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UN SALUDO

27^{ma} FIESTA BORICUA

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ESPECIAL

PASEO BORICUA COMMUNITY
MARKET POP UP

Sábado 05 & Domingo 06
de Septiembre / 2020
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM
EN PASEO BORICUA

Ivelisse "Bombero de Corazón" Díaz
Cultural Pop Up con Fiesta Boricua:

Presentando:

Bomba con Buya

Sábado, 5 de Sep, 2:15pm-2:40pm
(La Casita de Don Pedro)

Plenarios Del Pueblo

Domingo, 6 de Sep, 2pm-2:25pm
(Esquina de California y Division)

La Escuelita Bombero De Corazón

Domingo, 6 de Sep, 3:15pm-3:45pm
(La Casita de Don Pedro)

LATINX CIRCUS PERFORMANCE

Sábado, 5 de Sep, 12:30pm en La Casita de Don Pedro
Domingo, 6 de Sep, 12:30pm en 2425 W Division St.

Transmisión Especial 27^{ma} Fiesta Boricua Virtual 2020

Domingo 06 de Septiembre 9:30 AM (Repetición 12:30 PM) EST

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BORICUA/LATINO ¡TÚ CUENTAS!

COMPLETA EL CENSO EN 2020CENSUS.GOV

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OUR COMMUNITY

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Awarded Illinois
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LA PATRIA

**“El Censo es una
herramienta
de justicia social”**

Por: Luis V. Gutiérrez

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ABOUT LA VOZ:

The most recent manifestation of Puerto Rican journalism in Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua proudly continues in the legacy of our community's previous

newspapers. Founded in 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, or simply 'La Voz' as it is affectionately called by our readers, is a grassroots bilingual periodical published by the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. We report on stories relevant to our community on a monthly basis, disseminating news about local events, programs, resources, and developments. As an alternative source of media, we seek to acknowledge the achievements of the Puerto Rican community at large and to advocate for the preservation of the heart of our barrio in Humboldt Park - our "pedacito de patria" in Chicago.

SOBRE LA VOZ:

La más reciente manifestación del periodismo puertorriqueño en Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua continúa orgullosamente el legado de nuestros primeros periódicos. Fundado en 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, o 'La Voz' según se le conoce cariñosamente por nuestros lectores, es un periódico de pueblo, publicado de manera bilingüe por El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño Juan Antonio Corretjer. Mensualmente, divulga historias relevantes de nuestra comunidad, diseminando noticias sobre acontecimientos, programas, recursos, y progresos locales. Como fuente alternativa de medios, intentamos reconocer los logros de la comunidad puertorriqueña al igual que abogar por la preservación del corazón de nuestro barrio Humboldt Park - nuestro "pedacito de patria" en Chicago.

MEET OUR PRODUCTION TEAM



Nadya Henríquez
CONTENT EDITOR & WRITER
nadyah@prcc-chgo.org



Roberto Sanabria
EDITOR IN CHIEF
robertos@prcc-chgo.org



Luis Alejandro Molina
SENIOR ADVISOR
alejandrom@prcc-chgo.org



David Trujillo
EDITORIAL DESIGN & WRITER
davidt@prcc-chgo.org

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EL COQUÍ

Por Rafael Lugo

Mi nombre es coquí
 Quiero que sepas
 Que no me escondo de ti
 Repito mi nombre para que no se te olvide.
 No estoy escondido
 El campo es mi hogar
 Sitio donde nací
 Aquí están mis raíces
 Plantadas para siempre.
 Escucha mi canto
 Unidos reclamamos
 Nuestro orgullo y para que lo sepas
 Así te canto yo a ti.
 Chiquito, orgulloso y numeroso
 Grande en números
 Para que sepan que nunca callaremos
 Nuestro orgullo de ser Boricua.
 Canta y reclama lo tuyo
 No te venzas que yo te cantare
 Mi canto que afirma
 Lo mucho que adoro el campo.



Mi nombre es Rafael Lugo. Mi madre y mi padre eran naturales de Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico. A mí me criaron en el campo Tabonuco, cerca de donde la virgen milagrosa se le apareció a unos niños en el año 1949. A la edad de seis años me trajeron a Chicago. Tengo setenta años y como si fuese ayer todavía sueño con mi querida cuna -- *el campo donde nací.*

DR. PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS HIGH SCHOOL AWARDED ILLINOIS YOUTHBUILD GRANT



Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) has been awarded a \$100,000.00 planning grant by the Illinois YouthBuild Coalition. The money will be used to plan and outline the integration of a pre-apprenticeship in the construction trades program within the schools curriculum and prepare the school to apply for a three-year Department of Labor - YouthBuild implementation grant.

Several PACHS students will receive training in the fields of carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. They will gain valuable experience on a construction site building low-income housing, and they will earn opportunities to enter apprenticeship programs, and thus have access to life sustaining wages.

Two Key partners in this initiative are YouthBuild Illinois a program established in 1997 that is designed

to expand employment and education opportunities for low income and at risk youth by advocating for increased resources, public awareness, and involvement on behalf of youth-serving organizations in Illinois; and Revolution Workshop, a social enterprise that provides construction and woodworking workforce development for unemployed or underemployed people in partnership with area businesses.

This initiative will support and collaborate with the Puerto Rico Town vision of the Puerto Rican Agenda and has the support of the major housing programs of Humboldt Park, Hispanic Housing, LUCHA, and Bickerdike.

For more information contact Mervin Méndez at mmendez@youthbuildillinois.org

TRAICIÓN EN EL BARRIO:

TRAYECTORIA DE LA REPRESIÓN CONTRA EL MOVIMIENTO INDEPENDENTISTA PUERTORRIQUEÑO EN CHICAGO POR PARTE DE RAFAEL MARRERO Y EL FBI

RAFAEL MARRERO, FBI INFORMANT AND AGENT PROVOCATEUR



**RAFAEL MARRERO,
CIRCA 1990**



**RAFAEL MARRERO AT IL. ST.
HEARINGS, MARCH 1998**



**RAFAEL MARRERO,
CIRCA 2019**

El FBI tiene una larga y sórdida trayectoria de acciones de represión política. Mediante el uso de variadas tácticas, ha intentado dividir, destruir y neutralizar los movimientos de liberación nacional y las organizaciones radicales de izquierda. Uno de los episodios más notables de estas prácticas represivas sucedió en las postrimerías de la década de 1980, cuando infiltraron a un agente/provocador en el Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño de Chicago (CCP). El CCP se fundó en 1973 por un grupo de activistas que incluía a Oscar López Rivera, Carmen Valentín, Carlos Alberto Torres, Ida Luz Rodríguez, José E. López, Rev. José A. Torres, Alejandrina Torres, Dr. James Blaut, y América Sorrentini. Desde sus inicios el CCP era abiertamente pro-independencia de Puerto Rico y el propulsor principal y fuerza vital de las campañas internacionales en apoyo a la liberación de los presos políticos puertorriqueños y prisioneros de guerra. Impulsada por dichos compromisos políticos e ideológicos, esta organización de base que era

el CCP se esforzaba por crear “instituciones paralelas” descolonizadoras que respondieran a las necesidades de los residentes de la comunidad. El FBI alegó que el CCP y sus líderes eran el frente legal de una organización revolucionaria puertorriqueña, las Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN).

Para “neutralizar” al proyecto radical antes mencionado, el FBI reclutó – con remuneración muy generosa – a Rafael A. Marrero para que infiltrara la organización comunitaria para ultimadamente criminalizar a sus dirigentes, desprestigiar a las organizaciones comunitarias, y también para reclutar a miembros de la comunidad e inducirlos a cometer actos violentos. A pesar de que Marrero participó en actos violentos que causaron el encarcelamiento de otros, a él nunca ni se le formularon cargos por estos actos. En vez de eso, cuando salió del tiempo transcurrido como “testigo” y protegido del “Witness Protection Program” (programa a cargo del gobierno cuya función es proveerle

identidades y protección a las personas que sirven de testigos en casos criminales y que por ello se colocan en posición vulnerable y en riesgo de sus vidas), consiguió fortuna y prestigio, mientras ocultaba su indecoroso pasado. Treinta años más tarde, operando desde las entrañas de la conservadora comunidad cubana en Miami, se pregona como consultor experto para que los negocios operados por minorías tengan acceso al mercado federal.

Aunque Marrero crea que ha dejado atrás su pasado, parte importante de la comunidad puertorriqueña en Chicago no lo ha olvidado a él ni su labor como agente/provocador del FBI. El individuo arruinó muchas vidas, dañó reputaciones y socavó el importante trabajo de organizaciones comunitarias. No hay duda de que Marrero y el FBI desviaron los esfuerzos y recursos del CCP y sus miembros hacia la auto-defensa, pero también provocaron que se fortaleciera el espíritu de lucha y fuerza de sus convicciones. Hoy día, tras mucho trabajo para deshacer el daño provocado por la nefasta acción de Marrero y el FBI, el CCP prospera y amplía el apoyo de su misión visionaria.

HISTORIA DE COINTELPRO

En la década de 1950 el FBI comenzó un programa secreto dirigido a dividir, destruir y neutralizar los movimientos de liberación nacional y las organizaciones radicales de izquierda en los Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico, al costo que fuera. Conocido como Programa de Contra Inteligencia, o COINTELPRO, las tácticas del programa incluía la infiltración en organizaciones políticas y comunitarias de agentes/provocadores; hostigamiento en los foros judiciales; la propagación de rumores falsos y difamatorios en los medios para dañar las reputaciones de los líderes; crear división y discordia en las organizaciones mismas; instigar desconfianza y recelo entre los miembros y alentar el miedo en la comunidad; y movidas mucho más nefastas como el entrapamiento cuyo resultado era la cárcel y el asesinato. Aunque alegadamente este programa gubernamental ilegal se desmanteló en 1975 – tras una investigación de un Comité del Senado de los

Estados Unidos que determinó que el mismo incurrió en abusos rampantes –, el gobierno continúa utilizando las mismas tácticas de espionaje ilegal y disrupción de los movimientos hasta hoy día, como demuestra la persecución a la comunidad musulmana tras el 9/11 y al “Black Lives Matter” contemporáneo. A este último se le tilda como un movimiento de “extremistas de identidad negra” y sus miembros son rastreados y los capítulos infiltrados por agentes de gobierno o elementos de extrema derecha para hacer su labor de provocadores. El resumen histórico que se presenta en este escrito se hace con la esperanza de que servirá de recordatorio y advertencia de este caso concreto de represión y el insidioso daño causado, pero también de ejemplo de la subsiguiente lucha y esfuerzos de la comunidad para enfrentar y subsanar ese daño.

El movimiento independentista de Puerto Rico y su diáspora han sido blanco prioritario en la lista de organizaciones políticas del FBI por mucho tiempo. En Chicago comenzaron a vigilar a los militantes puertorriqueños tras los motines de Division Street en 1966, con el propósito de debilitar y destruir a varias organizaciones, entre ellas los Young Lords, una pandilla politizada puertorriqueña cuyo modelo fue el Black Panther Party (Partido de Panteras Negras). A mediados de la década de 1970, ya la mayor atención del FBI en Chicago se centraba en el CCP, que allanaron en el 1983.

SE INFILTRA UN AGENTE EN CHICAGO

En Marrero, el FBI consiguió a un trabajador diligente y a un ser maleable, que sabía congraciarse con las personas, y que comprendía el rol clave que tenía la comunidad puertorriqueña de Chicago en la lucha independentista, sobre todo en la diáspora. El FBI aspiraba a utilizarlo para dividir, destruir y neutralizar el trabajo que llevaba a cabo esa comunidad. Usando credenciales falsas, Marrero se mudó de Puerto Rico a Chicago. Con el tiempo, logró congraciarse con José E. López, Director Ejecutivo del CCP y líder del Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN, organización pro independencia de Puerto Rico). López estaba en la mira del FBI desde hacía tiempo por su posición en el movimiento independentista en la diáspora, y por su férrea resistencia a los intentos del gobierno de destruir al movimiento – incluyendo el ir a prisión en 1977 por negarse a testificar ante un gran jurado federal que investigaba al movimiento. También porque es el hermano de Oscar López Rivera, que en aquel entonces era buscado por el FBI por sus actividades clandestinas como miembro del FALN. José E. López también era arquitecto clave de la campaña por la excarcelación de dos generaciones de prisioneros políticos puertorriqueños

que cumplían condenas equivalentes a cadena perpetua por conspiración sediciosa, cargo político por conspirar para derrocar o destruir al gobierno de los Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico con el uso de la fuerza.

