunday evening paper.” Not published on Monday.

<sup>172</sup> There are 19 official countries in Latin America, but here I have included Puerto Rico, which I know is a commonwealth, as an act of solidarity and a recognition that they too are part of Latin America, but not their larger colonial ruler, the U.S.

<sup>173</sup> Durham Sun Pan-American articles from April 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>174</sup> Davies, “If You Thought Air Travel Was Luxurious In The 1970s, Check Out What It Was Like Aboard The WW2-Era Boeing Clipper.”

<sup>175</sup> Davies, “If You Thought Air Travel Was Luxurious In The 1970s, Check Out What It Was Like Aboard The WW2-Era Boeing Clipper.”

the spirit of the country.”<sup>176</sup> He added, “We shall deal very little with the rich because the rich are the same everywhere in the world.”<sup>177</sup> Boyd used binary language of “they” and “us” in an attempt to identify more with Duke and Durham Anglo readers than with the “average people” or with “the rich” from Latin America, even though he is a wealthy and elite class member in Panama. Through this rhetorical maneuver, Boyd made an effort to maintain a shared identity with his Anglo readers and avoided the risk of reading as unrelatable or foreign if he identified himself as part of his socioeconomic class in Panama, “the rich.” In using the language of “the average people” and “the rich,” Boyd mischaracterized two groups of people as monolithic and ahistorical, one that he claimed are “the soul and spirit of the country,” without mentioning which country he was referring to. Boyd’s mischaracterization of the people of Latin American revealed his lack of social, cultural, economic, and political understanding in Latin America.

He neglected to account for regional geopolitical issues, such as the one in 1903, that took place in what is known today as the country of Panama (then part of Colombia). The United States wanted access to the area of Panama that could bridge the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The U.S. entered negotiations, called the Hay-Herrán Treaty, with Colombia to use the canal, agreeing to pay Colombia a fee. The Colombian government decided not grant the U.S. access because they feared that they would lose control of the land. Then U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt was indignant to control the land, and in typical U.S. expansionist fashion, the U.S. government and a French-U.S. company called the Panama Canal Company armed and funded a group of Panamanian nationalist rebels to fight for the independence of Panama. Boyd’s grandfather, Boyd Lopez, was a leader among the nationalists. The U.S. government and

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<sup>176</sup> Durham Sun Pan American Sunday April 9th

<sup>177</sup> Durham Sun Pan American Sunday April 9th

company used their control over the U.S. railways in Panama to prevent Colombian troops to travel north to fight the insurrection and intimidated them by sending in a U.S. warship.

In less than three days of the insurrection, the Panamanian nationalist rebels, with now U.S. ties, became the symbolic leaders of the country of Panama. Immediately, the U.S. became the owner of the land, set its sights on building the canal, and in exchange gave the Panama “10 million and an annuity of \$250,000 beginning nine years later,” in what became known as the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty.<sup>178</sup> Many citizens protested the U.S.’s authoritarian power grab because they believed that Panamanians were not involved in the negotiation of the land. While the entire negotiation was made between the U.S. government and the French-U.S. Panama Canal Company, there were a few Panamanians who were part of the Panama Canal Company, such as Boyd Lopez. Boyd Lopez benefited monetarily from these negotiations with the U.S.,<sup>179</sup> ones that translated into Panama not owning or controlling the Panama Canal until almost one-hundred years later.<sup>180</sup>

The U.S.’s Good Neighbor policy was hypocritical because the U.S. used its armed strength to force “friendliness” with their newly formed, impotent “country,” Panama. Whether or not Boyd knew about his family history with the founding of Panama, he directly benefited from his grandfather’s corruption at the expense of the citizens of Panama. His ability to attend Duke University and his self-imposed identity as a “Good Neighbor” were directly tied to the U.S.’s history of control and authoritarian rule in Latin America.

Boyd’s affluence and wealth went, at least publicly, unquestioned throughout his life, allowing him to benefit from corruption and U.S. militarism. Boyd continued to become a

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<sup>178</sup> History, “Panama declares independence.”

<sup>179</sup> Mellander” The United States in Panamanian Politics”

<sup>180</sup> History, “Panama declares independence.”

student leader for Duke and Durham's most successful Pan-American Week. This happened without the support of an organization like the Pan-American Club, proving that the ideals of Pan-Americanism were propagated at Duke by individual Duke students, not always through formal organization. Weeks after Pan-American Week, Boyd graduated from Duke University and continued his education at the medical school at Northwestern University. Boyd would go on to become a medical doctor, return to practice in Panama, and become a founding father of Ophthalmology. Boyd's career was extremely successful. He won awards in the U.S., Australia, Italy, Spain, and Panama, and was revered by ophthalmologists in each of those countries. His life and career would later be documented by an award winning Panamanian writer named Ernesto Enrique Endara in a book called *A Quest for Light- Life and Works of Benjamin F. Boyd M.D.*<sup>181</sup> Boyd's biography however does not include any mention to his grandfather's legacy of corruption. Still, Boyd and Duke University will forever be a footnote in the U.S.'s longer history of power.

### **The Pan-American Club Resumes**

Four years after Boyd left Duke University, the Pan-American Club resumed in 1949. In 1951, the Pan-American Club had increased its membership to include students from Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Trinidad, Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Panama, still under the label of "Spanish students."<sup>182</sup> In calling themselves "Spanish students," the Pan-American Club continued to identify themselves as colonial subjects, unifying under the language and name of their former colonizer.<sup>183</sup> Their name "Pan-

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<sup>181</sup> *A Quest for Life-* By Ernesto Enrique Endara

<sup>182</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Pan-American Club Elects New Cabinet."

<sup>183</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, "Pan-American Club Elects New Cabinet."

American” was ironic in that the club did not include U.S. “American” identifying students, thus not being true to their name, of Pan, meaning all, Americans. In this 1950s period of heightened racial tension among Black and White communities in the U.S., and especially in the South and communist fear during the McCarthy era of the Cold War, the students from Latin American countries chose to identify themselves with the name of the European country of Spain.

Re-establishing themselves as the “Pan-American Club,” revealed that the students had not found a new language to identify themselves. Therefore, they continued to use the “Pan-American” language which placed them in a symbolic position in curry U.S. favor to cultivate a friendly relationship between the two entities.

Even after the first congregation of the Pan-American Club and the educational attempts by Ben Boyd, the Duke community still did not fully understand what Pan-Americanism was about or what the club did. In an article about the Pan-American Club in the 1952 *Chanticleer*, the organization was described to “cement relations [with Anglo Duke students].”<sup>184</sup> The mission of the organization was written from the White gaze, the perspective of an Anglo Duke student, who wrote, “to achieve better relations with our neighbors down in South America.” Another section maintains that “[the Pan-American Club] sought to arrive at a better understanding of South Americans, their culture, and their way of life through meetings conducted entirely ‘en español.’”<sup>185</sup> The Anglo student author misspelled the word “español,” revealing the possibility that they did not understand the Pan-American Club, their shared language, and culture. This spelling error also showed that the existence of the Pan-American Club as an organization was

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<sup>184</sup> *Chanticleer*, 1952.

