

The Wolfe Institute

*The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities,
in cooperation with the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies,
presents a series*

Writing Latin@ New York

Becoming Julia de Burgos The Making of a Puerto Rican Icon



While it is rare for a poet to become a cultural icon, Julia de Burgos has evoked feelings of bonding and identification in Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the United States for over half a century. In the first book-length study written in English, Vanessa Pérez Rosario examines poet and political activist Julia de Burgos's development as a writer, her experience of migration, and her legacy in New York City, the poet's home after 1940. Pérez Rosario situates Julia de Burgos as part of a transitional generation that helps bridge the historical divide between Puerto Rican nationalist writers of the 1930s and the Nuyorican writers of the 1970s. *Becoming Julia de Burgos* departs from the prevailing emphasis on the poet and intellectual as a nationalist writer to focus on her contributions to New York Latino/a literary and visual culture. It moves beyond the standard tragedy-centered narratives of Burgos's life to place her within a nuanced historical understanding of Puerto Rico's peoples and culture to consider more carefully the complex history of the island and the diaspora. Pérez Rosario unravels the cultural and political dynamics at work when contemporary Latina/o writers and artists in New York revise, reinvent, and riff off of Julia de Burgos as they imagine new possibilities for themselves and their communities.

Vanessa Pérez Rosario is associate professor of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. Her research and teaching interests include transnational feminism, Latino cultural studies, and Spanish in the United States. She is the author of *Becoming Julia de Burgos: The Making of a Puerto Rican Icon* (University of Illinois Press, 2014) and the editor of *Hispanic Caribbean Literature of Migration: Narratives of Displacement* (Palgrave, 2010). She has received numerous fellowships including the Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship, a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, an American Association of University Women fellowship, and a library fellowship at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University. Her work has appeared in *Centro Journal*, *Meridians*, and *Translation Review*. She currently serves on the board of Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project at the University of Houston. She is associate investigator of the CUNY—New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals.

**Monday, March 9, 2015
3:40 to 6:10 p.m.
Woody Tanger Auditorium
Brooklyn College Library**

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Speakers

Raquel Cepeda, born in Harlem to Dominican parents, is an award-winning writer, cultural activist, and documentary filmmaker. She is the author of *Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina*. Equal parts memoir about Cepeda's coming of age in New York City and Santo Domingo, and detective story chronicling her year-long journey to discover the truth about her ancestry, the book also looks at what it means to be Latina today. She is currently in production on *Deconstructing Latina*, a documentary focusing on a group of troubled teenage girls in a suicide prevention program who are transformed through an exploration of their roots via the use of ancestral DNA testing. Cepeda's writings have been widely anthologized and her byline has been featured in media outlets including *The New York Times*, *People*, the *Associated Press*, *The Village Voice*, *MTV News*, *CNN.com*, among others.

Sandra María Esteves is a poet and visual artist known as The Godmother of Nuyorican Poetry. She has published several collections of poetry which include: *DivaNations* (a cappella, audio cd, 2010); *Wildflowers* (a cappella, audio cd, 2009); *Portal* (2007); *Poems In Concert* (2006); *Portfolio* (2003); *Finding Your Way, Poems for Young Folks* (1999); *Contrapunto In the Open Field* (1998); *Undelivered Love Poems* (1997); *Bluestown Mockingbird Mambo* (Arte Público Press, 1990); *Tropical Rain: A Bilingual Downpour* (1984); and *Yerba Buena* (Greenfield Review Press, 1980). One of the first Dominican Boricua Nuyorican women to publish a recognized volume of poetry in the United States, she is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including, a Pregones Theater/NEA Master Artist Award and a Poetry Fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

María Teresa “Mariposa” Fernández is an award-winning poet whose poetry has been featured on the notable HBO Latino series “Habla Ya” and the critically-acclaimed HBO documentary “Americanos: Latino Life in the US,” produced by Edward James Olmos, Nick Athas, and Time Warner. Mariposa has also been seen on BET, PBS and Lifetime TV. A Native New Yorker born and raised in the Bronx, Mariposa is a third generation Puerto Rican whose work demonstrates pride in her culture and a deep commitment to her community. Mariposa is the author of *Born Bronxña: Poems on Identity, Love & Survival*.

Bonafide Rojas is the author of three collections of poetry: “Renovatio,” (2014) “When The City Sleeps,” (2012) and “Pelo Bueno” (2004). He has appeared on “Def Poetry Jam,” “Spitting Ink,” and has been published in numerous anthologies and journals, including *Saul Williams’ Chorus*, *Bum Rush The Page*, *Role Call*, *Learn Then Burn I & II*, *Me No Habla Con Acento*, *The Centro*, *The Hostos Review*, *Acentos Review*, *Letras*, and *Palabras*. He is the bandleader of rock band *The Mona Passage* and the founder of *Grand Concourse Press*.

Emanuel Xavier is an Equality Forum LGBT History Month Icon, and is chair of the Penguin Random House LGBT Network. A former homeless teen, he is author of four poetry collections: *Nefarious*, *Americano: Growing up Gay and Latino in the USA*, *Pier Queen*, *If Jesus Were Gay & other poems*, and the novel, *Christ Like*, a Lambda Literary award finalist. He is also editor of *Bullets & Butterflies: Queer Spoken Word Poetry*, *Mariposas: A Modern Anthology of Queer Latino Poetry*, and *Me No Habla With Acento: Contemporary Latino Poetry*. He has been featured on Russell Simmons presents *Def Poetry*, *The New York Times*, *CNN* and performed in cities throughout the United States, Buenos Aires, Ghent, London, and Paris. In 2014, he was invited to speak at the United Nations as part of the International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy in the USA.