Marrero no solo se insertó entre el alto liderato de la comunidad, sino que perversamente se posicionó como amigo de la familia Rodríguez, también activistas independentistas. Se casó con Evelyn, cuyas hermanas Lucy y Alicia eran dos de las prisioneras políticas cuya excarcelación se perseguía, y cuya madre, Josefina, era portavoz de la campaña internacional por la excarcelación de sus hijas y los demás prisioneros políticos. Como si eso no fuera suficiente, abandonó a su esposa y a su hija sin miramientos, una vez logrado su objetivo de causar gran daño al CCP y a otras organizaciones en las cuales también sembró discordia y desconfianza.



MARRERO ORQUESTA BOMBARDEO DE 1992

Marrero estaba al tanto de que la campaña por la excarcelación de los prisioneros políticos puertorriqueños se había ampliado más allá del apoyo inicial de familiares, militantes independentistas y aliados por conciencia. Para promover disensión en la campaña y el movimiento, empezó a incitar a activistas y aliados alegando que el liderato se había tornado “flojo”, que estaba abandonando su política militante y acomodándose al electoralismo. Marrero engatusó a activistas desafectos con el argumento de que la independencia de Puerto Rico solo se conseguiría por medios violentos. Totalmente consciente de que el tema de la lucha armada era controversial y afectaría adversamente el apoyo cada vez mayor a la campaña y a la posibilidad de una conmutación presidencial, organizó una pseudo célula clandestina, el Frente Revolucionario Boricua. Entre los que reclutó estaba José Solís Jordán, profesor de la Universidad DePaul con quien había entablado “amistad”, así como a otras personas talentosas y en buenas posiciones. Por supuesto que ninguna de estas personas estaba al tanto de que Marrero era un agente/provocador del FBI.

En nombre de su pseudo-organización, en 1992 Marrero puso dos bombas caseras (“pipe bombs”, en inglés, y en algunos países donde se habla español se coocen como “bombas de tubería”) en un centro de reclutamiento militar en Chicago. Puesto que lo hizo de noche, no hubo daño a personas, ni muertes. Años más tarde, a punto de que expirara la posibilidad de formular cargos, Marrero, bajo órdenes del FBI, con el uso de micrófonos escondidos bajo su ropa, grabó a Solís hacienda declaraciones inculpatorias sobre el acto [la colocación de las bombas]. Poco tiempo después, a Solís se le formularon cargos por conspiración, intento de destruir propiedad del gobierno y posesión ilegal de explosivos. Pero pronto el FBI mostró su verdadera mano: le ofreció a Solís la desestimación de todos los cargos si nombraba a José E. López como el autor intelectual del bombardeo.

Como suele pasar con el uso de informantes del gobierno, el caso de la fiscalía contra Solís se sustentó en el testimonio de Marrero. Por su testimonio, no solo recibió inmunidad, sino pagos en efectivo ascendentes a sobre \$100,000 y otros beneficios, que es de facto pagar por su testimonio. Durante el mismo, Marrero admitió su propia participación en la planificación y ejecución de la colocación de las bombas, pero alegó que Solís también participó. Por su parte, Solís negó con vehemencia haber participado de forma alguna en el acto y retó la aseveración del FBI de que había confesado. Basado casi exclusivamente en la palabra de Marrero — un infiltrado del FBI — el jurado encontró al profesor Solís culpable de todos los cargos; se le sentenció a 51 meses de prisión, con lo que su esposa quedó sola para mantener a sus cinco hijos.

EL FBI Y EL GRAN JURADO

El trabajo de Marrero con el FBI no terminó con el caso de las bombas caseras y el encarcelamiento de José Solís Jordán. También asistió al FBI con las convocatorias a unos gran jurados, supuestamente convenidos para investigar las bombas de 1992. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos tiene un historial largo y vergonzoso de utilizar al gran jurado como arma represiva para coaccionar el testimonio de personas contra los movimientos donde militan o que apoyan, y de encarcelarlos si se niegan a servirle de lacayos a sus estratagemas políticas. Las autoridades estadounidenses, y Marrero, estaban muy al tanto del honroso historial del movimiento independentista puertorriqueño de resistencia a los gran jurados.

Marrero le suplió al FBI los nombres de otros independentistas en Chicago, incluyendo a Juan Marcos Vilar, Diana Vázquez y Rubén Rivera, quienes fueron

eventualmente citados a comparecer ante un gran jurado, al igual que otros cuantos. Vilar, un respetado maestro en la Escuela Superior Roberto Clemente, era en aquel entonces el líder del comité nacional de los Estados Unidos a cargo de la campaña por la excarcelación de los prisioneros políticos puertorriqueños. Por fortuna, nadie fue a prisión, pero las citaciones provocaron coraje y temor entre la comunidad.



LA PROPAGANDA DE EL PITO

Nuevamente instigado por el FBI, Marrero recurrió a una conocida táctica de COINTELPRO: la publicación y distribución de El Pito, una supuesta publicación anónima, vulgar y estridente, donde se mofaban de y difamaban a José E. López y otros líderes comunitarios que abogaban por reformas en el sistema de educación y participaban en la campaña por la excarcelación de los presos políticos puertorriqueños. Sus “noticias falsas” (bulos, le llaman en otros países de habla hispana) y caricaturas lascivas intentaban socavar la credibilidad de los individuos y las instituciones mencionadas, y así impedir por miedo o intimidación el crecimiento del apoyo a las causas promulgadas por los susodichos. Para poner a funcionar esta empresa, Marrero reunió a un grupo que incluía elementos derechistas y anexionistas, corredores de bienes raíces interesados en ampliar el proceso de “gentrificación” del área, y criminales desafectos de la comunidad.

CONTROVERSA EN LA ESCUELA SUPERIOR ROBERTO CLEMENTE

La Escuela Superior Roberto Clemente, situada en el corazón de la comunidad puertorriqueña en Chicago se creó tras una larga batalla de los padres y madres, y de los activistas de la comunidad. En las postrimerías de la década de 1980 la Reforma del Consejo Local de Escuelas

de 1988 le confirió al Consejo Local la autoridad para designar prioridades presupuestarias, desarrollar planes de mejoramiento escolar y, lo más importante, el poder para contratar y despedir a los principales de la escuela. Fortalecidos por la experiencia adquirida cuando se enfrentaron a maestros y maestras racistas en la escuela, el Consejo Escolar Local de la Clemente esbozó un innovador plan de reforma escolar. Basado en la corriente de pedagogía crítica, el plan tenía cuatro objetivos principales: desarrollar un currículo que atendiera las necesidades y aspiraciones de su juventud; desarrollar un programa que enfatizara la auto-disciplina (con el fin último de no tener que recurrir a la contratación de agencias profesionales de seguridad); la transformación del consejo escolar local a un verdadero instrumento de gobierno democrático; y la transformación de la escuela a una comunidad eficiente de servicios de apoyo.

Usualmente, la propuesta de reformas escolares sería un blanco improbable para ameritar la atención del FBI, pero en esta ocasión el FBI insidiosamente perseguía deslegitimar los ambiciosos planes de la comunidad para su escuela. En esta fase, nuevamente, Marrero fue pieza clave. Alegó que el CCP y el Movimiento de Liberación Nacional malversaron fondos anti-pobreza de Título I valiéndose del Consejo Escolar Local. Esos fondos, alegaba él, se utilizaron para subsidiar la campaña y el MLN; también para lo que llamó “un inmenso esquema de fraude por clientelismo”, donde se empleaba a padres y madres para tareas de seguridad en la escuela en vez de oficiales de seguridad y detectores de metales. Esto le sirvió a un representante estatal local, conservador e ideológicamente opuesto a la independencia de Puerto Rico, para iniciar una investigación y celebrar vistas públicas.

El fiscal de las vistas, otrora fiscal federal adjunto Steven A. Miller, con un historial de persecución contra el movimiento independentista puertorriqueño, no le permitió a Marrero contestar las preguntas sobre su relación con el FBI que le hizo el representante estatal Constance “Connie” A. Howard, única afro-americana del panel de nueve personas. Miller intervino diciendo la falsedad de que no tenía conocimiento de que Marrero tuviese alguna relación con el FBI – por supuesto que lo sabía – e insistiendo que tal información debía permanecer secreta. Para mantener secreta la relación de Marrero con el FBI, se suspendieron las vistas.

Ni la investigación ni las vistas públicas, que costaron sobre \$1 millón de dólares de dineros del pueblo y que conllevó la formación de cuatro o cinco gran jurados a lo largo de 1992 a 2002, produjeron evidencia de que el Consejo Local Escolar de la Escuela Superior Roberto

Clemente violó los requisitos estatales que rigen el uso de los dineros de Título I. Por el contrario, la evidencia mostró que las Escuelas Públicas de Chicago aprobó el uso que hizo el CLE de los fondos, y que el mismo estaba dentro de los parámetros existentes de uso de Título I. La auditoría a Clemente sí arrojó algunas irregularidades en cuanto a la documentación e inventarios de equipo comprado con fondos de Título I, pero no hubo evidencia de actividad ilegal alguna, ni de que las irregularidades antes aludidas fuesen el resultado de una conspiración de independentistas puertorriqueños. A pesar de este resultado, la investigación y las vistas fueron ampliamente cubiertas por la prensa, con titulares históricos como “Utilización de fondos escolares para adelantar la excarcelación de terroristas”, y esto arrojó sombra a la reforma escolar, afectó a administradores escolares, maestras y maestros, y líderes comunitarios, y por supuesto minó la reputación del CCP.

ESTADO ACTUAL

Hoy día, tras años de lucrarse de los ingresos provistos por el FBI, Marrero vive cómodamente en Miami, presentándose como el director de operaciones de una reputada compañía consultora de administración de empresas que ayuda a negociantes que pertenecen a grupos de minoría a acceder a fondos federales, y a contratos con agencias federales. Ahora se inserta en una nueva “comunidad” de cubanos Floridianos ultra conservadores, jactándose de haber trabajado directamente con el hijo de Jorge Más Canosa, el mismito que la CIA entrenó para el ataque por Bahía de Cochinos, el que fundó la Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana, y que dedicó su vida a tratar de derrocar la Revolución Cubana. Para sorpresa de pocos, el lambón Marrero utilizó las plataformas sociales de su compañía para celebrar la muerte de Fidel Castro, y para conseguir fotografiarse con personajes tales como el representante Díaz Balart.

Si bien aparentemente Marrero siguió su camino luego de su aberrante traición a la comunidad puertorriqueña, el CPP y sus dirigentes han trabajado por años para reparar las reputaciones de organizaciones e individuos afectados por la bajeza de Marrero. Han trabajado para recuperar la confianza, luego de que este individuo infiltrara y trabajara con las autoridades gubernamentales para socavar relaciones y alianzas. Se movieron para reimaginar a la comunidad y nuevamente ganarse la confianza de las agencias y fundaciones proveedoras de donativos y subsidios, vitales para continuar proveyendo servicios necesarios para la comunidad donde se opera.

Estos esfuerzos pos-Marrero para reparar, re-construir



Rafael Marrero en la actualidad

y re-imaginar, aunque arduos, han rendido fruto. La mayor parte de los prisioneros políticos – incluidas ambas ex-cuñadas de Marrero — fueron excarcelados via conmutación presidencial en 1999. El CCP está más fuerte, con quince programas que proveen servicios a la comunidad, incluyendo a la Escuela Superior Pedro Albizu Campos, (que le sirve a jóvenes que han sido marginados de las escuelas públicas de Chicago); el Centro de Cuido Infantil Consuelo Lee Corretjer; El Rescate, un refugio para jóvenes LBGTQI; VIDA/SIDA, un programa pionero para la prevención del SIDA; y muchos otros programas y servicios.

Hoy día las organizaciones progresistas y radicales están repletas de activistas que aspiran poner fin al racismo colonial y sistémico que define la historia de este país. Aumentan las falsas noticias, los cargos sin fundamento y la persecución de activistas comunitarios desde los medios sociales y las instituciones legales. En vista de estas nuevas agendas de cambio, y la presencia constante en los medios de las protestas de #Black Lives Matter y #DefundPolice (llegando a ocupar el titular

del New York Times “Black Lives Matter Podría Ser el Movimiento Más Grande de los Estados Unidos”), es seguro que el gobierno aumentará el uso de las infames tácticas de COINTELPRO y la represión contra el activismo comunitario. Por lo tanto, es importante retomar la infrecuente discusión, y para algunos memoria vaga y lejana, del historial represivo del FBI contra el movimiento por la independencia de Puerto Rico en Chicago, porque contiene importantes lecciones para los movimientos de hoy día y puede aportar al futuro colectivo.

