

José G. Rigau, MD, MPH

17 March 2014

Loretta Collins, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of English
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

Dear Dr. Collins:

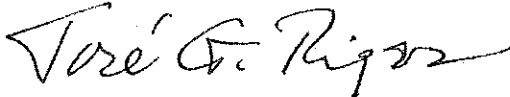
I consider myself fortunate to have participated in the project titled "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean," funded by NEH and coordinated by you. Although I knew its duration from the beginning, and it closed on schedule (with great success, in my opinion), I am sorry it has come to an end.

As you may remember, I was able to participate in six of the eight workshops (Campo, Dawes, Ferris, Coulehan, Ferguson, Roca), and I led a group discussion about the history of medicine in Puerto Rico on 20 March 2012. As a historian of medicine, and lecturer on the subject to medical audiences, I derived great benefit from these events in three ways: greater insight on the patient's side of the physician-patient relationship (Campo, Dawes, Ferris, Ferguson, Roca); deeper appreciation of the creative act based on medical and disease-related experiences (Campo, Dawes, Ferris, Ferguson, Roca); and new information and instruments for teaching about history of medicine (Coulehan, and the workshop I led; not because I led it, but because I learned so much from the participants.) I applied this learning to my participations in the pilot "History of Medicine Course" that was given at the Medical Sciences Campus to fourth year medical students under the coordination of Dr. Francisco Mufiz in the spring of 2013, and to the lectures and papers I have produced since then.

I congratulate you for putting this project together, and carrying it out with remarkable administrative organization. I find it almost miraculous that you were able to coordinate events at two campuses of the University of Puerto Rico plus some activities in the outside community.

Please let me know if I can contribute to future collaborations between the UPR College of Humanities, the Medical School, and the School of Public Health.

Sincerely,



Assistant Professor, ad honorem, School of Public Health and School of Medicine, UPR;
Puerto Rican Academy of History



OFICINA DEL DIRECTOR

UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
RECINTO DE RÍO PIEDRAS
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES
DEPARTAMENTO DE DRAMA
PO BOX 21819
SAN JUAN PR 00931-1819

19 de marzo de 2014

Loretta Collins, Ph.D.
Departamento de Inglés
Facultad de Humanidades
Universidad de Puerto Rico
Recinto de Río Piedras

Estimada Dra. Collins:

La felicito por este año de aprendizaje, intercambio y colaboración en el proyecto interfacultativo para NEH, "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean". Me siento honrada de haber participado como facultativa de esta iniciativa y haber reflexionado extensamente sobre el valor de las humanidades en la profesión médica, la sanación, la salud pública, la ética y los múltiples alcances que tiene la simbiosis entre las artes y la ciencia.

Usted ha posibilitado el que colegas de diferentes áreas como Historia, Inglés, Medicina, Filosofía, Artes Plásticas, Ciencias de la Comunicación, Salud Pública y Teatro hayamos diseñado cursos en torno a las Humanidades Médicas. Las reflexiones e investigaciones realizadas han permitido la profunda discusión en torno a la formación humanística y científica.

Los recursos que ha traído a nuestra Universidad han sido muy valiosos. He podido asistir a los encuentros con Campos, Ferris, Ferguson, Roca y Kapril. Con el Dr. Campos pudimos conocer el valor sanador de la poesía en los pacientes, los médicos, las enfermeras y la comunidad. El Dr. Ferris por su parte nos confrontó con la marginación de las personas discapacitadas y sus manifestaciones artísticas.

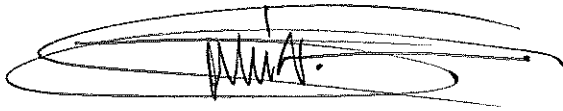
Laura Ferguson a través de su obra pictórica nos sorprendió con la estética de sus huesos y el diálogo gozoso entre tecnología y arte. Roca, a través de su trabajo fílmico "Arrugas" nos acercó a la realidad de los pacientes con Alzheimer y la interesante unión entre la animación, la salud y el contexto social. Su intervención permitió que Doctores y miembros de la Escuela de Medicina de la Universidad de Puerto Rico se pusieran en contacto con sus emociones y el lado humano de la enfermedad.