<sup>185</sup> The misspelling of “español” to “español” was written in the 1952 *Chanticleer* page about the Pan American Club. I define the “white gaze” as looking at the world through the eyes of a Anglo person, who is, like all Anglo people, inherently racialized and trained to racialize other people. This article about the Pan-American Club was not written by Pan-American members, but instead it was written by an Anglo student who was describing the Pan-American Club to other Anglo students. The Anglo student was not writing to other Pan-American students, this is evident because of the article’s subtle cues of linguistic separation: “their culture” and “their way of life.”

understood by Anglo students as to be ostensibly focused around educating Anglo students and improving Anglo/Pan-American relationships. Anglo students placed the burden of “achieving better relations” and “arriving to a better understanding of South Americans, their culture and their way of life” on the Pan-American Club members instead of Anglo students.

The perception of the burden and the idea that the focus of the Pan-American Club was centered on Anglo students and relationships was a misunderstanding of the club’s practices, policies, and events. The club was conducted entirely in Spanish, its members were all from Latin American countries, and they intentionally recruited “Spanish” and “Spanish-speaking” students to join.<sup>186</sup> As a club that was entirely conducted in Spanish, the Pan-American Club was one of few spaces on campus where students from Latin America were encouraged and normalized to speak in Spanish. The events the club organized were mostly made exclusive to “Spanish students” and “professors of Spanish” including the dances hosted in the President’s room.<sup>187</sup> These policies revealed that the Pan-American Club was structurally focused to create a cultural community among students from Latin America. If the Pan-American Club took any effort to “achieve better relations” with their Anglo peers, this mission was at best secondary to their premium on recruiting and retaining community among students from Latin America.

At the height of racial tensions in 1954, the same year as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that establishing separate public schools for Black and White students was unconstitutional, the Pan-American Club disbanded and its members formed part of the International Club in 1954. The International Club was an organization formed in 1950 and attempted to serve as a social space for all students from foreign countries. Until 1954, students from Latin America did not

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<sup>186</sup> *Duke Chanticleer* 1952.

*Duke Chronicle*, “Pan-American Club Elects New Cabinet.”  
Club members were all from Latin America

<sup>187</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “Pan-American Club Elects New Cabinet.”

join the International Club because they had their own, more regionalized organization (and orientation). When the Pan-American club was formed in 1933, the number of students from Latin America was about ten.<sup>188</sup> By the time the Pan-American Club disbanded in 1954, the number of students from Latin American countries had about doubled to about twenty.<sup>189</sup> This meant that even though the population of students from Latin America had grown. Students in 1954 were no longer interested in continuing the Pan-American Club and instead, formed part of a broader group of students from foreign countries. In the 1950s, during the Cold War and in light of the violence perpetuated by Anglo Americans towards people working for civil rights, students and activists alike wanted to avoid the communist label.<sup>190</sup> In the 1950s, the era of President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy had ended; the U.S.'s policy to refrain from intervening in Latin American affairs was over. In the era of the Cold War, Latin American governments were being systemically dismantled, as democratically elected Communist leaders were being overthrown by U.S.-backed paramilitaries. Latin American countries and their people were no longer seen as friendly neighbors but as potential subterfuges of Communist ideology. These international tensions may have influenced the Pan-American Club members to join the larger group of students from foreign countries.

## Conclusion

Since their arrival to Duke University in 1926, Latinx students joined student clubs where they could redefine (and to a great extent downplay) their "otherness." Latinx students attempted to educate their Duke community about their home countries and about Latin America, but their

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<sup>188</sup> Registrar 1933, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>189</sup> Registrar 1933 and 1954, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>190</sup> Interviewee, Baker, Ella., ["Oral History Interview with Ella Baker, September 4, 1974. Interview G-0007. Southern Oral History Program Collection \(#4007\): Electronic Edition. Ella Baker Describes Her Role in the Formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee".](#)



club activities showed that they mostly wanted to be in community with one another. Together, Latinx students felt like they were no longer “other” but instead, united under a common identity, even if that identity was not always consistent. Thus, ‘Latinx-ness’ at Duke was different in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because there were not as many Latinx students at Duke to nuance this imagined, collective memory. To put it in an anachronistic, yet helpful way, all Latinx students were all from Latin America, and most of them were from wealthy family backgrounds. These first Latinx students navigated national and international political affairs that influenced how they were identified and how they in turn identified themselves. In the next chapter, Latinx-ness at Duke University became more complicated with the arrival of U.S-born Latinx students and Latinx students from low and middle-income backgrounds. Latinx-ness was also complicated after the 1960s because of the arrival of Black students at Duke that transformed the campus into a space where marginalized students felt they could protest the discrimination they faced.

### Chapter 3

#### A New Era of Latinx Students

#### Introduction

When Latinx students and Black staff sat together in Duke's brand-new Mary Lou Center for Black Culture in 1986, the former confessed about what it was like to grow up hating to be associated with being "Latino." Maria Escobar, a senior at Duke, felt that "she was embarrassed by her mother's Hispanic background," adding that "[she] felt she had to accept Columbia to have a mother."<sup>191</sup> Later on, the topic of the conversation changed and Dr. Ed Hill, the director of the Mary Lou, summarized a point and said, "what I perceive in this room is similar to blacks. You get to a certain [socio-economic] level and divorce yourself from the masses of your people." Dr. Hill verbalized connections he saw between Black and Latinx communities outside of Duke. He was attempting to show the students the social and cultural connections between the two historically separated communities. In this chapter, I will explain how Black and Latinx students and staff came together in the 1980s not only to discuss in community, but to collectively explore what it was like to live as "cultural minori[ties] at America."

In this chapter I historicize Latinx students from the 1970s to 2017. Latinx students came to understand themselves as a "cultural minority in America" and organized themselves as a "Latin"/"Hispanic" student community. By the time they arrived to Duke in the late 1970s, Black undergraduate students had been challenging the university's history of racial violence. Black student's challenges helped transform certain university spaces into ones that could offer support for other marginalized racial minorities, like Latinx students. Latinx students started to come in larger numbers in the 1970s because Black undergraduate students demanded that the university

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<sup>191</sup> Griffith, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

accept more Black students, which catalyzed the university to also increase the number of non-Black minority students, including Latinx. Meanwhile, outside of Duke's campus, the Cuban Revolution brought a new generation of children to the U.S. The children were directly influenced by international sociopolitical policies and experienced discrimination first hand as Cuban migrants. These children became Cuban-American, Latin, or Hispanic, but nonetheless were still treated as cultural minorities. Many applied to Duke University and their matriculation marked a transition between the historical enrollment of elite Latin American students and U.S.-born Latinx students at Duke University. The Cuban migration experience influenced Cuban students to develop a Latinx consciousness, one that recognized their Latin "otherness" and, following the example of Black students, challenged the racial status quo at Duke University.

### **A Brief History of Black Student Activism at Duke University**

In order to understand how Latinx and Black students and staff came together in a Black cultural center to discuss race and discrimination, I will first provide a brief history of how Black students reshaped Duke University. In 1963, decades after the university was founded, Duke University finally matriculated its first five Black undergraduate students.<sup>192</sup> The students arrived to a hostile campus plagued with anti-Black racism. They experienced a "culture shock" on Duke's predominately White-Anglo campus.<sup>193</sup> They felt tokenized at the university, feeling as though they were representatives of the entire Black race the university.<sup>194</sup> When they arrived on campus, there were no institutional resources like Black faculty, administrators, or advisors, to

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<sup>192</sup> The Road to Desegregation at Duke, December 5, 2012 - March 3, 2013, Rare Book Room Cases, Perkins Library, Duke University

Commemorating Fifty Years of Black Students, Perkins Library, Duke University  
Black graduate and professional students had been at Duke a few years earlier.