Investigación:

La Red Nacional Pro-Derechos Humanos Boricua está compuesta de puertorriqueños y puertorriqueñas en los EEUU y sus aliados. Su propósito es educar y movilizar tanto a la comunidad boricua, como a la comunidad latinoamericana y gente de conciencia en asuntos de la justicia, la paz y los derechos humanos.

Read the article in English at <http://bit.ly/betrayal-eng>

ALMUERZO MUTUO “Solidaridad, No caridad”

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The Puerto Rican Cultural Center
Hispanic Federation
Nellie’s Restaurant**

It has been an honor to prepare, package and deliver delicious daily hot lunches to your household over these past few months. When the pandemic hit, we wanted to make a meaningful offering of love and culture during extremely difficult times. Since March 30, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Nellie’s Puerto Rican Restaurant have been dedicated partners in this journey. We would like to recognize Michael Reyes, Samantha Toledo, Luis Rivera, Emma Martínez and Adriana Vera, for faithfully coordinating and making deliveries seven days a week for a total of 7,500 meals to nearly 50 households for 18 weeks. From our family to yours, we wish you continued health and safety.

The Puerto Rican Agenda



**THE PUERTO RICAN
Agenda**

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GREETINGS TO 27TH FIESTA BORICUA DE BANDERA A BANDERA



¡WEPA!

SPECIAL

PASEO BORICUA COMMUNITY MARKET POP UP

**September, Saturday 05 & Sunday 06 / 2020
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM ON PASEO BORICUA**



**Ivelisse "Bombero de Corazón" Díaz
Cultural Pop Up con Fiesta Boricua:**

Featuring:

Bomba con Buya

Saturday, Sep 5th, 2:15pm-2:40pm (La Casita de Don Pedro)

Pleneros Del Pueblo

Sunday, Sep 6th, 2pm-2:25pm (Corner of California/Division)

La Escuelita Bombero De Corazón

Sunday, Sep 6th, 3:15pm-3:45pm (La Casita de Don Pedro)

LATINX CIRCUS PERFORMANCE

Saturday, Sep 5th, 12:30pm at La Casita de Don Pedro

Sunday, Sep 6th, 12:30pm at 2425 W Division St.

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Special Transmission 27th Fiesta Boricua Virtually 2020

Sunday, Septiembre 06 / 9:30 AM (Repetition 12:30 PM) EST

CHICAGO: • DirecTV-461 • Xfinity (Comcast)-679 • Dish-880

• Verizon-279 • AT&T-U-Verse-3050

PUERTO RICO: • Liberty-171 • Claro-550 • Dish-880

"Lo que el alma hace por su cuerpo es lo que el artista hace por su pueblo"
(Palabras de Laura Rodig a Gabriela Mistral tras recibir el Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1945).

Desde el inicio del confinamiento, como organización, en El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño, hemos tratado de continuar ofreciendo a la comunidad nuestra oferta de servicios institucionales como una oportunidad de prevalecer, adaptándonos diariamente a los cambios que nos enseña la denominada "nueva normalidad" respetando las directrices y regulaciones, para así evitar la propagación de la pandemia.

Tradicionalmente La Fiesta Boricua "De Bandera a Bandera" se lleva a cabo desde hace 27 años durante el fin de semana del Día del Trabajo - en Paseo Boricua (Calle División entre Western y California), en la ciudad de Chicago. Este evento de dos días congrega una inmersión total en la cultura, donde la música, el baile, la comida, las artesanías, los juegos, las bebidas, y las demás tradiciones puertorriqueñas se reavivan. Es una celebración multifacética y pluricultural que anualmente atrae a miles de personas de Chicago y el Medio Oeste de los Estados Unidos.

En estos tiempos de pandemia, la cultura parece desamparada y huérfana, pero a la vez es uno de los principales alimentos y acompañamientos durante el confinamiento. Este año no tendremos los apretones de manos, los abrazos, los aplausos, ni el calor cercano y fraterno de nuestra gente. Tampoco tendremos el recibimiento especial de "Lo mejor de nuestros pueblos" sin embargo nuestro nivel de adaptación y nuestra fiel creencia, compromiso y corresponsabilidad con nuestra gente, nos hacen más fuertes.

Por esa razón y por muchas más, queremos invitarles a evocar nuestra celebración anual más importante del año, LA 27ma FIESTA BORICUA DE BANDERA A BANDERA 2020, en el marco del festival ¡WEPA! Especial, que se realizará el sábado 5 y el domingo 6 de septiembre entre las 11:00 AM y las 5:00 PM. El Paseo Boricua, nuestro pedacito de patria en Chicago, estará engalanado con sus mejores representaciones: artesanos, artistas, emprendedores, líderes y lideresas de la comunidad, estarán acompañados esta sencilla, pero profunda celebración, enviaremos un saludo especial a la Fiesta Boricua 2020 y podremos apreciar el especial para televisión grabado en 4 localidades; Hormigueros, Loíza, Comerío y Paseo Boricua. Este especial para televisión se transmitirá el domingo 06 de septiembre a las 9:30 AM con repetición 12:30 PM (horario EST) en los siguientes canales de TV por cable:

- Chicago: DirecTV-Canal 461, Xfinity (Comcast)-Canal 679, Dish-Canal 880, Verizon Fios- Canal 279, AT&T-U-Verse-Canal 3050.
- Puerto Rico: Liberty-Canal 171, Claro-550, Dish-880

Mantengamos nuestra cultura viva, apoyemos a nuestros artistas y emprendedores, visite ¡WEPA! Especial el 5 y el 6 de septiembre. Continuemos practicando el distanciamiento social, usemos cubrebocas, y sintonice nuestro especial para televisión el domingo 6 de septiembre en los horarios mencionados.

EL CENSO ES UNA HERRAMIENTA DE JUSTICIA SOCIAL



Por Luis V. Gutiérrez / 14 de Julio de 2020
Publicado originalmente en elnuevodia.com

Cada diez años se lleva a cabo un Censo, que es un conteo de cada persona que vive en los Estados Unidos y sus territorios, incluyendo Puerto Rico. El conteo de la población se lleva a cabo en dos fases. La primera, en la que nos encontramos, es la de auto-respuesta. En esa fase la población por teléfono, correo postal o internet se inscribe en el Censo. Cada uno de nosotros tenemos la responsabilidad de declarar “aquí estoy, cuéntame”

Como ha sido bien documentado por El Nuevo Día, esta fase inicial en Puerto Rico esta vez ha sido un fracaso. La baja tasa de participación es alarmante. Hasta el momento solo el 23.7% de la población de la isla ha respondido el Censo. Mississippi, el estado más pobre, ya tiene una participación de 57%. En el estado de Illinois, que representé por 26 años en el Congreso federal, la respuesta ha sido de 66%.

El Censo permite determinar cómo se distribuyen cientos de miles de millones de dólares en fondos federales por toda una década. Si persiste una baja respuesta al Censo en la isla, los enemigos de nuestra patria en el ámbito federal no van a decir “ay bendito, vamos a darle otra oportunidad a los puertorriqueños de ser contados”. Por lo contrario, durante la próxima década se asignarían fondos para programas de salud, nutrición, educación u

otros que no serán justos o equitativos para el país debido a una pobre participación de Puerto Rico en el Censo.

Por cada familia que todavía vive sin techo seguro tras el golpe del huracán María, insíbete en el Censo. Por cada uno de los 739,642 ancianos, huérfanos, personas con necesidades especiales y beneficiarios del programa de Seguro Social, insíbete en el Censo. Por los niños que se quedaron sin escuela debido a los terremotos, pero merecen una educación igual o mejor de la que reciben los niños de la plutocracia puertorriqueña, insíbete en el Censo.

La senadora de Massachusetts Elizabeth Warren, campeona de los consumidores en el Senado federal y enemiga mortal de los fondos buitres de Wall Street, aboga por la eliminación de la deuda y la eventual reestructuración de la nefasta Junta de Control Fiscal.

Es urgente que cada persona en la isla sea contada en el Censo 2020: jóvenes, adultos, ancianos, trabajadores, desempleados, personas que viven en zonas rurales y urbanas y en áreas rurales, así como ciudadanos estadounidenses e indocumentados.

Nuestras necesidades hoy son demasiado altas, especialmente entre los más vulnerables y marginados de la sociedad de Puerto Rico. Hemos sufrido devastadoras tormentas y otros fenómenos naturales extremos. Por eso, necesitamos más ayudas. Los fondos federales para muchas personas y familias son una cuestión de vida o muerte.

Quiero dejar en claro que participar en el Censo 2020 no es un acto de aceptación del colonialismo. Por el contrario, es una de las formas como podemos responsabilizar a Estados Unidos por 122 años de dominación colonial a través de las leyes orgánicas, los Casos Insulares y más recientemente la Ley Promesa, solo por nombrar algunas de las disposiciones legales más conocidas.

El gobierno de los Estados Unidos nos ha robado nuestro trabajo, nuestras tierras y nuestros recursos. Se nos debe mucho; más de lo que un Censo puede satisfacer. Sin embargo, debemos exigir algo de lo que se ha tomado y necesitamos usar esos recursos para mejorar la vida de nuestra gente.

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#QuédateEnCasa
#SalvaVidas

CENSUS 2020



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HUMBOLDT PARK

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APOYANDO A PEQUEÑOS EMPRESARIOS Y EMPRENDEDORES

PRCC'S BUSINESS INITIATIVES DEPARTMENT BRINGS BACK THE "WEPEROS" AND SUPPORTS SMALL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS!

During this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's (PRCC) Business Initiatives program has played a critical role in the preservation of Paseo Boricua's economic vitality and joyful spirit. These programs and initiatives work closely with the Division Street Business Development Association (DSBDA), and are the continuation of work that The PRCC began more than 40 years ago.

In 2019, PRCC established the Neighborhood Business Development Center (NBDC) with the support of the City of Chicago's Business Affairs and Consumer Protection Dept. At the same time it created the "¡WEPA! Community Pop Up", -- an initiative created to support local artisans and makers. The initiative is also designed to be a platform for up and coming entrepreneurs who avail themselves of NBDC's free business advising and counseling sessions.

In January 2020, PRCC received approval to establish an Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which is funded in part by a cooperative agreement among the U.S. Small Businesses Administration (SBA), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and The Puerto Rican Cultural Center. This Center began to operate at full capacity in May when Carlos Bosques was brought on board to assume the role of SBDC Director.

During the first months of the pandemic, PRCC's Business Programs provided assistance to small businesses, contractors, and self-employed individuals so they could navigate the COVID-19 resources available to them. We apprised them of SBA low interest loans, disaster loans, City of Chicago grants and funding opportunities, as well as other resources made available by private corporations such as Facebook, Verizon, and others.

After months of observing stay at home mandates, we

finally re-opened the Paseo Boricua ¡WEPA! Community Pop Up in June. This brought great cheer to Division Street during the Virtual Puerto Rican People's Parade. Our staff saw the possibilities and we decided to increase the frequency of ¡WEPA! from once a month to every Saturday. Local vendors were eager to return to the streets and offer their products and creations. We now offer the ¡WEPA! Market every Saturday, from 11 am to 5 pm. Moreover, we added a monthly ¡WEPA! Raffle of products donated by WEPEROS. Currently, we do not charge a fee for vendors to participate in our ¡WEPA! event. Our mission is to promote entrepreneurship and offer a space for local vendors to "test the waters" and encourage them to register their own businesses.

In August we were invited, for the second year, to represent Humboldt Park at the Navy Pier Artisan Market. This time vendors were situated outside, at the entrance of Navy Pier, and under the shade of large trees. The weekend was absolutely gorgeous and we were blessed with great weather. Although the Humboldt Park vendors were limited to only a few, for purposes of social distancing, they sold \$2,300 of their products.

Our goal is to continue creating opportunities for entrepreneurs and artisans to develop a side business, which would eventually become a brick and mortar store or an online shop. The process does require some sacrifices, as all entrepreneurs need to develop business skills to run their companies in an efficient manner. This is the objective of NBDC and SBDC -- providing resources, training, and advising for small businesses to prosper in our community.

We provide monthly webinars about different business topics, ranging from how to open a business in Illinois, to

how to do marketing, and how to keep your finances in order. In September, we will offer a 12-week online class in partnership with Sunshine Enterprises, a non profit organization that has been providing training in Chicago for the past six years. Our course will be the first one the organization provides in Spanish. We are eager to have our Humboldt Park entrepreneurs, small business owners, and those who simply have an idea for a business to join us in this adventure of learning the tools that will help you succeed in your current or future business. For more information please visit:

<https://www.sunshineenterprises.com/infosessions> or get in touch Nadya Henríquez at nadyah@prcc-chgo.org.