Loretta Collins, Ph. D.
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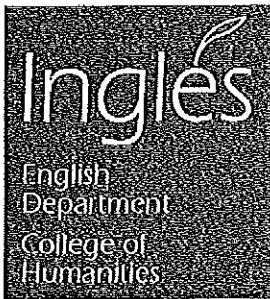
La actriz, dramaturga y directora Kapril compartió varias de sus piezas teatrales donde permea el tema de la inmigración y su relación conflictiva con la enfermedad. Tuvimos la oportunidad de hacer escenas de sus textos y compartir ideas para la creación de cursos nuevos.

Nuevamente la felicito por tan encomiable labor y le reitero mi disponibilidad para seguir colaborando con usted.

Atentamente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carola García López', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Carola García López, Ph.D.
Catedrática Auxiliar
Departamento de Drama
Facultad de Humanidades
Universidad de Puerto Rico



English Department
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March 23rd, 2014

Loretta Collins, PhD
Department of English
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico,
Rio Piedras, San Juan
PR 00931-3356

Dear Dr. Collins:

This letter is in appreciation for my participation, together with other professors in the University of Puerto Rico system, in the recently completed National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) project titled "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean," which you coordinated from 2011-2013. The project was well thought out and brilliantly executed under your able leadership. Your foresight and ability to motivate professors from different disciplines was refreshing and enlightening to me. I benefited immensely from the project's inter- and cross-discipline approaches to the study and practice of medicine and the humanities, and was made aware of my own role in promoting this line of education in my profession as a professor of literature.

My participation in several of the workshops provided me with new tools of inter- and cross-discipline perspectives to literary studies. The invited speakers: medical doctors, poets, dramatists, performers, all successfully broadened my intellectual awareness of the relationship between literature and the healing arts and collapsed for me any dichotomous divisions that my training had imbibed in me. In addition, the inclusion of professors and students from the University of Puerto Rico Medical School, tied to locating some of the programs on the Medical School Campus, was a stroke of planning ingenuity; this probably has narrowed the artificial divide between practitioners of the medical sciences and humanities. I say this because as a literary scholar in Caribbean Studies, and also having periodically taught an undergraduate course: English 3036: Literature and the Healing Arts, I derived great benefits from the events in multiple ways: greater insights on physician-patient relationship, narratives of empathy and healing, literature (performance and poetry) and the humanization of disease and medical practices of healing; deeper appreciation of the creative arts based on medical and disease-related experiences by doctors, nurses, and patients, and new information and instruments for teaching about literature and medicine.

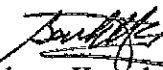
For example, because of this project, I have made a new course proposal for fourth year undergraduate students: *Narratives of Trauma, Madness and Healing*. I am also presently drafting a new course that will involve the natural environment, literature and healing. The ideas for this new course to be proposed originate from two of my courses on literature and ecology I have been teaching over the past five years: English 3045: Literature and Ecology and English 6059: Current Trends in Literary Criticism & Theory: Post-Colonial Literary Theory, Caribbean Literature and the Environment. In these courses, I have often focused on the relationships between disease/illness causation and healing processes and ecological/environmental issues in literary narratives. Thus, the envisaged new course proposal will focus on exploring literature, healing, and the environment.

I also want to stress that the NEH project "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean," in which I participated, benefited me personally in the development of my creative work as a developing poet. I derived great creative inspiration from listening to the various presenters and was able to write personal response poems to the presentations on trauma, disabilities, death, natural disaster, and mourning. These poems have been published in my new collection of poetry: *Voices from Kibuli Country*. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 2013. While immersed in the project, I also gained new insights into how myth, ritual, spirituality, and drama/performance could be used for healing psycho-social, historical, somatic, and emotional dis-eases. I was able to use the skills gained from the project to do a much more insightful reading of African diaspora drama and performance to contribute two chapters in a book: *Myth Performance in the African Diaspora: Ritual, Theater and Dance*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2014, co-authored by me and Dr. Benita Brown of Virginia State University and Dr. Christopher Olsen, of the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras.

