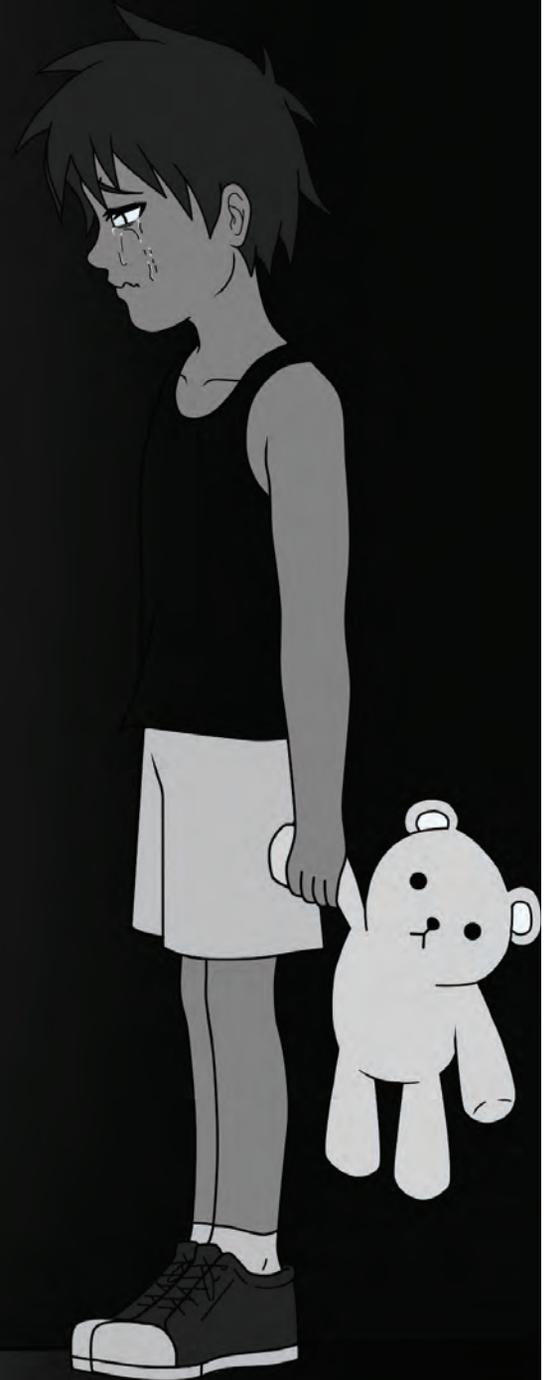


# FSJ

Front Street Journal

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
STUDENT NEWSPAPER



**Immigration Turmoil**  
**How the crisis impacts students and families**



## **PENN STATE BERKS AND RACC PARTNER TO MAKE EARNING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE EASY**

Penn State Berks and RACC have joined forces to make earning a bachelor's degree easier than ever before through an articulation agreement that allows seamless transfer from RACC associate degree programs to Penn State Berks bachelor's degree programs.\* Penn State Berks offers 21 bachelor's degree programs and most degree programs include an internship component, allowing students to get real-world experience while earning college credits. And most internships lead to jobs. Transfer scholarships are also available.

Contact James McCarty, Penn State Berks Transfer Admissions Counselor, for more information or questions at 610-396-6462 or via email at [jmccarty@psu.edu](mailto:jmccarty@psu.edu).

\*Articulation agreement provides seamless transfer from specific associate degree programs to specific bachelor's degree programs. RACC students who choose other majors can apply as transfer students into any one of Penn State Berks bachelor degrees programs.



**PennState**  
Berks

For more information, visit  
[berks.psu.edu/admissions](https://berks.psu.edu/admissions)

# FSJ

## Front Street Journal

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### Features

<b>Legally Happy</b> How DACA changed my life	<b>2</b>
<b>Immigration</b> How Do Immigrant Families Acculturate?	<b>3</b>
<b>Depression in Immigrant Populations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Understanding Identity:</b> An Interview with Maribelle Ortiz	<b>10</b>
<b>The Hidden Life</b> An undocumented immigrant describes her plight	<b>13</b>
<b>Immigration and Crime:</b> Confronting the Myth	<b>15</b>
<b>Immigration Healthcare Policy and Mexican Immigration in the US</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Heart Health</b> A Problem for Reading	<b>20</b>
<b>Struggles Latino Students Face</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Senior Centers</b> A Solution for an Aging Society	<b>26</b>



### A Letter from the Editor:

Thank you for picking up a copy of our special Immigration edition of the Front Street Journal! This is a very important issue to all college students, all around the United States. It is crucial that we come together to create a better America, welcoming to all nationalities from all around the world with different backgrounds than you and me. We have to welcome people with open arms, free of judgement and prejudice. If you enjoy these articles, that is because they were essays submitted for Professor Chris Costello's English Comp Class. The Dreamers Act is beneficial to students attending our college, and one of these essays shares our student's first-person point of view and opinion about it.

The Front Street Journal is an online publication, accessible to Reading Area Community College's current students and alumni. You can access it by going to [www.fsj.racc.edu](http://www.fsj.racc.edu). We are in need of students willing to showcase their creative talent. Students can submit articles, photos, videos and anything else displaying their specific ability that can be viewed by the student body. We also looking for officer positions as well to vote on at our meetings, so feel free to ask how you can join!

Enjoy Reading,

**Ana Tomko**  
B220 Career Assistant  
Co-Editor of the  
Front Street Journal



**Cover art by Brandon Medina** –“I knew that once I volunteered for this, there had to be something that would stand out. So I decided to make this with love and compassion. I also wanted to keep this in the “anime/manga” art style to raise awareness that the Japanese art style does have its own form of creativity. I am always invested in putting deep meanings behind designs or else I wouldn't be doing I love. My alias online is Ultimos and I'm always open for commissions. My website is [ultimosda.deviantart.com](http://ultimosda.deviantart.com) if you wish to see more of my work. It was such an honor to make this design for RACC to raise awareness of immigration!”

# Legally Happy

## How DACA changed my life

By *Kyara Perez*

**I**t was seventh period of my last week of senior year and I was sitting in Spanish class taking mental pictures as my closest friends converse about their upcoming summer plans. My Spanish teacher, Laura Rodriguez, was calling us up one at a time to her desk to privately share with her which path we will be taking after high school and which colleges we had decided on. My turn arrived, and Mrs. Rodriguez called my name over the conversations; my eyes met hers as she smiled patiently waiting for me to head over to her. I politely smiled back and gently shook my head no. She looked puzzled and waved at me to head to her so we can speak. Again, I shook my head no but this time my smile faded and my eyes watered; I felt sad and embarrassed. I knew I was not going to be able to go to college since I was an illegal immigrant. She must have felt my discomfort and slowly nodded her head once in understanding as she called on the next student.



I was born and raised in the Dominican Republic. When I was five, my mother separated from my father. Young and pregnant, she came to the United States to work and a year later sent for my brother and I to reunite with her. She enrolled us in school where we were taught how to speak, read, and write in English. I was top of my class.

Senior year arrives; all my friends excitedly share their goals for after high school as I kept quiet about my own. Even though I had good grades and according to my teachers had a “promising future,” that didn’t change the fact that I was an illegal immigrant. With no idea where my life was heading, I graduated high school. I spend the first year after high school not doing much of anything. I lost contact with many of my friends, which was mainly my own fault. I was jealous and embarrassed; I felt insignificant.

At seventeen I was angry at my mother for not resolving this legal issue when I was a child. I was jealous of anyone who was able to attend school, which made me take my anger out on my mother every time I was reminded of the fact. It felt like it was a privilege to attend college and anyone who had the opportunity but was wasting it was a fool. I was not motivated, no goals, no path, no guidance, no desire; I was wasting my life away. This was not my fault so why was I paying for it?

Shortly after Barack Obama was elected president, my life drastically changed. An immigration policy, DACA, was approved that allows immigrants who were brought to the United States as children a non-immigrant legal status, meaning I could work and attend college. I was sitting directly in front of the television screen eyes wide open, with a knot in my stomach, and my hands nervously clenched as the news was being televised. Tears stung my eyes and uncontrollably rolled down my face; I was overjoyed and in disbelief. I immediately started applying for jobs.

As life changing as DACA has been, there are exceptions to the policy. DACA recipients do not qualify for financial aid. Being the oldest of six children, I already had accepted my mother was not going to be able to help financially with my dream of enrolling to college; I had to figure it out on my own. I forgot about my dream of furthering my education since I was focused on working and earning money. It took years of working and surviving daily life expenses to finally re-focus and discipline my expending habits to save money for college. I could not allow for my dream to die.

DACA has drastically changed my life in many ways. I have a job that I am learning to appreciate more and more each day. Having a job opens many opportunities to elevate the quality of my life. I can afford to dress how I want, eat what I enjoy, travel, and pay for college as I always dreamed of. I can financially take care of myself, which leads to planning goals like someday owning a home and earning a college degree. I would have never imagined I would have this opportunity. I am no longer angry or lost. There is so much more to look forward to now; I feel motivated. I am genuinely happy. It can only get better from here.

# Immigration

## How Do Immigrant Families Acculturate?

*Immigrants are looked in the context of their families. However, adapting to their new environment is a process that is different for each family member, often facing their own individual challenges.*

*By Isibell del Rosario*

When immigrants move into a new country, they go through a process where they learn how to adapt to the language, customs, and culture of that new place. This process is known as acculturation, and this process is critical for immigrants to learn how to live in their new country. When the move to that new place is permanent, acculturation becomes an important part of their lives where they must get used to new ways of living that are different from their original culture. They learn how to act, communicate, and think about their new environment, and that shift can either be heartbreaking or promising. The acculturation process is more complex among immigrant families due to the composition of two or more generations within the family unit, which means that each family member will live through different perspectives of acculturation. The disparity of acculturative experiences is higher between younger immigrants and older immigrants because of the difference in generations between these two groups, and they may have different perspectives of their “shift” from their home country to a completely different one.

Younger immigrants have an advantage over older immigrants in terms of how fast they acculturate. Different factors help younger immigrants adapt easily to their new country. One of these factors is education, which younger immigrants tend to be exposed to from the moment they set foot in a new country. Education is a component that is indispensable in a child’s life since education is their foundation of obtaining the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in life. Education becomes more important for children because of what the parents demand from them. Most families immigrate because they want a better future for themselves and their relatives. Parents are aware that if they want their children to thrive in the new country, the children must acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to do so.

Marcelo Suarez-Orozco explains in his article “Right Moves?” how parents prioritize education for their children, stating that “immigration for many parents represents nothing more, and nothing less, than the opportunity to offer children, access to these skills.” Younger immigrants not only acculturate inside the classroom but outside of it as well. Socialization plays a big role in how younger immigrants acquire the customs and culture of the new country. When people immigrate to a new country, especially when they are young, they want to be able to fit in their communities. Their interactions with other younger people affect how they acculturate because they can use those interactions to understand how people their age should behave in the dominant culture.

Carola Suarez-Orozco explains the function of interpersonal relationships, stating that “social support includes the provision of tangible aid, as well as guidance and advice that are so much needed by disoriented newcomers” and that “a well-functioning social support network is closely linked to a better adjustment to the new environment.” Younger immigrants are more likely to socialize than their older counterparts because they have the time to go out with their friends, unlike their parents who don’t have that much time to socialize because they are too busy working.

While younger immigrants acculturate quicker to their new culture and environment, they still encounter challenges along the way. One of these challenges is the lack of resources that are available to them. Most immigrants move to a new country because of their economic need, so they move to areas where they can afford housing. Unfortunately, most of these affordable areas are segregated and poverty-stricken neighborhoods and these areas often lack proper education and healthcare establishments. Violence becomes a concern for immigrant parents, often enforcing their children to stay inside the house to keep themselves safe. When the children are trapped inside their homes, they are not able to socialize with other people, limiting them from learning about their environment and from acquiring the culture of their new country.

*Continued on page 4*



*Continued from page 3*

Carola Suarez-Orozco explains in her article "Identities Under Siege" that while immigrants move to pursue better lives, at the same time most "lamented the resulting loss of freedom following immigration." The lack of proper resources has detrimental effects on immigrant children because it "jeopardizes not only their personal development but also their future success as labor force participants and fruitful contributors to society."

