

# Bryn Mawr Now

## Apocalipsis Rosario '11 Wins \$10K Davis Grant to Support Writing Project for Boston Teenagers

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This summer, Apocalipsis Rosario '11 plans to turn a group of adolescent girls who hail from one of Boston's toughest neighborhoods into published authors.

A Boston native, Rosario knows from experience that listening to the voices of young people can have a powerful positive impact—on both their lives and their communities. That knowledge spurred her to apply for and win a \$10,000 Davis Projects for Peace grant to fund a project that aims to foster girls' sense of agency as they respond to violence in their communities.

With Rosario's leadership, 15 high-school students from Lower Roxbury, a neighborhood considered one of Boston's most violent, will take part in a 10-week program of discussion groups and writing workshops. Designed to encourage the students to think critically about the sources and effects of violence and abuse, the project will result in a book of the girls' writings, to be published at the end of the summer.

"The book is a very important component of the project," Rosario explains. "It will be a concrete accomplishment that inspires pride. It is an important way of showing these girls that they can achieve amazing things."

The violence that permeates the neighborhood of Lower Roxbury, says Rosario, includes not only gang-related turf contests, but also domestic violence and abuse that is often hidden. Although several violence-prevention projects are focused on the more public forms of violence, including some that are specifically for young men and boys, Rosario perceived a relative scarcity of programs and information about domestic violence and programs focusing on young women and girls.

In 2009, Rosario says, the highly publicized domestic dispute between recording artists Rhianna and Chris Brown motivated a public discussion of domestic violence organized by Project HIP-HOP, a youth-led Boston nonprofit that develops leadership skills through the study of hip-hop culture and the history of social-justice movements.

"The number of young women who agreed that Rihanna must have 'done something to provoke him' dismayed the staff at Project HIP-HOP," Rosario says. That's when she decided to develop a program specifically for girls to address issues of violence and abuse.

“It is important that girls learn about taking control of their future, dealing with issues surrounding violence, crime and abuse, and about coping with the reality of their environment,” she says. “Through the process of publishing a book about the effects of violence, the girls will develop literacy skills, coping and leadership skills, and enhance female solidarity.”

Rosario says that female solidarity wasn't a topic she thought about much before she came to Bryn Mawr.

“In my high school, people were pretty much out for themselves,” she says. “My time at Bryn Mawr has really encouraged me to think about what we can achieve by working together.”

Using survey methods she learned as a Bryn Mawr sociology major, Rosario will gauge the girls' self-confidence and attitudes toward violence and measure how they change over the course of the program.

The Davis Projects for Peace, established by noted philanthropist Kathryn Wasserman Davis on her 100th birthday in 2007, funds 100 grassroots projects from proposals submitted by students at colleges and universities in the United States.

After attending a presentation about the Davis Projects for Peace during her sophomore year, Rosario set herself the task of developing a youth-empowerment project that was thoroughly planned, concrete, and feasible.

Her plans were informed by her experience as a counselor and swimming instructor at a summer camp for disadvantaged children and by an internship at Project HIP-HOP.

Rosario's relationship with Project HIP-HOP began during high school, when she participated in a trip to Washington, D.C., to lobby in favor of a special bill preventing the deportation of a popular teacher at her high school. The experience, she says, had a profound effect on her ideas about her potential for achievement and her relationship to public life. She has maintained contact with the group, and she will collaborate with the group for her Davis project.

Rosario is a member of a Bryn Mawr Posse—a group of students the College selected in collaboration with the Posse Foundation, which has worked with the Admissions Office since 2001 to bring talented students from Boston-area public schools to Bryn Mawr. These students enter the College as supportive, multicultural teams—Posses-of 10 women each year.

Rosario believes that the kind of inspiration she draws from Project HIP-HOP, Bryn Mawr, and her Posse is communicable.

“This project will create a ripple effect in this neighborhood and the greater Boston community,” she says. “The girls will teach their peers about what they have learned and help them understand their options in responding to violence. Education brings empowerment, and I want them to know that the sky's the limit.”