



Dear friends and colleagues,

I write you with mixed emotions. After extensive consideration, I have decided to step down as Director of the Center of Puerto Rican Studies (Centro) effective June 30, 2021. Apart from this, I have also requested a sabbatical leave for next academic year. I will devote my sabbatical to the understanding of disaster recovery in Puerto Rico, community planning and local participation, and supporting the critical initiatives and partnerships that Centro has championed in the island in recent years.

Serving as Centro's Director for almost thirteen years has been the most meaningful undertaking of my professional career. At times we have faced and continue to face serious challenges. But our achievements have always been rewarding and fulfilling. I am proud of and will leave satisfied with the progress that Centro has experienced during my tenure at the helm of this wonderful academic institution, growing our programs, staff, and budget; developing partnerships across the country to bolster historical preservation and our archives; and strengthening our outreach footing nationally to disseminate research and strengthen our community, and to support the solidarity movement with Puerto Rico. Among these achievements, rooted in the mandate of my appointment as Director, are:

Research and Publications

- Creating a post-doctoral full-time Research Associate program for strengthening the pipeline of the next generation of scholars in Puerto Rican Studies providing them with the opportunity to publish books and peer reviewed articles to continue on to academic careers. Since 2008, researchers participating in the program have published five books, four edited volumes, thirty-three articles in peer-reviewed outlets, eighteen book chapters, six major policy reports, among other contributions to generalized knowledge
- Creating the Data Center as a repository of information on Puerto Ricans in the United States, as a producer of actionable knowledge such as Policy Briefs, Data Sheets and special topic Booklets that advance basic and applied research on the Puerto Rican community, and as a provider of data and statistical assistance services to advance research in priority areas.

Since 2012, the Data Center has released more than twenty-five research briefs, more than twenty-five data sheets, dozens of population profiles for selected states, counties, metropolitan areas and cities, and more than twenty-five population maps.

- Launching the RebuildPR and USA Web applications, making hundreds of layers of GIS data available to the public for community planning, public policy analysis, and demographic and sociological research stateside or island-based Puerto Ricans.
- Establishing the Centro Research Exchange program benefiting over a hundred resident scholars, Master and Doctoral theses and dissertations, and post-doctoral and junior faculty fellows.
- Entering in a partnership with the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR) to sponsor the Mellon Fellowship Program to support six doctoral students in the humanities who were completing their dissertations with a \$25,000 stipend and mentoring for completion of the dissertation.
- Spearheading and supporting a sponsored research program that has recently produced numerous studies on the impact of the disaster on the diaspora and Puerto Rico, including the impact of the exodus on the greater Hartford area, local responses in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the impact of the storms on community organizations in the island, and local engagement in post-disaster reconstruction.
- Expanding the publication of the CENTRO Journal to three times a year and the expansion of special topics issues, especially recently, to accommodate increase coverage of the economic and humanitarian crises in Puerto Rico.
- Launching Centro Press in 2013, which currently has fifteen published titles, and more forthcoming.

Historical Preservation

- Celebrating Centro's 40th Anniversary and the 100 Puerto Ricans campaign in 2013 with the goal of expanding archival collections to a national scope and broader fields of accomplishments, celebrating sixteen affinity events across the country where we honored our pioneers and significantly increased the number of collections and oral histories in our archives.
 - As part of the 100 Puerto Ricans Oral History Project, over 300 interviews have been conducted with prominent Puerto Ricans who have made significant contributions to their fields and in the Puerto Rican community.
 - Securing the acquisition of collection donations to the archives from high public recognition individuals and organizations, such as Herman Badillo, Tato Laviera, Miriam Colón, Jose Serrano, and the National Puerto Rican Coalition among many others.
 - Launching the Centro's Digital Collections portal, providing access to over 8,000 digital objects from across 153 collections, and to over 500 interviews from across oral history projects in its holdings.
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- Creating a network of active oral historians in cities and states such as Orlando, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Holyoke, Connecticut, and New York City.
 - Overseeing the move of the Centro Library and Archives from the Upper East Side campus to East Harlem.