However, even immigrant children with sufficient economic resources may not integrate easily to their new culture because of the discrimination that exists against immigrants. The negative stigma against immigrants is a growing concern due to the increasing influx of non-English-speaking immigrants of color. Discrimination can be found in the form of micro-aggressions, such as stereotypes, hostility, and exclusion, as well as in larger systems that prevent immigrants from obtaining resources. Discrimination affects younger immigrants because it acts as "a potential stressor impinging with the lives of many; interfering with their mental and social adaptation and adjustment", states Carola Suarez-Orozco in her article "Identities Under Siege." Discrimination often leaves immigrant youth feeling like they don't belong within their new environment; they feel out of place. A 19-year-old Dominican girl remembers her experiences of her first months living in the United States:

"When you first come to a country you don't know, I was like 5 or 6, everyone went through some sort of depression, because when you [first] come to a country, you don't know the language, you don't know a lot of people, you don't know a lot of friends. And since my parents were working, I stayed inside most of the time"

A growing concern that exists among younger immigrants is the "negotiation" of their cultural identities. As these immigrants are building their identity, they are often faced with the challenge of balancing between two identities: their home culture, and the new culture that they try so hard to assimilate to. This situation brings confusion to the young immigrant, which makes it harder for them to build their own sense of identity. Most of these immigrants going through this phase of cultural negotiation "are torn between the attachment to the parental culture of origin, the lure of the often-intriguing adolescent peer culture, and aspirations to join the mainstream culture." The 19-year-old Dominican girl tells her story navigating through her different cultural identities:

"Being Dominican and being raised in America makes you feel like there's sort of a limbo, because you don't identify a 100% with the American culture, but you don't necessarily feel 100% Dominican because you weren't raised over there. So, when I met Dominicans who are "fresh off the boat" [just immigrated], I realize that my Spanish is quite different from their Spanish" While younger immigrants face their challenges adapting to their lives in a new place, they tend to acculturate more easily to their new culture than their older counterparts because they perceive their new country as their long-term home for them to build their lives. Most younger people who immigrate are children, and they haven't lived in their home country long enough to identify with that culture. When they immigrate to a new country, they are only exposed to the culture and the way of living of that new place. These younger immigrants, having only the new culture as the foundation to understand their new way of living, they adapt to see the world under the lenses of that culture. As they acculturate to the new country, they start to acquire the language and understand more about the environment that they currently live in. They acculturate faster because they see the new country as their future, a place where they will build their lives and make their mark in the world.

Older immigrants have more of a difficult time acculturating than their younger counterparts. The most apparent challenge that older immigrants face is the inability to learn the language of the new country. Since these older immigrants communicated exclusively using their mother language when they lived in their home country, it is harder for them to acquire a second language if they didn't have a previous knowledge of the language before immigrating. Carola Suarez-Orozco explains in her article "Identities Under Siege" that since they don't know how to speak the dominant language, older immigrants often must rely on younger immigrants, mostly immigrant children, to translate for them. Diane August and Kenji Kahuta list different factors that affect how older immigrants acquire a new language in their article "Bilingualism and Second-Language Learning." The main factor is the biological decline of the brain to learn a new language after a specific period. Since the peak of brain development is during childhood, older immigrants don't have the same capacity to learn a new language the way younger immigrants do. Stress can affect how fast they may acquire the new language because they face more stress than younger immigrants because of work, family, lack resources, all these factors that limit their literacy of the language. The amount of time living in the country can influence literacy of the dominant language, but if the person mostly speaks their mother language, their fluency can be decreased. A 61-year-old Dominican woman talks about her experiences learning English in the United States:

"I became more involved with the English language when I went to college and graduated. I started speaking a little bit more of English, even though all my life I have been working with the Hispanic community, I would say that my language still has a heavy accent because of that. I have never with only English-speaking people, but I learned, and I have been working here with the little bit of English that I know" A process that most older immigrants go through when acculturating is the "shift" from their home culture to a new culture. While all immigrants go through this process, its impact is higher among older immigrants because they have lived in their home culture for most of their lives, as compared to younger immigrants who may not have that experience. These immigrants must navigate through a cul-

*Continued from page 4*

tural spectrum where they must learn how to let go of their old way of living to adapt better to their new environment. This process often leaves older immigrants disoriented in their new country, and some of them even feel like they are regressing to a childlike state where they must learn to do everything again. Janet Wilmoth explains in her article "Social Integration of Older Immigrants in the 21st Century America" the experiences of older immigrants when navigating to a culture that is different from their own, stating that "older immigrants discovered that the values they took for granted no longer applied in their new country, and the backdrop against which they live their lives is unfamiliar and expressed in a language they do not understand." The 61-year-old Dominican woman talks of a few difference between her home culture and the American culture:

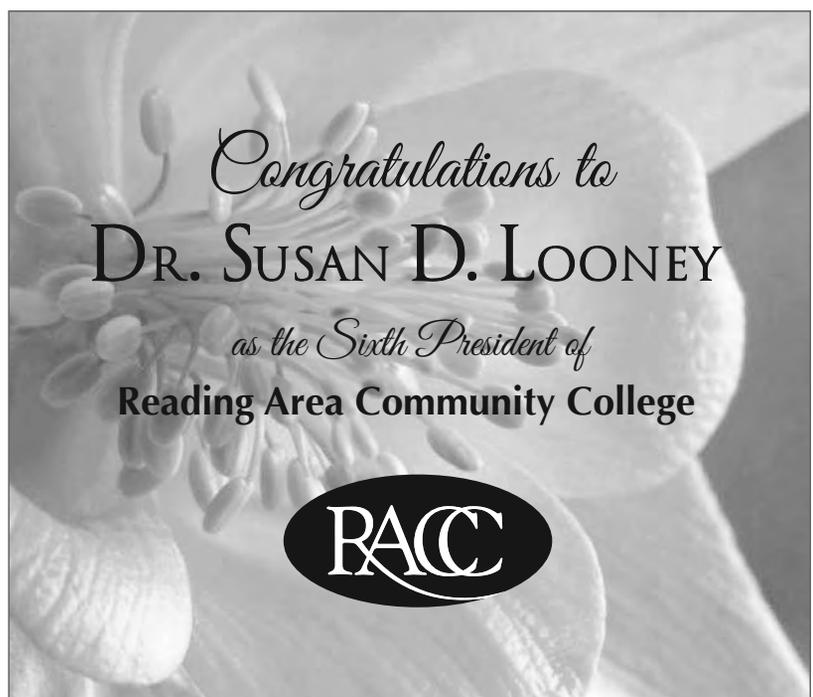
"There is a lot of differences between the cultures because in my country, regarding the children for example, in my country we used to spank children and to correct them. Here, we were scared to even raise our voice to the children. We felt like we couldn't correct them, and the children would lose their respect towards their elders. Something else is that in my country we are used to addressing our elders with respect. We don't say just "you". In English is different because the pronoun "you" is used to address everyone. However, in Spanish, we use the formal you "usted" to address our elders"

While some older immigrants have trouble acculturating because of factors that prevent them from doing so, others don't acculturate because they just don't want to at all. Most of these immigrants don't acculturate because they are afraid that they will lose their cultural roots of their home country. Older immigrants often believe that to acculturate to a new country they must abandon their cultural roots, which leaves them in a state of limbo, where their body is at the new country while their mind is "back home." These immigrants usually move to cultural enclaves where they preserve their language and culture. However, these actions only alienate them more from the dominant culture and prevent older immigrants from acculturating because they don't get involved in the mainstream culture.

Acculturative stress is an issue that older immigrants go through when they cannot adapt appropriately to their new cultural environment. Although older immigrants have a harder time acculturating than their younger counterparts, that doesn't mean that they cannot acculturate at all. An important factor that helps older immigrants acculturate is a good support system. Most of these support systems are composed of their own families, especially their children. Since the immigrant youth and children are quicker to acculturate than their parents, the children can help the parents learn more about the new country's culture and values and help them adapt to their new way of living. Frank R. Dillon and several others explain the importance of family unity in the acculturation process in their article "Acculturative Stress and Diminishing Family Cohesion among Recent Latino Immigrants." They explain that a good support system within the family can help ease the tensions that derive from acculturation since the family members can help each other with any challenges that they face.

Family immigration is a very complex yet misunderstood process. This process is often encountered by difficult experiences, and these experiences are interpreted through the lenses of people of various generations and perspectives. Each family members goes through their individual experiences acculturating to a new country, but these experiences can bring problems within the family circle if a support system within the family doesn't exist. These problems would only further make it harder for them to transition into their new environment.

Family immigration is often misunderstood in public policy because people tend to look at immigrants as isolated individuals, and do not consider how their families affect their lives. For most immigrants, families are the only support they have, and how the family adapts and lives in their environment affects their mobility in the economic and social scale. It is important to think of immigrant families, not only as assets for the economy, but also recognize the benefits that these families bring for the well-being of immigrants and their communities.



# Depression in Immigrant Populations

By Ashley Beck de Munoz

The World Health Organization estimates 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression or depressive symptoms. As the leading cause of disability worldwide, depression has a devastating effect on humanity's progress and productivity. Characterized by feelings of sustained sadness, hopelessness, and uncontrollable negative thought content, this psychological disorder debilitates its victims slowly over time, effectively separating them from whatever support system or coping mechanisms they once possessed.

The symptoms of depression include irritability, changed sleep pattern, inability to concentrate or focus, feelings of worthlessness, guilt, decreased interest or pleasure in daily activities, fatigue, and suicidal tendencies. Because significant life changes cause increased stress, immigrants with language and cultural barriers often find themselves trying to adapt without their usual coping mechanisms may experience a heightened risk of depression.

## Social-Cognitive Personality Theory and Major Depressive Disorder

Albert Bandura's social-cognitive personality theory indicates that an individual's personality originates in a complex interlocking series of interactions of individual traits with the environment. This theory suggests that individuals' biological traits and tendencies are emphasized or deemphasized by their environment. Bandura, a leading social cognitive theorist, says behavior influences decisions, which in turn, influence environment. The environment that individuals face and their responses to it dictate who they become. According to this theory, a child raised by a parent with depression would be at an increased risk for major depressive disorder for two reasons. Biologically, the child carries some of the same genes as the depressed parent, and the daily influence of negative thinking increases the child's risk for pessimistic interpretation of events and self-worth. Because the prediction and later interpretation of an event by a person with even slight depression is likely to be negative, the anxiety surrounding social events often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The accumulation of perceived undesirable events in the individual's memory creates an instinct. For people with depression, it becomes increasingly difficult to fight this feeling. A similar situation occurs upon examining the self-esteem of a person with depression. A tendency to feel disliked and unaccepted can increase melancholy, creating a somber personality that promotes unpopularity and rejection. Since depressed people are prone to avoid social interactions due to perceived previous negative outcomes, it is likely that their past experiences will increase their present loneliness and deepen the depression.

Though much study has been done on the subject, doctors and scientists are still unable to accurately predict depression. There are, however, factors that increase an individual's risk of suffering from depression or depressive symptoms. Misfortunes such as job loss, death of a loved one, health decline, or severe consequences of a mistake can initiate the cycle. Feeling out of control often increases hopelessness and anxiety. Additionally, stress that individuals have initiated such as a major life change can precipitate a depressive incident.

Biology plays a large part in causing depression. In general, poor health creates an increased risk of depression and many diseases are associated with depression including hypertension, HIV, and diabetes. Because of the biological brain changes caused by depression, people with depression perceive situations as more threatening, and react more strongly than individuals with healthy personalities. Peers usually regard these strong reactions as socially unacceptable, further augmenting isolation and a depleted sense of self-worth. For immigrants striving to acculturate, this discrimination can be damaging, not only socially but for their careers as well.

A damaged sense of self-worth is often accompanied by low self-efficacy beliefs, when individuals doubt their ability to succeed or improve their situation. These predictions of failure make the person with depression less likely to be persistent with new tasks. Repeated failures or perceived failures allow affected individuals to sustain the negative self-image and discourage self-motivation leading to job performance deficits.

Immigrants may find themselves especially susceptible to environmental triggers. Many immigrants leave in search of a better life for themselves and their children. In uprooting they may face the stress of loneliness, unemployment, lower social status, language and cultural barriers, and loss of familiar lifestyle. While they may or may not accomplish their dreams in their new country, they usually face life stresses without the support system they left behind. This isolation combined with the increased effort required to communicate in a new language puts them more at risk for depression.

*Continued on page 7*

Continued from page 6

## Biology and Major Depressive Disorder

While researchers have been unable to definitively pinpoint the genes that predispose individuals for depressive symptoms, various separated twin and adoption studies have shown a 40%-50% heritability factor for depression. Similarly, researchers found that young people with a depressed mother were more likely to present depressive symptoms than the general population, and those with both a depressed mother and a depressed father were three times more susceptible, even if the depressed parent did not raise them.

