

# Hispanic Heritage Month



**My name is Nayda Pares-Kane and I just began my 21<sup>st</sup> year at MCC. I am Puerto Rican, a mother, wife, sister, daughter, colleague and friend. Identity is central to who I am. As a person of color, it is what sociologists call my “master status”. It defines who I am to others, whether I like it or not. And in my 53 years of life, I have embraced and nurtured that status. I have given it power. The power to better understand the society we live in, and the power to bring about intentional and just change.**

**I was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Brooklyn, NY. As a Nuyorican, I was pushed to assimilate in order to succeed. Believe me, I tried. Growing up in the 80s, in my Irish-Italian neighborhood, it was difficult to battle the slurs of “spick”, so I was quiet about my identity. When I went off to Binghamton University, sociology helped me to understand the big picture, and Latin American history opened my eyes to all the cultures we share as Latinx people. I studied abroad in Mexico, married my tall, handsome white boyfriend, and lived in Austin Texas for a year. We moved to San Diego, California for four years where Jake and I finished up our Master’s degrees. I gave birth to my first born there, and then returned back east to settle in Rochester, NY in 1997, where two more children completed our bi-racial/ethnic family. Every experience was one riddled with cultural assimilation, acculturation, and a very conscious feeling that I was somehow responsible for reimagining people’s stereotypes of “Puerto Ricanness” in the USA.**

**At MCC, it was the knowledge that some believed I was a diversity hire and not “as” qualified. I finished my PhD from UB in spite of the statics that show in 2014, only .03% of all PhDs belonged to Latina women. I am a sociologist, Chair of AHPS, and in 2019, I became the first Faculty Senate President of color. Our leadership at MCC is void of Latinos, and many of my Latino colleagues suffer from inequitable pay compared to their white counterparts.**

**As we celebrate Hispanic-Heritage month, let us not forget that although we have made great strides, we are far from the ideal. I am proud to be Puerto Rican. I am also proud to champion my people and culture and continue to focus on equity. Join me here, at MCC. Boricua!!!!**