Outreach and Education

- Convening the Puerto Rican community in fourteen stateside and four island search conferences to discuss among thousands of stakeholders and attendees the economic, fiscal and unfolding humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico, and engaging the community in a thorough discussion of the impacts of the crisis on the island and stateside Puerto Ricans in order to ground the Puerto Rico solidarity movement.
- Launching the Puerto Rican Heritage Cultural Ambassadors Program in 2016 with the collaboration of ASPIRA, El Puente, Comité Noviembre and other cultural organizations to promote historical recovery and civic engagement. This free, self-paced, multimedia online program has enrolled over seven hundred participants to learn about Puerto Rican history and culture by using Centro's online asynchronous, distance learning platform and onsite workshops.
- Launching Puerto Rican Voices, a TV series premiered in 2015 and now in production of its 5th season, and broadcast in collaboration with our partners WIPR, CUNY TV, BronxNet, and others. It highlights the contributions of Puerto Ricans across the United States. In 2016, it received the Imagen Award for Best Local Informational Program.
- Launching the Centro eJournal, a demonstration initiative under the auspices of the Library and Archives, that seeks to provide new digital humanities resources to scholars to expand Centro's digital exhibits of archival collections with a broader public engagement and innovative digital humanities projects.
- Launching a documentary series celebrating pioneers of the Puerto Rican diaspora, including Frank Bonilla (56 min), Pura Belpré (53 min), Clemente Soto Vélez (48 min), Rafael Hernández (26 min), Tato Laviera (56 minutes), and Julia de Burgos (forthcoming).
- In collaboration with other CUNY research institutes and community-based organizations, we launched in 2017 the annual Summit on Latin@s in New York City (SoL-NYC) to foster the creation of an action agenda and the improvement of the conditions and standing of New York City's Hispanic population.

Organizational Capacity-Building

- Conducting strategic planning during the first-one-hundred-days after my appointment in 2008 inclusive of close to one hundred stakeholders' interviews, developing an in-depth organizational assessment, and executing an implementation plan. In 2012, a second engagement with
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stakeholders informed a strategic assessment in conjunction with the 40th Anniversary celebration, the 100 Puerto Rican campaign and a national outreach campaign to celebrate affinity events across the country, and the library move to East Harlem.

- Over the last decade, building a digital infrastructure for the 21st century, beginning with the revamping of the website, investing significant resources in virtualized fast servers, modernizing computers and repositories for the library, the data center, media production and other core operations, and installing state of the art applications to make content more accessible and visible to the public.
- Modernizing the Centro website now publishing over five thousand online pages to date and improving annual page views from slightly over a hundred thousand the first year of operations to half a million in 2019.
- Installing new communication technologies, launching a program of social networking, and implementing communication strategies to reach broader academic, policy, and community audiences. Our weekly newsletter, Centro Voices, is published using NationBuilder to reach over a 150,000 supporters and prospects, 26,000 email subscribers, and its content reach over 28,000 Facebook followers and is also distributed in Twitter and Instagram.

To Centro colleagues, I have been honored to work with you, our talented staff, who are as responsible as I could ever be about conceptualizing and executing programs that embody our mission. You have dedicated your professional talents to develop and operate these programs. I am proud of what we accomplished together and confident that we have fulfilled the high expectations for Centro of our academic and community stakeholders.

I wish you the best of luck in the future. I will continue to watch your progress closely and with pride. I look forward to future collaborations and supporting your work and aspirations in any way I can. To you, my deepest appreciation for helping me fulfill the mandate of my appointment as Director.

To Centro friends, supporters, and partners, I know you join me in celebrating the trajectory and body of work Centro has brought forth. I extend my sincerest gratitude to you for your interest, collaboration, and support throughout the years. Your enthusiastic engagement with us in our programs made them possible, and more importantly, will safeguard their future continuity.

To all, I know you will continue to support Centro for years to come, to help us make a smooth and successful transition to new leadership, and, as important, to help Centro endure the serious and threatening challenges the present difficult times represent for all public academic institutions. It would be heartbreaking to see a deep but nevertheless temporary economic crisis undo more than a dozen years of growth and achievements on the eve of its 50th anniversary. With your support,

Centro will remain as an undisputed and peerless public asset of the City University of New York, Hunter College, New York, and the Puerto Rican people.

Farewell, with love,

Edwin
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