Dear En Foco Supporters,

We are fortunate to once again publish another issue of *Nueva Luz*. For many, *Nueva Luz* has been a beacon of opportunity for many photographers of color and though it is a beacon that has been undercapitalized. It has survived... a tribute to the En Foco family. Sadly, this year is no different and in many ways far more severe. It is a sign of diminishing support for community based arts organizations like En Foco and like so many others, we are struggling to sustain our commitment to quality and service.

Given the fiscal realities, En Foco is compelled to introduce cost saving measures so that we can deliver basic services. *Nueva Luz* will be published semi-annually instead of triannual. We will only print 500 copies but we will make each issue available at no cost to the public. This move from the print version to an online platform allows us to reach a much broader public with immense audience development possibilities. Needless to say, we view this as a more democratic approach as we move vigorously to integrate our social media as an efficient, cost effective venture.

For the next fiscal year, *Nueva Luz* will publish an issue of the five En Foco Photography Fellowship awardees who were selected through a competitive peer panel process. The second one will be centered on En Foco’s early history and its permanent collection. One of our most important but relatively unknown assets is our permanent collection with over 800 photographs and related vital items, e.g. catalogues, reviews, etc. What is trending for En Foco is the financial support of its constituency and the sharing of our important collection with our community and family of artists.

Thank you for your extraordinary support of *Nueva Luz*, En Foco’s professional development services, exhibitions, and networking (virtual and live) events. Please enjoy this issue but in the meantime, we welcome your suggestions, critiques, curatorial ideas, etc. from you to info@enfoco.org.

Bill Aguado    Layza Garcia
Interim Director  Program Manager/Editor
**Living Latina: The Bronx Women’s Photo Collective**

As the negative stereotypes that have moved across our communities, there have been members of the Puerto Rican community converting to the Islamic faith. Rhynna M. Santos began to document Puerto Rican Muslim women as they transitioned from their Christian beliefs to Islam. What emerged was a photographic study entitled, “A Transcendent Calling: Latina Muslim Portraiture.” The rationale of what on the surface appears to be a dramatic shift in religious practices, so alien to the traditional Puerto Rican culture, demonstrates an independence of choice, and the courage implicit in selecting a religious belief so different from her cultural upbringing. To be sure the conversions among Puerto Rican women were voluntary, Santos eloquently captures the idea that this is a new life without demeaning their new religious path.

**Sandra Ayala**

Sandra Ayala is a nurse and a self-taught artist. Her carefully composed photographs express her relationship to religion through its iconography. Her work is a constant reminder of Catholicism’s symbols: the Virgin Mary, white doves, candles, crosses, and veils. In recent years, she has been experimenting and refining her visual vocabulary by including exquisite surreal photographs that are richly layered with spiritual meaning. Ayala created a series of photographs that borrow from the Renaissance paintings’ formal elements of composition and perspective, light and tonal value. These photographs are visual poems that reflect her sentiments about institutionalized religion. Using family members as models and subjects, Ayala connects to her roots through imagery that are both familiar and recognizable. As Catholics have experienced conflicts with their faith in such areas as: marriage, sexuality, gender roles, reproductive rights and sexual abuse scandals, Ayala’s work appropriates this religious iconography and subtly blends it with her own experiences and aspirations. Her work signifies imagery where the elements of reality are modified, mediated and reimagined as inspired by real events, fears, anxieties, losses and accomplishments.

**Lizzy Alejandro**

Lizzy Alejandro’s portraits not only focus on the woman’s body but more specially the Latina. Alejandro gently stages and reimagines women in their new religious path. Santos eloquently captures the idea that this is a new life without demeaning their new religious path.

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**Editorial Essay**

This issue of *Nueva Luz* is a departure from our previously curated publications. The values that *En Foco* treasures with great pride are a commitment to quality, professionalism, cultural equity, and community. These values will not be compromised instead they will be forcefully asserted. What will be emphasized in future issues will be lack of cultural equity and access to funding resources for artists, arts organizations, and community groups of color. At the same time, we want to document photography initiatives organized by community-based collectives and informal groups that reflect contemporary values not always represented in the mainstream art scene.