Many of the genes believed to increase risk of depression inhibit individuals' ability to handle stress effectively. While the human stress response is an important function for preservation of the species, sustained stress is very damaging. Stressful life events cause an immediate rise in stress hormones. These usually regress as soon as the event passes; however, stress that is not quickly resolved will increase the risk of depression. Stress symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, pain, and gastrointestinal distress further deplete the body's energy and damage the immune system's ability to function. The compounding of these problems reduces individuals' ability to successfully cope with daily life furthering the cycle of depression. Many undocumented immigrants arrive in their new country with next to nothing, making financial concerns inevitable. Their attempts to start their lives over can require working long hours and making unanticipated sacrifices. Workers, such as the 1.2 million immigrants who live in Washington DC, often work two or more jobs cleaning offices for little more than minimum wage. Sustained stress causes deterioration of neuron dendrites and loss of their complexity, slowing brain processes and causing a reduction in grey matter. Rather than the twice daily fluctuations of cortisol found in healthy people, individuals with depression maintain a consistently high level of this hormone, which is primarily responsible for stress reactions. This causes a reduction in available neurotransmitters slowing brain activity. Sustained cortisol levels can place the newly constructed life of some immigrants at risk by increasing distrust and exacerbating the fear response.

Cortisol levels are often a key factor in depression. In fact, researchers discovered that young girls with naturally higher levels of cortisol were more likely to develop depression after undesirable life events. Cortisol levels are also negatively correlated to language adeptness for immigrants because environmental mastery is essential to controlling and reducing cortisol response. It is not surprising that immigrants are at increased risk for depression when they find themselves in a new environment. Researchers found that nearly 25% of undocumented immigrants near the Mexican border struggle with a mental disorder. These elevated rates can be attributed to the long-term stress of "hiding," fear of the interruption of a newly constructed life, and the reluctance to seek medical help.

Women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression as men and are also more likely to relapse. Many researchers have suggested this is due to

the effect sex hormones have on neurochemistry. Estrogen stimulates brain activity while progesterone is characterized by a more sedative effect on mood for most women. When these hormones fail to balance correctly during times of change and when estrogen levels begin to drop off in menopause, women may find themselves more prone to depression. While women are more susceptible to depression during times of hormonal change, these rates of almost 2:1 depression in women versus men happen throughout the lifespan and are not limited to puberty, childbirth, and menopause. These rates can create large numbers of women who remain dependent on family members or government agencies in the absence of adequate social support to sustain them in their daily lives.



## Effects of Major Depressive Disorder Individuals and Families

Daily stress creates a larger toll for people with depression because they tend to perceive events as more undesirable than people without this disorder. Even individuals who have recovered from depression experience this increased negative perception of life events and are at a much higher risk of experiencing depressive symptoms in the future than a person who never had depression. People with depression also have a lower positive affect, meaning that they feel less happy about positive events than people who have not experienced depression.

Continued on page 8

*Continued from page 7*

These punitive emotions are often directed at the self. This self-focus is negatively related to problem solving abilities and often limits the individuals' abilities to formulate plans of action regarding a problem so that effective coping might take place. This decreased problem-solving and coping ability is especially damaging for immigrants who are adapting to a new home, work, and social environment. As depressed individuals accept the unfavorable thoughts about themselves and their situation, they start to believe they have little or no worth. This becomes quickly evident in their lack of self-care such as poor personal hygiene, lack of attention to dress, increasingly poor diet, and little or no exercise.

Depression is characterized by a decrease in energy and motivation. It has such an effect that some researchers have used energy levels to diagnose depression rather than traditional psychosocial methods. This decrease in energy and motivation means many individuals are slow to seek help, or implement even the most basic changes or treatments to their daily routine, making it difficult to combat the depression.

While major depressive disorder leaves some individuals unable to work, those who can work often find it difficult to get hired or promoted. Few employers are interested in hiring individuals with low motivation, poor self-care, or decreased cognitive abilities, even if it comes out of a medically induced condition they can't discriminate against. In addition, immigrants who face a new language, often suffer dysfunctional communication at work, misunderstanding expectancies and goals. Treatment for depression such as medication and therapy can be expensive, decreasing the household's expendable income. These factors make it difficult for individuals to improve their economic status, defeating many immigrants' original goal.

As part of the problem of increased negative perception, depressed people suffer from increased pain and anxiety. It is found that the deeper the depression, the greater the severity and anxiety of the pain both physical and emotional. Not only is perception of pain increased, but depression can often be presented as new pain symptoms. Because many immigrants work in repetitive motion manual labor positions, new pain symptoms are not uncommon.

There is a significant social stigma attached to poor mental health. Some people such as those who have never experienced depression for themselves often consider the disorder a sign of weakness or an attention-getting behavior. The self-pity associated with depression is occasionally repugnant to healthy individuals causing significant discrimination. Victims are told or made to feel that they need to "get over it," "toughen up," and "stop whining." Because this advice suggests that individuals are choosing to remain depressed, it is more damaging than helpful.

When depressed individuals misinterpret the strength and well-meaning of their support system, they may find themselves contemplating the most devastating effect of depression: suicide. While not all or even most depressed people attempt suicide, many of them consider it. Fifty percent of all suicide victims suffered first from depressive symptoms. Because immigrants experience acculturative stress and more psychological distress, they are at higher risk for depression and thus have higher rates of suicide. By obscuring their symptoms, those immigrants that struggle with these feelings make it much more difficult to help them.

People suffering from depression often withdraw emotionally and avoid social situations causing family members and others to feel shut out and rejected. While not understanding the process, they suffer the effects of living or associating with the depressed. Watching a loved one's thought process spiral out of control creates increased anxiety and stress as partners often find themselves suddenly in a caregiving role. The victim's apparent refusal to change or seek help and apparent stubborn negativity sometimes chases away their support system. For those depressed individuals who do seek help, however, there are increasingly improved methods for treating this devastating illness. Clinics like La Puerta Abierta in Philadelphia are appearing around the United States. These clinics provide free services to documented and undocumented immigrants while functioning, in their own words, as "a training and mentoring site for bilingual interns and counseling practitioners."

**M**ajor depressive disorder affects many people who enter the United States as both documented and undocumented immigrants, disrupting their lives and the lives of their families with sadness, hopelessness, and reduced capability to handle stress. While some of these individuals recover, others find themselves in a self-perpetuating cycle of negativity, low self-worth, low motivation, and impoverished social abilities. Social-cognitive personality theory can explain how individuals' choices in environment and thinking patterns mixed with biological risk factors influence risk for depression.

Because of a lack of culturally competent medical professionals, immigrants dealing with depression find themselves at a disadvantage at every turn. Increased incidence of traumatic life experience combined with sustained acculturative stress predisposes these individuals biologically for depression. Cultural differences and language barriers impede immigrants from seeking, understanding, and trusting their medical options.

While the treatments for depression are many, not all are culturally acceptable or affordable to some immigrants. A professional must be aware of these barriers, while still working to ensure a recovery, which can be influenced by a positive support system and coordinated care that allows the patient to decide which recommended treatments to incorporate into their medical plan.

*Continued on page 9*

## Treatment of Depression

While the symptoms of major depressive disorder can be devastating, many people will recover in three to six months whether they seek treatment or not. Treatment has been found, however, to increase remission rates and speed up recovery times. Medications are key in the treatment of depression. Anti-depressants, with the most common being selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI's), are often the first line of defense to treat mild to moderate depression symptoms. In order for any other treatments to be effective, at least moderate relief of depressive symptoms must be achieved.

Antidepressants are not the only available medical therapy. While sex hormones such as estrogen and testosterone may not be a common treatment for depression, in the case of peri-menopausal women, several studies have found treatment with these hormones to promote a greater sense of well-being than placebos.

There are also several herbal remedies that claim to cure or lessen depressive symptoms. The most common and long-standing of these is St. John's Wort, an herb used for centuries in Europe to treat mental illness. While various studies have been performed, no conclusive evidence has been found to prove the effectiveness of this herb, and thus, it is not empirically validated.

Acupuncture, developed by the ancient Chinese, is a holistic practice that involves the placement of small needles in the skin. Originally used for pain relief, it has recently been expanded to include treating various other illnesses including depression. Generally well tolerated and safe, there is some evidence that it can be effective in the treatment of depression. Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a treatment reserved for majorly depressed individuals who do not respond to any other traditional treatments for their disease. While this treatment may have a dishonorable history and reputation, its efficacy in certain populations cannot be ignored. The modern version is less aggressive, administered with anesthesia and causing only minor memory loss. Some individuals show dramatic improvement with only 6-12 treatments of ECT, but it does have a higher relapse rate than other therapies.

Cognitive behavioral therapy consists of talking with a therapist to identify unhealthy thoughts and behaviors and is nearly as effective alone as drug therapy. Once these thoughts and behaviors are identified, the patient and therapist work together to exchange them for healthy ones. A goal-oriented therapy, patients are encouraged to take control of their thinking by eliminating or reducing rumination and working towards a more positive outlook. Cognitive behavioral therapy is considered important by many doctors and should be included in the treatment plan for any willing patient with depressive symptom. It can be used with any other combination of depression treatments, and is especially important for those individuals who do not respond quickly to medications.

Many therapists recognize that a return to or strengthening of depressed individuals' religious faith can be an important part of recovery. While some people with depression have found that seeking God's forgiveness has reduced their anxiety and improved coping mechanisms. Others attribute their recovery to the sense of community they encountered in their church. Korean Americans, for example, were found to share the difficulties caused by relocation and provide a familiar support system for each other. By encouraging individuals to develop their support system, doctors and therapists are not only increasing recovery rates, but also decreasing the risk of relapse. This is especially important when dealing with immigrants. Feelings of isolation can be removed, improving individuals' sense of self.

Choosing a course of treatment for people with major depressive disorder is complicated and can be multifaceted. This is amplified when dealing with immigrant populations who may have different or specialized taboos and practices. Thus, before treatments are chosen, patient acceptability and likelihood of compliance must be assessed as well as the individual's financial resources. Most research recommends a multi-pronged approach, usually including antidepressants, talk therapy, stress reduction, and the strengthening of individuals' support system.

## Conclusions

The negative perceptions, decreased problem solving, and decreased energy and motivation experienced by individuals with major depressive disorder create a cycle that is hard to escape. Immigrant populations often find themselves facing this long-term stress of acculturation without their traditional support system all the while language, cultural barriers, and financial limitations curtail them from seeking help. Research has shown that improved programs for attaining and maintaining cultural competency are vital for all medical professionals so that more immigrants will be accurately diagnosed and treated, returning them to their lives with improved resiliency. As more information and educational programs are made available to professionals who can help eradicate these problems, hospitals and clinics will be able to offer competent services to all of their clients.

# Understanding Identity: An Interview with Maribelle Ortiz

By Elizabeth Boyce

It was a Monday evening when I first sat down with Maribelle, called Belle by friends and family, and as she welcomed me into her home she embraced me in a hug. We sat down and as I prepared to begin our interview, she offered me different candies....Swedish fish, Hot Tamales, or sour gummy worms. We shared the hot tamale cinnamon candy as we delved into her experience as a Puerto Rican moving between both Puerto Rico and the United States most of her childhood. We also discussed her adult life as a permanent citizen of the United States, and how her identity was affected as she navigated through two different cultures.

No one's story is exactly like another and Maribelle's experiences are unique to her and her family, which is what makes her stories interesting.

Lizzy: When did you move here? Did you grow up in Puerto Rico?

Maribelle: I lived in the States and in Puerto Rico. I didn't grow up there my entire life. I was born over there – came over here.

L: How old were you when you first came to the United States?

M: Maybe two.

L: Did your mom go back and forth to?

M: Yes. The entire family did.

L: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

M: 2 sisters 3 brothers (laughing) 6 of us.

L: So, she took all of you back and forth?

M: Well, when I was little, but as I got older no, because the older siblings went off on their own.

L: When did you stop going back and forth and living in both places? How old were you?

M: I was 15, 16.

L: Did you like going back and forth?

M: No, because the Puerto Ricans didn't like me.

When she said that it was Puerto Ricans who did not like her I was honestly shocked, because I had thought the discrimination would be different. Carola Suarez-Orozco, author of "Identities Under Siege," discusses the hostility that immigrant children are faced with outside of their homes in the US, and as part of a study she conducted, children were asked what the hardest thing about immigration was, and the responses were overwhelmingly discrimination and racism.

Most of the children believed that "Most Americans think that we are bad," and I had expected that Maribelle would have experienced the same discrimination from Americans. I wanted to further understand the discrimination that she did face.

L: Oh? They didn't [like you]? Why?