By: Nadya Henríquez, La Voz del Paseo Boricua

MUÉVETE: 15 YEARS PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF OUR COMMUNITY

Muévete brings free and attainable physical activity classes to Humboldt Park, West Town, Logan Square, and Avondale. For the past 15 years, it has collaborated with The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), the Chicago Park District (CPD), and more than 15 physical activity volunteer instructors to make this happen.

Muévete's beginning comes out of a personal health concern of its founder. She had been battling high blood pressure, high cholesterol, borderline diabetes, and acute joint pains. She began walking Humboldt Park's outskirts as a way to stay active and control her illnesses, which were largely connected to obesity. All this time, she invited people to walk with her. Several did join, and by the fall of 2005 they formed a walking group.

Fall gave way to winter; snow fell and the temperature dropped. Muévete partnered with The Puerto Rican Cultural Center and the Chicago Park District, and the walking group moved indoors into the Humboldt Park Field House. Instead of walking, the group activity changed to dance-aerobics three times a week (after work hours). Coincidentally, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center was working at this time to address Health Disparities within the Puerto Rican community. This was a perfect fit for a community based physical activity program.

In 2009, Muévete built on its successful collaboration with the CPD and extended its programming into Kosciuszko Park with dance aerobics. Volunteer instructors Christina Núñez and Vicky Camacho spearheaded this effort. This programming was in high demand because it was free and took place in a comfortable, non-judgmental environment. By the spring of 2010,

Muévete became part of the Gather Humboldt Park Community Diabetes Empowerment Center at 2753 W. Division St. The aims were to complement the Diabetes Center's prevention education and to control diabetes from within the community. This allowed Muévete to offer additional physical activity programming to the community, including Zumba, Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, and biking. Finding people to become involved in these physical activity initiatives was easy because the community was in need of an alternative to traditional health clubs, which many found uninviting.

In April of 2011, Muévete established Move for Life! as a warm weather season kick-off to begin the outdoors activities such as the walking and biking groups. This was done in partnership with West Town Bikes.

In 2012, Muévete established the trainings: Muévete 101 and Train the Trainer. These are basic group physical activity trainings for participants who show interest in facilitating classes. This creates leadership opportunities and thus leaders from within our community. It also opened a lane for professionals in the field of physical activity to become volunteers with Muévete.

In August of 2015, Muévete celebrated its 10th anniversary with a 10,000 - Step Community Walk around Humboldt Park. It partnered with Norwegian American Hospital and gave participants t-shirts and duffle bags for completing the 10,000 steps.

During the last 15 years, Muévete has had more than 35 physical activity volunteer instructors in the areas of Dance-aerobics, Zumba, Pilates, Yoga, Tai Chi, Walking Group, Biking groups, High

Intensity Interval Training, and Strength Training. Muévete has served more than 7,000 participants from all over Chicago and, as a direct result of Muévete, the creator has lost more than 80 lbs and has eliminated all her borderline illnesses, keeping them at bay.

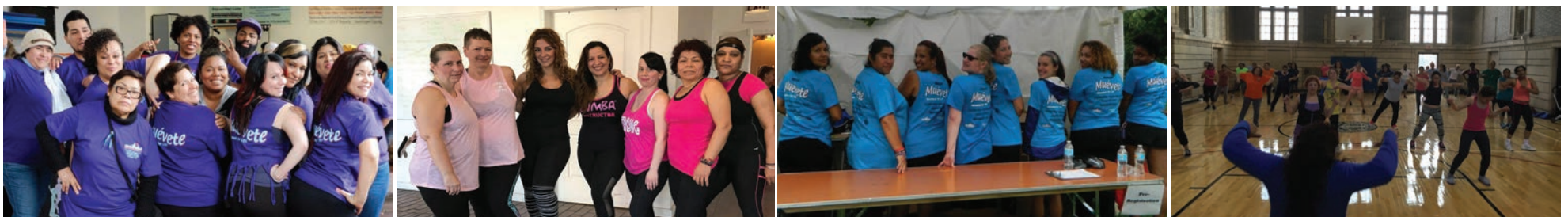
Currently Muévete has 15 Physical Activity Instructors with 10 being the core of the program. 18 classes take place Monday thru Friday at three different locations and five distinct types of physical activity: Dance-Aerobics, Zumba, Pilates, Tai Chi and Yoga.

For Muévete's quinceñera, we would like to acknowledge our instructors for their dedication and time in providing the community with much needed physical activity.

- Zumba; *Lisa González, Carmen Rivera, Karen Gasiamis, Michelle Díaz, Gloria Hernández, Rosa Ortíz, A. Iris Díaz, Vicky Casas and Melva Flores.*
- Dance-aerobics; *Sofía Flores, Cristina Núñez and Ángeles García.*
- Yoga: *Vivian Prapuolenis and Migdalia Galarza.*
- Pilates: *Beatriz Navarro*
- Tai Chi: *Martín Romero*

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have retooled our physical activity classes to keep our community safe. Some classes are taking place outdoors, while others are online. Once the city moves to Phase 4 of the reopening post COVID-19 plan, we will resume our regular schedule. In the meantime stay active, but more importantly stay safe. Muevete@prcc-chgo.org, (773)236-2698.

*By Leony Calderón
Creator/Director/Coordinator and Facilitator of
the Muévete physical activity program*



AS BIG MUSEUMS GET RESCUE GRANTS, THE PRESIDENT OF CHICAGO'S PUERTO RICAN MUSEUM SAYS HE'S 'TIRED OF BEING LEFT BEHIND'



"This isn't just about whether we open up next week or not. This is about whether we exist next year or not," says Billy Ocasio, president and former 26th ward alderman. Manuel Martinez / WBEZ

By Mark Braboy, Olivia Cunningham / July 31
Originally posted in: <https://www.wbez.org/>

This story was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Center. For more stories about the effect of COVID-19 on museums, please visit the Prairie State Museums Project at PrairieStateMuseumsProject.org.

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic that has ravaged Illinois, many museums of color have been feeling the squeeze of the economic hardships caused by it.

The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, the only Puerto Rican history museum in the nation outside of the U.S. territory, continues to fight for racial and financial equity. However, the neighborhood institution didn't expect to have to do it in the midst of both a pandemic and a national resurgence of Black Lives Matter, during its 20th anniversary no less. The confluence of events has created new challenges — and a rare opportunity to knit together Chicago's Puerto Rican art community at a moment of national reckoning over race and social justice.

Since its opening in 2000, the museum, along with other cultural institutions of color in Chicago, has always had to work significantly harder for fewer resources while enduring empty promises of "diversity, equity and inclusion," according to Billy Ocasio, the president/CEO of the NMPRAC and former alderman.

"Museums of color have figured out that they have to basically work harder, just as we've always have to do in every other aspect of life," said Ocasio, 58. He points to systemic racism as the main culprit, particularly in how government funding is distributed to museums.

Museums in Illinois have been in peril throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Arts Alliance Illinois' COVID-19 Cultural Sector Impact Assessment, they have collectively lost an estimated \$93.8 million in revenue, \$4.4 million in lost wages from salary/payroll deductions and 1.7 million visitors. Larger museums such as Adler Planetarium, the Museum of Science and Industry and the Shedd Aquarium each received more than \$1 million in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, as reported by the Chicago Tribune. By comparison, the NMPRAC only qualified for \$71,000, according to Ocasio, who is accustomed to such disparities. He explains that most foundations give grants based on the size of the recipient's total budget.

"So if you're, let's say, a small organization that [doesn't] have a million-dollar budget, they're not going to give you more than 10 percent of what your budget is. Now, if you're an institution that has a billion dollars, they could still give you 10 percent of that. So, it's just not equal enough," explained Ocasio.

Most government, foundation and corporate giving won't provide more than 10% of an institution's total budget. Those institutions with a higher budget can apply for higher levels of funding. Ocasio said that 10% in funding can help a small organization with a \$1 million budget, but it doesn't provide opportunities for growth the way a large organization with a \$1 billion budget does.

"If you're an organization that has this huge endowment that could survive without the pennies you get from the government, then you shouldn't be in the program anymore," said Ocasio. "If you have an endowment that's over a billion dollars, you should not be involved in any type of handouts at this point."

Leveling the playing field for museums of color

Veteran artist and the founder of the Latin American Museum of Art, Oscar Luis Martinez has dedicated most of his life to arts education and advocacy. During his time on the Illinois Arts Council, he said he often critiqued major museums like the Art Institute of Chicago and

Museum of Contemporary Art for receiving government funding despite failing to include local artists or promote community engagement.

"If they're not willing to promote local artists ... then why should they receive money from the taxpayer of Illinois?" said Martinez.

He said the state should take more radical action in holding Illinois museums accountable to ensure that museums and local artists of color are given the same opportunities for funding and inclusion, something he believes New York has done much better. He said he wants major Chicago museums to step up.

"There's a lot more that needs to be done and having the Puerto Rican museum is a fantastic step in the right direction, but we should not let the other institutions off the hook. No way," said Martinez.

Martinez has been involved with NMPRAC since its founding, helping restore the historic building according to the strict requirements of the historical register that totaled \$9 million in renovation costs.

"We started by doing one wing of the museum at a time because there was no way we could afford the \$9 million dollars to do it. We started with a trailer in the parking lot of the museum," explained Ocasio, adding that it took them 15 years to raise the \$9 million while creating their own programming over those years, starting small.

Ocasio also met his wife, Veronica, during that period. For them, building the museum was a "labor of love."

"If we are given the opportunity we will show up," Ocasio said. "We will make it worth your investment. We can become these larger institutions if we are given the same playing field."

The museum, despite being closed throughout the pandemic, has stayed afloat thanks to the creation of its first reserve fund, seeded by an anonymous donation during its 6th annual Raices Gala in 2019. The anonymous donation of \$150,000, the biggest gift in the history of the museum, was offered on the terms that NMPRAC matches the funds and move half of the dollars into a reserve fund. Ocasio said the timing was crucial.

"This is us after 20 years getting our biggest gift of \$150,000. Imagine those larger institutions who, let's just say, one of them got \$125 million. It's just unbelievable," he said. The reserve fund allowed the museum to adapt to today's remote learning and digital climate, as well as

invest in digital programming, including virtual tours and online versions of the exhibits. Although the learning curve has been steep, Ocasio said the efforts of volunteers and supporters have helped the museum create its new virtual program.

Contributing to local vitality

Despite the hefty donation, the museum still faces challenges from the pandemic due to overwhelming expenses. And while the conversation is mostly centered around when museums should open up as Illinois recently reached stage 4 in its own reopening plans, Ocasio is more concerned about moving smartly to ensure that the NMPRAC exists in the next year and beyond.

“This isn’t just about whether we open up next week or not. This is about whether we exist next year or not,” said Ocasio.



Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the museum has invested in digital programming, including virtual tours and online versions of their exhibits. Manuel Martinez / WBEZ

So far, funding has come from local foundations, PPP loans and one national organization, the Hispanic Federation, which gave \$25,000 toward emergency relief. NMPRAC is also part of Museums in the Park (MIP), a nonprofit coalition of 11 museums located on park district land, through which NMPRAC receives some funding. But Ocasio said the park district should “get with the times” and overhaul its current system.

“One of the things [the park district] needs to do at this point is say ... ‘Those institutions that have had it for over a 100 years, take the money from there and put it into the places where we are really suffering, where we are really trying to make a change,’” he said.

When asked about how museums under this umbrella are funded, Rebecca Schejbal, the administrative director of MIP, responded in a statement: “The members of Museums In the Park are dedicated to making Chicago’s

museums more accessible to the communities we serve. Our funding distribution is intended to maximize the impact on the greatest number of Chicago citizens.”

Those large institutions that received millions in PPP loans — Adler Planetarium, Museum of Science and Industry, Shedd Aquarium, and Field Museum — are also members of MIP. The scale and locations of these museums make them hotspots for tourists, a potential revenue stream for the city of Chicago and a possible explanation for the funding disparity among MIP’s smaller museums. Ocasio said museums of color could contribute to the tourism dollar if they received more funding.

“Of course, the larger institutions are bringing all the tourists,” he said. “They have the resources to be able to make that happen. The DuSable, the Mexican Fine Arts [National Museum of Mexican Art] and us, we all have the same intelligence to make these things happen. We just need the proper funding and the proper staffing.”

Although the Humboldt Park-based NMPRAC, among a few other museums of color in marginalized neighborhoods, has been able to avoid significant layoffs for now, Ocasio warns that Chicago is in danger of losing many of these institutions due to the unequal funding. For him, such closures would be disastrous at a time when more people want to learn about the stories of people of color and their lived experiences that forewarn history repeating itself.

Martinez said that artists of color should talk about their culture as part of the larger American diaspora.

“Culture and art are vital to our well-being as people. Just as employment is important,” he said. “Just to be included, to sit at the table is important.”