<sup>193</sup> Commemorating Fifty Years of Black Students, Perkins Library, Duke University

<sup>194</sup> The Black Demands, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

help them navigate the social climate.<sup>195</sup> Slowly, the number of Black students in the classes after, grew from five students in 1963, to eight the next year, to 45 in 1968.<sup>196</sup>

That same year, the university registrar documented its non-Black “minority” senior undergraduate students in the class of 1971. They found that there were zero “Mexican American” students, one “Puerto Rican” student, one “Oriental” student, and nine “American Indian” students in the senior class of 1971. This was one of the first times that the university recorded the number of Black and non-Black “minority” students. This was also the first time that the university acknowledged the existence of “Mexican American” students in their admissions and registrar records. By documenting students through these specific racial and ethnic identity labels, the university had shown interest in possibly increasing the number of “minority” students at Duke. But besides these demographic documents, there was no documented discussion on how or when the university would take steps to recruit “minority” students to Duke. Diversifying the Duke student body was a long-term goal for the university administration, something that the university knew they should eventually embody but did not feel was an immediate priority for the university. The university administration would soon come to find out that for Black undergraduate students, admitting more Black students was an immediate concern.

Since 1966, Black undergraduate students expressed many concerns to the university administrations, including: the increase the number of Black students at Duke, the end of police harassment Black students and community members experienced on campus, and the creation of academic resources designed for Black students.<sup>197</sup> Many Black students had academically failed

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<sup>195</sup> Commemorating Fifty Years of Black Students, Perkins Library, Duke University

<sup>196</sup> Annual Report 1981-1982, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>197</sup> The Black Demands, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Duke and were forced to withdraw because Black students argued that Duke had failed them. More specifically, Black students said that “the stifling social and educational environment at Duke [made Black students] unable to achieve required academic standing...”<sup>198</sup> The students engaged in extensive conversations and negotiations with university administrations but ultimately felt neglected. In 1969, the Black student’s frustrations manifested into direct action when they occupied the Allen building. The Allen building was Duke’s main administrative center, a visible and central space on campus. The Black students created a list of ten demands of the university, including their original concerns, and threatened the university with burning the “University records if police [were] sent in to remove them.”<sup>199</sup> The Black student protesters were committed to changing the social culture of the university and creating resources so that Black students at Duke could thrive.

The 1969 Allen Building protest served to spotlight the racial violence and difficulties Black students experienced at Duke. The protest was successful because it urged the university administration to become attentive to the needs of their Black students and “five of the original demands were met without delay.”<sup>200</sup> The university administration began talks among administrators and faculty about where to find a university advisor to Black students, where to create a living space for Black students on campus, and to address the reasons many Black students had failed Duke (and how Duke failed Black students) since 1963. To address the attrition rates of Black students at Duke, the university administration took meticulous notes on

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<sup>198</sup> The Black Demands, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

<sup>199</sup> “The Divinity School Response, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

<sup>200</sup> The Black Demands, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

General Faculty Meeting February 13, 1969, Allen Building Takeover Collection, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

The university records do not specify which demands were immediately addressed.

the number of Black students that applied to Duke, the number of Black students that enrolled, the classes Black students took, their grades, and the reasons they withdrew from the university.<sup>201</sup> The protests pushed administrators to take actionable measures to increase the number of Black students in every school, including Trinity, Engineering, Medical, Forestry, Law, Divinity, and Graduate.<sup>202</sup>

Black student recruitment efforts also translated in the increase of the number of non-Black “minority” students at Duke. Consequently, by 1971, the number of “minority” students at Duke increased to include 20 “Spanish Surnamed American” students, 20 “American Oriental” students, 100 “American Indian” students, and 168 “American Negro” students.<sup>203</sup> Even though the Black student protest and efforts were not specifically aimed to increase the number of non-Black “minority” students at Duke, their efforts greatly influenced this change. The Black student activism and demonstrations on campus opened the door for more Latinx students to be admitted to Duke. Meanwhile, hundreds of miles away, the Cuban Revolution was a source that brought Cuban Latinx to the U.S. and to Duke University.

### **A Source of Latinx Students- A Brief History of U.S./Cuban Politics**

One of the first groups to form Latinx consciousness at Duke University were Cuban-American students.<sup>204</sup> To understand why Cuban-Americans were the first Latinx conscious

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<sup>201</sup> Update/Minority Recruitment-Annual Report, July 1982, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>202</sup> The Duke administration used the term “minority” sometimes to mean only Black students and other times it meant “American Indian,” “American Negro,” “American Oriental,” and “Spanish Surnamed American.”

<sup>203</sup> Resident-Credit Headcount Enrollment and Total Faculty by Race, Office of the University Registrar Records, University Archives, Duke University.

<sup>204</sup> I use Cuban-American as opposed to Cuban because the majority of Cuban refugees were given legal status to live, work, and study in the U.S. and permanently settled in the U.S.

Beginning in the 1800s, Cuban businessmen had settled in U.S. cities and enrolled their children in schools and universities.<sup>204</sup> Many Cuban criollo elites preferred to enroll their children in schools in the U.S. instead of Europe, which was popular at the time for wealthy and elite families in Latin America and the U.S.<sup>204</sup> Starting in 1930, Duke

students at Duke, we must understand why Cuban refugees came to the U.S. and how they became Cuban-Americans.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Cubans arrived in large numbers to the U.S. East, particularly to South Florida. Some Cuban migrants consisted of Cuban exiles who had been connected to the Batista regime in some way, such as politicians, members of the military, economists, and officials.<sup>205</sup> Many Cuban migrants were a mix of Batista loyalists, professionals, and upper, middle and working-class people.<sup>206</sup> By the end of the 1960s, “almost 40,000 Cubans had arrived in the United States.”<sup>207</sup>

Cold War politics influenced the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations to grant refugee status to the Cuban exiles, allowing them to legally live, work, and study in the U.S.<sup>208</sup> This legal status allowed Cuban children to study in U.S. public schools and universities. Non-Cuban Latinx migrants who came to the U.S. as a result of political, economic, or social turmoil were not given the same generous permanent legal status as Cuban refugees. In turn, the Reagan administration’s Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which gave legal status to about three million migrants (many of who were Latinx), made it even more difficult for people without legal status to work and live in the U.S. In short, Cuban migrants were given a unique opportunity to access educational and professional resources that put them at an advantage over other Latinx migrants.

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University enrolled its first Cuban student and since then would continue to enroll about one to four Cuban students every year until the 1960s.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Garcia, “Exiles, Immigrants and Transnationals: The Cuban Communities of the United States,” 152, 194.

<sup>206</sup> Garcia, “Exiles, Immigrants and Transnationals: The Cuban Communities of the United States,” 153, 156.

Most of the 40,000 Cuban migrants were White, mestizo, or non-Black Cubans. Many Black Cubans and Cubans of African descent decided to stay in Cuba. They were optimistic that they would benefit from Castro’s agenda of racial equality.

<sup>207</sup> Black Cubans also hesitated to migrate to Florida, the U.S. South, because of Jim Crow laws that oppressed Black Americans.

<sup>208</sup> Garcia, “Exiles, Immigrants and Transnationals: The Cuban Communities of the United States,” 153.

In the 1980s, Cuban students applied to universities outside of the state of Florida in larger numbers. Some even applied and were accepted to Duke University. Out of the Cuban students who attended Duke, some were born in Cuba and others were born in the U.S., as a result of their parent's migration from Cuba. Regardless of their country of birth, all Cubans became U.S. citizens as a result of living in the U.S. and as "cultural minorities," many students experienced changes to their socioeconomic class from the U.S. Anglo majority. Thus, Cuban students at Duke represented a sociocultural and economic bridge between the wealthy and elite Latin American students and the U.S-born Latinx students.

