

Yale Ciencia Academy Fellows and Alumni Respond to COVID-19 ^[1]

Submitted by Mónica Ivelisse Feliú-Mójer ^[2] on 3 October 2020 - 8:59pm



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One of the pillars of the Yale Ciencia Academy (YCA) is that beyond their research, our scientists can contribute to society through science communication and public engagement. As part of their program year, YCA Fellows participate in science communication training and complete one outreach activity of their choice to engage with a community they care about. Since 2016, YCA Fellows have completed 150 outreach projects including blogs, newspaper articles, op-eds, and podcasts; lesson plans for educators and school visits; panels, workshops and conferences; public lectures; new science communication and advocacy initiatives; and hurricane relief efforts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been no exception. Numerous YCA Fellows have put their YCA science communication, outreach, and leadership training to work tackling unmet needs in public health services and research, informing the public about the science behind the pandemic, and promoting evidence-based policies and practices. Below we highlight some of these COVID-19 activities. We are incredibly proud of our YCA Fellows and Alumni!

Public Health

- **Nixon Arauz** (YCA 2020) worked with the first all-Hispanic/Latino Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Response Team to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak among Hispanic/Latinx communities in Richmond, VA. He also worked with his local health department on its COVID-19 response and coordinated an online conversation about COVID-19 in Garifuña, the language of his native community in Honduras.
- **Fabiola Cruz López** (YCA 2017) is directing the Puerto Rico Department of Health's Municipal Contact Tracing System. This system, which is being implemented in 77 of 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico, is modeled after the contact tracing program she successfully developed for her hometown of Villalba [3] in April 2020. Fabiola also published several [4] op-eds [5] about Puerto Rico's public health response [6] to COVID-19.

Research

- **Luis Alexis Rodríguez Cruz** (YCA 2018) published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [7] about how the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fragility of Puerto Rico's food supply chains, food security, and its lack of food sovereignty. Luis Alexis is also co-leading a working group with Dr. Marysel Pagán Santana from Migrant Clinicians Network and Yamil López from Corporación de Servicios Médicos that is analyzing farmer-household needs during the pandemic to develop participatory emergency management plans for the current hurricane season. Moreover, he is codirector of PRSPAN [8], a CienciaPR initiative to promote scientist involvement in advocacy and public policy, which has been very active during the pandemic.
- **Edith Brignoni Pérez** (YCA 2016) started a new clinical study to understand how the quality of developmental care (e.g., positive touch, holding, talking, music therapy) for preterm infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) has been impacted due to the implementation of COVID-19 hospital policies.
- **Kia Pérez Vale** (YCA 2020) served as a Spanish-language interpreter for clinical trials at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.
- **Ryan Natividad** (YCA 2018) performed research and data analysis [9] that detailed the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable and high-risk populations in Los Angeles County and created a data visualization for the COVID-19 hot spot analysis, as part of Advancement Project California's (APCA) COVID-19 rapid response and research efforts.
- **Grace George** (YCA 2019) along with her PI and another researcher submitted a publication on the effects of stress due to the pandemic on children's development, particularly for those living in poverty. Her research predicts disproportionately worse educational outcomes for students from low socioeconomic households and helps to inform policy makers.

Science Communication and Advocacy

- **Nicolle Rosa Mercado** (YCA 2017) published an op-ed [10] in El Nuevo Día, advocating for more involvement and engagement of the Puerto Rican scientific community to effectively respond to COVID-19 in Puerto Rico.
- **Paige Greenwood** (YCA 2019) published two op-eds in the Cincinnati Herald shedding light on the impact of COVID-19 on local public schools [11] and on already disadvantaged students [12]. During the pandemic, Paige has also written about her activism [13] against racism and police brutality against Black people. She has answered questions about COVID-19 transmission and ways to flatten the curve through the Ask A Scientist tool [14] by the Federation of American Scientists, participated in Skype a Scientist, and organized several science policy and advocacy events at her institution.
- **Carlos Pérez** (YCA 2019) and **Alberto Cintrón-Colón** (YCA2020), launched a Spanish-language podcast called "En Arroz y Habichuelas [15]." They did a mini-series of episodes on COVID-19 and created a series of infographics [16] about the science of the disease.
- **Kimberly Santos Avilés** (YCA 2018) published an op-ed [17] in El Nuevo Día offering mental care strategies for people who already struggle with mental conditions and their loved ones. Kimberly has also been offering stress-management workshops to undergraduate students.
- **Claudia Colón Echevarría** (YCA 2016) published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [18] about how COVID-19 and physical distancing have disrupted Puerto Ricans' way of life.
- **Greisha Ortiz** (YCA 2017) published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [19] about the importance of not overexercising while staying at home during the pandemic.
- **Jaileene Pérez** (YCA 2016) developed JOUST Kids, [20] as part of the Journal of Undergraduate Research Students (JOUST) from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. JOUST Kids publishes infographics and printable activities for kids to learn about COVID-19. Kids also send their drawings and thank yous to essential workers to the journal. JOUST Kids has received 55 drawings from kids from Aguadilla, Aguada, Santa Isabel, San German, and Mayagüez.
- **Jennifer Patrissi Cram** (YCA 2018) published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [21] about how COVID-19 prevention is critical to flatten the curve. Jennifer has also organized science policy and advocacy events at her institution.
- **Lorraine Vélez Torres** (YCA 2019) co-founded "Vistazo A La Ciencia [22]," a science communication initiative that discusses current science topics by inviting experts to their virtual conversations, including COVID-19. Lorraine also published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [23] about the possible use of wastewater surveillance for COVID-19.
- **Charlene Rivera Bonet** (YCA 2020) published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [24] about trauma and the importance of good mental health and suggestions on how to maintain it during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for the Puerto Rican community.
- **Kevin Alicea Torres** (YCA 2019) gave a series of COVID-19 interviews with Latin American scientists for Caminos en Ciencia [25], a podcast he co-founded. Kevin has also done a variety of TV [26], radio [27], and social media interviews. He also published an op-ed in El Nuevo Día [28] about how tropical weather may or may not affect the coronavirus.
- **Amanda Acosta Ruiz** (YCA 2020) coordinated scientist-volunteers for the Ask A Scientist Initiative [14], created by the Federation of American Scientists. These volunteers answered questions related to COVID-19 submitted in Spanish and other languages.