Once again, I extend to you my heartfelt appreciation and congratulations for pulling off this multi-discipline project without a hitch, considering all the numerous other duties you carried out simultaneously in the community in relation to this project, and compounded with your duties toward your students and in your other research projects.

Please let me know if I can contribute to future collaborations in other multidisciplinary projects that the NEH may at the University of Puerto Rico under your leadership.

Sincerely,


Dannabang Kuwabong Ph.D.
Professor, Department of English
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

I consider myself honor to have participated in the project titled "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, funded by NEH and coordinated by you.

As a cohort member, I actively participated in 6 of 8 participants, workshops and presentations (Campos, Ferris, Coulehan, Fergusson, Roca, and Ferrer).

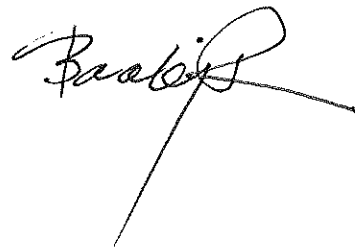
I also gave an introductory visual talk to contextualize within the art discourse Fergusson's artistic proposal: "Visualizing the Body from the Inside Out".

As a plastic artist and art educator, I derived great benefit, in several ways, from these interdisciplinary events addressing different issues of race, gender, discapacity and ethics, among others.

They help me to understand the skills essential for humane medical care, in order for me to design the curriculum "Art and the Art of Healing: A discovery through the arts". They also gave me a greater insight of the patient side of the physician – patient relationship (Campos, Ferris, Coulehan, Fergusson, Roca, Ferrer); a deeper appreciation of the humanities and the medical and disease related experiences; and new information and instruments while designing the course.

Overall, these events gave me a wider spectrum in my artistic perception and as an art educator, which I was able to integrate already in the undergraduate courses I taught last year, 2013: Introduction to the Visual Arts".

I congratulate you in conceptualizing, organizing and implementing this ambitious project with a remarkable outcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

Janet MacLennan, Ph.D.
Full Professor, Linguistics and Communication
Department of English
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

Not since I was a student myself have I had such a wonderful learning experience as that created through the NEH-funded project “Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean,” delivered by Dr. Loretta Collins. This faculty development program truly inspired me, breathing new life into some old lines of teaching and research while opening up several others for me.

So inspired was I by this project that in the two years of its duration I never missed the opportunity to benefit from the interaction with the amazing speakers.

- As the first speaker, Dr. Rafael Campo (Harvard University) set the tone—and set the bar high. He was incredibly knowledgeable yet personable and accessible. He personified the spirit of the medical humanities by himself spanning the creative arts and the medical world. His shared stories and poetry opened my mind to the possibilities of the medical humanities. I immediately incorporated some of his stories and poems in several of my courses. His public talk with doctors at the medical sciences campus was a workshop introducing poetry as a way to understand the experiences of a doctor. Being in a room full of doctors creatively analyzing poetry about health and healing, living and dying, was powerful.
- Dr. Kwame Dawes (University of Nebraska) was amazing. So fortunate were we to be able to share with this oft-awarded colleague with too many creative talents to name. I am an interpretive researcher and I teach health and communication so I could not get enough of his shared stories of researching and reporting on HIV/AIDS in the cultural context of Jamaica, and later Haiti. His public presentation at the medical school drew on word, voice, poetry, photography, story, music in a very moving way.
- Dr. Jim Ferris (University of Toledo) had an academic background in my field of Communication Studies so I felt immediate kinship with him. His focus on performance made him a natural for connecting with audiences of all kinds. In particular, his multimedia performance of *Scars* was poignant and thought-provoking. But it was his work in Ability Studies that really opened things up for me.
- Dr. Jack Coulehan (Emeritus, Stonybrook) was a surprising academic. Our colleagues at the medical school picked his brain about introducing a medical humanities curriculum but it was his quiet reading of beautiful poems that I found thought-provoking.
- Aditi Kapil (playwright) introduced me to the world of drama writing as a place to explore themes of health and culture, stories that are even more powerful in their performance. As someone interested in narrative as communication and as research, I loved hearing the stories behind Aditi’s plays.
- Laura Ferguson (New York University) challenged my conceptions of the body, as well as what is beautiful and what is “normal”. Moreover, her hands-on drawing workshop, working with human bones, was a great opportunity to challenge my own self-conceptions. Her public presentation of her artwork was a feast for the senses.

