

# JUVENTUD

## BORICUA & LATINA/O

### YOUTH AS TRANSFORMATIVE AGENTS



# **Plantando Semillas 2011:**

## **Bridging the Gap between Community Schools & NEIU**

While the Latina/o Cultural and Resource Center is being built to provide a unique space and experience for Latina/o students here at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), retention and recruitment remain key questions that continuously need to be addressed. Historically, Latina/o students have collectively been a major force in ensuring the progress of the Latina/o status at NEIU.

In early April, nearly 30 students from Roberto Clemente and Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) toured the campus here at NEIU. These students (who all are potentially attending Northeastern next fall) were able to meet student leader, sit-in in their classes, and explore to see the many student programs and organizations for a full college day experience at NEIU.

Organized by the Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) and Que Ondee Sola (QOS), a number of Latina/o student leaders from different organizations were present in the QOS office, ready to welcome and introduce themselves to the curious and excited high school students. While previous Plantando Semillas events have addressed the concerns of the Latina/o status, this years Plantando Semillas was in fact, another attempt to improve the overall status of student retention.

Specifically, this 6th annual Plantando Semillas was a kick off for the 40th anniversary of UPRS and QOS, celebrating the Latina/o presence and persistence at NEIU and the new Latino Latin American Studies major.

The event gave honor to Puerto Rican patriot and former political prisoner Carlos Alberto Torres who was present in room 1002 LWH where the event took place. Alberto Torres, who was involved in the student struggle at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), struggled for the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services Program (LARES), which was established to assist UIC in recruitment of Latinos and to provide academic support. The LARES program now has an enrolled Latina/o student population of 3300 students.

Throughout his presentation, he reflected on the overall progress of Latina/o students at the University. Although incredibly proud of the many accomplishments, Carlos affirmed that the student struggle here at NEIU must continue. In essence, Latina/o students are a prominent factor in the growing of the Latina/o status. In other words, Latina/o students play a critical role when it comes to providing a great sense of mentorship for incoming students and their success as college students.

When exploring the pages of this month's edition, you will find reflections shared by some of the students from Clemente on their experience coming to Northeastern, and students from PACHS, who shared their experience involving the deep reality of substance abuse. They give us (existing college students) an idea on what must be done to improve and further Latina/o retention. Furthermore, this edition tackles the enormous challenge we have ahead of us in terms of proceeding the Latina/o agenda at NEIU.

# Adentro QOS

## Campus

- 4 A Day at NEIU
- 6 A Trip to NEIU
- 7 The New TriO Program

## Comunidad & Arte

- 8 Presenting BACCA to the community
- 9 BACCA Instructor Reflection
- 10 Value Life, Not Alcohol
- 11 Falling into a Statistic
- 12 Don't Use Alcohol Just to Fit In
- 13 Teens, Drop the Bottle
- 14 The Chain Reaction of Underage Drinking
- 15 The Community as a Campus

## Puerto Rico & Latin America

- 22 Interviews on Oscar López Rivera, Part I

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Que Ondee Sola was established in 1972 and remains the oldest Puerto Rican & Latina/o university student publication in the U.S. Our mission is to provide the NEIU community with a relevant and engaging publication that deals with student issues with a focus on Puerto Ricans and Latinas/os, our communities, and our *patrias*.

Que Ondee Sola continues to affirm the right of Puerto Rican self-determination, freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners, and support for a truly participatory democracy.

## Que Ondee Sola

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# A Day at NEIU

Que Ondee Sola

As I reflect on the shadow day at Northeastern Illinois University, I had first heard about the school through my mother, who received her masters at NEIU to become a teacher. I also have friends and family members who attend there now. I'm interested in



High School students attending class at NEIU

going into the field of education and law.

The reason why I am interested in going into education is because I'm good with children, from small children to kids my age. Another reason why I was looking into education was the fact that I have seen my mother in action, being a teacher; my whole life. I was a small part of her teaching career, which didn't bother me at all. I liked helping my mom with her lesson plans and when I didn't have school I had to go to school with her



High School students attending 6th Annual Plantando Semillas



High School students attending a tour by QOS staff members

about today. It was a great class and I hope to take it while attending NEIU. I was captivated by Mr. López's lessons on such history and amazed how he delivered them. I was also very interested in the *Que Ondee Sola* magazine. I appreciated how the professor took time out to talk with us and share their experiences. I thought that was very nice and thoughtful.

Since it was a beautiful day, we were also able to take a tour of the whole campus and see the

and I loved it. I loved being able to teach someone something that they had small or no knowledge about and also helping them understand why education was so important.

The day began with us entering the *Que Ondee Sola* office, where a number of college students were there ready to meet us. I was very pleased with the college students taking out time for us to guide us through the day. After a quick introduction, we were split up into a few groups. This is when college student Marla Mojica guided us to her first class.

The first class that she took us in was with Professor José López in Puerto Rican history. We pretty much talked about how Puerto Rico evolved and how it has come to be

different buildings and what each building was. I had a great time and I can't wait to start my year off as a NEIU college student. I'm excited for the big change and challenge.

I'm currently in a law class in my school and that's how my interest for law came about. I've had 2 mock trials and my schools prosecution and defense team have been able to advance and make it to the finals. Out of 520 CPS teenagers in the city of Chicago I have been chosen to be one of the 8 finalists to attend a final mock trial. It has been a challenging three months, but one of the best and most interesting three months of my senior year.