M: I had more trouble over there in Puerto Rico than I did over here in the states. If you can believe that. Because I speak English properly. I don't look Puerto Rican. I was kind of like a "traitor" in their eyes.

L: That kind of goes into my next question, while growing up did you feel like there was a pressure to conform to the main culture you were surrounded by outside of your home, while also still feeling the pressure to stay connected to your Puerto Rican heritage?

M: Over there in Puerto Rico.

L: So, you didn't feel that pressure here in the United States?

M: (surely) No, nope. Not really.

L: So, you felt the pressure to stay connected to your Puerto Rican heritage more in Puerto Rico than you did here?

M: Yes. Not here. No. It was normal here, I didn't feel pressure here. In Puerto Rico they said things like "this is Puerto Rico we speak Spanish here" because we spoke English. There was nothing really for us to do - we were put in the situation and we just went with what had to be done.

I got into fights at school and we would say "we do speak Spanish. We're Puerto Rican just like you are - we're from the island, and we can speak English all we want. You people go to the United States and speak Spanish how would you like it if someone said to you "speak English?"

*"My mom was never upset from what I remember. She was always very supportive and accepting of us kids. She had to go with the motions. I never heard her saying to me 'Act who you are. Your Hispanic not American,' she never said that."*

Continued on page 11

*Continued from page 10*

Sometimes I felt disgusted. I felt like those people were ignorant. Because then you see many of them coming over here (the US) and they want to be treated with respect, but they couldn't treat me with respect when I was in Puerto Rico.

L: Have you found a balance between the two?

M: I don't feel pressure now. I do have a balance between the two I think here in the states. There's not more Puerto Rican or US than the other. With this not everything's black and white you can have two different points of views. It's not just one way - you can understand different opinions. (she offers me some more cinnamon candy) I think because so many Hispanics are migrating over, I think it's more acceptable I guess is the word.

The way Maribelle adapted to her circumstances allowed her to have a strong sense of identity despite the discrimination that she experienced in Puerto Rico.

L: Did you move right to Reading?

M: Yeah, we went from Puerto Rico to Reading, Reading to Puerto Rico. I went to Reading high school and graduated from there

L: Did you feel like Reading was a diverse place to live when you were a child?

M: Yes. I kind of fit in with everyone else, whereas in Puerto Rico I got into A LOT of fights. (She laughs at herself). I got in fights in Puerto Rico because I wasn't a "true Puerto Rican."

L: Did you yourself ever feel like you weren't a true Puerto Rican?

M: Nope. I always felt and knew I was. At times I felt like I had to prove myself to people in Puerto Rico, because my parents were born there, their parents were, and they raised me with the same culture they grew up with.

Most immigrant families find themselves in situations that are stressful and filled with intense pressure from inside the family and from the dominating culture. Assimilation can cause much stress between parents and children creating an identity crisis for all involved. When in Puerto Rico her identity was questioned, and she mentioned that it did bother her as a child and caused some stress. Although this discrimination did occur she mentioned that her and her family were very close throughout her time living between Puerto Rico and the states, and they worked through the process together which minimized stress.

A large obstacle immigrants face is the language barrier. Ruben G. Rumbaut, author of "The Crucible Within: Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, and Segmented Assimilation Among Children of Immigrants," states that parents experience loss and disaffection when they see their children "moving as Americans among Americans." Though the child's role as "culture broker" is vital to the parent, a level of animosity and conflict tends to ensue as the child adapts to the social norms and values of the main culture. Rumbaut focuses on how the development of a new language affects relationships and identity. Rumbaut states that "language is also closely, and effectively, connected to the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity - both within and without the family." In a study conducted by Rumbaut it was found that immigrants that learn English and choose to speak it most frequently are viewed as "abandoning not only their mother tongue but also a personal identity."

I mentioned all of this to Maribelle and she said her mom had never seem fazed by her and her siblings learning English. She agreed that language is connected to her ethnic identity, but that learning English was vital for her and her family and helped them navigate the society efficiently. We talked about her experience with navigating language after coming to the states.

L: So, when you lived here with your mom did she speak English at all?

M: No.

L: How did you learn English?

M: My older brothers and sisters.

L: and they just learned it from being here?

M: Yeah and going to school.

L: So, you learned English before you went into school because of them?

M: Yep.

L: Your mom does not speak English fluently. Did you feel like you had an obligation to help her assimilate and navigate the culture that you were growing up in?

M: Yeah because my siblings and I had to interpret for her. It was just an unspoken thing that we all did. There was never much stress for us. My mom was never upset from what I remember. She was always very supportive and accepting of us kids. She had to go with the motions. I never heard her saying to me "Act who you are. Your Hispanic not American" She never said that. Like I said, she went with the motions. I always stuck with my culture, it was never something that left me as I moved here. Living in Reading helped because there were lots of other Hispanic people around us.

It shows great strength that Maribelle's mother "just went with the motions," because it emphasizes that she knew what was best for her family, and she wanted to support them as they transitioned between cultures. This transition between cultures is referred to as biculturalism, which develops as an individual exists in an environment where both the native and dominating

*Continued on page 12*

Continued from page 11

cultures are needed for comfortable everyday living. Biculturalism represents the idea that acculturation to the new culture and the hold of the native culture are independent of one another, and this is how Maribelle and her family adapted. Mari-belle's mother realized the advantages of being bicultural, and accepted the changes they encountered.

Seth J. Schwartz and Jennifer B.Unger, authors of "Biculturalism and Context: What is Biculturalism, and When is it Adaptive?," explain that it has been found that those that have integrated two cultures into their lives have an increase in advanced reasoning, and Schwartz and Unger explain how biculturalism develops and how this duality in culture and identity affects an immigrant.

Dina Birman, author of "Biculturalism and Perceived Competence of Latino Immigrant and Adolescents," discusses how biculturalism is found to be the most beneficial form of acculturation for immigrants. Biculturalism was found to be positively related to family cohesion and less conflict between parents and children, which proved to be true for Maribelle and her family as they grew closer and closer throughout the years, and continue to have a strong bond. I was able to talk to Maribelle about her relationship with her family now and how they continue to stay so close. Her mom and one brother currently still reside in Puerto Rico, while her and her other siblings live in the states.

Once a year Maribelle visits her mom in Puerto Rico, and once a year her mom visits her in the states. When her mom visits the states her and her family all get together at either her house or her sister's house. Maribelle says "It's our tradition. I think that our experiences as a family when all of us siblings were young shaped all of us tremendously. As we drew on each others strength and support we were able to better understand the world around us no matter how difficult or different it may be."

Immigrant experiences differ from family to family, and each develop unique patterns once migrated. As immigrant families adapt to bicultural living it can be found that it has many benefits for them as they maintain their native culture while integrating to the new culture, which Maribelle's experience has proven true. Maribelle's strength and dignity as she stayed true to herself is inspiring.

*"There's not more Puerto Rican or US than the other. With this not everything's black and white you can have two different points of views. It's not just one way - you can understand different opinions."*

# Georgio's

PIZZERIA

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD PIZZERIA

COME CHECK US OUT!!

500 PENN AVENUE • WEST READING, PA

610-750-7199

**WE DELIVER ON CAMPUS**

PRESENT THIS AD FOR 10% OFF FOR STUDENTS & STAFF

# The Hidden Life

## An undocumented immigrant describes her plight

By Jennifer Caprinteyro

In 2016 an estimated 18 million people immigrated to the United States, and 11.3 million were undocumented immigrants. Mexican immigrants accounted for 28% and many settled in urban areas, such as Reading. The Hispanic community exists all over Reading, working for a better life for themselves and their families. However, life as an undocumented immigrant is not just crossing the border and getting a job. The life of an undocumented immigrant is much more difficult and exhausting than what is seen in movies or television. From the difficult journey to America to maintain their new lives here, the nonstop struggles can take a tremendous toll on their mental health as well.

Maria is an undocumented immigrant who migrated to America when she was 20, following her older sister who had immigrated before her. Fortunately, her journey to cross the border was not alone. She traveled with other family members. Maria explains her experience when she first lived in America was difficult, but she also is grateful she had family already established here. She says having her sister here made her feel not so alone, something she knows her sister felt her first years here. Although being thousands of miles away from her home and family, she at least felt some sort of relief that she was able to have family travel with her as well as her sister who she had not seen in a couple of years. But even with the company of her sister, she faced days of discrimination. With her lack of understanding of the English language she had a much more difficult time defending herself.

She describes one experience when she was accused of stealing. She says all she was doing was looking at an item with full intention of buying it, but she had been wrongly accused of stealing and due to her lack of English she had a difficult time explaining to the owner she was not. Sadly, this not uncommon with many minorities wrongly accused of stealing due to their ethnicity. Maria was wrongly accused and sent to jail; she describes the moment as horrendous. She was frightened for her life, and she says she had never committed a crime and feared she could potentially be deported and lose her children and the life she made. In the end she was not charged and sent free to her family.

She says she lived in fear for many years on whether or not today will be the day she will be deported. In 2017, about 143,470 undocumented immigrants were arrested and deported to their home country. Maria claims she would constantly hear stories of deportation, claiming there was one instance where ICE came to a certain company and did a mass deportation to the workers. She says three of her friends were deported that day and has not seen them since. Maria has lived in the country for several years without seeing her mother and father back in her home country. She explained how hard it was – she hadn't even so much hugged her mom and dad in over a decade. Recently her mother was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

"I hadn't seen her in years and she could potentially die without me seeing her again," she said.

Remarkably, her mother made an astonishing recovery and the tumor was safely removed, but the dread and guilt Maria felt was remarkable. This close encounter made her take further steps to getting her citizenship, not only for her mother, but for her children as well. However, the process is not as easy as filling paperwork and gaining citizenship.

She says fear drives her away from moving forward. She claims it is difficult to be able to get your papers to begin with, but she is also afraid that if she comes out and says she is undocumented she will risk getting deported. Because of the previous encounter she had where she was wrongly accused, she is afraid of her citizenship being denied. She says she



*Continued on page 14*

Continued from page 13

feels stuck, if she does nothing then she runs the chance of deportation everyday, but if she attempts to go, she is afraid to be denied and deported.

### Reading's Diverse and Helping Community

Living as an undocumented immigrant is difficult and mentally exhausting, but Maria says living in America has had its perks. She says if she had not come here, she would not have met her husband as well as bore her children. Here, she has met many other people from different states of Mexico to different countries. She says she has made many friends and coming from a home with nothing to a better country has made kluge more meaningful. Reading has a diverse community ranging from immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Colombia and so much more. She says since coming here she has fallen in love with Puerto Rico's culture.

Back in Mexico she didn't have much whether it was television or radio. So she was unaware of other cultures other than her own, nor did she have any first-hand experiences with them. Now she knows more of the other cultures in Reading...the food, music, and traditions. Maria says she loves her country and she loves sharing it as well as having other share their culture with her.

When asked about living in Reading, Maria says there are many benefits. The language barrier is one she faces everyday; whether it's at her children's school, store or even at work it can become difficult to communicate with other. But living in Reading, where the population is made up of mostly Hispanics, she was able to find a sort of retreat within the Mexican community that exists here.

She claims it's nice to have a community here that makes her feel at home. She says, in Mexico people tend to have parties with friends at family especially on holidays that some American don't celebrate. One instance is on the birth of the Guadalupe, the Virgin Mary. A Mass is celebrated at the Santander Arena, which hosts many multicultural events, and later there is a party with food, traditional dancing, and music.

Maria says its nice to be around people who have the same beliefs, food, and culture. It reminds her of home. She remember the times everyone in her town would go to church, pray at Mass and then have a carnival in the center of the city at night to celebrate the city's saint. Reading is a diverse community; therefore, the community offers many events that come from other cultures, not just Mexico.

I asked her about programs offered by the Hispanic Center, an organization that helps immigrants and those who cannot speak English. She says she used to go when she first got to Reading and she said they helped her a lot, especially helping her find clothes, translating documents as well as helping her fill them out, and other programs helped her children when they needed medical or educational help. Her children also shared benefits with access to classes that taught them English.

Maria was asked did she think it all was worth it. She admitted that at times she felt as though she wanted to return home. She thanks God her giving her strength and for giving her a chance to build a family. She says she knows many people don't get past the border, much less gain a successful life in the United States. She knew before she came her how difficult it would be, but she did not fully understand what she was getting herself into until she arrived.

Many undocumented immigrants do not make it past the border. Those who make it face a long life of fear and hardships, but it's all for a better life and the American dream. Maria is only one of many undocumented immigrants who reside in Reading. Even with thousands of miles away from their home country, Reading's diverse community helps undocumented immigrants feel closer to home as well as integrate another's culture.