### **The Spanish American Latin Student Association as Organized Latinx Consciousness Building**

In the 1980s, Cuban and other Latinx Duke students identified as Cuban-American, Hispanic, U.S. citizens, and/or with their Latin American nationalities.<sup>209</sup> The Latinx students felt that their Latin identity and experiences were sufficient to create a community among one another. Some Latinx students were born in the U.S. and others were born in Latin American countries. They were still willing to compromise their individual identity label to create one that attempted to capture their Latin commonality. Thus, they compromised on a Spanish American Latino identity when they founded S.A.L.S.A., the Spanish American Latino Student Association at Duke University in 1982.<sup>210</sup>

S.A.L.S.A. students used "Hispanic," "Latin," "Spanish," "Columbian," "Cuban," and "American," to identify themselves, their parents, and their S.A.L.S.A. community. By using

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<sup>209</sup> Yonker, interview.

Griffith, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

<sup>210</sup> Yonker, interview.



these different identity markers, S.A.L.S.A. students, like past Latinx students, who experimented with different terms like the “Alien,” “Cosmopolitan,” and “Pan-American,” were attempting to organize their similarities into a collective identity. There were two differences between past Latinx students and S.A.L.S.A. students. The first was that S.A.L.S.A. students had more complicated relationships between their U.S. and Latin American identity. The second, was that S.A.L.S.A. students had the historical luxury of having more terms to experiment with, since President Richard Nixon’s administration popularized the term “Hispanic” at a national level in the 1970s U.S. Census.<sup>211</sup>

In their first year as an organization, S.A.L.S.A. invited Jaime J. Montealegre Lacayo to speak at Duke.<sup>212</sup> Lacayo was been part of the Nicaraguan Revolutionary War as a member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front government in Nicaragua.<sup>213</sup> The Sandinista fought and succeeded to overthrow the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle, whose family ruled Nicaragua since 1936 and Somoza ruled Nicaragua himself from 1967 to 1979.<sup>214</sup>

During the war, the Sandinistas fought an oppositional group called The Contras. The Contras were supported by the U.S. government and opposed the Sandinista’s leftist ideology and policies. The Sandinistas won the revolutionary war and organized their government as a military junta.<sup>215</sup> Inviting Lacayo did not necessarily mean that S.A.L.S.A. explicitly supported or opposed the Sandinista government. S.A.L.S.A. members felt it was important for their academic and cultural education at Duke to engage with historical actors from Latin America and engage in moments where the U.S. took military action to support U.S. political and economic

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<sup>211</sup> Cohn, “Census History: Counting Hispanics.”  
Mexican-Americans in New Mexico had identified as “Hispanics” decades earlier.

<sup>212</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “SALSA.”

*Duke Chronicle*, “SALSA: Presents Jaime J. Montealegre Locayo.”

<sup>213</sup> *Duke Chronicle*, “SALSA: Presents Jaime J. Montealegre Locayo.”

<sup>214</sup> Crawley, *Somoza and Roosevelt*, 3.

<sup>215</sup> Crawley, *Somoza and Roosevelt*, 3.

interests. Like the Pan-American Club, S.A.L.S.A. engaged culturally and politically with issues in Latin America, yet, unlike the Pan-American Club, S.A.L.S.A. was led by students whose lives were influenced by their working-class family struggles, their family's immigration to the U.S., and/or their life as non-Anglo U.S. citizens: "cultural minorities in America."<sup>216</sup>

In 1986, S.A.L.S.A. was co-led by Cuban-American Nelson Bellido and Maria Claudia Escobar whose parents were from Colombia.<sup>217</sup> Bellido was born in Chicago, Illinois and grew up in Miami, Florida, after his parents felt forced to leave Cuba because of the revolution.<sup>218</sup> In Cuba, Bellido's parents were professionals, but upon migrating to the U.S. they worked on farms, in the maintenance-service industry, and in manufacturing as working-class laborers, in part because they did not know how to speak English. Escobar was born in the U.S. and was raised in a community in Virginia isolated from any Latin influences beside her family.

Students like Bellido and Escobar made S.A.L.S.A. the first organization through which Latinx students actively engaged with the racial violence they experienced in the U.S. In 1988, Bellido and Escobar organized a S.A.L.S.A. forum, which was sponsored by the university's Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, on the topic of "living as part of a cultural minority in America."<sup>219</sup> As a fourth-year student, Escobar was still conflicted with the process of her identity formation. She felt that U.S. racial culture made it problematic for her to identify as a U.S. citizen and with her "Columbian" heritage.<sup>220</sup> Escobar, said that while growing up, "she considered herself American and defied anything that said [she] was Latin."<sup>221</sup> She expressed that it was difficult for her to want to identify with their "Columbian" heritage, because there

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<sup>216</sup> Griffith, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

<sup>217</sup> Griffith, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

<sup>218</sup> Nelson, interview.

<sup>219</sup> Duke Chronicle, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

<sup>220</sup> Duke Chronicle, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

<sup>221</sup> Duke Chronicle, "Latin Students Discuss Heritage."

was “no food, no music, no places to dance” in her Virginia community that made it acceptable or normal to identify as Latin. She added that “the media stereotype[s] t[ied] Hispanics with crime, drugs and poverty.”<sup>222</sup> Escobar’s point was reinforced by *Duke’s Chronicle* student newspaper because the S.A.L.S.A. forum was reported on the front cover of the newspaper surrounding a sketch of a Black/Brown man who was described to be “a suspected rapist.”<sup>223</sup> It is not clear whether the *Chronicle* staff intentionally meant to place the sketch as part of the “Latin students” article, but at best, this action was oblivious to the S.A.L.S.A. student’s objections of

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<sup>222</sup> Duke Chronicle, “Latin Students Discuss Heritage.”

<sup>223</sup> Duke Chronicle, “Latin Students Discuss Heritage.”

the “media stereotype tying Hispanics with crime.” S.A.L.S.A. students were opposing the very thing that had been attached to their newspaper article for the entire Duke community to see.

