



THE



HALL



OF



FAME



# Hall of Fame

The Archives has been actively involved with producing two new oral history initiatives that are capturing our campus, students and community history. The following is an update on the two projects written up by Archivist Cynthia Tobar.

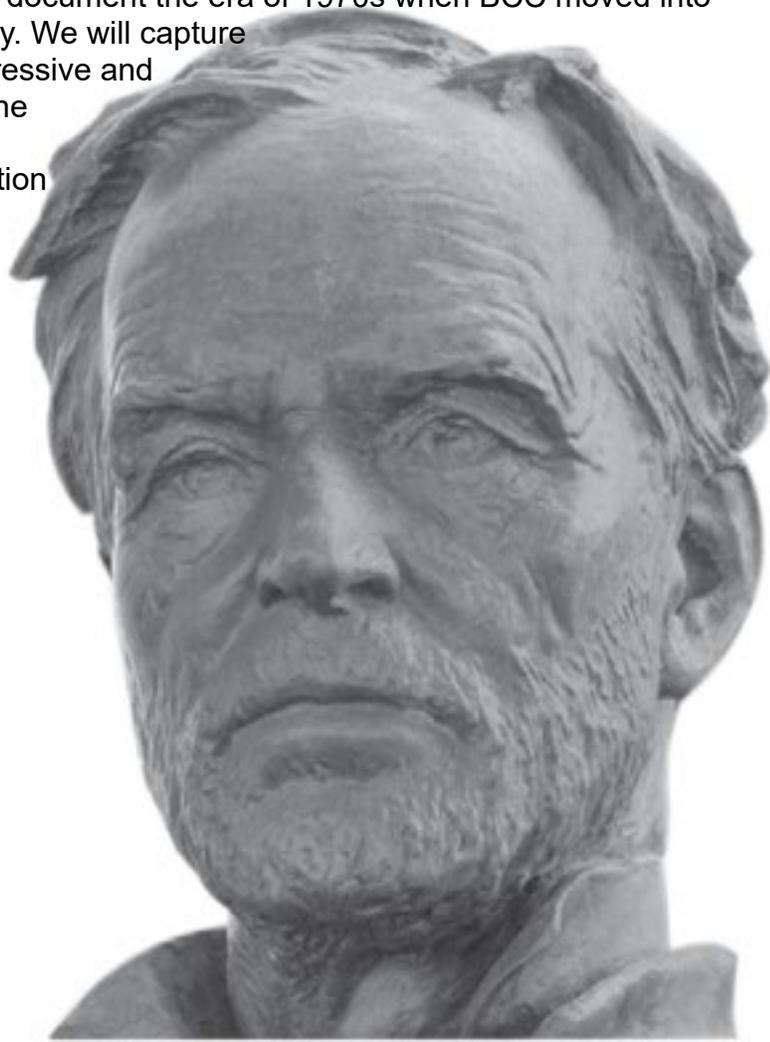
## ***I. "A Place Among the Greats" Oral History Project***

The aim of the "A Place Among the Greats" Oral History Project is to speak directly with individuals related to Bronx Community College's past, whether they were former administrators, faculty or students. The use of oral history can be a potent vehicle to promote the unique history here at BCC. In effect, oral history can be that bridge between the historic University Heights campus and the current student body.

We want to collect the vivid and provocative memories of BCC from students, faculty, staff and alumni. This collective effort will include several voices: from the student who struggled against all odds to get their degree, to the instructor who recognized the potential of teaching nontraditional students, and alumni on their college experience and how it helped shape them into the people they are.

The focus area of our oral history work will be to document the era of 1970s when BCC moved into the University Heights campus to the present day. We will capture the history of political and cultural ferment, progressive and retrogressive changes, the antiwar movement, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the feminist and gay liberation movements, immigration and the Dream Act, and diverse challenges and success to these moments as experienced by members of the BCC community. We are also interested in collecting stories from student groups and clubs, department chairs, retired faculty, and past and current administrators.

Students, faculty, alumni or staff wishing to schedule an interview session can contact Professor Tobar at 718.289.5436 or at [Cynthia.Tobar@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Cynthia.Tobar@bcc.cuny.edu)





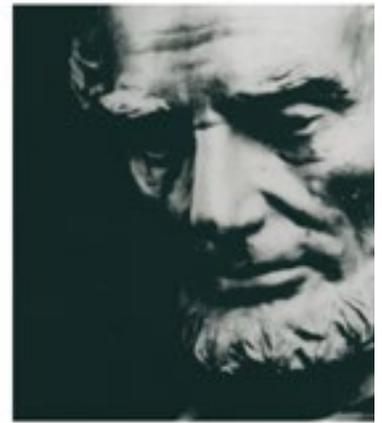
## II. ***“Raising Ourselves Up”***: Oral Histories from First-Generation College Students at BCC

*“Raising Ourselves Up”*: Oral Histories from First-Generation College Students at BCC is a Collaborative Experiential Learning Pilot Project to build a video oral history archive to document the stories of first-generation college students on our campus. Each student’s time at BCC is unique, yet all students are bound to each other by the shared sense of struggle towards achieving a college education. Using video oral history interviews, students will examine the challenges faced by low-income, working-class groups of peer students from various ethnic, racial, and immigrant backgrounds, groups that BCC is dedicated to serving and who have been historically underrepresented in higher education. This project will also help inspire resiliency among BCC students by showing positive examples of overcoming adversity to attain a college education.