*“Maria says it's nice to be around people who have the same beliefs, food, and culture. It reminds her of home. She remembers the times everyone in her town would go to church, pray at Mass and then have a carnival in the center of the city at night to celebrate the city's saint. Reading is a diverse community; therefore, the community offers many events that come from other cultures, not just Mexico.”*

# Immigration and Crime: Confronting the Myth

By Nina Eddinger

Immigration has increased dramatically in the United States, growing from 4.7% of the total population in 1970 to 13.5% in 2016. From 1990 to 2000, 13.2 million new immigrants arrived, a direct result of a job growth pegged at 22 million. The majority of immigrants arrived from South America, more specifically Latin America which continues to dominate immigration to this day. Countries from this region accounted for 58 percent of the growth in the immigrant population from 2000 to 2010. Foreign-born populations in 2017 climbed to a 43.3 million migrants living in the United States.

An example of this growth is expressed in the southeastern region of Pennsylvania, where the immigrant population, especially Latino migrants, has been increasing drastically since the 1900s. Berks County has seen the most international migration. Because of this radical rise in the Latino immigrant population, Reading has since become more tolerant of migrants, deeming the city's college to be a Hispanic-serving Institution. According to the U.S Department of Education, a Hispanic Serving Institution is an eligible institution that has an enrollment of "undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students."

America as a new nation was comprised of immigrants from throughout Europe and Spain as well as many other countries. However, American citizens today have a certain animosity towards immigrants.

What is the cause of this change in outlook throughout the generations, from considering ourselves immigrants to fearing difference all together? When did this occur?

An answer can be found as far back as humanity can date. In human nature, it is instinctual, natural even, to have fear of the unknown. Xenophobia is defined as an "irrational fear of foreign, including fear of race and the immigrant." This idea has surfaced multiple times throughout history, from the Cold War to the European migrant crisis happening today. Humans see someone different, with a different appearance, culture, religion, and it is our primitive nature to be afraid. The fear of these differences grow from the concern that our way of living could be potentially altered by this difference. While the next generation has learned to adapt and become more tolerant to differences in religion, ethnic background, and sexual orientation, fear of change is imbedded in our subconscious by a more primal instinct.

Perhaps the biggest factor contributing to this change in perspective would be the common misconception that immigration has a direct correlation with crime rate. While little to no evidence has been found that supports this theory, this preconception of immigrants still remains deeply rooted in the minds of American people.

In a poll conducted by *The New York Times*, "73 percent of Americans expressed the view that immigrants are likely to increase crime rates." The popular association of immigrants with crime seems to be engendered by a popular disregard for the plight of others. Calling immigrants criminals seems to be a rationalization of desire to not help and focus on self interests.

Figures such as Donald Trump express contempt and malice for migrants without any real motive. Political journalist Rich Lowry defends Trump's policy in his article "No, Trump's Immigration Plan Isn't 'Un-American.'" Lowry states that "It is not true that a months-long pause in immigration from seven Muslim-majorities countries . . . is a violation of the nation's creed."

Immigrants are not received as well as they should be in our country because of the view that Mexican immigrants take away labor jobs from native-born Americans. University of California-Berkeley psychology professor Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, who studies stereotypes and intergroup relations explains that, "At the end of the day, we're motivated by resource-distribution . . .the most common human reaction is to hog resources, not to share," This comes from natural instinct where resources, such as food, money, and jobs, must be preserved. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco talks about this deep-rooted dislike for immigrants in his article, "Right Moves? Immigration, Globalization, Utopia, and Dystopia." He states that, "New data suggests that many immigrant children perceive that mainstream Americans do not welcome them, and in fact, disparage them as undeserving to partake in the American dream."

Contributing a large part to the fear of immigrants, prior acts of terrorism have worked to further instill the distrust and

*Continued on page 16*

*Continued from page 15*

suspicion. The balance between United States citizens and immigrants was severely damaged due to the tragedy of 9/11. Even years later, we continue to fear Islamic people and those of Muslim decent.

Part of this fear stems from the possibility that these people could be responsible for even more destruction. However unjust these suspicions may be, they are still (prevalent) in our world today. Because of these acts, crime and for-eigners or immigrants are closely linked in the minds of Americans. Documentaries such as "Calais Chaos," which concentrates on migrant camps located in Calais, France, have also reinforced immigrant antagonism.

Many of the scenes shown in this film attribute to the hostility towards migrants, illegal or legal. Civilians of Calais are heard telling the investigators that they are afraid for their lives because of the violent prone immigrants who run rampant through their towns. This documentary focuses only on the negative aspects of a very small type of immigrants and, though the popularity, fails to create an unbiased view of immigration.

Prompted by the availability and, for undocumented immigrants, anonymity, many immigrants migrate to metropolitan areas, such as New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, London, and Paris, where the already high level of existing crime associates them in popular perceptions with criminal behavior. These areas provide more unskilled job opportunities as well as economic development and social services. These large cities often have higher crimes rates than suburban or rural communities. Factors that stimulate the crime rate include an increase in drug use, unemployment, and low income housing. For example, Dr. Daniel P Mears clarifies in his book, *Immigration and Crime: What's the Connection?* that " theories may suggest, and research may confirm, that immigration is associated with increased crime only among young adults who reside in areas marked by high levels of unemployment and residential mobility."

Crime rates in the United State have been gradually increasing along with the population. For example, the population from 200 to 2016 increased nearly 8%. Overall violent crime was up 4.1% last year, while murder increased by 8.6%, according to new FBI statistics. Last year, the FBI reported violent crime rose by 3.9% in 2015, while murder jumped by 10.8%. The crime rate for Berks county, however, seemed to nearly cut in half from 2001 to 2010. This did little to diminish the fact that relative to Pennsylvania, Reading has a crime rate that is higher than 92% of the state's cities and towns of all sizes. With a crime rate of 7.8, Reading has a higher rate than larger cities such as Philadelphia Pittsburgh which had crime rates of 6.5 and 7.2 respectively. One finds Reading City has both a high population of immigrant and an incredibly high crime rate. The majority of the population would argue that this is no coincidence.

Many scholarly articles suggest that, despite popular opinion, there seems to be no correlation whatsoever between immigrant population and increased crime rate.

According to Noah Painter-Davis, a professor of Sociology at the Pennsylvania State University, "Immigration has small or trivial effects on violence and this pattern holds across most comparisons, including most destination and race/ethnicity specific models." An analysis using metro area population estimates by the Pew Research Center for 'unauthorized' immigrants not only discovered no correlation, but indicated that concentrations of unauthorized immigrants were associated with marginally lower violent crime rates. A statistically significant negative correlation was also shown for property crimes."

Despite what popular opinion dictates, the immigrant population has not been inked to an increasing crime rate and in fact has been shown to decrease it. According to the 2015 National Academy of Sciences study, "Immigrants are in fact much less likely to commit crime than natives, and the presence of large numbers of immigrants seems to lower crime rates."

In fact, even more research conducted on behalf of the Society for Study of Social Problems not only revealed there to be no association, but also support for the argument that " immigration lowers violent crime rates by bolstering intact (two-parent) family structures."

In Berks County, the foreign-born population has more than doubled since 1990, representing 11% of the total population in 2014. That number was 1,228 people in 2011 and 1,738 in 2017. The 2017 number is practically identical to the 2016



*Continued from page 16*

number of 1,736. Following the pattern of the majority of immigrants originating from Latin America, the city of Reading, had a Latino population of 60% in 2014, up from 37% in 2000. In Pennsylvania as a whole, the immigrant population is comprised 31.9% of Latino migrants, in contrast with Reading city, which includes 92.4% of immigrants, roughly 70% of Berks County's Latino immigrant population.

Comparing Berks with a county of a relatively similar size yielded information in which the argument for a correlation between immigration and crime rate could be falsified. With only a 28,932 difference between the population size of Berks and York County, Pennsylvania, a comparison of immigration and crime rate can be accurately determined. According to the U.S 2017 Census, York County held a 3.6% of foreign-born persons, while Berks County nearly doubled that percentage with a 7.1% of immigrant population.

York County's crime rate is 84% higher than its state's mean, and 31% higher than the country's average. In the year 2005, York boasted a crime index of 3,998 per 100,000. In Berks County, the rate of violent crime showed to be 924 in 2011, while York County had a rate of 959 in the same year. While the overall crime rate in York seems to be decreasing from 2009. Despite the "average" crime rate showing an increase during times of high immigration, this information can neither confirm nor deny the correlation. For example, crime rate tends to increase with any rise in population, no matter whether the population in question is foreign-born or not. "A comparison of census and FBI data shows the U.S. rate of violent crime was cut by nearly half from 1990 to 2013, while the number of undocumented immigrants in the country tripled."

This statistic also relies on the type of crime conducted by immigrants being reported. For example, during 2000, with a U.S. population of 281,421,906, the number of rapes were 90,178. Following the pattern of population increase, which grew to 323,127,513 in 16 years, the number of rapes rose to 95,730. Similarly, the number of murders in Berks County inflated from 15,586 to 17,250. However, the number of robberies that occurred in Berks County was held at 408,016. This number actually decreased from 2000, landing at 332,198. It seems that the rate of nonviolent crime, such as robbery and vehicular theft, has decreased in times of high immigration. According to the U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), forty-seven percent of those deported in 2013 who had a criminal conviction history were convicted of only immigration or traffic offenses. The statistic also relies on the status of the immigrant, such as documented and undocumented. "Undocumented" or "unauthorized" immigrants refer to "foreign nationals residing in the U.S. without legal immigration status." In 2014, there were an estimated 11.1 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. This population reached a high of 12.2 million in 2007 but began to gradually decline. The Crime Prevention Research Center analyzed 32½ years of prisoner data from the Arizona Department of Corrections and found that undocumented immigrants in the Arizona data, which covers 1985 to 2017, had the highest incarceration rate compared with legal immigrants and the U.S.-born population.

However, most research suggests that areas where immigrants, either legal or illegal settle, experience significantly low crime rate, and even tend to encounter a decrease in crime. An analysis using metro area population estimates by the Pew Research Center for "unauthorized" immigrants not only discovered no correlation, but indicated that concentrations of unauthorized immigrants were associated with marginally lower violent crime rates.

According to Erik P. Grunzig, chief of the Muhlenberg Police Department, immigrant criminals are not a large issue in this area. While this is mainly a personal perspective, Grunzig does have 29 years experience dealing with a variety of crimes. Though there have been some instances of immigrants performing minor crimes such as alcohol induced fights, and vehicular crashes, Grunzig believes that the overall percentage of crime committed by immigrants is so small as to be "immeasurable." In reference to the way immigrant criminals are treated, he claims that they are processed the same way as undocumented immigrants and documented citizens. Grunzig does not believe there to be any correlation between immigrant population and crime rate. In fact, he does not support the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and its harsh campaign towards immigrants. He states that the police department "has enough to do in keeping the community safe from real threats" and that the immigrant crime campaign is not a priority.

Unfortunately despite the evidence, little is being done to bring this research to the public light. In fact, the nation's view of immigrants seems to be getting worse. Another forum highlights suggestions about how the police enforcement should approach the challenges of accepting immigration. "Police and Immigration-How Chiefs are Leading Their Communities Through the Challenges," created a list detailing the specifics of this memo.

1. Officers should be prohibited from arresting or detaining persons for the sole purpose of investigating their immigration status.
2. Officers should arrest persons who violate the criminal laws of their jurisdictions without regard to the immigration status of the alleged perpetrator or the victim.
3. Local police must protect crime victims and witnesses regardless of their immigration status, and should encourage all victims and witnesses to report crimes, regardless of their immigration status.

*Continued on page 28*

# Immigration Healthcare Policy and Mexican Immigration in the US

By Alissa Artz Emerich

People living in developing countries undoubtedly see the United States as a land of prosperity. Seven percent of the American population are immigrants who are either documented or undocumented. With a booming economy, the federal government has enacted healthcare reforms to safeguard its people from health-related problems wrecking the United States. In this light, adoption of the immigration healthcare seemed necessary to streamline the eligibility criteria for the noncitizen.

## How to become legal immigrants

A green card is the most legitimate way through which foreign-born individual can immigrate to America. Green cards are available in three different ways: job allocation, marriage, and lottery. Because the labor force in the United States the labor force is underserved, the federal government solicits for the labor force. The government seeks highly skilled people from all countries and offers them a job. The second way is through marriage. Marriage is the most accessible channel through which a person may become a legally present immigrant. It only requires a non-citizen to marry an American citizen, and then the green card granted allowing him or her to live and seek a particular job in the country. The final method is through a lottery conducted every year by the Congress. A person wishing to become an American citizen applies through US embassy in their home country.