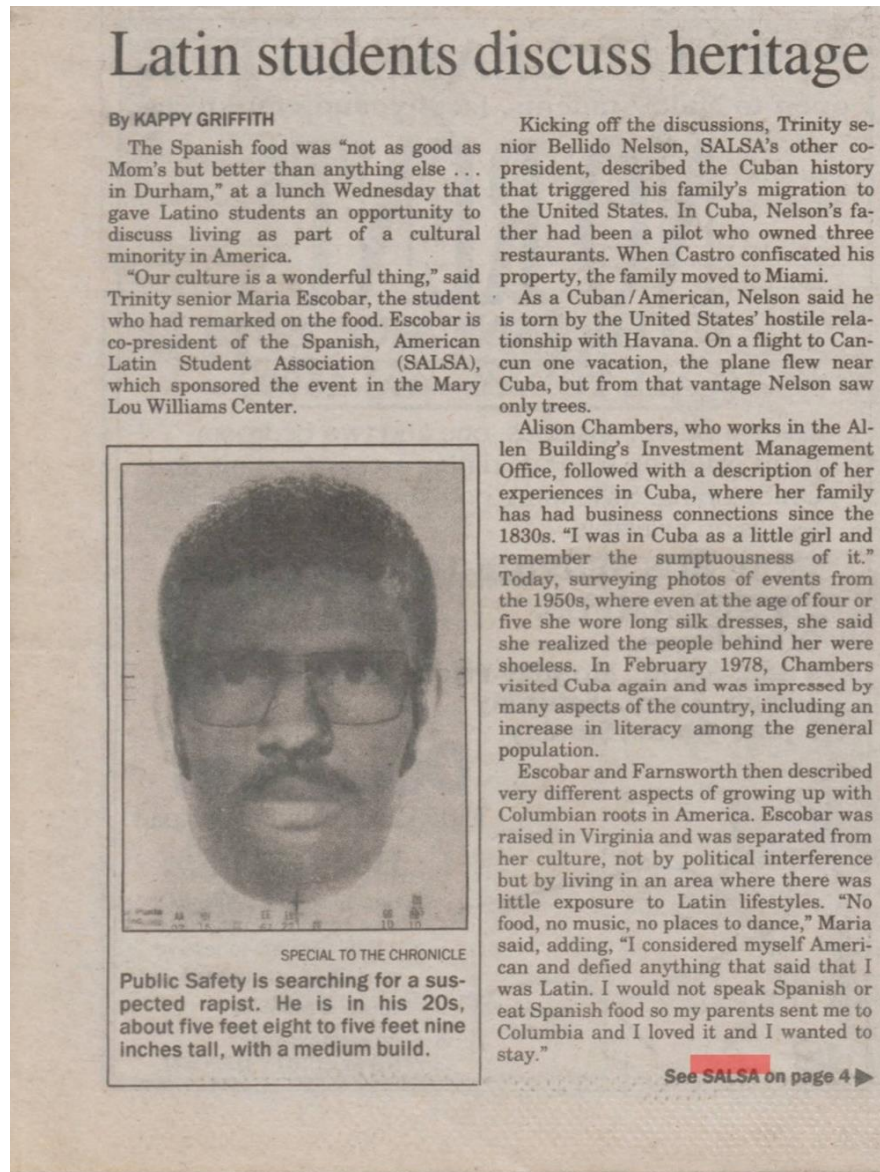


Image 2: Latin Students Discuss Heitage

The S.A.L.S.A. forum, “living as part of a cultural minority in America” was able to happen at Duke University in 1988 because there was a sufficient number of Latinx Duke students who identified with the struggle of being a cultural minority, thus not being Anglo-Americans, in the U.S. The S.A.L.S.A. conversation was hosted by the Mary Lou William

Center for Black Culture because the topic of “living as cultural minority in America” was one that Black students and staff related to and was more pronounced as “minority” students at a predominately White-Anglo institution. Conversations like these, that explored racialized identity, “minority” subjectivity, and the difficulties of belonging at Duke, brought together Latinx and Black students and staff. The conversations helped catalyze personal relationships between Latinx and Black students and staff that paved the way for Black and Latinx solidarity in the 1980s.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Black students strongly advocated for the creation of a center space on campus where they could host events, study, and be in community with one another. Their efforts resulted in the creation of the Mary Lou Center for Black Culture in 1983.<sup>224</sup> The first director of the Mary Lou was Dr. Edward (Ed) Hill. Bellido and Dr. Hill formed a mentorship relationship, in part because Bellido described that Dr. Hill “understood the plight [of Latino students] and Latino culture and helped him [Bellido] flourish the [Latin] community.”<sup>225</sup> The relationship between Bellido and Dr. Ed Hill was an example of Black and Latinx solidarity because Dr. Hill was expected to help the Black student community grow, but he was also committed to mentoring and supporting the Latinx Duke student community. Dr. Hill understood and was sympathetic to the struggles Latinx students faced and during his tenure as the director of the Mary Lou Center for Black Culture, he expanded the center to serve as a home for both Black and Latinx students.

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<sup>224</sup> History of the Mary Lou Williams Center, Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, Student Affairs, Duke University

<sup>225</sup> Bellido, interview.

### **Latinx Organizations Grow and Become Independent in the 1990s**

The Black and Latinx solidarity that was started by the students in S.A.L.S.A. and the staff in the Mary Lou Center for Black Culture transforms into a wider solidarity net when Spectrum was founded in the late 1980s by a group of students of color, including Nelson Bellido, the co-president of S.A.L.S.A. Spectrum and Chris Foster, a leader in the Black Student Association. It meant to serve as an umbrella organization that attempted to bring together other identity groups on campus, under one governing body. The founders wanted Spectrum to serve as a space that promoted solidarity among marginalized students on campus and of “the larger Duke and Durham communities.”<sup>226</sup>

By the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, many identity groups were forming that focused on a specific racial, ethnic, and marginalized identities. Some of the group members of Spectrum were the “Asian Students Association, the Black Student Alliance, Diya (the Duke South Asian Student Association), Duke Women of Color United, Gothic Queers, Hillel/Freeman Center of Jewish Life, Hindu Students Council, International Association, Mi Gente (The Latino Student Association), Muslim Student Association, National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, Native American Student Coalition, and the Students of the Caribbean Association.”<sup>227</sup> Many of these organizations remained active to 2018. Some organizations rebranded and changed their name to something else. However, the temporality of a four-year term at Duke University caused for many student organizations to eventually discontinue because of a lack of student interest and continuity.

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<sup>226</sup> Spectrum Constitution, Spectrum, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

<sup>227</sup> Spectrum Constitution, Spectrum, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Spectrum created a cultural and social infrastructure at Duke University where students of color, minority religious organizations, and LGBTQ identifying students could be part of a larger community of support. Spectrum attempted to build solidarity among these groups under the premise that these groups had been historically discriminated or underrepresented at Duke University and in the country as a whole. Under Spectrum's tenure at Duke, new student organizations formed and joined the Spectrum network as other organizations discontinued.

In 1992, S.A.L.S.A. discontinued as an organization but there was still a need for a Latinx student community. Understanding this need, four Latina undergraduate women: Circe Bermudez, Pilar Sixto, Jessica Portillo, and Betsy Guzman founded Mi Gente, the Latino Student Association.<sup>228</sup> I emphasize that this organization was created by Latina women because up until this point in the history of Latinx students at Duke University, Latinx women do not appear as often in the organization's archives, the *Chronicle* newspaper, nor in the university's records as Latinx men. From 1926 to the 1980s, Latinx women may not have come to Duke at the same rate as Latinx men for a number of reasons, including but not limited to the fact that most cultures in Latin America and in the U.S. practiced patriarchal values that would have prevented Latinx women from leaving their home communities to pursue higher education. Latinx women formed part of the earlier Latinx-affiliated organizations like the Cosmpolitan Club and the Pan-American Club, but S.A.L.S.A. and Mi Gente were the first Latinx-identity-centered organizations that were spearheaded by Latinx women.

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<sup>228</sup> Lopez, interview.

Mi Gente Mission 2000, Mi Gente, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Mi Gente was founded with the mission “to educate and promote awareness of Latino culture and to highlight academic, political, and social concerns facing Latinos on campus.”<sup>229</sup> From the beginning Mi Gente was both a social organization that attempted to build community among the Latino-identifying students at Duke and a political organization that fought to make the larger university and community more just for Latino people. Mi Gente members organized an annual month-long series of events called “Latino Heritage Month,” to promote community among Latino students and “promote awareness” of issues Latino people endure at Duke and at a national level.<sup>230</sup> The Latinx student community was not encapsulated in Mi Gente, but as the population of Latinx-identifying students continued to grow, more Latinx organizations were created at Duke.