One such voice that burst onto the scene is the recently formed Bronx Women’s Photo Collective by Rhynna M. Santos, Sandra Ayala, and Lizzy Alejandro. Their curated exhibition, *Living Latina* at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx reflected the voices of these Puerto Rican women photographers as they interpreted their respective cultural values, communities, and personal visions. Rhynna M. Santos’ sensitive portrayal of Puerto Rican Muslim women defies the usual cultural stereotype, whereas Sandra Ayala’s reimagined images of legendary Latina performing artists who have inspired young women; and Lizzy Alejandro documents women who have chosen non-traditional roles. These are voices that are rarely heard beyond the confines of their homes and neighborhoods. The Living Latina exhibition is a testament to these three Puerto Rican photographers and the vision they share with the public.

**Rhynna M. Santos**

Within the context of the United States invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, it fueled the rise of radical Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Middle East and its spread to the United States. The excesses of these radical fundamentalists has fueled widespread Islamic-phobia against the law-abiding members of our communities.
Rhynna M. Santos

Rhynna M. Santos is a photographer born in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico and currently residing in Bronx, New York. Santos graduated from UCLA in 2007. Since then she has worked with a number of Bronx based organizations including Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center, Bronx Documentary Center, and Bronx Art Space. In 2014, Santos had her first solo exhibition in Madrid, Spain entitled, Window to the Bronx. The exhibition expanded a global dialogue about urban, Latino immigration. Santos depicts the everyday life, geographies, emotions and realities of people of color in Bronx, New York. She has exhibited work as featured artist in Curate NYC 2013, Bronx Art Space: Access to Art 2014, Bronx X Bronx 2014, the Jerome Avenue Workers Project 2015, and Bronx Now 2016. In addition to being the founding member of the Bronx Women’s Photo Collective, Santos is a member of the Bronx Documentary Center / Bronx Photo League and curator of the Instagram feed Everyday Bronx.
Maribel Cancel, A Transcendent Calling: Latina Muslim Portraiture - series in progress . 2016 . digital print

Vilma A. Santos, A Transcendent Calling: Latina Muslim Portraiture - series in progress . 2016 . digital print

Gabriella Carpio, A Transcendent Calling: Latina Muslim Portraiture . series in progress . 2016 . digital print
Sandra Ayala

Sandra Ayala is a self-taught visual artist/photographer born and raised in the South Bronx to Puerto Rican parents; liberating her mind by creating works of art which speak to her emotionally and free her from everyday life. By using familiar subjects to create one of a kind fine art portraits she is able to capture the viewer’s attention and bring forth emotions and visions from within her head onto a canvas. Ayala resides in the Bronx and often uses it’s amazing parks as her backdrops. Ayala is currently working on an project about inspirational Latinas. Ayala has exhibited her work for the Armory show at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, BronxArtSpace, Edgar Allan Poe Visitor’s Center, Lincoln Hospital Exhibition Hall, and Rush Art Gallery in NYC.
Tell Me Your Worst, Take Me To Church series. 2015. digitally manipulated print

16 Nueva Luz

The Fine Line Between Sinners and Saints, Take Me To Church series. 2015. digitally manipulated print

Nueva Luz 17
When Saints Are Out To Save You, Take Me To Church series. 2016. digitally manipulated print

Self-Portrait 1-Homage to Frida. 2011. digitally manipulated print
Lizzy Alejandro

Lizzy Alejandro is a visual artist, born and raised in The Bronx. She attended Lehman College, earning her BA in Studio Art with a concentration in photography. Alejandro fell in love with photography at the age of 16 when she enrolled for photography classes at a program called The Point, located in the South Bronx. Since then, she has not put down her camera. In 2010, Alejandro fell in love yet again; inspired by the work of Banksy and M.I.A., she started creating stencils from her photographs. She often combines the two mediums in her work. Alejandro has exhibited at the Lehman College Art Gallery, BronxArtSpace, Andrew Freedman Home, the Galleries at Krasdale Foods, and in the Bronx Latin American Art Biennial. She still resides in The Bronx.
MASK
Photographs by Frank Gimpaya

Marisol Diaz, Curator
July 13 - September 25, 2016
Opening Reception: July 13, 2016 | 6-8PM

The Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10456

The exhibition is made possible with a grant from the Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center with additional support from the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and private donors.
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