- **Lester Rosario Rodríguez** (YCA 2016) wrote posts for the Facebook page "[Ciencia en tus Manos](#) ^[29]" to inform people about COVID-19 situation in Puerto Rico. Also, he coordinated donations of personal protection equipment from his laboratory to hospitals in the Medical Center of Puerto Rico, with the help of students at the UPR-Medical Sciences Campus.
- **Luis Antonio Haddock III Soto** (YCA 2020) volunteered for the '[Ask a Scientist](#)' Initiative ^[14], created by the Federation of American Scientists, answering COVID-19-related questions. He also published [an op-ed](#) ^[30] about asymptomatic transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in *El Nuevo Día*.
- **Jessica Caballero Feliciano** (YCA 2020) published a [Spanish-language article on the importance of vaccines](#) ^[31] in a local newspaper (in Western Massachusetts) called "*El Sol Latino*". Her next article will be on vaccine clinical trials.
- **Neysha Martínez Orengo** (YCA 2016) published [an article](#) ^[32] about the difference between SARS-CoV-2, other coronaviruses, and the influenza virus. She is a member of the Puerto Rico Science Policy Action Network (PR-SPAN) and has been part of a project tracking local COVID-19-related government actions. Neysha participated of Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program's [STEAM Camp Connect 2020](#) ^[33], where she offered workshops about COVID-19 and science policy.
- **Luz Milbeth Cumba García** (YCA 2017) has published several articles in [El Nuevo Día](#) ^[34] and [Sister STEM](#) ^[35], among others. She has also offered several [webinars](#) ^[36] and virtual talks for students and the public and participated in [radio](#) ^[37], TV, podcast, [YouTube](#) ^[38], and [social media interviews](#) ^[39].
- **Marcos Ramos Benítez** (YCA 2017) published [an article](#) in *El Nuevo Día* ^[40] about how soap and water are powerful in destroying the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and [an op-ed](#) ^[41] about the second wave of the pandemic in Puerto Rico. Marcos is the founder and director of [Ciencia en Tus Manos](#) ^[42], a science communication non-profit and Facebook page, which has been consistently publishing infographics and articles about the science of COVID-19.
- **Robert Rabelo Fernández** (YCA 2018) published [an op-ed](#) ^[43] about important public health lessons we should learn from the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Reinaldo Franqui Machín** (YCA 2017) published [an op-ed](#) in *El Nuevo Día* ^[44] dispelling a common myth about how to prevent getting infected with the COVID-19 coronavirus.
- **Omar Vélez López** (YCA 2016) published [an article](#) ^[45] about the importance of COVID-19 testing to control the pandemic in Puerto Rico.
- **Leslie Díaz Ortiz** (YCA 2016) published [an article](#) in *El Nuevo Día* ^[46] about strategies to care for and protect the elderly from COVID-19.
- **Nathalie Fuentes** (YCA 2017) published [an article](#) ^[47] about how the coronavirus affects our lungs and [an op-ed](#) ^[48] about “controversies” surrounding the use of face masks.
- **Luis Colón Cruz** (YCA 2018) published [an op-ed](#) ^[48] in *El Nuevo Día* underscoring the importance of following COVID-19 prevention measures to protect vulnerable members of society, from his personal perspective as a public health expert and the son of a cancer survivor.

Tags:

- [covid19](#) ^[49]
- [coronavirus](#) ^[50]
- [covid19-cienciaboricua](#) ^[51]
- [yale ciencia academy](#) ^[52]

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[contagio-de-adultos-mayores \[47\] https://www.cienciapr.org/es/blogs/conocimiento-tu-salud/como-el-coronavirus-hackea-nuestros-pulmones](https://www.cienciapr.org/es/blogs/conocimiento-tu-salud/como-el-coronavirus-hackea-nuestros-pulmones) [48] <https://www.cienciapr.org/es/blogs/conocimiento-tu-salud/la-controversia-de-las-famosas-mascarillas> [49] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/covid19?language=en> [50] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/coronavirus?language=en> [51] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/covid19-cienciaboricua?language=en> [52] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/yale-ciencia-academy?language=en> [53] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/gguerre?language=en>