In the 1990s, the first Latino-centered Greek organizations were founded at Duke University. The first Latinx Greek organization to be founded at Duke was the Latino fraternity, La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda (LUL) Fraternity Incorporated.<sup>231</sup> They were founded in the spring of 1995 by George D. Bonaros, Steve A. Guerrero, Roberto López, Hugo Javier Narvarte, Thomas E. Epps, Alejandro Fernandez, and Louis P. Moreno.<sup>232</sup> In 1998, Latinas Promoviendo Comunidad, Lambda Pi Chi Sorority, Incorporated, was the first Latina sorority at Duke.<sup>233</sup> Lambda Pi Chi was founded by five women: Lisbert Avila, Paola Gómez, Joia Pardo, Annette Rodríguez, and Solimar Santos. Lambda Pi Chi eventually discontinued and another Latina-centered sorority was founded, Omega Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated in 2000.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Mi Gente Mission 2000, Mi Gente, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

<sup>230</sup> Mi Gente Mission 2000, Mi Gente, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

<sup>231</sup> LUL Duke Rho Chapter’s Facebook page.

<sup>232</sup> LUL Duke Rho Chapter’s Facebook page.

<sup>233</sup> “Kappa Chapter.” Lambda Pi Chi Sorority, Inc. [http://www.lambdapichi.org/Default.asp?kappa\\_chapter](http://www.lambdapichi.org/Default.asp?kappa_chapter)

<sup>234</sup> “Omicron Chapter.” Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. <http://www.omegaphibeta.org/site/lang/en-us/entities/entidades/collegiate/omicron-chapter/>



In 2015, Omega Phi Beta also discontinued and Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority Incorporated (LTA) was founded.<sup>235</sup> The Latina organizations saw a lot of discontinuity because the organizations were not able to continuously recruit women. However, LUL was able to maintain continuity as recent as spring 2018 with the initiation of Moises Tacam. Apart from Mi Gente, Latinx Greek organizations served as social communities for Latinx students at Duke but were not official member organizations of Spectrum.

By the mid-1990s, many student leaders of individual Spectrum member organizations felt that they could address their individual community's issues without having to rely on Spectrum. Many organizations, like Mi Gente, became large in members, were given sufficient funding by the university to organize their own events, and had established consistent visibility on campus. Some of these organizations felt that they did not need to rely so much on Spectrum as they had in the past. In the summer of 1995, Spectrum became its own organization, no longer serving as an umbrella organization for multiple groups, and later discontinued.<sup>236</sup> Student identity and cultural organizations worked with one another, in solidarity, on specific issues and at different times, but they did not formally unite under an umbrella organization after Spectrum discontinued.

An example of this type of cross-organization student solidarity was when students in Mi Gente, LUL, and Student Action with Farmworkers came together in 1995 to protest California grapes because they of the "farm workers' health and labor conditions."<sup>237</sup> Latinx students, like the co-coordinator of Mi Gente and co-founder of LUL, Roberto Lopez, led the movement.<sup>238</sup> Together, these students negotiated with the university to end their purchasing contracts with

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<sup>235</sup> I was a founder of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. in 2015.

<sup>236</sup> Hwang, "Spectrum's Visibility Decreases."

<sup>237</sup> Martelli, "University Reinstates California Grape Boycott."

<sup>238</sup> Martelli, "University Reinstates California Grape Boycott."

California grapes and to buy grapes from other suppliers. Students continued to advocate for farmworker rights, for a Latino studies program, for Latino faculty at Duke, and against the discrimination of students and faculty of color at Duke.<sup>239</sup> This legacy continued in 2015 when students in Mi Gente, LUL, and LTA demanded for resources for Latinx students.

### **A Memoir of Black and Latinx Demands**

In 2015, students in universities across the country were protesting racial violence and discrimination in their university communities. In an attempt to ease racial tensions and prevent mass student protests at Duke University, top Duke administrators: President Richard Broadhead, Provost Sally Kornbluth, and the Dean of Trinity Arts and Sciences Valerie Ashby hosted a panel discussion about the future of the university, called “Duke Today”.<sup>240</sup> Ten minutes before the event was scheduled to begin, a group of fifty Duke students, mostly Black and Latinx, marched up to the stage with a bullhorn and indicted the administration for their constant neglect towards the communities of color on campus. The students challenged the administrators to meet them at Page auditorium one week from that day on November 20th to discuss the institutional neglect and the changes that could be made to amend the damage. This event was called “Duke Tomorrow: Student-Organized Discussion with Brodhead and Administration.”<sup>241</sup>

The next Friday, a large group of Duke students moderated a hearing that placed the students against the university’s top administrators: President Broadhead, Provost Sally Kornbluth and Dean of Trinity Arts and Sciences Valerie Ashby. The auditorium was packed

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<sup>239</sup> Mi Gente Executive Council, “Mi Gente response to “Education professor sparks conversation on representation of Latino faculty.”

Staff Reports, “Sigma Chi Party Offensive, Racist.”

<sup>240</sup> Wohlever, “Students Present Demands to Administrators at Follow-Up Forum Friday.”

<sup>241</sup> Wohlever, “Students Present Demands to Administrators at Follow-Up Forum Friday.”

with students, faculty, staff and some members of the university's board of trustees. The three administrators were seated on the stage and three black-identifying students moderated the hour and a half long event. First, the black students read their demands out loud, then a group of Latinx students, and lastly, a group of Asian American students. The event ended after the audience gave their own testimonies about the racial tensions at Duke and asked questions to the administrators and the student protestors.

The Duke Tomorrow event, the student protestors, and the demands were perceived as aggressive by some students at Duke University.<sup>242</sup> Students like first-year Sabriyya Pate called the demands “combative” and argued that the student protestors “demean[ed] authority figures.”<sup>243</sup> The Black, Latinx, and Asian student protestors who organized the event and presented their list of demands were at first perceived as “aggressive” but after the Duke Tomorrow event, the three groups negotiated with the university administration separately. Each group strategized differently in preparation for their meetings with the university administration because they each group had different goals.

The demands made by the Black students were called “Demands of Black Voices.” The demands stated, “We, a group of unaffiliated and concerned students, hereby demand the following ten points.” The student's use of the term “unaffiliated” was strategic in order to remove the group from the history and reputation of any one student organization such as the Black Student Association, the Students of Caribbean Association, Duke Africa, Black Men's Union or any other black-identifying group. While many of the students involved in creating the petition were part of these student groups, by labeling themselves as “unaffiliated” they attempted to establish a fresh relationship with the administration that went beyond the monthly

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<sup>242</sup> Pate, “Do Better.”

<sup>243</sup> Pate, “Do Better.”

“Committee on Black Affairs” meetings, or the meetings between the Black Student Union and the vice president of student affairs, Larry Moneta. Most importantly, by identifying as “unaffiliated” and “concerned students,” the students were following the example and standing in solidarity with the other universities across the country who were also protesting, like in Mizzou, Georgetown, and Claremont-McKenna.<sup>244</sup>

The “Demands of Black Voices” attempted to include measures that would improve the educational and working experience for all students of color, faculty, and staff at Duke University. For example, the first demand was under the subject of the university’s “Bias Report Policy and the University Standard.” A subpoint of the demand called for all first-year students to take a class that taught them “ideals of diversity and cultural competency.”<sup>245</sup> The students demanded that “all members of the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council” be trained in bias and diversity. The students specifically mentioned these historically White-Anglo Greek organizations because they had a long history of racist practices like the “Viva Mexico” party where members of the Sigma Chi fraternity “included invitations in the form of expired green cards and a ‘border control’ at the door”<sup>246</sup> and the “Asian Fusion” themed party where members of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity dressed up in rice hats and squinted their eyes in photographs.<sup>247</sup>

After both incidents, the university continued to ignore the need for either Greek councils, or even the groups involved, to be trained in bias and cultural competency training. On the same note, the students also urged all professors to participate in this same training. The

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<sup>244</sup> *The Maneater*, “Letter to the Editor: Dear Chancellor Loftin: It isn't enough.”