As more of the larger institutions continue to speak out against the country’s history of racism in the wake of the resurging BLM movement, Ocasio said that it’s time for them to put their money where their mouths are and share their surplus of resources.

“Those larger institutions need to recognize that ‘Hey, we’ve had it good for all these years. We really are not at that same level. We really don’t need these funds anymore,’” said Ocasio. “If the country’s moving in that way surely art institutions need to move that way.”

‘Tired of being left behind’

Beyond funding, equity for Ocasio also includes making the museum boards “more colorful,” adding many more people of color in ways more meaningful than hiring a token person of color who typically serves on multiple arts and culture boards. Besides himself, the NMPRAC board consists of Latinx and Hispanic executives, CEOs,

creatives and academics in a range of fields, in comparison to heavyweights such as the Field Museum and the Art Institute of Chicago, which have boards that are predominantly white.

“They have one [person of color] and they want to [keep] that [to] one person. [Do] you want to change with the times? You need to get into the communities,” said Ocasio.

Ocasio served 16 years as the 26th ward alderman, representing parts of Humboldt Park, Hermosa, Ukrainian Village and Logan Square, before resigning in 2009 to work on social justice issues as senior advisor to Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. During his first year as alderman in 1993, Ocasio organized a community summit to create a blueprint of what the neighborhood wanted — from housing to education to culture. He said NMPRAC has been an enduring anchor, serving as a community voice for the Puerto Rican community in Chicago experiencing not just the pandemic and uprisings tied to the BLM movement but also the earthquakes and hurricanes that have hit Puerto Rico in recent years.

“Through art, people have always been able to express what’s going on in communities and cities and at the times, and so we need to continue to be that voice,” said Ocasio.

In light of this, Ocasio and the NMPRAC are working on a “community-built exhibit” of art — both material and digital — made by citizens and artists alike while quarantining. They will also collect the murals painted on plywood used to board up shop windows during the BLM uprisings, only taking the ones with “positive” messages, and showcase them around the NMPRAC campus.

For Ocasio, the project is a way for the museum to engage the community until people are more comfortable visiting museums during the pandemic. The submission announcement will be available on the website by next week. Ocasio said he encourages those who wish to support the NMPRAC to visit the museum when it opens (which has not been confirmed at the time of this writing) and to visit the museum’s website. More importantly, he urges everyone to be part of social justice solutions for Black and brown people and learn more about them through museums of color.

“Museums of color go an extra mile of trying to reach out to others who are not of color so that they have a better understanding of how we can get along in the future of this country,” said Ocasio. “Any time change has happened, our communities have been involved in those changes. Whatever rights there were, our communities were involved, and our artists. We’re just tired of being left behind.”

COMPLICATING LATINIDAD: LEARNING TO BE BLACK IN AN ANTI-BLACK WORLD

By Angel L. Velez / Jul 9, 2020
Originally posted in: <https://ocrl.illinois.edu/>



WE WERE NEVER BLACK

Growing up in Puerto Rico, I knew the color of my skin. Everyone reminded me of it. I was often called “trigueño,” a color somewhere in between Black and white. A simple dictionary search will tell you that I have the color of yellowish dark wheat. Even though my father was a Black Puerto Rican, my mother’s father was a Black man, and though my skin color was similar to theirs, we were never Black. While I have always been a Black Puerto Rican, also known as an Afro-Latino, I had to learn how to be Black.

The colonization of Puerto Rico and Latin America by the Spanish has left behind vestiges of white supremacy and racism. The Spanish invented the ideas of “razas” (race) to classify groups as superior or inferior. Almost a century before enslaved Black Africans were stolen from their homelands and brought to U.S. colonies by the British, the Spanish had already enslaved millions of Black Africans in Latin America. The enslavement of Black Africans happened shortly after the Spanish conquered Indigenous lands and exterminated millions of individuals by spreading diseases and enslaving these people. This history of conquest, colonization, and enslavement frames Black and Indigenous history in Latin America, and its effects impact us today.

Angel Velez, at right, and his older brother From early on, I knew I was ethnically Puerto Rican. It was also my nationality. Those things are taught to us very early in Puerto Rican schools. We learn about our culture,

notably the racial harmony that supposedly exists in our archipelago. From an early age, I was conditioned to believe that our culture is a mixture of three cultures: Spanish, Taino, and African. Yet this racial trilogy is very limiting since it promotes whiteness as the preferred “race” and closes the door on other groups such as Dominicans, Asians, and Arabs to become part of our nation’s collective consciousness. Blackness in Puerto Rican culture is celebrated. We celebrate our Black music such as reggaeton, plena, bomba, and salsa. We love our Black-inspired foods such as mofongo and cuchifritos. However, this love for Blackness is superficial and fades away quickly.



Blackness was also frowned upon. I remember being called cara de mono or monkey face a couple of times. People, including my family, would say I had pelo malo because my hair was thick and coarse. Regarding Blackness and racism in Puerto Rico, scholar Jorge Duany states:

“Stereotypes persistently stigmatize the Black population of Puerto Rico and practically exclude it from the nationalist canon. In elite as well as in popular forms of culture, Afro-Puerto Ricans continued to be represented as marginal and subaltern outsiders, as less Puerto Rican than white people. A catalogue of racial slurs against dark-skinned people run through folk humor, proverbs, aesthetic concepts, school texts, museum displays, media representations, literary texts, and political speeches.”

In many ways, affirming Blackness was only allowed in prescriptive ways, while often being co-opted by light-skinned Puerto Ricans. Reggaeton is an excellent example of a Black music genre that is performed by mostly white Puerto Ricans such as Daddy Yankee and Bad Bunny. An article by the Latinx magazine Remezcla even called upon

all of us to not forget reggaeton’s Black roots. Artists such as Tego Calderon, Don Omar, and El General are ignored figures despite their contributions toward spreading the genre. In short, this presumed racial harmony is marred in anti-Blackness while turning to colorblindness to help mask it.

In Latin America this nebulous concept of racial harmony contributes to the erasure of Blackness. Not until 2016 did Mexico recognize its Black population, which was nearly 1.5 million people. In Colombia the government decreased the percentage of the Black population from 10 to six is due to the systemic under-registration of the Black community. Dominicans treat Haitians like a pest. In Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans dislike Dominicans. While colorblindness places the onus on individual bigotry and claims not to “see” race, the systemic racism in Latin American countries, such as Puerto Rico, are the main culprits of Black structural oppression.

Most Puerto Ricans believe that racism does not take place in Puerto Rican society and blame the U.S. racial tensions for the racism experienced on the archipelago. Regardless, anti-Blackness in Puerto Rico is state-sanctioned violence. For example, in regard to policing in Puerto Rico’s urban areas, scholar Marisol LeBrón states that “part of mano dura contra el crimen’s strategy of controlling drug trafficking and drug-related violence on the island included the tacit acceptance of continued and indeed elevated levels of harm and death directed at low-income and racialized individuals, particularly the poor, young Black and brown men who labored in the informal economy” (Lebron, 2017).

Anti-Blackness not only happens during policing but also occurs in the realms of housing, health, and education outcomes for Black Puerto Ricans. The landscape of Puerto Rico’s Hispanic-serving community colleges is quite interesting, in fact. Recently, I co-authored a research and policy brief that highlights how Puerto Rico does not report statistics for the archipelago’s distinct racial groups. The color-evasiveness and racially neutral ideologies lead to anti-Blackness and uphold white supremacist values in Puerto Rico.

“While Blackness is scapegoated, whiteness is continuously celebrated and centered.”

And while Blackness is scapegoated, whiteness is continuously celebrated and centered. From statues of Christopher Columbus to every governor, being white-

skinned, white identified, and phenotypical Puerto Ricans dominate social media and politics. In fact, the statue of Columbus in Puerto Rico is taller than the Statue of Liberty. Many white-skinned Puerto Ricans are often from higher-income classes and live in gated communities. Where I am from, people go gaga for blue-eye babies. It is ingrained in every aspect of Puerto Rican life. If Black Puerto Ricans try to call attention to these inconsistencies, people often call us *acomplejaos* or self-conscious. We are often blamed for bringing attention to this racial double standard. It is treated as a figment of our imagination, not something systemic or structural. In that regard, avoiding race and evading colorism is a tool of white supremacy that benefits white Puerto Ricans. Since colonization and enslavement, white skin and bodies have been deemed more valuable and desired. There is an apparent racial hierarchy whereby Blacks are placed at the bottom. I feel that is part of the reason we were never Black.

LEARNING TO BE BLACK

In May 2001, when I arrived in Chicago from Puerto Rico, I was supposed to attend Orr Academy High School, located in a predominately African American community. Upon arriving at the school for enrollment, my mother realized the high school did not have an English as a Second Language program. A few weeks later, I ended up enrolling at Roberto Clemente Community Academy. During my freshman year, I tried out for the basketball team and was selected to play as a small forward. Back in Puerto Rico, I had played organized basketball since I was 6 or 7 years old. The basketball team was 70 percent Black and 30 percent Puerto Rican. It's fair to say that my first interactions with Black people were on the basketball court. My English language skills were nonexistent, but I managed to begin learning English with my new friends, most of whom were Black.

Interestingly, coming from Puerto Rico, I still did not see myself as Black. I had lived 16 years with the idea that I was just Puerto Rican. Soon enough, I begin to hear my Black friends say to me things like, "You look like one of us" or "Bro, you are Black." I did not fully understand what they meant. Obviously, they knew I did not speak English well and that I was from Puerto Rico. But they also knew something I did not know, which I later learned: Everyone is given a race in the U.S. An English teacher, Ms. Bermudez, also knew this about U.S. society. She probably knew more about my Blackness than I did.

Angel Velez, second from right, as a freshman During my freshman year (that's me, second from right in photo), Ms. Bermudez recruited me to a citywide Spanish poetry

competition. It was the first time Clemente had ever competed, and we had a great team. I remember Mr. Bermudez asking me if I knew Luis Pales Matos, a well-known poet in Puerto Rico. He wrote Black poetry, and one of his most famous poems was titled "Majestad Negra" (Black Majesty). This style of writing was a perfect fit for me.



People cried over the poem I entered in the competition, and I won first place in the underclass category.

Playing basketball and winning a Spanish poetry competition were amazing accomplishments, but my Blackness began to weigh negatively on me. In the U.S. racial order, racism is more blatant and in your face. It is not the subtle, casual racism that takes place in Puerto Rico. In Chicago I would be stopped and frisked frequently with no probable cause. Walking to my home often triggered the police to violate my civil rights, most of the time for no apparent reason. My skin color was enough to command that response. I became annoyed by the unfairness of policing in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago.

Growing up in Puerto Rico, I do not remember such a blatantly hostile environment. At 16 years old, I had only a few encounters with Puerto Rican police, often stemming from police raids at the housing project my family lived in. In Chicago, Black people were considered suspects at all times. And without realizing my Blackness, I became a perennial suspect, too—and still am. Just last year I was stopped four times by the police. The anti-Blackness in U.S. society was systemic, just like in Puerto Rico. In both places state-sanctioned racial profiling, excessive force, and violence were taking place but occurred in slightly different ways. Notwithstanding, these approaches, while different, have similar outcomes—Black death.

Learning to be Black was not only a constant struggle against white supremacy and racism but also a battle within the Latinx community. Due to the color evasiveness and systemic racism in the U.S., Latinxs often exclude Blackness

(Oakley, 2001). When I walk to a Latinx restaurant, I am sometimes looked upon with suspicion. Spanish-speaking employees would struggle to speak English to me, thinking I am African American and not realizing I am as fluent in Spanish as they are. When advocating for Black lives, many Latinxs, including some leaders, would dismiss my experiences as an Afro-Latino. In retrospect, I learned to be Black through my lived experiences in a racist society and the interactions I have with its members.

Even as an Afro-Latino scholar today, I often see the lack of theorization within Latinx research about Black Latinxs. Not only do Black Latinxs fall outside of the margins of Latinidad, but Afro-Latinxs are also erased from the Latinx experience altogether (Oboler & Dzidzienyo, 2005). Even though the Afro-Latinx population is significant within the Latinx community, our experiences are often invisible. Anti-Blackness is central to the Latinx community. However, there would be no Latinx community without Black people. The history of colonization and enslavement affects our daily experiences. There cannot be solidarity without acknowledgment of my Blackness. Many Latinxs are quick to dehumanize Black bodies by dismissing our painful experiences at the hands of police. Throughout the years, I have heard a lot of people say, "Black people don't know how to behave. That's why they get killed by the police." Solidarity cannot take place under those circumstances. The same system that murders Black people also cages Latinx children.

"Learning about Blackness has meant unlearning the anti-Blackness from within."