Another way to become an American immigrant is through refugee status. In this case, the individual must provide the necessary information that will allow the homeland department to assess his or her qualifications. A refugee must have a genuine and provable reason for leaving the home country. Most of the time the legitimate reason includes civil wars, political instabilities, and religious persecution. Refugees stay in the country until their countries become stable or the situation is no longer threatening. Refugee can be adults or unaccompanied minors. There is provision for basic needs such as food, clothing, education, and medication to refugees during the whole period they are in the country. However, there is a denial of some rights based on their immigration status.

A person may become an immigrant in America is through seeking asylum. The asylum-seeker have to identify herself or himself to the relevant authority and take a plea. A denial or grant of asylum depends on how they express themselves. In most instances, seeking protection is due to religious persecution in the home country, a political viewpoint that makes a person wanted and threatened with death upon deportation. Asylum's rights resemble those for refugees except that there is no expectation to return home after a certain period. They become legalized noncitizens with contingencies.

Temporary residence in the United States can be given to travelers and students who are in the country for a fixed time and then will return home. They also have contingent privileges and do not enjoy all healthcare services a native citizen acquires. Sometimes this group persists illegally in the country even after the expiration and they become undocumented after their visas expire.

There is yet another illegal way of becoming American immigrants. This method is usually common among people from neighboring countries. They are often in search of job opportunities or facilitation of unique social amenities lacking in their nations. This method is highly discouraged, and for those caught, there is the prosecution in court. Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for primary need or federal assistance except in emergency cases where a doctor can attend without regard to immigration status.

## Policy Concerning Immigrants

Immigrants who are legally residing in the United States may receive Medicaid and CHIP. The low-income category may also qualify for ACA Medicaid expansion but under certain contingencies. For lawful immigrants to be eligible for Medicaid and CHIP, they must possess qualified status.



*Continued on page 19*

*Continued from page 18*

The majority of lawfully present immigrants must wait for five probation years before they enroll for any medical coverage. Other immigrants such as those seeking asylum and refugees can apply for Medicaid and CHIP before the expiration of five years. Temporarily protected immigrants may reside lawfully but are not eligible for enrollment. Moreover, there is a waiver for the five-year wait usually given to women and children who are otherwise not qualified. However, only half of the states have implemented the option some favoring inclusion of children while other opting out women for inclusion.

There is a permission granted to lawfully present immigrants to buy medical coverage through affordable care act marketplaces and sometimes may obtain subsidies for this coverage. Unfortunately, these subsidies apply to individuals with incomes from hundred percent to four hundred percent below the federal poverty line and must not be eligible for any other coverage.

## Driving force for Mexican Immigration

The United States government has enacted legislation allowing emergency provision for medical services to all individuals who show up to the hospital in need of urgent care. The service for emergency care is regardless of immigration status or nationality of the presenting patient. Healthcare providers are encouraged under this provision to be purveyors of compassion and equity in their profession.

All classes of immigrants stand to benefit significantly from the implementation of this act. It extends the most needed medical services that occurred unexpectedly, and without prejudice of origin. This is an obviously legislative revision, it does not come without cost to the government and the American citizens, both of whom fund such worthy causes.

## Immigrant Challenges Perspectives from a Deep Interview

Other than discrimination in health-care services, Mexican immigrants also suffer from mental problems related to workplace discrimination and low payment. They feel alienated from the external world and only resort to family ties for psychological needs and motivation. For instance, a Mexican who left a family in Mexico and wishes to visit them meet many problems and sometimes forgo seeing them physically.

The language barrier is another problem that hinders new immigrants into the United States. They are unable to express themselves to healthcare providers whenever they get sick and sometimes they get paid low salaries because they are unable to negotiate terms of work in a language he or she understands well. The low level of education especially in immigrants who relocated to America while still minors hinder their growth and empowerment and therefore end up in farming jobs.

## How to Improve Healthcare Conditions

Immigrants contribute significantly to the American economy and tax base in the course of their stay in the United States. Their children born here are citizens of this country. Therefore, they have an inalienable right to affordable health care like any other indigenous children. The current exclusion from full benefit of the ACA and Medicaid is counterproductive to the health of anyone living in America has an overall impact population.

Because immigrants pay taxes directly or indirectly, they ought to benefit from taxpayer money. In fact, immigrants from Mexico have helped shape the United States economy for many years, especially in Texas. The current provision and illegibility criterion for ascertaining qualification status should apply to a group that has contributed so enormously to the economy. After all, the population of American is aging, and including immigrants in the health system will help spread the cost-benefit and alleviate strains on social security funds.

The current effort the government is putting in leveraging the health care for undocumented immigrants is not enough. It should increase budgetary allocation to community health centers that deal directly with immigrants. This initiative increases the number of illegal immigrants seeking healthcare and therefore improve living conditions of the American people. The government also can subsidize or reduce the cost of coverage to all worker hence allowing them to purchase insurance cover from ACA marketplaces. Finally, increasing funding for prenatal cares will help improve medical services to pregnant and nursing women and help reduce mortality rate in the United States. Additionally, the government can increase outreach programs to immigrant citizens who do not seek medical care due to fear of arrest, thereby we can reduce healthcare disparities among undocumented immigrants.

## Conclusion

Mexican immigrants in the United States crossed the border with determination to improve their lives. They have stayed in the United States for a considerable period, interacted intensely with the American population, and contributed to the economic prosperity America enjoys now. They have braved such hard times as the economic recession in 2008 and have persevered under disadvantaged healthcare.

By dismissing the needs of Mexican immigrants, we stand to lose a lot.

# Heart Health

## A Problem for Reading

By Dan Faudree

Culture is an evolving entity and one of its most recent phenomenon is globalization, worldwide immigration driven by resources and the desire for a better life.

The resulting journeys often lead to the United States, a stressful travel from any direction. Unfortunately, one of the most reactive bodily organs to stress is the heart. Due to the heart's sensitivity, a host of factors need to be addressed to help maintain a healthy status.

Arguably, the most important factor to consider is genetics. Although genetics generally work in favor of heart health, there exists a large amount of heart-related issues in the United States. However, a simple explanation for disproportionate cases in the United States can be explained by the Founder Effect. While genetics plays a major role in the backdrop of human health, the diet of immigrants plays a more direct role in heart health and is agitated by socioeconomics and abrupt changes in diet.

The pilgrimage to the United States is an unforgiving journey; the tension does not dissipate for a moment as many poor immigrants are forced to perform backbreaking labor for desperate wages. Hypertension is an issue that affects the heart and acts as a gateway to many cardiovascular diseases. The development of hypertension may become widespread in areas where Hispanic populations are large. Hispanics, especially immigrants, have a higher chance of acquiring cardiovascular diseases because of genetic disposition, poor diets, and consistently high levels of stress, all of which lead to the initial gateway of hypertension.

### Genetic Code

Genetics is the bastion of biological defense as it provides humans and every other organism what they need to survive and thrive. However, when genetics is faulty or distressed, issues arise. One such way that genetics becomes faulty is through a sudden overexpression of specific genes due to a constricted gene pool.

The name for a sudden lack of a gene pool is called the Founder Effect, presented by Dr. Kenneth Mason, a professor at Washington & Jefferson College, and his colleagues. When the Founder Effect is in action within a population, genes that would normally be suppressed become the main expression for the gene. This reverse expression of genes is especially problematic because it spreads weaknesses in the genetic code.

Such a reverse expression of genes seems to account for the high occurrence of poor heart health, particularly hypertension, among Hispanics living in the United States. An easily observed factor that can threaten and disrupt heart function is hypertension. Fortunately, people of Hispanic descent have a lower chance of contracting it – roughly 10.3% compared to people who live in the United States, emphasized by J. Jaime Miranda, an official of the Department of Medicine in Peru, and other official medical colleagues. Conversely though, if the Latin American immigrants who came to the United States were already predisposed to hypertension then the Founder Effect would be in action and yielding a positive correlation to Latin American immigrants and hypertension. While genetics plays a crucial role in the health of humans, it is not the determining factor, merely the amount of programmed resistance that the body can use to fight against diseases.

### Nutritional Side Effects

Our diet determines our health: what we eat is at the forefront of how our body reacts to disease. With a nutrient-poor diet comes a higher body mass index (BMI). If someone has a higher BMI, then they have a larger fat to bodyweight ratio. Having a higher than normal BMI is unhealthy because additional mechanical stress is placed on the human heart. However, if unhealthy food is the most readily available food, then having a high BMI is almost inevitable.

Socioeconomics plays a huge role in the availability of healthy food sources, like fruits and vegetables, meaning that living in a poor community often leads to poor health. Jennifer J. Salinas and colleagues of the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center present this unfortunate side effect and back it up with data from an international study. In their article, Salinas

*Continued on page 21*

*Continued from page 20*

and others give an overview of the data and states that “in low- or middle-income countries, socioeconomic environment is positively associated with obesity.” Issues with finding healthful food are further compounded when a person is an immigrant, as immigrants are often without their usual source of food and are forced into finding new food sources.

One nutritionist within the Reading Health Physician Network was able to confirm that socioeconomics and changes in diet accounted for the majority of patients that were dealing with obesity. While specific data could not be shared due to HIPAA laws, professional opinion was given on the patient demographics, stating that “more than half of the patients are of Hispanic decent and many of the obese patients are children.” Observing this trend shows that even after successful immigration being within a poor socioeconomic range negatively impacts the individual, especially the children.

### **Stressful Living: Coming and Being Here**

Immigrating to the United States from Latin America is not easy. There exists a lack of nutritious food, clean water, and a fight against the environment. The environment is not an easy obstacle. The temperatures become extremely high during the day and at night it becomes dangerously cold. Just one or two major stressors can be challenging for someone, but to face most of them simultaneously shows a remarkable amount of fortitude.

To make a dangerous situation even more perilous, once immigrants successfully complete the pilgrimage there is no guarantee they will find a job that pays well, thus pressuring many immigrants to work for reduced wages. For an illegal immigrant, the cycle of stress perpetuates. Effectively, cheap labor wages create natural stress and housing affordability issues, while living in a ghetto intensifies the stress due to the nature of the atmosphere.

The pilgrimage does not mark the end of a stress-filled life. While stress itself is not unhealthy, because it aids in mankind's ability to survive, exposure to it must be short-lived. Whereas chronic stress, a type of stress that lasts for a long time, either occurring repeatedly or continuously is extremely unhealthy. When the body is constantly under stress, bodily systems start to suffer and as a result, lead to issues such as burnout, depression, and cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension.

### **An Overview: The City of Reading**

Data USA provides quick and accurate data on the demographics, economic status, and general health for areas within the United States, including Reading. Observing the census data shows that Reading is a Hispanic majority city, with 63.1% of all citizens being Hispanic. The Census Bureau also reports that 39.3% of citizens of Reading are impoverished and 48.4% of all the impoverished citizens are Hispanic or Latino. The data shows the effects of stresses, such as poor socioeconomic status, that are placed upon Hispanic populations. The effects of being a poor community are made worse by the fact that wages rarely exceeded the poverty level in Reading. The census data also shows that two of the three major health issues in Reading are heart related.

The first and most prevalent issue of the three major health issues faced by citizens of Reading is congestive heart failure, a condition that can be brought on by hypertension. While the third most dominant health issue being myocardial infarction, which can also be brought on by hypertension, is simply known as a typical heart attack. The summary of the census data for Reading as of 2016 shows that it has issues with healthiness, poverty and that the Hispanic community is bearing these problems.

### **Doctors' Note: In Conclusion**

An important concept to understanding the human body is genetics, a code that blindly bestows us with traits from our ancestors, allowing survival to be easier as well as perpetuating issues. In addition to genetics, the very food that is consumed is another factor to consider, as having a poor diet places needless strain on the body. The final aspect to consider is stress, which, in small doses humans can endure many unfavorable situations. However, too much stress is toxic, a slow and insidious poison that leads to hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

Owing to potential genetic disposition intensified by immigration, poor diet, and consistently high levels of stress, Hispanics are at higher risk of becoming hypertensive and continuing down the path towards other cardiovascular diseases. Bearing in mind the demographics of Reading Pennsylvania, there exists a concern for the health of the population and the longevity of its people.