Our project is a team effort, combining resources provided by Student Support Services/General Counseling Department where Dr. Nelson Reynoso will foster existing connections to recruit student interview subjects and the Archives within the Library Department where Prof. Cynthia Tobar arranges training workshops in Oral History methodology and oversees production of the video interviews. The resulting video oral history interviews will ultimately be deposited at the BCC Archives where they will be processed and made available to the public via an online archive.

The Archives will process the collection, catalog them through item-level descriptions as well as a collection-level finding aid, and post as many of the interviews as possible online that will make their contents searchable and therefore more accessible. A final goal of the project is to use the collection as the basis for increased community and public engagement surrounding the issue of access to public higher education through outreach, social media, online publishing, and programming.

On November 10, we were excited to welcome Professor Prof. Mark Naison from Fordham University, who talked about his work on the [\*\*\*Bronx African American Oral History Project\*\*\*](#) and shared some useful skills with our student in what to prepare for when conducting a community oral history project, as well as presenting us with some wonderful Bronx history and music!



## **Working on the Hall of Fame Collection**

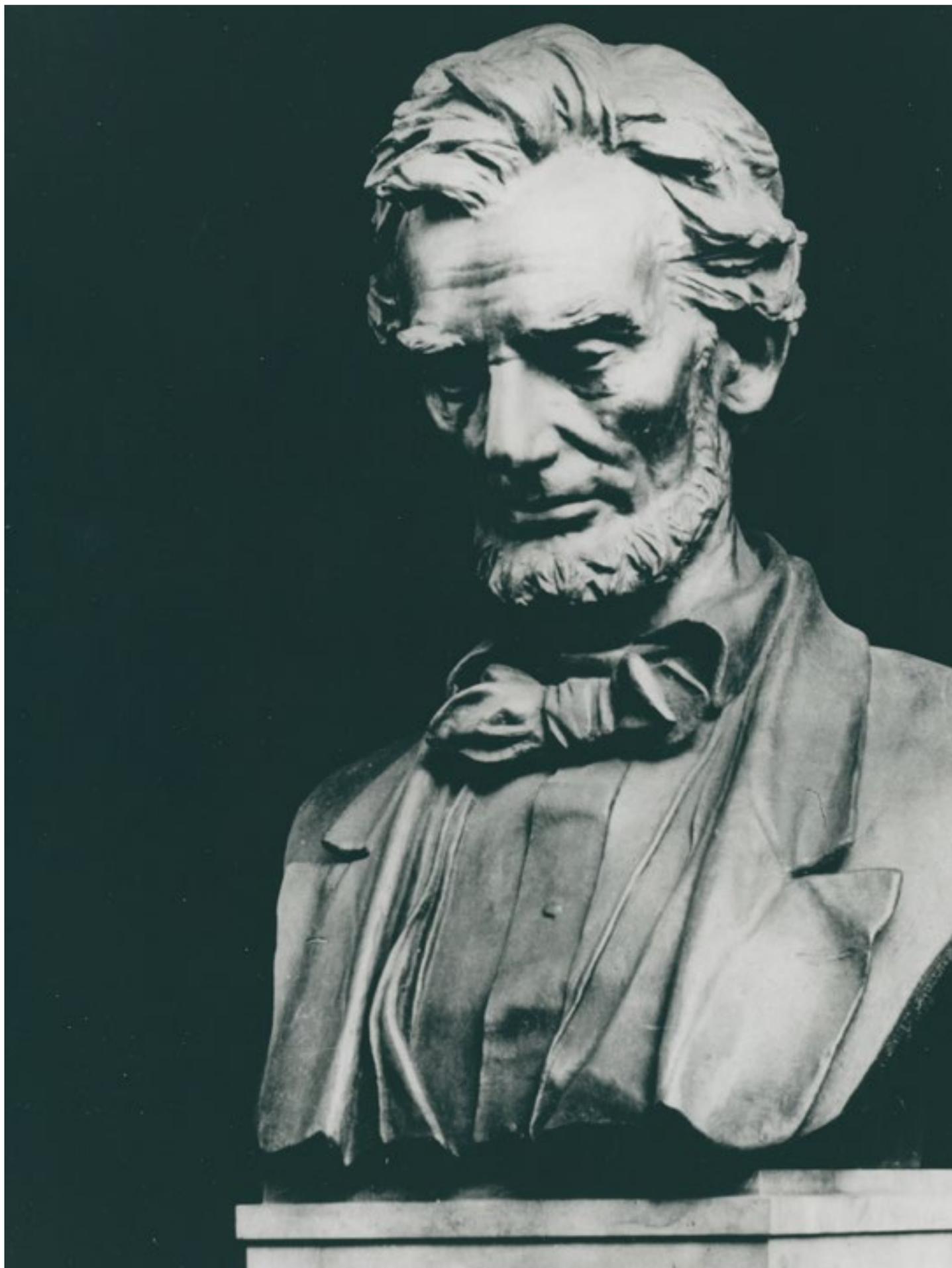
by Allen Thomas, Assistant Archivist

The Hall of Fame for Great Americans collection presented some significant challenges to me as an archivist. The collection spans back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and had apparently never received the attentions of a professional archivist before I went to work on it. This meant I had to do all of the work necessary to prepare the collection for access but much more importantly from the time the Hall of Fame ceased active operation at the end of the 1970s until only a few years ago when a basic survey of materials was done by non-archivist staff at BCC, the materials that make up the collection sat unnoticed in various locations around the BCC campus. It was stored only in the sense of having been put somewhere; there was no record of what specifically was part of the collection or where any particular item was. It is likely that parts of the collection were lost during this period as there is a lack of materials relating to some candidates for the Hall which is abundant for others.

Normally when materials are added to an archival collection the way in which they were organized by their creators is preserved as this information provides important insight into how and why the records were originally created and used. Due to the long period of inattention this was not possible with the Hall of Fame collection. Materials were moved and shuffled together without regard to their origin (not to mention materials that might have been lost entirely) and any sense of original order was lost.

In the absence of the original order, a new one based on the content of the collection would have to be created instead, but this presented its own problems. While no sense of who created what files remained, the collection did seem to consist in part of the office files of several different individuals. There were many examples of two or more folders dealing with the same candidate for the Hall. As I was creating a new order for the collection based on content, these duplicate files needed to be identified and combined so that all material on a single subject could be found in a single place. The concept is simple but accomplishing it with several thousand folders of documents was a considerable undertaking. Workspace and archival-quality storage materials such as folders and boxes have been scarce so the mere logistics of processing were sometimes difficult. I would have to get an understanding of the contents of the whole collection before creating a new order and re-arranging the individual pieces accordingly.

