

CNR Alumni Spotlight
Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo, SNR '85



On November 12, 2022, the Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo was inaugurated as the 11th President of Columbia Theological Seminary, becoming the first president of color in the seminary's 194-year history. Founded in 1828, Columbia Theological Seminary has been at its present location in Decatur, GA since 1925 and is a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Married to his wife Suzette for 36 years and the proud father of two daughters, Victor Aloyo has

continuously bridged the gap between ministry and academia.

Although describing himself as a “cradle Presbyterian” Rev. Dr. Aloyo has a universal, one might say small “c” catholic approach to religious ministry, that combines historical academic perspective within a framework of service and social justice.

Victor grew up in Brooklyn, NY where his parents the late Esperanza and Victorino Aloyo had settled from Vieques, Puerto Rico. Victor credits both his parents with instilling a strong sense of faith based on religious study (his mother taught Sunday School for 58 years). Victor graduated from the prestigious Brooklyn Technical High School in 1980 with a plan to study architectural engineering at university. In fact, he was accepted at both Carnegie Mellon University and the Rochester Institute of Technology. But a nagging sense that he had a calling to the ministry caused him to put his educational plans on pause.

After working in Human Relations and taking courses at Adelphi University, Victor decided with the encouragement of mentors to face what he had been running away from- his calling. In 1982 he enrolled at the New York Theological Seminary campus of the School of New Resources, College of New Rochelle. He describes his professors as cutting edge in their fields, adding that they provided him with an ecumenically broad perspective, which he continues to use. In 1985 he graduated from the College of New Rochelle with a BA degree in Religious Studies and Sociology.

Victor went on to earn a Master of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1989 and served as Associate Dean of Institutional Diversity at Princeton Theological Seminary until 2022. In 2015 he earned a PhD in Higher Education from the University of Pennsylvania. (His dissertation: *Navigating Diversity and Inclusion within the Framework of Social Justice*).

The Rev. Dr. Aloyo managed to combine his academic pursuits and academic leadership with community outreach, serving from January 2005 to August 2022, as the organizing and senior pastor at La Iglesia Presbiteriana Nuevas Fronteras, a multicultural and multilingual congregation in Plainfield, NJ.

According to Rev. Dr. Aloyo, religious ministry doesn't exist in a vacuum but needs an academic understanding of history to be meaningful. He credits Dr. Dale Irwin's class at CNR on the history of the church as giving him a grounding in how critical historical perspective is. Explaining that we are living in a time of challenge where people are moving away from "organized" denominations, he sees his role as President of Columbia Theological Seminary, as an opportunity "to create a platform where bold and courageous conversations can take place to come together with interdisciplinary approaches to societal challenges."

In reflecting on the role of CNR in his life, Rev. Dr. Aloyo stated, "I am honored to be an alumnus of the College of New Rochelle, which helped to solidify my calling, a calling of service that is based not on one's own agenda but is empathetic service 'with' others, not 'to' others."

- Annalinda Ragazzo SAS '74
CNR Alumni Communications Committee