Learning about Blackness has meant unlearning the anti-Blackness from within. As I continued to grow in my skin, accepting it fully, I have become more vocal about issues impacting the Black community. When the police murder Black people, I am eager to fight for Black lives. I learned that being Black and Latino are not mutually exclusive. I am racially Black. I am ethnically Puerto Rican. I have always been an Afro-Boricua. From my experiences, I learned that being Black is a constant struggle for liberation and freedom. The truth of the matter is, to be free, we must locate and decenter colonialism and white supremacy. There is an interwoven nature within the fight for equality. There should be synthesis and synergy between the Black and Latinx communities' civil rights, and our fights are linked on multiple fronts. Once this simple truth is recognized, only then will we get rid of anti-Blackness and the fufu, that enslavement curse that has haunted Black people for generations and truly galvanizes in affirming that BLACK LIVES MATTER!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW GRADUATES!



- Anthony B. Tovar Jr. - Sofía L. Correa - Michael A. Pérez -
- Lia A. Villareal - Jacob J. Lozada Graniela - Lucas H. Zaragoza -
- Jaylah Morales - Elisha J. Villalobos - Alana J. Hernández -
- Christian K. Charles -

July 16, 2020

To. Centro Infantil Consuelo Lee Corretjer - PRCC Daycare

I, Gloria Nieves, parent of Elisha Jesus Villalobos write this letter of appreciation to all the teachers and staff members who put together the graduation on July 10, 2020. As a parent I was so excited for my son reaching a small milestone in his life, Preschool into Kindergarten.

The time taken to put this event together is and was greatly appreciated. Given the circumstances of our new normal everything was so amazing and beautiful. We loved the back drop banner and the balloon arch, especially the gifts our graduates received were very creative and thoughtful.

As I reflect Elisha's time at the PRCC daycare I am grateful that he always felt safe and excited about his time there. I've witness his growth and how much he has learned at the PRCC daycare. Elisha loves all his teachers and staff members. So with that Thank You all for being so loving and caring to our children during these challenging times. Thank you for this journey.

Sincerely,

Gloria Nieves
Gloria Nieves





GAY LATINO: FINDINGS FOUND IN RESEARCH

The Gay Initiative research project aims to gather a deeper understanding of obstacles and barriers that subsequently lead to reduced utilization rates of healthcare services among many gay Latinos living in Chicago. Through a series of individual interviews and focus groups, we gathered data to understand better the correlation among generational trauma, cultural pride, HIV stigma, and machismo and how that leads to a lower utilization rate of healthcare services. Among our findings, the most notable was that an individual's socioeconomic status has a strong correlation to their healthcare literacy and utilization rate. Not knowing what insurance covers, what co-pays to expect, and what it means to be out of the network are all things preventing individuals from advocating for their health. We learned that among Latinos, the topic of sex is something that is not spoken about among family and friends. The lack of sexual education often leads to further stigmatization of HIV, STIs, and sex in general. Other notable themes were hours of operation and healthcare offices' locations were identified as barriers to access to healthcare. As we wrap up the data-gathering portion of the project, we are excited to share with you the innovative concepts centered around the services we offer to combat these barriers, which we have identified.

VIDA/SIDA

PROVIDES ENERGY ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Many in our community receive much needed energy assistance services at Vida/SIDA. Between October 1, 2019 and June 31, 2020, our EST (energy service technicians) completed 1,187 applications for individuals in need of light and gas payments.

At first the challenges seemed insurmountable due to the shelter in place restrictions put in place early in the pandemic. However, in-person applications were largely swapped for a remote hybrid process of applications via phone and email.

Of the folks who have been coming to Vida/SIDA for years, however, many are not computer savvy and this process proved too difficult for them. Shirley Payton understood this so she took the initiative to create a new process that remained compliant and helped clients successfully navigate the entire documentation process despite their technological limitations. This process was a great success. Clients were grateful and followed instructions with ease. All this occurred while remaining compliant with restrictive COVID-19 guidelines. This effort made a great difference for area residents. Shirley Payton, with the assistance of Kamill Torres, helped save our residents a total of \$604,745.

PRCC IS PRESENT IN THE BOYSTOWN COMMUNITY



During this unprecedented time, the Public Health Initiatives Department continually retools its efforts so our services to the community are not interrupted. We've revamped our social media platforms Facebook.com/publichealthinitiatives/ and continue to service the community virtually. We have also begun the process of rendering services at home!

We conduct at-home visits to our clients each week Wednesday through Friday. We know there are obstacles that prevent community members from getting the services they need, but we are happy to provide HIV testing in the comfort of your home.

Please contact our office at 773-342-0855 to secure a slot in our testing schedule. Our testing staff will show up to your home fully equipped with personal protective equipment to ensure both you and our staff remain safe.

On Saturday, August 1st, our very own Javier Rodríguez performed as Jenni Rivera, thus initiating the start of our services in Chicago's Boystown community. Beginning this month we will have a presence in Fantasy Night Club, located at 3641 N Halsted St. Our staff will provide condoms, HIV tests, and counseling -- all free of charge. We are excited to meet our community in person! After the city of Chicago quarantine period we know many of you need some loving and we are more than happy to provide the tools needed to keep you safe.

Please stay tuned to our Facebook page for upcoming events.

By. Arley Silvestre

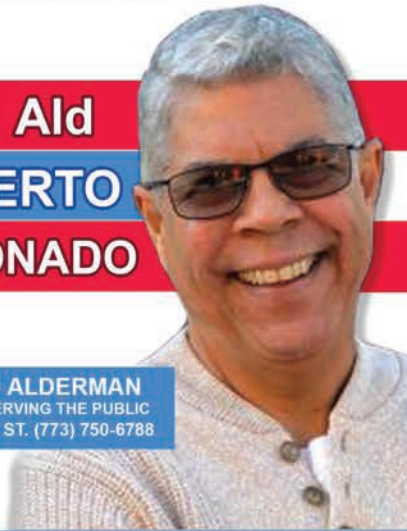
26TH WARD ALDERMANIC OFFICE / THE PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER
EVERY SUNDAY (SEP 06 / NOV 26, 2020 / 12 PM to 5 PM)
COMING TO YOUR DOOR

GREATER HUMBOLDT PARK CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT



**JUAN
MANUEL
CALDERÓN**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
THE PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER
2546 W. DIVISION ST. (773) 394-4935



**Ald
ROBERTO
MALDONADO**

26TH WARD ALDERMAN
COMMITTED TO SERVING THE PUBLIC
2511 W. DIVISION ST. (773) 750-6788

GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE
CITY SOCIAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
TO THE COMMUNITY



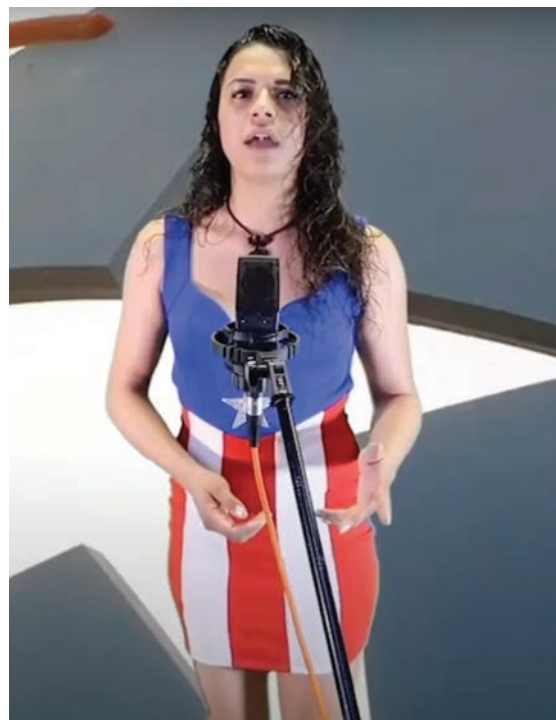
MERCY HOSPITAL CLOSING PRCC STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

The Chicago Board of Health voices its grave concern regarding the proposed closure of Mercy Hospital. Such a move would magnify the healthcare desert that residents now suffer on the south and southwest sides of Chicago.

We call upon Governor Pritzker, Mayor Lightfoot, and the Illinois Health Facilities Board to postpone the closure of Mercy Hospital until a study has been conducted that includes a short and long-term plan for the community, as well as a more permanent solution to serve the disparately resourced residents of these areas. Failure to act swiftly will compromise the health and wellbeing of these Chicagoans.



PASEO BORICUA CELEBRATED VIRTUALLY 42nd PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE'S DAY PARADE 2020



Watch the full video on: <http://bit.ly/virtual-parade>

MAYOR LORI LIGHTFOOT AND CPS CEO CONVENE PRESS CONFERENCE AT CITY HALL: CLEMENTE COMMUNITY ACADEMY'S ALTERNATIVE S.O.R. VISION HIGHLIGHTED

On Wednesday, August 19, Mayor Lori Lightfoot and CPS CEO Dr. Janice Jackson convened a press conference at City Hall to discuss reforms to School Police programs.

During which the alternative vision of the Clemente Community Academy was highlighted. The following statement was issued by Clemente's principal Sergio Mojica:

My name is Fernando Mojica, and I am the principal of Roberto Clemente Community Academy in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood.

One of the most important parts of my job is creating a school culture where every student is able to focus on what matters most—learning and growing academically. Students are unable to thrive in an environment that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

The future of student safety at Clemente is something that we have been discussing for a long time. When the conversations around school resource officers began to grow several months ago, we made additional efforts to engage our students, teachers, parents and community partners to make sure that our final decision was reflective of what our community wanted.

Ultimately, our LSC voted to remove SROs for the upcoming school year. This vote was not because our two SROs were viewed as a problem; in fact, our school's relationship with CPD was quite strong. Rather, we simply decided that our vision for the future of Clemente did not include police in our school as a part of our approach to student safety.

So what is our approach?

We plan to continue working with our community to develop restorative, culturally responsive practices to undo years of inequitable policies and help our students and community heal from historical and generational trauma. Nearly all of our students are young people of color, and most come from families that face constant financial hardships, and it is my belief that these restorative practices will have transformative effects on their academic and social-emotional development.



Roberto Clemente Community Academy Principal Fernando Mojica is flanked by Chicago Public Schools CEO Janice Jackson, left, and Mayor Lori Lightfoot at they discuss reforms to school police programs during a news conference at City Hall. (Antonio Perez / Chicago Tribune, Aug 20, 2020)

One way that I know we will continue to prioritize student safety is by continuing to partner with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center through the district's Safe Passage Program to give our own community members the agency to keep students safe walking to and from school.

I plan to grow Clemente's strong relationship with Chief Jadine Chou and the district's Office of Safety and Security as we work together to engage our students and families on a plan that reflects our community's needs and—above all else—keeps students safe. This will be an ongoing process

that will evolve as the needs of our school community change. Student voice will continue to be a crucial piece of our decision-making moving forward, because I want every student to be able to think back on their Clemente experience and say: "here is a way that I was able to make a difference in my community, by helping to create a safe and inviting place to explore the world." I am very thankful that CPS empowered our school to make this important decision on our own.

Thank you.

PRCC CREATES NEW LEADERSHIP POSITION: NAMES MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO AS CHIEF POLICY OFFICER



The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) is proud to announce the hiring of Melissa Mark-Viverito as our Chief Policy Officer. Over the years The PRCC has worked closely with Melissa on a myriad of issues, key among them organizing to free our Puerto Rican political prisoners and mobilizing to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques. Most recently, PRCC has been advocating the need for Congress to support a just recovery for Puerto Rico after the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

As a community-based, grassroots, educational, health, and cultural services organization our mission is deeply rooted in our identity as a diasporic Puerto Rican people whose history must be understood within the context of colonialism. An important aspect of our work seeks to further deepen the relationship our diaspora community has with the island. Activism and engagement are critical to our survival as a community, and as such, all of our work is founded on the principles of self-determination, self-actualization, and self-sufficiency. It is with this understanding that we are proud to have Melissa join our team. Chief among Melissa's responsibilities will be to work closely with PRCC to map out policy initiatives to strengthen our work locally as well as further strengthening the bridge between Chicago and Puerto Rico. The work PRCC has done locally

in Chicago over the years has a proven track record of success and we are actively looking to identify resources which will enable us to expand this work to Puerto Rico. Currently, PRCC is in talks with the municipalities of Comerío and Loíza and establishing the necessary linkages to make this happen.

Additionally, PRCC is looking to further support Puerto Rico by engaging the diaspora in advocating against the anti-democratic measures enacted by Congress, which further reinforce our colonial reality and relationship with the U.S. As an activist-oriented organization, PRCC will engage in efforts that are forward facing to Congress and will advance a process of self-determination for Puerto Rico and support mechanisms to provide decentralized decision making aimed at local empowerment and self-actualization.