- Dr. Ferrer (UPR, RCM) taught about the ethical aspects of medicine but also taught us about resources available for research and for the exploration of bioethics.
- Finally, I do not believe I have ever read a comic book...not until Paco Roca (graphic novelist) visited our campus. When the movie version of his award-winning graphic novel *Arrugas* was screened at the medical sciences campus, there was not a dry eye in the house among all of the labcoat-wearing audience members. And it was standing room only when he shared the stories behind the art of his novels—art students especially could not get enough.

Through all of these learning opportunities, I grew in the ways that I conceptualize health, illness, ability, the body, beauty, poetry, performance, art, the creative spirit, the human condition, and the blurred lines between arts and science when it comes to the humanistic side of medicine. Yet the development provided by my participation in this project was not limited to interaction with the guest speakers. I forged bonds—what I know will be lasting and fruitful connections—with colleagues that I would not otherwise have met. Through the NEH funding I benefitted from release time to be able to work on the exciting phase of curricular/program development—a curriculum that I know will be so beneficial for our students. As mentioned previously, I felt re-energized. Although it is certainly true that I grew as a faculty member in terms of research and teaching, it is also true that I grew as a colleague and even as a person.

I cannot thank you, Loretta, enough for coming up with this idea (including recognizing a deep need for faculty and curriculum development in the medical humanities at our university), successfully proposing it with the NEH, and tirelessly working to see the two-year project to its conclusion. It was a gift!

Sincerely,

Janet MacLennan

March 20, 2014

Loretta Collins, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of English
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

Dear Dr. Collins:



Recinto de
Río Piedras

I am very pleased to have been able to participate in the NEH funded project "Humanities and the Healing Arts: Puerto Rico and the Caribbean," which you coordinated during the past two years. The project has been successful on many levels, and has benefitted professors, students, and the university community at large. I congratulate you on the success of this initiative, which allowed many world renowned artists and authors to visit our campus, and which is culminating in the development of a minor in Medical Humanities at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras.

Personally I was able to attend activities by guest speakers Dr. Rafael Campo (Harvard), Dr. Kwame Dawes (U. of Nebraska), Dr. Jim Ferris (U. of Ohio), Dr. Jack Coulehan (Emeritus, Stonybrook), Aditi Kapil (playwright), and Dr. Ferrer (UPR, RCM). All of these visiting speakers opened my mind to ways in which medical issues can be thought through the Humanities, for example through poetry, as the award winning poet Campo so touchingly demonstrated and as Dr. Ferris reinforced with his specific angle of disability studies; through film and documentary sprinkled with poetry (Dawes); through theater (Kapil); or ethics (Ferrer).

Through the project, I was inspired to create an advanced undergraduate course on Literature and Healing in the Middle Ages, which not only will focus on how medieval literature represents medical discourse and methods of healing, but which also will encourage students to compare and contrast medical and traditional healing practices of different time periods and cultures, including specifically our own twenty-first century Puerto Rican context.

In addition, I very much appreciate the contacts I was able to make through the project with the Medical School at the University of Puerto Rico and with the medical historian José

Facultad de
Humanidades

Departamento
de Literatura
Comparada

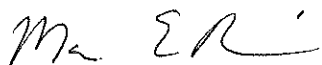
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Rigau. I hope very much to be able to continue collaborating with these contacts in future projects dealing with the history of medicine and its literary representation in Puerto Rico.

Thank you again for inviting me to participate in this very successful and stimulating project. I appreciate the NEH, as well, for funding this important initiative, which will bring Medical Humanities to the University of Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. E. Polhill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Marian E. Polhill, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Comparative Literature
School of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras