Profile of an Outstanding Queens College Graduate

NELSON GIL: Fleeing the Dominican Republic and Living on Food Stamps . . . Now Bound for Medical School

FLUSHING, NY, May 18, 2012 – Nelson Gil is just one of the outstanding students from over 2,500 degree candidates expected to attend the 88th Queens College Commencement ceremony on the campus Quad, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing, May 31, at 9 am.

Four years ago when he was 16, Gil fled his native Dominican Republic along with his parents and infant sister. The family had led a comfortable life there—both parents were physicians running a private clinic—but when criminals started extorting money from them and they had no confidence the police could protect them, they decided to flee.

Language was not an issue for Gil, since he had graduated from a private English-language high school just before the family left. They settled (and still reside) in Corona, and Gil was accepted at QC. He entered an accelerated BA/MA program in chemistry, and will graduate this spring with a 4.0 GPA.

Life has not been easy for the family. His mother, unable to practice medicine, has had to take on childcare jobs while looking after the family, and his father has gone through the arduous process of getting his American medical license. At times the family had to use food stamps to get by. Through it all, Gil has been an outstanding student.

“The most important thing is the support from my family,” he says. “Knowing (every evening) that you’re going back to a stable and unified family makes me want to try harder for them.”

Gil would like to pursue a research or academic career in medicine. He has been accepted at three medical schools—Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Stony Brook, and Penn State—and will probably choose the first because of his familiarity with the research environment and the opportunities at Einstein, which he learned about when taking part in a summer research program at that school.

“There is a shortage of people with an Hispanic background in medical fields,” Gil says. “I’d like to be a role model.”

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Nelson Gil 2012 Outstanding Graduate