We are excited to have Melissa join our team. Her experience and insight as a lifelong activist, organizer and elected official in NYC will help PRCC advance its mission and goals. Jose E. López, Executive Director of the PRCC stated "Melissa is an amazing leader, a devout Puerto Rican, a fierce fighter for equity and social Justice. She will indeed add new dimensions to our work in advancing the guiding principles of self determination, self actualization and self reliance of the Puerto Rican people."

ALD. MALDONADO/PRCC BEAUTIFY PASEO BORICUA

Alderman Maldonado, with participants of the Humboldt Park Youth Employment Program, place signage calling for respect for Paseo Boricua planters.

The 30 planters have been planted and maintained through the efforts of community youth from Roberto Clemente High School, Pedro Albizu Campos High School, and The Puerto Rican Cultural Center over many years.



Commentary

WHICH WAY FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: CENTERING THE MARGINS OR CORPORATE GREED? THE CASE OF CASA CENTRAL AND THE CENTER HOME FOR HISPANIC ELDERLY



For decades, Puerto Ricans in Chicago cherished an institution that few could lay claim to – a nursing home unapologetically rooted in its community’s culture and heritage. It would go on to become the oldest and longest-lived Latino social service agency in Chicago. When Casa Central opened its doors in 1954, it was the only place where thousands of Puerto Ricans could find the help they needed to survive a world so alien to them upon arrival. Not long after that, Casa Central opened its acclaimed nursing home. This new enterprise was a celebration of culture and identity. Such a nursing home may have been a tectonic shift for Chicago, but it was a natural progression for an authentically rooted Puerto Rican community organization.

In the 1960s, Casa Central broadened its mission so it could serve newly arriving Cuban immigrants. Even with this additional commission, under the leadership of Jose “Viejo” Torres, Casa Central continued unabated to serve the socio-cultural needs of all the community’s Latino residents. However, beginning in the 1970s, there was an overhaul of its mission and vision under the leadership of Rev. Daniel Álvarez and his family. La Casa Central now embraced a corporate model of social services.

Decades later, and without prior warning, Casa Central’s Board of Directors sold the community’s prized nursing home to the highest bidder. Where once there was a

mission-driven enterprise that honored the heritage and the lived experiences of area residents, now there is a business (Center for Elderly Hispanics) where executive leadership obeys its fiduciary duty to maximize profits for remote, non-Latino shareholders.

The COVID 19 pandemic has exposed ugly truths. Among them -- corporate profit schemes are incompatible with effective holistic care. There is a rudimentary disconnect between making lots of money and authentically serving a community in a literal life and death struggle for resources. According to The Illinois Department of Public Health in May of 2020, The Center for Elderly Hispanics suffered the highest COVID-19 death toll of all nursing homes in Illinois. The generation that brought us into the world, nurtured us, helped us to make sense of what surrounds us, and passed onto us our proud heritage has been dying off faster than any other group in all of Illinois. This loss is catastrophic and irreversible.

From cradle to grave, Puerto Ricans confront historical and generational traumas and other maladies common among marginalized populations, yet we persevere. The capacity to endure great hardship, is the noble inheritance modeled and passed down to us across generations. In our golden years, however, we expect some of life’s burdens to ease because we are elevated, loved, and honored for our long devotion to family and for our accumulated wisdom – as evidenced by the often-heard dictum, “Respetar la cana” (Respect the gray hair). This promise of a noble “third age”, however, is upended by Casa Central’s fire sale. It was a shortsighted and treacherous money grab that is usurping the end of life dignity of our heroic, unsung elders as it overwhelms those of us left behind. The following narratives speak to that reality.

Samuel Calderón moved to Chicago from Luquillo, Puerto Rico in the early 80s. He found a job, married, and started a family. He is now on disability, struggles with addiction, and suffers a chronic heart condition that lands him at the Norwegian American Hospital emergency room up to five times a month. His son Juan laments there are no effective long-term care options for his father in the community. Juan is a community leader who works full-time and sits on several boards. When he comes home, his

full attention goes to his father’s care. Where once La Casa Central Nursing Home would have been an obvious choice for Puerto Ricans in their golden years such as Samuel, the younger Calderón insists he would never leave his father in the place that succeeded it. According to Juan, the new nursing home is owned and managed by non-Latinos. “They don’t get how important it is for Puerto Ricans to be connected to their Puerto Ricanness.” Juan describes a thriving Puerto Rican food scene that surrounds them, but that no Puerto Rican restaurant has been contracted to prepare meals for Center Home residents. Juan goes on to argue that Center Home for Hispanic Elderly is in the middle of a vibrant, and culturally rich

community of Puerto Rican art, culture, and life, yet the nursing home chose to cut itself off. He described it as a self-imposed silo, oblivious to the beauty that

surrounds it. Juan added, “And why does the Center not have a relationship with Norwegian American Hospital? It only makes sense! Why does it not have relationships with community organizations in the neighborhood so it can provide wrap around services? That’s basic prevention. You know, there’s more to health care than calling the ambulance when one of your residents gets sick!”



Nelson Rodríguez III recently said goodbye to his grandfather – also Nelson Rodríguez. The young man described his grandfather as a proud man who passionately loved everything Puerto Rican. When the elder Nelson became eligible for subsidized housing and an opening came up, he moved quickly. However, when the grandfather found himself miles away from the smells, sights, and sounds of his Puerto Rican neighborhood, he abandoned the long-sought housing, and returned to Humboldt Park. The young Nelson regrets his grandfather was not in the kind of nursing home that would have better cared for him once it was discovered he was ill. “He really needed professional care, but he also really needed to be close to his family and to his Puerto Rican culture.” The older Nelson often referenced the seminal Puerto Rican song, “En Mi Viejo San Juan”, where the composer laments his hair has grown white, his life is slipping away, and Death is calling for him, but what troubles him is he does not want to die away from his soul – his Puerto Rico. Nelson’s grandfather passed away from pancreatic and liver cancers on August 6, 2020.



Noel Sánchez is a union organizer for SEIU Local 1 Humboldt Park. When he came to Chicago from Puerto Rico, he lived and worked as a maintenance repair person at a Hispanic Housing site, a residential home for senior independent living. Many elderly Latinos reside there before they require the around the clock care of a nursing home. Sánchez grew close to the seniors he lived with and worked for. They exchanged stories of their growing up in Puerto Rico, they celebrated one another’s birthdays and anniversaries, they played dominoes, and they all looked out for one another. Even after they left to live in nursing homes, Sánchez kept in touch with many of them. Several transferred to Casa Central’s nursing home. Sánchez was

not aware that Casa Central had sold its nursing home to a private, for-profit entity. He believes it was purposely kept quiet. He said that it makes sense now, explaining that his old friends began to complain bitterly about the nursing home around the same time the sale went through.

Now that Sánchez is an SEIU Local 1 organizer, he works closely with those who live and do maintenance work in Hispanic Housing sites, just as he once did. He described his union brothers and sisters as hard working people suffering from trauma. As did Sánchez, other maintenance repair people have forged bonds with the seniors they live with and work for. Now the COVID-19 pandemic is taking a quick and severe toll on their friends. At one point, Hispanic Center for the Elderly had the most COVID-19 deaths of all the nursing homes in Illinois. Sánchez explained that behind each one of those deaths, there was a person who was loved, who gave love, and is now mourned too soon. Sánchez draws a connection between the sale of our community’s nursing home and the shoddy conditions that left our seniors vulnerable to infection and death.



Dina Cruz is a Puerto Rican woman who has lived in Humboldt Park for more than 50 years. She says that the Center Home for the Elderly used to be a community institution until Casa Central sold it for profit. Cruz said, “The only thing they want to do is take our money. It is not a place I want to be at 76 years of age.”

The Puerto Rican community lovingly sustained La Casa’s nursing home across turbulent decades. Through riots, recessions, Arctic blasts, a killer heat wave, and 9-11, it was an area where elderly Puerto Ricans intentionally constructed their home space -- reconnecting the senses with their rich past. They heard and danced the rhythms of Puerto Rican boleros, trios, bomba y plena; they ate

arroz con gandules, bacalao, mofongo, and alcapurrias; they played dominoes, engaged in tertulias, they saw they were integrated seamlessly into the life of the Puerto Rican community. Unfortunately, this has come to an end. The nursing home that intentionally grounded the connection between its residents to their heritage has been eviscerated. In its place, stands a business void of meaningful connection to the community it makes money off of.



The Casa Central Board Treasurer, John Filan, is a keen advocate of privatization. When his consulting and accounting company was hired to review the Chicago Park District’s finances, his recommendations led to the firing of more than 1,100 employees, the doling out of contracts to for-profit companies, which effectively privatized the jobs he had just eliminated, and effected an 11-fold increase in registration fees, e.g., softball teams (\$45 to \$500), thus effectively privatizing City recreational areas for those with the disposable income to afford it.

There is no doubt; Humboldt Park must revive the model of elderly care we inherited from the generation before us. We need to reestablish the vision of a truly community-rooted nursing home -- one that is organic, culturally informed, and mission driven, not a business designed to yield profits for investors with no involvement in our community other than a column in their portfolios. And once we do this, we must ensure that it is not again taken from us under cover of darkness. We owe our parents and grand parents so much more, but at the very least, we owe them this.

One lesson to be taken from this unhappy history: To ensure a mission-driven, community based organization stays true to its commitments and to the spirit that created it, the organization must codify its mission and vision in the organization’s bylaws and with the Board of Trustees.

SURVIVAL DAY: FOR SELF ACTUALIZATION

COVID-19 HUMBOLDT PARK UNITED COMMUNITY RESPONSE



Humboldt Park institutions showed up in force on July 13th to promote a healthy community. The event was billed as “Survival Day”, and was organized by Healthy Hood and sponsored by 26th Ward Alderman Roberto Maldonado’s Office with the help of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), Save Money Save Life, and Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE).

Survival Day took place in the parking lot of the Boathouse Café, which is in the heart of Humboldt Park. A team from CORE administered free COVID-19 testing. Hundreds waited patiently in line to take the test while listening to curated music from DJ@Giosandz, and enjoying free tacos from chef Manny’s Taco Sublime. There were also free groceries by Save Money Save Life, and live art by @artbyroldan, @hai_ey, @clue.chicago, and @_frillz.

The initiative was undertaken because there is a startling increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the Latino and African American communities of Chicago. Healthy Hood, the organizer, plans on having similar events in other communities of Chicago to fight the spread of

COVID-19 among minority groups.

Representatives from The Puerto Rican Cultural Center were present and provided crucial information regarding COVID-19 prevention, as well as services offered by PRCC’s public health, human services, and business departments. PRCC is one of the first and strongest proponents for testing Latinos, and has pressured the City of Chicago, as well as the State of Illinois, to provide more free COVID-19 testing resources in marginalized communities of Chicago. PRCC’s Census program staff was also present and distributed Census 2020 items to the attendees reminding them of the importance of filling out their Census information. PRCC staff helped those who had not yet filled out the Census, to complete and submit their forms online. Oftentimes people are unaware of the immeasurable work behind initiatives like this. Activist organizations such as Healthy Hood and PRCC are continually challenging city officials to allocate more resources to minority groups and disadvantaged communities. The fight is continuous, and

as the pandemic progresses, activists look for more ways to protect the Latino and African American communities through education and prevention. “The inequity and racism that exists in healthcare is one I’ve dedicated my career to combating. This virus has only magnified the injustice we face as Black and Brown people. We have to fight!” said Tanya Lozano, co-founder and CEO of Healthy Hood. Healthy Hood is a community based, non-profit organization based in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. It was established to provide affordable programming and resources that elevate the mind, body, and conscience as means to combat the current twenty-year life expectancy gap between underserved communities and high-income communities in the Chicago area and around the country. As many other activist organizations, Healthy Hood has a heightened understanding of the critical importance of easy-to-access health resources for people within their own neighborhoods so that transportation does not become an obstacle in getting tested.

At the onset of the pandemic, people were instructed to wait until they presented with symptoms before they would take the COVID-19 test, however, research has shown that some people can have the virus and be asymptomatic. For this reason, it is important to persuade people not to wait to get tested. If there is doubt about possible exposure, the best route is to get tested immediately.

According to the organizers, Humboldt Park “Survival Day” was a huge success -- 646 people were tested for COVID-19, while hundreds of masks, face shields, and bottles of hand sanitizer were distributed. The importance of always wearing a mask while in a crowd was a theme that organizers came back to frequently. Wearing a facemask is our new normal; we need to make this our habit.

