



A message from **THE PRESIDENT**

2025 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March 1 marks the beginning of Women's History Month. For the next thirty days we celebrate the manifold contributions women have made to this nation and the crucial role they've played – and continue to play – in shaping our political, cultural, scientific, economic, academic, and moral landscape.

This year's WHM theme is "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations." As an educator and academic, this theme is particularly close to my heart. The innovative and even revolutionary ideas and achievements of America's women have consistently been ignored when they weren't disparaged or co-opted by their male counterparts.

Redressing the historical record is one way to educate and inspire women (and men). From the very earliest days of this country, women have excelled in the arts and sciences. Making sure their names and accomplishments are acknowledged has expanded our sense of the enormity of what they achieved. Even an exceptionally abbreviated list indicates the scope of their activities:

In 1640 Anne Bradstreet was the first published poet in the British American colonies.

In 1781 Elizabeth Freeman sued the state of Massachusetts, "becoming the first African American enslaved woman to win a freedom suit in the state. Her suit helped lead to the permanent abolition of slavery in the state of Massachusetts." (Madeline Merinuk and Sarah Lemire, *USA Today*.)

In 1933 Frances Perkins was appointed as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor. As the first woman to hold a cabinet secretary, she formulated the policies Roosevelt pursued: "a 40-hour work week; a minimum wage; unemployment compensation; worker's compensation; abolition of child labor; direct federal aid to the states for unemployment relief; Social Security; a revitalized federal employment service; and universal health insurance." (Francis Perkins Center website.)

In 2006 Tarana Burke founded the MeToo Movement to provide women with a safe space to share their experiences with sexual harassment and assault in the entertainment world and elsewhere.

The Puerto Rican philosopher/activist Eugenio María de Hostos, after whom the College is named, was an early proponent of scientific education for women. He recognized the all-encompassing role women could play in society by realizing their own enormous potential and showing men the way to realizing theirs:

Mother, lover, wife: all women are an influence. Equip that influence with scientific knowledge, and imagine the kind

of existence, happiness and indescribable harmony that men would enjoy on this planet, if the giver, the beautifier, the companion of our lives would be: as mother, our scientific guide; as our beloved, the lover who reflects on our ideas and our virtuous undertakings; as wife, the companion of our bodies, our reasoning, our feelings, our will, and our conscience. Men would be complete. At this time, they are not.

Looking back over the centuries, we see that women's history is, in truth, American history – world history – human history. Only a month for Women's History? Given the scale of what women have given to and done for America, they should be lauded 365 days a year.

I hope you'll appreciate this poem by the amazing Black American poet Lucille Clifton (1936-2010), "won't you celebrate with me":

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

Let us all join Clifton and so many other outstanding women in celebration and solidarity.

Sincerely,

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.
President

Office of the President
Eugenio María de Hostos Community College
475 Grand Concourse, A-Building, Room 341, Bronx, NY 10451
718-518-4300 | PRESIDENTSOFFICE@hostos.cuny.edu