# Struggles Latino Students Face

By *Shae Lynn Harris*

## Hurricane Maria's effect on Puerto Rico

On Wednesday September 20, Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico devastating the island and plunging all of its 3.4 million residents into a desperate crisis. An article in the Washington Post explains that Puerto Rico is one of the nation's largest and poorest school system, with 370,000 students in more than 1,100 schools across the island. The storm has driven families to leave the island and move to different states across the country. There still remains a great amount of students on the island and there is no timeline for when schools will reopen. The island is under the impression of making some schools available for families to reside for shelter. A issue that remains in the air is that these students do not have anyone to look after them and some are roaming the streets. The streets in Puerto Rico are not safe because the storm has destroyed most of the island.

Reading Area Community College is a Hispanic Serving Institution that has taken in students from Puerto Rico because of Hurricane Maria. The college is a community college that serves a diverse population of students. There are students from every race, age, religion and different countries that study at Reading Area Community College. The community college provides associate degree's, certificate programs and adult education programs; career-focused training; skills training for business and industry; personal enrichment programs and public service activities. The community college has a mission to build communities that is committed to growing educationally and economically in Berks County region. The college is an example of a college that helps an influx of students who leave their home country in search of education opportunities. The students from Puerto Rico come from a Hispanic background and Reading Area Community College has helped these students accustom to a new learning environment.

## Hispanic Serving Institutions

College campuses are transitioning into Hispanic-serving institutions because there is a major demographic shift occurring where large numbers of Hispanic's are in the education system and this number will continue to grow in the future. Latinas and Latinos continue to be underrepresented in the educational system. The population in the United States is experiencing a rapid growth of the this population. Educators and policymakers are responding to the rapid Latino/a population growth by considering what, who, and how things need to change to achieve college graduation goals that could possibly expand the nation's capital. There needs to be a better understanding of how higher education institutions should respond to the growing population of Hispanic students regarding culture competency, language barriers, and financial burdens that Latino/a students' experience. Having a sense of these issues will help inform public policy and practices to increase Latino student's success.

A Hispanic-serving institution is an institution of higher education that is participating in a federal program that is designed to assist the majority of low income Hispanic students in college. Hispanic serving institutions are seeking to identify ways to better serve the Hispanic student population that continues to grow rapidly. A federal program called the Title V act was introduced in 1998 to provide grants to Hispanic students to help expand and enhance them in their academics. One author claims that this act also proposes colleges to show the U.S. Department of Education that at least 25 percent of their students graduate from their institution or transfer to another college within six years of entering the school. He also notes that those who fail to reach these criteria will become ineligible for grants and will not be provided any funding. The author explains that the goal of this program is to utilize the funding provided to improve completion rates, student services, and support institutional management.

The transition from high school to college can be overwhelming and stressful for many individuals. Latina/o students can have a difficult time adjusting to the college life because they encounter unique stressors that can negatively impact their college experience. In the article "Facilitating College Success among Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions," the author explains that studies have shown that only thirty six percent of Latino/a high school graduates go on to enroll in higher education compared to forty nine percent of White high school graduates. In the article "U.S. Latinos and Educational Policy," the author claims that politicians and education policy makers are informed that Latino/as will account for sixty percent of the population in the United States from 2005 to 2050, with an estimated 120 million Latinos living in the United States. The author also notes that while Latino/as are the population, there are no comparable increases of rates of high school or college completion. Latino/a students are a majority of the population in higher education, but are not successful completing their education this is an issue because the Latino/a population will continue to increase, and they will continue to be underrepresented in education if individuals do not realize this issue needs to be addressed.

*Continued on page 23*

## Challenges Latino and Latina Students Face

### Cultural Competency

In the transition of leaving high school to enter college an individual is in the process of understanding who they are as a person. In the formation of identity, an institution plays a big influence in helping a student's identity. In the article "The Importance of Familia for Latina/o College Students," the author explains that schools can have an impact on the development of students' identities and there is a call for schools to create environments where students are encouraged to thrive. Latino/a students' take pride in their native language and when experiencing acculturation sometimes they feel forced to not speak their home language which causes the individual to lose a sense of their identity. The article "U.S. Latinos and Educational Policy: Research-Based Directions for Change" explains how studies have shown that Latino/a students stress bilingualism when they are developing a positive student identity. A positive self-identity is vital because it shapes a person's perception of belonging throughout their lifetime.

Diversity can make or break the ease of the transition, and a college's efforts really matter when it comes to making students feel comfortable on campus. Some students may not consider diversity in their college decision at all, but that shouldn't necessarily be the case. Diversity brings new opportunities to an individual's college experience, whether it is in the classroom, in an extracurricular club or organizations, or in the dorms. Additionally, this shows that the school is committed to equality in education and eliminating the disparities that are often seen in higher education.

One way for colleges to attract a greater percentage of Latino/a students is by acknowledging and supporting the sub-cultural among them. It is imperative for higher education institutions to realize that the Hispanic culture varies in a variety of ways. These students come from different countries, backgrounds, and ethnic groups. Garcia claims that when one fails to recognize these differences by which students identify themselves this may result in inaccurate generalizations and reliance on cultural stereotypes. One option for colleges and universities to consider is providing resources that encourage such students to speak their native language, comfortably. If programs were created in all colleges and universities to integrate this student population students will feel more comfortable in schools and are more likely to succeed.

### Language Barriers

Majority Hispanic students who come from a different country go into school with a speech difficulty because they know one language and move into an area where they are forced to learn another language. This is a problem because these students are struggling in a classroom setting and are not working at their full potential. This is important for policymakers and higher education institutions to know about so support services are created for these underserved students. This is a good reason for colleges and universities to transition into Hispanic serving institutions because it will help the future growing population of Hispanic students who will enter college in the future.

One of the causes of an educational gap between Latino/a students and other students is they suffer from a language barrier. Not only is there a language barrier for the students, but there is also a language barrier for their parents. Some of the students and parents may speak little or no English. The students become misevaluated and are put into classes that they are not able to succeed in. Having a language barrier is a serious issue in the education gap for Latino/a students and if the issue is not resolved this may affect Latino/a students who want to further their education.

### Financial Burdens

Every student comes from a different socioeconomic status and this is imperative to know when colleges are looking for students to attend their school. It is known that finances impact the retention and academic performance of Latino students. In the article "Unseen Differences" the author notes that when a Latino/a student struggles to pay for their college education this can cause a negative stressor to their life. He also explains that studies have shown that students whose parents support them or receive financial aid have financial stability which positively influences their academic performance. Not all students know that there are many options out there to help them pay for their education and this is why it's imperative for institutions to provide this information to Hispanic students.

It is known that immigrant and international students have parents who work a lower paying wage job, and this makes it difficult for them to help pay for their children's college tuition. Most Latino/a students have immigrant parents and this puts them in a position in their life where they must work two times harder to pay for college than students who have parents who are legal citizens. If a parent is an undocumented immigrant their child who attends college may not want to expose their parent's status when applying for financial aid, so they are more likely not going to apply and would be stuck taking out loans to pay for their education. Immigrant students will most likely work one to two jobs to pay for their necessities and college tuition. This is a disadvantage because the students have an extra burden of working multiple jobs just to get by and they tend to focus less on their education due to financial stressors.

*Continued from page 23*

To better help serve this population of students in the transition of high school to college there is some important outreach that should be done from community colleges and universities. The article "Internationalizing Campus Partners" claims that it has been shown that in the 2014-2015 academic year, international students brought \$30.5 billion worth of revenue to the United States. The article also notes that majority of these students pay full-tuition, so they guarantee revenue for their institutions. Therefore, the article emphasizes that higher education institutions should cater to these students and do their best to meet their needs such as helping them overcome challenges while respecting the diversity of the population. When referring to catering that does not mean to give these students handouts over native-born students, but more so of understanding that this population of students are unique and do lack the knowledge of having proper resources to help pay for their education. Students are helping institutions remain open by paying for their education and in return the institutions should provide support to decrease the stress of financial burdens.

Financial burdens are different for every student, but the Latino/a population need the proper knowledge and skills of financial availability to succeed in college. There is a correlation between immigrant and international Hispanic students who suffer from financial burdens. This population of students lack the proper financial knowledge to pay for their college tuition. Students who are financial literacy are better prepared than those who are not to make wise choices regarding how to pay for their education. The decisions students make to pay for their higher education have a long-lasting impact on them and the economy. Therefore, it is imperative for policymakers and higher education systems to provide financial support for students who are underserved.

Language barriers affect a student's ability to communicate, comprehend, and interact with their social environment. Garcia notes that latino/a students who are immigrants in a college have a range of language-related needs. According to the article "Immigrants in Community Colleges", one of the greatest needs for immigrant students is to improve their language skills. The authors also explain that in order to better serve this population of student's higher education institutions have no choice, but to provide these students with the most effective language skills to better succeed. For Latino/a students to succeed in their academics they need to have good communication skills with their professors and peers. Some students may start off in a course or class that speaks their language, but they should gradually be encouraged to learn the English language with the support of their professors. It is a long and difficult process for students to learn a new language, so it may take some time for these students to become proficient in the English language. With the help and encouragement of a strong support system from the institution these students can overcome their language barrier and become very successful in their educational journey.

### **Reading Area Community College**

Reading Area Community College (RACC) is a community college that is the only college in the state of Pennsylvania that is a Hispanic Serving Institution. The community college has a population of 37% of Hispanic students. In an interview with Dr. Susan Looney, college president, and Benjamin Rosenberger, director of Financial Aid/Registrar, they discussed how Reading Area Community College responded when taking in students because of Hurricane Maria. The federal government informed RACC that they should be sensitive on a student in this particular situation.

The then-president of the college, Dr. Anna Weitz, called a meeting with upper and middle management to inform them on what may occur in this situation. Surprisingly, not many staff members were not aware that people from Puerto Rico are U.S. citizens. Informing staff on this information was crucial because the college did not want to turn anyone away. There is no specific policy for the college to follow when a crisis situation occurs and they have to prepare for students to enroll into their college.

There were no major issues for the college when dealing with this unique situation. The college works on a daily admissions process that fits all needs at all times. The only area of concern the college had was the ability to obtain official documents such as tax information, high school and college records from the locations that were impacted. There is no actual number of how many students fled Puerto Rico and are now students at Reading Area Community College.

To better serve these students Reading Area Community College has applied for a grant that will help the stem program. The United States has shifted its education focus on subjects such as science technology, engineering, and math. With the Hispanic population growing. RACC has decided to focus on expanding their stem program to encourage students who have a passion for a career in the stem field to study the program.

In another interview with Dr. Gloria Oikelome, Dean of the STEM division, she shared that she talked to administrators at RACC and explained to them the grants that are offered to Hispanic Institutions. She notes that RACC was not taking advantage of these grants that could help Hispanic population of the college. She did note that writing grants takes a lot of time and patience. Many people are denied the first time, but once you are approved for a grant as long as you follow rules and regulations you are most likely going to receive the grant again.

*Continued on page 25*

Continued from page 24

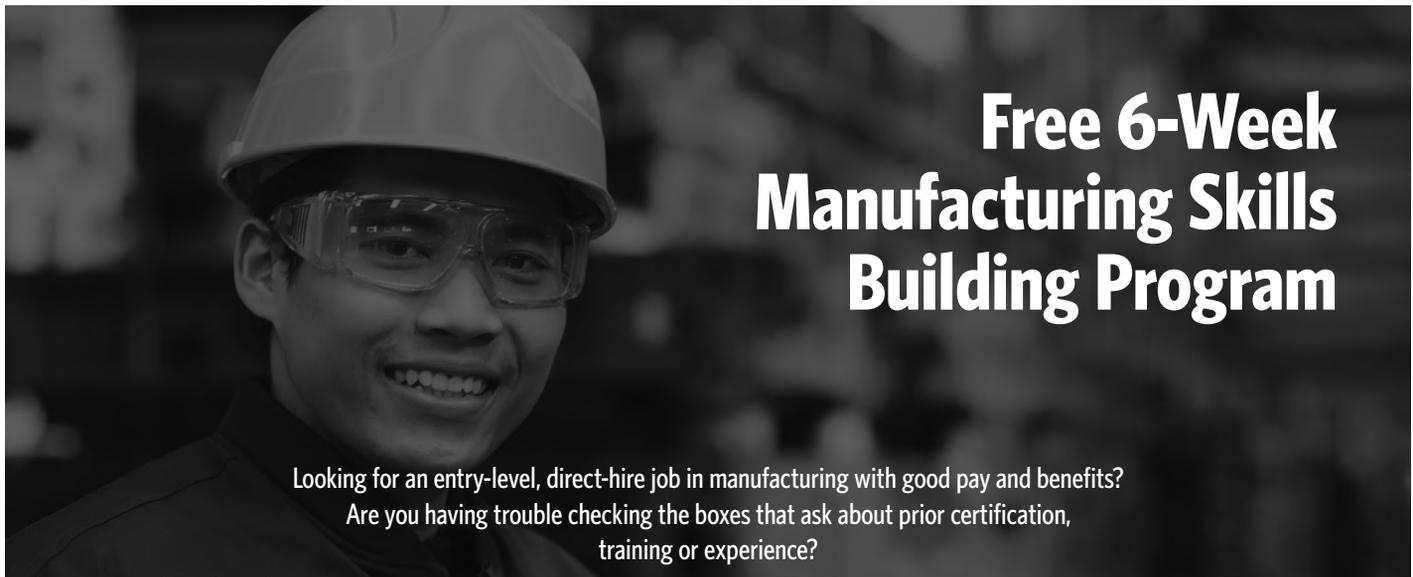
Oikelome presented a presentation on what a Hispanic institution looks like and how as a community college RACC can advance in helping students. The college is seeking for ways to better serve the Hispanic population. The college's main goal is to provide the best education for all students.