Ultimately, even if the collection was not in an ideal state the way forward remained clear and overcoming these challenges was simply a matter of effort. After a lot of work the Hall of Fame collection is in a state where a researcher or anyone else interested in learning from it can easily find what they are looking for using the finding aid my work at BCC Archives has produced. It was definitely worth the effort.







# Hall of Fame

## **Intern Jhensen Ortiz Interviews Julia Encarnación On Her Experience in Work-Study with BCC Archives**

### **State your name, year in school, major.**

My name is Julia Encarnación and I am in my third semester at Bronx Community College majoring in Computer Systems.

### **What made you want to apply for a position in the archives?**

Well I applied for many jobs on campus and Cynthia was the only one who responded with a date to interview me. After the interview I decided to work with her.

### **Did you have any prior knowledge or experience in the archives?**

No I didn't have any prior knowledge working in any archives before I started working here.

### **How long have you been working in the archives?**

I have been working here over a year now.

### **Tell me about your experience working with Cynthia and Allen? What have you been trained in since you started working here?**

I first started working with the binders in the storage room which consist of minutes and yearbooks to see if they were in order or not. Also work on the computer organizing the information from the binders I was working with on Microsoft word. Currently, we are rehousing the folders of the Hall of Fame Collection. My experience with Cynthia and Allen has been great they are very attentive because sometimes I may have a problem with something and they give me advice on what to do. You know some supervisors don't always give their attention to the students and I appreciate that because I know they care about the work I am doing here.

### **Would you consider going into the archives field?**

The work is very stressful and technical, but I would consider it because it is a profession like any other.

### **Any future plans?**

Right now I don't know; just get good grades and transfer to another CUNY senior college to continue with my studies.

## “Visions of Greatness” Launch Party

BCC Archives held a launch event for the “Visions of Greatness at BCC” website April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in the rotunda of Gould Memorial library from 5pm to 7pm. Head archivist Cynthia Tobar demonstrated the website and spoke about the project to digitize selected items from the Hall of Fame for Great Americans site. BCC faculty Gregory Jost, Grisel Acosta, and Prithi Kanakamedala as well as Bronx historian Lloyd Ultan briefly spoke about the essays they contributed to the website on the topics of Historical exclusion and public commemoration, accomplishment and opportunity, public service, and issues of representation. An interactive nominate-your-great station was set up to allow anyone to add to the “virtual Hall of Fame”

See the website at <https://bcchalloffame.commonsgc.cuny.edu/>



**Contact BCC Archives:**

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**BCC Archives on CUNY Academic Works:**

[http://academicworks.cuny.edu/bx\\_arch/](http://academicworks.cuny.edu/bx_arch/)

**BCC Archives Libguide:**

<http://bcc-cuny.libguides.com/archives>

**“Raising Ourselves Up” Oral History Project for First-Generation College Students:**

<https://vimeo.com/album/4365327>

**“A Place Among the Greats” Oral History Project for memories of BCC:**

<https://bccgreats.commonsgc.cuny.edu/>



Graphic design template by Paola Ortiz