



Name: Gustavo Agosto-DaFonseca

Hometown: NYC

Program and degree: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Sociology Department, PhD

Year: 1st year

Undergraduate institution: Baruch College, The City University of New York

How I found my way to Boston College: After completing two years of undergraduate studies at Baruch College (CUNY), I deployed for a one-year tour to Iraq with the Army Reserve in 2005. I returned to Baruch College in 2006, where I was fortunate to have mentors who encouraged me to look toward pursuing graduate studies. I applied to sociology graduate programs that are committed to the improvement of their neighboring communities through scholarly research, and are located on urban campuses which share longstanding research commitments with nearby African American and Latino/a innercity communities. After a long year of applications, GREs, and nerve-racking anxiety, I was accepted to three PhD programs and a MA program, and was most fortunate to have been awarded the Boston College Diversity Fellowship.

Summary of my research, teaching, service at Boston College: My research interests include (1) the comparative study of class stratification and inequality in the United States, Brazil (my mother's home country), and Latin America, (2) intergenerational poverty within low-income communities, and (3) higher education and military service as pathways for personal advancement within the socioeconomic hierarchy. I am currently participating as a mentor to an undergraduate scholar in the Graduate Mentorship Program, a partnership between the Office of Graduate Student Life and the Learning to Learn program. The Graduate Mentorship Program pairs BC McNair Scholars with graduate student mentors who share experiences and provide support to the aspiring scholars throughout the graduate admissions process. This experience has been the highlight of my first semester at BC. I also serve as the Sociology department representative and treasurer to the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

How I define being a representative of diversity: For me, being a representative of diversity means being a model for overcoming adversity. I am a first generation college student of Puerto Rican and Brazilian heritage who was raised by a widowed mother in East Harlem, New York City. My mother struggled to maintain two minimum-wage jobs while raising me, and made just enough money to satisfy the constant eviction notices—even food was often a luxury. The struggle that we endured has given me the motivation and self-discipline to pursue and overcome all of the challenges that I would experience throughout my life, from growing up in Spanish Harlem through the 1990's, to deploying to Iraq with the Army Reserve in 2005. I carry these experiences with me daily, reminding myself of how goals are attainable through focused dedication.

How I define the word diversity: My definition of diversity draws from my undergraduate experiences at Baruch College, ranked as the most diverse college in the United States, where students come from over 140 nations and speak over 90 languages ranging from Akan to Zulu. Diversity is an eclectic exchange of knowledge, values, and beliefs with an appreciation for multicultural perspectives.

What I hope to do with my fellowship: I hope to use funds from the Diversity Fellowship to conduct research for my doctoral dissertation. Although I am still exploring my research interests, I would like to study class inequality and higher education access in Brazil.

My Favorite Quote: "We did not all come over on the same ship, but we are all in the same boat." -Bernard Baruch