The reach of this pandemic is unprecedented in recent history. No community was prepared for such a profound and sweeping turn of events. Nonetheless, our community has risen to the challenge. Disparate Humboldt Park institutions seamlessly joining forces to promote “Survival Day” demonstrate the strength of our community. The roots of our organizations are authentic, relevant, and run deep. As long as they continue, our community will endure this crisis.

Nadya Henríquez, La Voz del Paseo Boricua

¿ESTAMOS TODOS EN UN MISMO BARCO?



El asesinato de George Floyd fue un golpe nuevo sobre una vieja herida. En cuestión de minutos las imágenes del linchamiento cruzaron las fronteras, catalizando protestas tanto a nivel nacional como internacional. Habían pasado dos meses desde que la pandemia del COVID-19 había forzado la población a quedarse en casa y mantener una distancia social de seis pies. Si lo re-pensamos en un contexto socio-político, la distancia social no es un concepto nuevo para las minorías en los Estados Unidos. No son seis pies ni dos metros lo que nos separa, son quinientos años. Si bien es pragmático advocar por que cada individuo mantenga una distancia física, ignorar que lo que nos ha separado no ha sido una pandemia, sino el racismo como producto del desorden creado por la empresa colonial, es ponerle un vendaje a un cáncer que ha carcomido el desarrollo de la humanidad. Como resultado, las protestas, el saqueo y la represión policiaca mostraron que más que fisuras, la sociedad estadounidense está llena de grietas profundas, que históricamente insisten en resolverse.

Irónicamente la respuesta del estado para lidiar con las protestas contra la brutalidad policiaca fue movilizar la policía. Cuando la ciudad de Chicago movilizó la policía al centro, los saqueos se desplazaron a los barrios marginados y hacia los pequeños negocios. Lo que comenzó como una lucha social vertical, se degeneró en violencia horizontal. La gente rompía los cristales de las tiendas y entraban como Juan por su casa a llevarse lo que pudiesen. Los meses de confinamiento en el hogar, sin ingresos, desataron la desesperación. Mientras las tiendas se vaciaban, los social media se llenaban de hashtags y consignas que iban desde el 'Defund the police', 'Justice for George Floyd', 'Black and Brown unity', hasta 'we are all in this together'. Esta última

consigna se refiere a que en esta pandemia estamos todos juntos en el mismo barco.

Esta analogía sólo se puede tomar en serio si recordamos a los barcos negreros de hace quinientos años atrás cuando los colonizadores cruzaban las aguas del atlántico en los mismos veleros que los esclavos. En aquel entonces, si un brote viral ocurría, era el esclavo quien terminaba en el fondo del mar. Desde entonces mucho ha cambiado. Pero como dice el viejo adagio, todo cambia para que nada cambie.

Tras los saqueos, los negocios locales instalaron paneles en los ventanales que pronto se transformaron en obras de arte mostrando solidaridad y apoyo con el pueblo afroamericano.

En el barrio puertorriqueño, los artistas nos organizamos para pintar los paneles y hacer visible nuestra empatía con la causa del pueblo afroamericano en Estados Unidos. Sus causas no han sido ajenas a nosotros. La erosión de la memoria colectiva, el constante desplazamiento, el trauma intergeneracional, las olas migratorias, la educación colonial, y la fragmentación sistemática son algunos de los retos que compartimos los pueblos marginados en los Estados Unidos. Estos síntomas son producto de una colonización tanto externa, en el caso de Puerto Rico, como interna en el caso de las minorías en los Estados Unidos.

El arte público en Paseo Boricua, como se le conoce al barrio puertorriqueño en Chicago, ha funcionado como una plataforma para denunciar las injusticias sociales que se viven tanto en la isla como en la diáspora como producto de la relación desigual socio-política que confrontamos. Paseo Boricua sirvió como galería para una exhibición orgánica de arte público que reclama la solidaridad mutua

y recíproca entre las minorías oprimidas en los Estados Unidos y denuncia al racismo como una manifestación más de una estructura colonial. El colonialismo busca justificar lo injustificable en los aspectos más superfluos como lo es la apariencia, el color de piel, las diferencias en creencias religiosas, el lenguaje o el estatuto migratorio. En adición al arte público, la comunidad llevó a cabo una vigilia para conmemorar la vida perdida a causa del racismo. La misma se llevó a cabo frente a la Iglesia Unida Metodista Adalberto donde varias mujeres indocumentadas han tomado santuario en el centro de nuestra comunidad puertorriqueña, comenzando con Elvira Arellano. Actualmente el Museo Nacional de Arte y Cultura Puertorriqueña en Chicago está organizando una exhibición con las obras de arte en los paneles.

El linchamiento de George Floyd, la apropiación de las tierras palestinas por Israel, las reservas indígenas en Estados Unidos, la encarcelación de niños inmigrantes en la frontera, la junta de control fiscal, y la ley de cabotaje en Puerto Rico, son manifestaciones de un colonialismo que no solo se limita a la geopolítica estadounidense, sino que abarca otras naciones, tanto externas como internas, como un cáncer metastásico que comenzó hace cinco siglos en el renacimiento, con la conquista y hasta el son de hoy se propaga por la humanidad. Es un colonialismo definido por el binario entre los países "desarrollados" y los que han sido "subdesarrollados", los primeros sostenidos por el discurso de la supremacía blanca y nutrido por "las venas abiertas" de "los condenados de la tierra".

Por: Cristian J. Roldán Aponte

Ending Anti-Blackness in Latinx Communities

This event seeks to engage with the problem of anti-Blackness in Latinx communities. Speakers will address: (1) the conditions that shape anti-Blackness within Latinx communities and between Latinx and Black communities and, (2) how long-standing strategies for racial justice can be mobilized to expand the possibilities of solidarity.

The event is geared towards scholars, students, local communities and activists.

Featuring Panelists

Regina Russell, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression labor committee co-chair & Mamas Activating Movements for Abolition and Solidarity Member

Bertha Escamilla, Mamas Activating Movements for Abolition and Solidarity Member & Campaign to Free Incarcerated Survivors of Police Torture member

José López, Puerto Rican Cultural Center Executive Director

Fernanda Castellanos, Organized Communities Against Deportation Asambleas leader

Crystal Galván, UIC Latin American and Latino Studies Master's Student

Mario Lamothe, UIC Anthropology Assistant Professor

Ralph Cintron, UIC Latin American and Latino Studies & English Professor

September 1, 2020

4 - 5:30 pm

Register at:

LatinxBlackSolidarity.eventbrite.com



 Latin American and Latino Studies

 Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Latinos

 Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy
Research that Makes a Difference

SAVE THE DATE

Sept. 16th, 2020

NATIONAL BORICUA PHONE BANKING DAY

Join us for a day of Diaspora action to reach Boricua voters in swing states

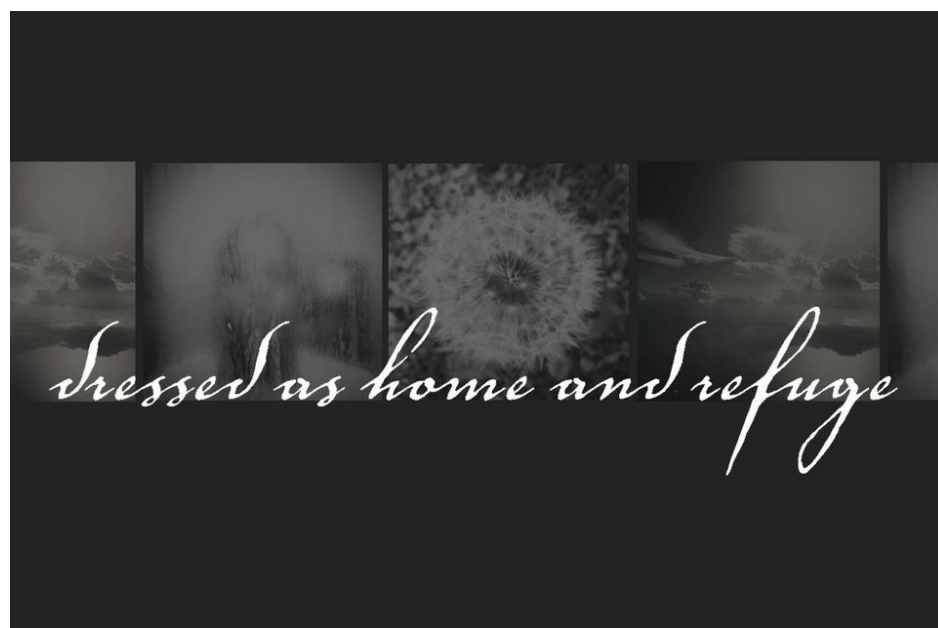
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THE PUERTO RICAN Agenda



Dressed as home and refuge: is an intimate map through homesickness and resistance presented through a site-specific photographic installation that investigates the effects of homesickness and its meaning to those close, but also to those that remained back home.

Closing Reception:

Dressed As Home & Refuge

Art Exhibit by Brenda Torres Figueroa

Saturday, September 5th, 10:am to 2:00pm

Humboldt park Boathouse Gallery

1301 N Sacramento Blvd, 2nd Fl.

[facebook.com / Humboldt-Park-Boathouse-Gallery](https://facebook.com/Humboldt-Park-Boathouse-Gallery)



-RIP- OUR COMMUNITY MOURNS AND CELEBRATES THE LIFE OF...



...RAMÓN LÓPEZ

Our beloved Ramón López has exited this world and entered his new life. Truly, everyone that knew him knows that his spirituality transcended the physical entrapment which was his body. He was a free spirit who confronted the physical pain and torture of his fragile body with an amazing grace. The depth of his spirit provided him with a mighty shield, which overcame all the trials and tribulations of his body. He danced and sang; he performed his storytelling with the agility of an athlete; he composed music and edited the newspaper Boricua; he held captivating and riveting tertulias; and his bony fingers wove the most aesthetically beautiful and complex canvases.

While constantly challenging the limitations of his bodily constraints to the furthest possible, he was an incredible scholar who pierced the façade of Eurocentric thinking with his critical research. He placed Puerto Rican popular culture at the center of what defines us as a people and as historical beings. His resilient spirit was that of a cimarrón warrior and a Taíno bohique that refused to accept the notions of docility and insularismo, which characterized a great deal of Puerto Rican scholarship. He defied the very canons of the colonial paradigm of silencing our past. Ramón has physically passed away. His spirit and his wisdom shall forever be present in this community because he, 25 years ago, with the erection of the flags of steel, baptized the area between the gigantic monuments as Paseo Boricua. Para celebrar la vida de nuestro entrañable Ramón López, les exhortamos a todos a proclamar a los cuatro vientos:

¡Se siente! ¡Se Siente!
Ramón estuvo presente en el Paseo Boricua
¡Se siente! ¡Se Siente!
Ramón está presente en la estatua de Don Pedro
¡Se siente! ¡Se Siente!
Ramón estará presente en la Casita de Don Pedro y
Doña Lolita
¡Se siente! ¡Se Siente!
Ramón estuviese presente en todas las hazañas que
emprenderemos
como una nación nómada, en el desierto, en búsqueda
de nuestra Estrella del Oriente
¡Hasta Siempre! Ramón López, hijo predilecto de éste
tu Pedacito de Patria en Chicago.



HIPÓLITA PÉREZ

We at the PRCC want to express our heartfelt solidarity and deepest sense of love to the family of Hipólita Pérez upon her death. Hipólita, the mother of our patriots and ex-political prisoners Felix and Luis Rosa was the pillar for the family members who shared her experiences of offspring jailed for their leadership and activism in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. She never tired of raising funds, organizing activities and visiting her sons in distant prisons across the US. She never faltered and was always steadfast and unwavering. Her fierce spirit, her loving smile, her incredible cooking, her compassion and empathy made such a contagious and indelible mark in all who met her, ensuring that she will always be among family, friends and loved ones. As the philosopher Kahlil Gibran has reminded us: "For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one." Hipólita has been transformed, but she will always accompany us in our many paths.

*José E. López. Executive Director
Puerto Rican Cultural Center*

Hipólita requested a cremation. For those who would like to help with expenses, please mail a check to the PRCC and write Hipólita Pérez in the note.



...CARLOS LÓPEZ LÓPEZ

Please join me and the PRCC Board of Directors in expressing condolences to the López family on the unexpected death of Carlos López López. Carlos is the brother of Maricelis and Luis Iván, and through the father's line, the sibling of Juan Alberto, Clara Luz, Mercedes, Oscar, José and Zenaida. Carlos suffered a massive heart attack and upon arrival at Norwegian American Hospital was pronounced dead. While Carlos faced many challenges in his life, he was truly a loving father for his beloved children, Grisellely, Carlos Jr, Marileys, and Yajaira Lee.

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