

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Luis Antonio Leyva

Luis Antonio Leyva was raised in a small Cuban household in West New York, NJ, a small town with a predominantly Latinx population that borders the Hudson River and New York City. He attended Rutgers University-New Brunswick where he earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 2006. The drive behind Luis's professional pursuits in education is following in the footsteps of his father, who worked as a literature professor in Cuba's La Escuela de Economía de José Machado Rodríguez for a decade. In 2011, Luis earned a master's degree in mathematics education from the Rutgers Graduate School of Education and was certified as a K-12 mathematics teacher in New Jersey. He later competed a doctoral degree in mathematics education with a graduate certification in women's and gender studies at Rutgers University in 2016.

Luis holds over six years of professional experience across various initiatives for supporting minoritized students in STEM, including work as a residential mentor for a summer bridge program and summer mathematics instructor for TRIO Upward Bound (U.S. Department of Education). In 2015, the National Academy of Education and Spencer Foundation distinguished Luis with a Dissertation Fellowship that recognizes early-career, interdisciplinary scholars undertaking innovative research for the improvement of education. As a Fellow, Luis wrote findings from his dissertation that detailed culturally-affirming instruction and student support meaningful to undergraduate Latinx students in their mathematical success and engineering persistence. Luis also received the 2018 Early Career Publication Award from the American Educational Research Association's special interest group on research in mathematics education for his publication, "Unpacking the Male Superiority Myth and Masculinization of Mathematics at the Intersections" (Journal for Research in Mathematics Education). Currently, Luis is an assistant professor of mathematics education in the Peabody College of Education & Human Development at Vanderbilt University.

Luis's experience as a student, educator, and higher education professional shaped his intellectual curiosities as an educational researcher. His research examines how historically marginalized students at intersections of race, gender, and sexuality construct their identities while navigating educational contexts of P-16 mathematics, including pursuits of mathematics-intensive STEM majors. Luis's research draws on semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations to characterize mathematics education contexts and capture historically marginalized students' narratives of experience in them. With analyses framed by Black feminist theory and counter-storytelling methodology from critical race theory, this body of research centers historically marginalized students' voices to catalyze change in P-16 mathematics instruction and STEM student support and broadens socially affirming learning opportunities.

"The life and work of U.S. presidential inaugural poet, Richard Blanco, inspire what Hispanic Heritage Month means to me. Blanco's poetry centers the questions, "Where am I from? Where do I belong? Who am I in this world?" to engage artistic inquiry about his intersecting social identities and meanings of U.S. nationhood. As a queer Cuban-American educator interrogating narratives of educational injustice in mathematical sciences, Blanco's poetry shapes my view of Hispanic Heritage Month as celebrating Latinx and Hispanic individuals' lived experiences of "complexities and contradictions" that galvanize their efforts for social justice, both personal and professional, in U.S. society."

Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at LATHISMS.ORG.

Thanks Thanks to the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America for support of Lathisms.