<sup>245</sup> Wohlever, “Students Present Demands to Administrators at Follow-Up Forum Friday.”

<sup>246</sup> Levine, “Sigma Chi Party Outrages Latinos.”

<sup>247</sup> Kingkade, “Duke University Kappa Sigma Fraternity Draws Accusations Of Racism With ‘Asia Prime’ Party (UPDATE).”

students purposely did not specify adjunct, non-tenure track or tenured track faculty but used the phrasing “all professors” to suggest that even Duke’s long-time tenured faculty are also guilty of expressing bias against their students. This was specifically inspired by the racists comments made in a rant by Duke Professor Jerry Hough, who demeaned “the blacks” and “the Asians” in the comments section of a New York Times editorial called “How Racism Doomed Baltimore.”<sup>248</sup>

The Duke concerned student demands continued to encompass all members of the university, by demanding an “increase [in] the amount of women, Black, Asian, Latino/a, Native American and Queer people of color serving as faculty.”<sup>249</sup> Another demand urged the university to allow students to submit a Short-Term Illness Notification Form (STINF)<sup>250</sup> for mental health reasons. Another demand pressed the university administration to allow university staff and faculty to unionize without the university administration’s active union-busting actions. All of these demands were made to directly and indirectly benefit all students and especially students of color.

When the concerned students finished presenting their demands, they asked the university administrators seated on the stage to sign a document that symbolically indicted them for their institutional negligence against all students of color. The concerned students were bold, inclusive, and inspired many students to take direct action with the university administration. After the concerned students presented their demands, the Latinx students climbed on stage and read their ten demands outloud.

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<sup>248</sup> Miller, “Duke professor, attacked for ‘noxious’ racial comments, refuses to back down.”

<sup>249</sup> Wohlever, “Students Present Demands to Administrators at Follow-Up Forum Friday.”

<sup>250</sup> Illness, Short- and Long-Term, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, Duke University.

The Latinx student demands were more focused on the needs of Latinx students, faculty, and staff, as opposed including the larger Duke community. In 2005, Latinx students in Mi Gente wrote a list of demands that addressed needs in the Latinx student, faculty, and staff community. Some of those demands included an increase in Latinx faculty and staff, a center for Latinx students and to “deepen linkages with local Latinx populations in Durham and North Carolina.”<sup>251</sup> Ten years later, in 2015, there were many more Latinx students on campus, yet most of the demands were still unmet. Thus, the Latinx student demands of 2015 were similar to the demands of 2005 because the needs of the Latinx community had still not been fulfill by the university administration.

Antonio Lopez and I read the Latinx student demands at the “Duke Tomorrow” event, I was a representative of Mi Gente as the vice president and Lopez was a representative of LUL. In the process of writing these demands, the Latinx community was divided. When Mi Gente’s executive council discussed writing demands weeks before the “Duke Tomorrow” event, the group of fifteen students could not agree on whether or not demands should be written. The executive council became polarized and about half of the executive council members came together to write Latinx student demands. We were a small group of students and needed support in writing the demands. Thus, I sought the help of Antonio Lopez, a senior Latinx student and president of LUL.

After the small group of Mi Gente’s executive council members created the first draft of the Latinx demands, Antonio and I spent many hours editing the demands. Days before the “Duke Tomorrow” event, the Latinx demands were presented to all of Mi Gente’s executive

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<sup>251</sup> Mi Gente Demands 2005, Mi Gente, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

council and after hours of debate, we finally agreed to present them at the event. Mi Gente's executive council took on the responsibility of writing the demands because our predecessors in 2005 had written the first set of demands, Mi Gente had established a long history of advocating for the Latinx community at Duke, and because we were the largest and most active Latinx student organization. The majority of Mi Gente members were first-generation, low-income, and U.S. born Latinx students who were aware of the history of racial discrimination and student activism on campus.

The demands called for the creation of a Latinx center, more funds and staff for the Latino Student Recruitment Weekend that Mi Gente helped organize every year, more Latinx faculty and staff, and funds for an annual Latinx awards event. The demands also asked for an apology from the university administration for Dr. Jason Mendez, a former visiting professor who had been racially harassed within the program by his all-white colleagues in the Program of Education. Eight out of the ten demands strictly addressed issues that the Mi Gente executive council felt were necessary to be amended by the administration. There were two demands that included other students of color: the appeal for the university to "provide need-blind admission for undocumented students" and the demand for "all black and brown laborers" to be paid \$15 an hour. The call for need-blind admission for undocumented students would affect Latinx and non-Latinx students who were undocumented. The movement for higher wages at Duke was took direct action at the university a few months after the "Duke Tomorrow" event. Students at Duke University had adopted the national movement, "The Fight for Fifteen."

After Antonio and I presented the Latinx demands to the Duke community at the event, we published the demands through the *Duke Chronicle* in a letter called "Duke Without Mi

Gente.”<sup>252</sup> The title “Duke Without Mi Gente” was based off the satirical movie, “A Day Without a Mexican,” to address the unspoken importance of Latinx students and Mi Gente at Duke University. Most importantly, in the letter we wrote, we stated that Mi Gente would “cease its collaboration with the Admissions office with respect to Latino Student Recruitment Weekend (LSRW).”<sup>253</sup>

The decision to end our annual collaboration with LSRW was made in private meetings among Mi Gente’s executive council and Lopez. Ending Mi Gente’s collaboration with LSRW meant that Mi Gente would not contribute its annual \$10,000 budget towards the weekend’s programming. It also meant that Mi Gente’s executive council would not volunteer to organize and execute the weekend. Mi Gente, understood that LSRW had become important to the university administration. Months before the “Duke Tomorrow” event, the *Duke Today* magazine published an article that celebrated the enrollment of the largest group of Latinx students in the class of 2019.<sup>254</sup> This article did not mention the success of LSRW, the organizing efforts of Mi Gente, Latinx students, nor the work of the Ashley Taylor, the only staff coordinator for LSRW.<sup>255</sup> When Mi Gente announced that they were terminating all involvement with the program, the university understood that the program’s funding and success would be deeply undercut and there was a possibility that the number of Latinx students for the class of 2020 would fall. In the letter, Mi Gente also included a deadline for the administration to respond, January 29, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. A few days after the letter was published on the *Duke Chronicle*, the university administration emailed Mi Gente to schedule a meeting to address the demands.

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<sup>252</sup> Mi Gente 2015-2016, “Duke Without Mi Gente.”

<sup>253</sup> Mi Gente 2015-2016, “Duke Without Mi Gente.”

<sup>254</sup> Duke Today Staff, “DUKE WELCOMES CLASS OF 2019 ON AUG. 18.”

<sup>255</sup> Duke Today Staff, “DUKE WELCOMES CLASS OF 2019 ON AUG. 18.”