## Support System

It is imperative for college students to have a solid support system in college because students face both big and small challenges throughout their academic career. This means that it is important to have people that one can lean on in times of need. When obstacles become overwhelming to handle, students at two year institutions sometimes need help to keep their goals in perspective. A support network may be there for students when they need to talk to someone after a long overwhelming day. A support system includes family, friends, faculty, or staff at one's institution. These individuals help a student to celebrate their successes and helps them learn from their failures by providing words of encouragement that the student needs to meet each challenge with a positive attitude.

International and immigrant Latino/a students tend to pursue their higher education away from home and when leaving their comfort zone having a support system to help them with their challenges is needed. These students deal with a handful of obstacles, but they are aware that the benefits outweigh the challenges. It is important for professionals to work directly with these students to understand their needs, communicate effectively with them and to know how to adapt to the diversity of the group. These students tend to lean towards their support system in their institution to receive support therefore, institutions should be knowledgeable on how to handle certain situations when they occur. Some of these situations may include students needing a place to stay because their family has disowned them for leaving their home country. Institutions should be knowledgeable outside resources that they may refer the student to, so they can receive help.

Once students attend college their environment begins to change and so does their support system. Without the right support system Latino/a student's face difficult challenges alone and this may affect their academic performance. Words spoken from a Latino/a student "you always have to have someone there to have faith in you or else you feel alone. And when your alone things become a lot more difficult." Therefore, it is important for students to feel connected to their college environment because it increases the chances of college success. These students may feel connected with their peers and faculty at the institution they attend. In fact, in the article "Social Support and Success in Higher Education" the author explains that studies have shown that Latino/a student's find that academic performance and peer support are correlated. This population of student's benefits from having a social network with their peers and it helps them to excel in their academics.



## Free 6-Week Manufacturing Skills Building Program

Looking for an entry-level, direct-hire job in manufacturing with good pay and benefits?  
Are you having trouble checking the boxes that ask about prior certification,  
training or experience?

### For more information and application for the Basic Manufacturing Skills Program:

\*Send Text Message "EZSKILLS" to 474747 \*Go to Schmidt Training and Technology Center Blog @ RACC.edu  
or contact Sarah at 610.372.4721 Ext. 5312 or sstapleton@racc.edu



## RACC has a FREE training program for you!

# Senior Centers

## A Solution for an Aging Society

By *Laura Ramsey*

When immigration occurs, a deterioration of normally defined family structure can be observed during the process of growing accustomed to a new location. Family organization often changes when a family migrates due to the 21st century shift to gendered labor, meaning both men and women are required to work equally as long shifts to gain sufficient income. When these changes occur, often times extended family members such grandparents or seniors get left behind in the chaos. They no longer have the same support they once had which has detrimental effects due to seniors being at a higher risk for social isolation, depression, and physical deterioration compared to their younger counterparts. A solution for this matter comes in the form of public services, specifically in this case for seniors: senior centers.

Senior centers have begun to play a pivotal role in society as in 2001. One estimate says about 10 million seniors were served at centers throughout the country; along with the average life expectancy reaching 77, with 12 of those years being seniors, and the estimated doubling of the entire population by 2030, they have become a needed necessity in the realm of public services. Locally, the city of Reading has a very large senior population and the answer for them is their local Hispanic Center: Centro Hispano Daniel Torres.

Amidst the busy traffic and bustle of Reading on 501 Washington Street lies a beacon of hope for the seniors of Reading: The Centro Hispano Senior Center. The center is for seniors 60 and older and provides socialization, food, and medical interpreting that supports mostly Hispanic and some non-Hispanic seniors needs.

Rebecca Ortiz, 63, comes to Centro Hispano every single day since she turned 60. "I come over here to socialize with people and eat breakfast," she said. "We have lunch. We play bingo sometimes, I play dominos, and sometimes we go for a trip. I like to socialize with everybody."

Ortiz is one many seniors who comes to Centro Hispano Senior Center on a regular basis for the support it offers. Seeing over two hundred every single day, the center plays a very big role in the community of seniors in Reading.

### Socialization

During my observations it became clear that many of the seniors come to the center to get socialization with other seniors in the community. When seniors age, their risk for socialization rises with five different factors: retirement, widowhood, loss of friends, illness, and increasing geographical dispersion of family members and friends, and Centro Hispano helps alleviate these isolation issues.

As Anabel Adame, senior coordinator and medical interpreter shared, "It [Centro Hispano] provides a place for them [seniors] to be with other people. To be able to socialize and not be at home and alone. At their age a lot of them go through divorces or either they are widowed. I have a couple of them that their spouses have been passing away lately and this is a place for them where they can come and communicate and be with other seniors, so they're not alone."

By creating a space for seniors to come and encouraging socialization, Hispanic seniors in Reading avoid loneliness while facing the various issues that accompany aging.

The main way that the center provided said socialization is through various different activities such as dominos, a favorite for many of the seniors.

Fellow RACC student Jonathan Tinoco stated, "Dominos are like Uno for Hispanic people." The center provides an entire large corner to dominos with four tables in the back corner, each with a domino table sitting in the center. The minute one enters they will hear the crashing of dominos and see any seniors patiently (and, sometimes not) waiting for their turn. The games will continue on until the center closes. The noise of crashing dominos constantly echoes off the high ceilings of the building.

*Continued on page 27*

*Continued from page 26*

## Health

Being in good health for seniors is key for longevity in life, but this does not always turn out to be so easy to achieve. Food plays a major role in health, and studies have shown that many senior will skip meals if it does not relate to their ethnic identity food as represents a lifelong custom for many seniors and want to eat the food they are used to. If they are not served this food many seniors will often go without therefore compromising their health or seniors have a difficult time taking care of themselves.

Adame said, "A lot of them [seniors] have difficulty taking care of themselves or cooking so here they are provided with breakfast and lunch, which they don't have to worry about that on a daily basis."

The food served at the center respects the Hispanic culture and the seniors are very grateful for it. Hector Fumui Plzano, 66, said, "With everything they [Centro Hispano] help, even with food." For Plzano the food the center services is very important as most programs for other seniors don't offer completely free food. Rafael Garcia, who comes to the center everyday, also expressed gratefulness when it came to the food the center serves: "They provide me with food, if you need a favor they can help. Everything, I feel good." The center giving food to the seniors helps them stay healthy and allows visitors such as Garcia to feel good.

## Meals on Wheels

Not all seniors in the area can make it to the center to get food nor do all have the capability to make themselves their own food.

When asked what the most impactful program of the center was Adame did not hesitate to say, "The biggest one would have to be the program for meals on wheels, which is the food because if they cannot come out—a lot of them have disabilities and they can't walk, or they become very sick especially in the winter. The Meals on Wheels program takes the food from their homes, so they don't go hungry and that is one of the biggest things with our seniors that cannot take care of themselves." The center works very hard to make sure all the seniors are served food, so they can stay healthy.

## Medical Interpreting

One of the biggest issues facing seniors in the modern age is getting proper health care and making sure they get the care they need. Seniors can feel threatened by health-care providers and practice because for many seniors their identity lies on the idea of "being healthy, independent and active, and responsible and unselfish." Seniors do not want to feel as though they do not have control over their health anymore.

Almost 2.3 million ,or seven percent ,of people over 65 do not speak English at all or very well. Without any knowledge of how to speak the local language, Hispanic seniors find themselves in a position where they cannot receive any health care, but Centro Hispano helps with this. Adame feels as though the medical interpreting department is the most important program offered to seniors because "without it since the majority of our seniors are Spanish speaking. They wouldn't be able to go to any medical appointments so the medical interpreters we have are for the whole Berks County, any medical practice that way they are able to take care of their health."

The seniors also feel grateful for this program. As Rafael Garcia, 65 shared, "They [Centro Hispano] provide medical and they send with a woman who knows what she's doing. I feel very grateful."

Without the ability to speak English well, or at all in many cases, for the seniors attending Centro Hispano, the center works hard to make sure the seniors can see a doctor and understand the diagnosis given. The center allows the seniors to have proper appointments and make sure that the seniors are being taken care of. Making sure their seniors are in the best health they can possibly be remains a very high priority to Centro Hispano.

## Challenges

When asked what the biggest challenge the center faces Adame said transportation. Transportation is definitely the biggest one because many cannot walk long distances. But not everybody has access to BARTA because of their age. To get the free BARTA service one needs to be 65, but the center is open for ages 60 and up, so if you're from 60 to 64 you can't have that service of free transportation Lack of available, appropriate, and affordable transportation is an impediment to elderly people's mobility and to accessing social support. Not having transportation makes it difficult for the Centro Hispano to reach all the seniors they want.

*Continued on page 28*

Continued from page 27

## Community

Despite not always being able to serve everyone due to transportation, the center plays a vital role to the community. Carlos Torres, an information referral receptionist and case worker, said, "I think without the Hispanic center – and this is coming from people who have said these words – what would we do without the Hispanic center. That just speaks volumes right there just because there is no other agency."

Seniors who frequent the center feel as though the center plays a large role in community.

Ortiz said, "This place is not just solely for Hispanics. It's all kinda color, like a rainbow. When I call it a rainbow it means Spanish, white, black. Whatever. I call them the rainbow."

The center strives to serve as many people in the community as it can. Although the center is a Hispanic center, it allows any seniors to enjoy the benefits it offers.

Rafael Garcia supports this idea: "Well, I see a lot of other people coming to center and I think center is an institution that benefits the world (us all)."

Both the workers and seniors at the center find Centro Hispano's senior center to be a vital part in the community of Reading because it provides help to everyone free of cost.

## Immigration and Crime

Continued from page 17

By abiding by these laws, the Police Executive Research Forum believes that trust can be established between the community and its migrant inhabitants.

Furthermore, after conducting his famous "Robbers Cave" experiment, Muzafer Sherif stated that immigrants can one day be accepted into American society, due to effort on both parts of the dividing wall. He explains that is "is often simply a matter of giving two different groups the same goal. Nothing binds children of different races together more quickly than needing to dissect a frog together in science class."

Later studies by Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp elaborated on this idea of creating equality through children. They established that "In addition to having common goals, kids need to be treated as equals and to have non-competitive interactions with one another."

There seems to be hope that one day, native-born Americans will be able to settle the hostility for immigrants and realize that, despite the differences, there is no reason for the animosity.

**Read *Front Street Journal* Online!**

**[www.fsj.racc.edu](http://www.fsj.racc.edu)**

.....  
**News \* Features \* Photos \* Poems \* Videos \* Opinion**

**Share Your Creativity!**

**Contribute to *Front Street Journal***

**Contact [fsj@Racc.edu](mailto:fsj@Racc.edu) for info**



*Chelsi Roberts-Williams  
Senior, Orientation Leader*

**Celebrating 125 years of**  
**Educating Future Leaders • Building Community Partnerships**  
**Empowering Innovation**



Offering accelerated undergraduate degree completion programs in Bethlehem:

**Lehigh Valley Center**

Computer Science/Computer Security  
Public Health

**Northampton Community College**

Business Management  
RN to BS in Nursing



**EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**Main Campus**  
200 Prospect Street  
East Stroudsburg, PA  
570-422-3542

**esu.edu**

**Lehigh Valley Center**  
60 West Broad Street  
Bethlehem, PA  
610-419-0316

# Lead the Pack after RACC



ALVERNIA  
UNIVERSITY



***NEW! Digital Media  
Marketing major***

- Transfer RACC credits easily
- Apply for transfer scholarships

**ALVERNIA UNIVERSITY**

1.888.ALVERNIA (1.888.258.3764) [alvernia.edu](http://alvernia.edu)