Meanwhile, after our letter was published, most of the Latinx community outside of Mi Gente's executive council was angry that they were not presented with the demands before the "Duke Tomorrow" event. Latinx students were also angry that the letter said "Mi Gente, Latinx Students and non-Latinx allies" were making the demands, even though those outside of Mi Gente's executive council and Lopez were not included in the writing process of the demands. In order to mediate these issues, Mi Gente organized a townhall meeting about the demands days after the "Duke Tomorrow" event. At the townhall meeting, Mi Gente's executive council members explained the writing process of the demands and apologized to the Latinx student community about not including them in the process. Some Latinx student were supportive of the demands, some did not want to associate themselves with the demands, and others felt that Mi Gente had "shot themselves in the foot" by ending participation with LSRW.

As the directors of the movement that created and presented the demands and later led the negotiations with administrators, Antonio and I found that the most difficult politics to navigate were the differences among the Latinx community.<sup>256</sup> In her book, *The Trouble with Unity*, Sandra Beltran references the ways in which Latinx organizations have started off with similar struggles and agendas but have historically separated because of nationalistic, strategic or government installed differences (COINTELPRO).<sup>257</sup> However, in her final chapter, Beltran references the Feminist movement and the different directions the movement took in order to address differences of race, sexual orientation and class. Specifically, Beltran's work is useful in understanding the resistance that occurred within the Latinx community in regard to the demands and LSRW. Beltran's concept of the rhizomatic status of Latinidad sets the foundation that Latinx unity does not exist. The rhizomatic concept stems from the analogy of the rhizome which

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<sup>256</sup> Lopez, "Spic'ing into Existence: Epitaph, Epithet, and the Ethnopoetic Imagination."

<sup>257</sup> Beltran, *Trouble with Unity*, 165.

acts as a network of “different entryways and flights.”<sup>258</sup> Therefore, it is helpful to understand the physical Latinx community that presented itself as the membership of Mi Gente, as an ideologically diverse space that was in constant debate over culture, politics and ethics. In this case, this same rhizomatic relationship was demonstrated through the multiple points of view that were expressed among the Latinx student community; that analyzed, praised and criticized Mi Gente and the leaders of the demand movement.

Mi Gente executive members and Lopez continued to meet with students in the days after the townhall event and before the scheduled meeting with the university administration to discuss the demands. The Mi Gente executive council and Lopez decided to continue with the negotiations with the university administration even after they had been discouraged by many students and alumni in person and through letters published in the *Duke Chronicle*.<sup>259</sup> At the same time, Mi Gente executive council members and Lopez had received a lot of support from Latinx students, non-Latinx students, faculty, staff, and alumni.<sup>260</sup> Additionally, Latinx student organizations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and at North Carolina State University wrote letters in support of the Latinx student demands. The students felt motivated by the letters of support and words of encouragement from their peers. Thus, in preparation for the meeting with the university administrators, the student protestors, Mi Gente executive council members and Lopez, continued the research they had started in writing the demands, on the history of Latinx students at Duke University. They rallied support from university faculty and

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<sup>258</sup> Beltran, *Trouble with Unity*, 165.

<sup>259</sup> Courtney, “Mi Gente’s Demands Miss the Point.”  
Villasante-Fricke, “Letter to the Editor.”

<sup>260</sup> Santoyo, “Letter to the Editor In Response to Mi Gente.”  
Mi Gente Alumni, “Un Pueblo Unido Jamás Será Vencido.”

staff, they reached out to every single department chair in Duke's Trinity and Pratt schools, and strategized what they would present and negotiate at the meeting.

The president of Mi Gente, Gloria Tomlinson, the secretary, Norma de Jesus, LUL president, Antonio Lopez, and I, the vice president of Mi Gente attended the meeting with university administrators: Dean Valerie Ashby, Provost Sally Kornbluth and the vice president of student affairs Larry Moneta. The university administrators first addressed the demand for the Latinx center. They revealed that student affairs was working on attaining a larger space for Latinx students. At that time, the Latinx space was a small room in between two bathrooms at the basement of the Bryan Center. After this first negotiation, Moneta immediately asked about Mi Gente's involvement with LSRW. In response, the students asked about increased funding and staff for the program and the university administrators promised that they would increase the funding, institutionalize the program through the admissions office, and provide more staff assistance.

Each student protesting group achieved different results after negotiations with the university administration. Asian student protestors began conversations with the university administration to establish an Asian American studies program at Duke. The Black students negotiated with the university to rename the West Union building at Duke after Julian Abele, the main designer of Duke's west campus. However, after months of negotiating, the board of trustees decided to rename the main quad of the Duke's west campus after Julian Abele. Still, many of the Black, Latinx, and Asian student demands were not successfully met by the university administration. Since the demands in 2015, students of color continue to advocate for institutional changes at Duke. Asian American students continue to advocate for an Asian American studies program. Latinx students continue to negotiate with the university

administration for an institutionalize funding for a Latinx student graduation and awards ceremony. Black students are working to change the disciplinary process for Duke community members who commit racial violence. The students continue to work to make Duke a safe, equitable, and just for all its members.

## Conclusion

The student demands in 2015 represented a moment of solidarity when Black, Latinx, and Asian students came together to demand institutional changes at Duke. But even before such urgent cries surfaced to Page Auditorium, Asian and Black students have helped Latinx students form their cultural identity. In the 1940s, Latinx students joined Cosmopolitan and International Club, both organizations started by Asian international students. A couple decades later, Black students influenced the university administration to increase the number of Latinx students on campus. The history of Latinx students at Duke is thus inextricably to the history of Black and Asian students at Duke University.

This thesis shares in this cross-racial collaboration. It was a community effort, inspired by the Latinx student community and aimed to primarily benefit the Latinx student community. And yet, the complicit behaviors of our predecessors urge the need to tirelessly forge alliances with our Black, Asian, and indigenous sisters and brothers. By understanding our history at Duke University, in all its pitfalls and achievements, we are able to stay vigilant in the anti-racist struggle for liberation. We can empower ourselves by understanding moments of solidarity among Black, Asian, and Latinx students at Duke: what caused them to be effective and ineffective, what hierarchies were perpetuated, and what new ways of relating to one another (affective or institutional) were created?

Latinx student identity and subjectivity, has moved with the times—it has been influenced by immigration laws, racial quota systems, foreign policies, world wars, and of course, student activism (both reactionary and progressive). Sometimes, we've postured ourselves as 'tour guides' to our native lands, as attested by students like Ben Boyd and the Pan-American Club members who attempted to educate the Duke community about Latin American

and Latinx culture. In so doing, we purchased and advertised ourselves as patrons to a colonial, racist gaze that othered our bodies. In so doing, we acquiesced to an Anglo community and ideology that sponsored xenophobia and racial discrimination. It was not until the efforts of the Black student community that created a political space sufficient enough for us to subvert this supremacist paradigm. Black bodies helped Latinx bodies to encroach a model of tolerance, one that begrudgingly admitted select ‘tokenistas.’ Black bodies instilled in us the courage to follow their example, to actively protest discrimination and racial violence on campus.

It is this author’s humble hope that this thesis may help to return the favor, to help Black and Latinxs to create bridges in the spirit of Cherrie Moraga, to foster community between our two groups, and to enfranchise Native Americans, Asian (Americans), and all others who “want to change the miserable condition that exists on this earth.” And this campus...

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## Thesis

Baligh ibn Antonio Lopez, "Spic'ing into Existence: Epitaph, Epithet, and the Ethnopoetic Imagination" (Thesis, Duke University, 2016).