# A Trip to NEIU



**Proyecto Pa'Lante staff speak with High Schools students at the 6th Annual Plantando Semillas**

things like that. Once again this school is very good because it provides online help with teachers and professors to make sure you're able to be on track. But one thing I do know is that college is a place where teachers don't stress you for homework or things like that. Attendance is if you choose to go and if you don't go it's your loss.

When students are in high school it's a great opportunity to have the privilege to go on college trips. Visiting colleges is a great way to see what the campus is offering and see what environment it's in. I've had the privilege to visit many colleges on trips and one college that stood out to me was Northeastern.

Northeastern has a great campus and has many opportunities you can build from to start your career, live, and become a better person. Everyone there looks like they get along and teachers make the impression that they will be there to guide you. This campus is very clean, healthy, and students look very mature.

In high school many fights occurred with various trouble makers but at Northeastern there no need to be watching your back for

Many high schools offer the opportunity to be able to go on college trips. When I went on the trip to Northeastern, I felt like I was in good hands. Staff members were there with welcoming smiles and made me feel like school wasn't an obstacle but a privilege. Students should take advantage of things like this so if you do go to college you won't be lost and feel like you are alone. Student who go on trips like this always remember a face when they leave the campus so that helps them feel like they have someone to talk to if they need help and that leads to meeting new people. The most interesting thing I found was the magic of art that they provide. Their art inspired me to become a make-up artist and hair designer. This college offers many starts to your life and it's on you if you're going to take it.

Que Ondee Sola

# TriO Program:

## A New Teacher Preparation Program at NEIU

College can often be overwhelming. Students have countless responsibilities that can make it difficult to keep school in order. It's easy to feel lost in the hectic whirlwind of grades, choosing classes, and deciding a major. For many Latinas/os, there is no one in generations before them to turn to for assistance. Finally, there is a place to turn to! The TRiO Student Support Services is a brand new, free program to the Northeastern campus. As a federally funded program, TRiO aids to increase the academic success of first generation college students.

The TRiO program offers three subprograms: Achieve, Access, and Teacher Preparation. The Achieve program offers academic support for first generation and income-qualifying students and students, and students with disabilities. Financial aid, scholarship guidance tutoring and mentoring, among other things are used to increase university leadership. Access aids students with disabilities in academic success using support and advocacy. Teacher Preparation gives support to students majoring in Educational degrees.

This subprogram offers preparation for the Illinois Basic Skills Test, academic advisement, and other tools to aid in academic success. As a whole, TRiO hopes to help students become more engaged at NEIU and network. The TRiO staff members understand the importance of having a Latino serving university in the city of Chicago. The TRiO program at NEIU is intentionally reaching out to the Latino population. TRiO is equipped with Latino staff members to make Latino students feel more welcomed and be able to relate to their mentor.

In order to be eligible to apply to TRiO, a student has to be enrolled or accepted to NEIU, a citizen of the U.S, or meet residency requirements for financial aid. A student must either be a first generation college student, have a qualifying tax income, or be disabled. Applications are available in any of the TRiO offices 134, 138, 139, or 140 located in the College of Business Management. Applications can be sent online or by email. Being a member of the TRiO program, I encourage everyone to further look into TRiO and apply!

*Que Ordee Sola*

## Presenting our BACCA program to the Community

Que Ondee Sola



The Barrio, Arts, Culture, & Communications Academy (BACCA), por si no lo sabías, is a community-based after school program on Paseo Boricua.

The program was created in 2007 as an alternative way to reach Puerto Rican and Latina/o high school-aged youth in Humboldt Park. BACCA was also created to offer career skills to that population related to media and the arts as well as getting young people engaged in community activities.

BACCA's five core group of students participate three days a week in classes of poetry, theater, civic engagement, and journalism. These courses are offered in

order to build a successful future for our Latina/o youth within our community and to open up possibilities.

Throughout each week, we learn how to express ourselves, interact with our peers, and exercise our writing skills. Furthermore, we will be organizing community events and are currently producing a social marketing campaign on anti-underage drinking focused on alternative ways of dealing with the problems young people face.

You can find out more information about us by going to: [www.prcc-chgo.org/bacca](http://www.prcc-chgo.org/bacca)

## BACCA Instructor Reflection



Being a Co-coordinator and instructor for the Barrio, Arts, Culture, & Communications Academy (BACCA) has been a learning experience. The realities of our students have inspired me to do my best as a role model and an instructor. BACCA is no ordinary program; we have allowed our students to make this program their own, to make it a home away from home. Our students are inspired to be agents of change, organizers, and key components to this program and community.

I am the instructor for theatre and poetry; with has a theme of: "Liberation Through the Arts." In this class, our students have learned to tell their stories through acting and poetry, even if they are painful. We have discussed things like drug abuse, unstable families, gangs, prostitution, all of which are a reality in their lives. Currently, we are working on a play that deals with underage drinking, using freestyle poetry. Through laughing, serious discussions, and debates the students and myself have build a great sense of community inside our class. They respect the space as well as each other because they understand they are all

here for the same or similar reasons. One of BACCA's components is the anti-underage drinking campaign, in which we discourage drinking before the age of 21, especially since many youth have told us that alcohol is a way of escaping the problems they face everyday.. Therefore, in our program we talk about escapism and what that means. We have discussions on what types of alternatives we can be creating instead of drinking. Thus, the BACCA students become in charge of challenging themselves and other youth in our community to rethink drinking, alcohol and think critically about the situation at hand, so that they are able to do things more productive and potentially produce things that can tranform their lives and the lives of others for the better:

My job is to be able to provide an alternative space for our youth, as well as incorporating academic rigor and art. As I reflect on my position and this program, I realize that the students have also provided an alternative space for me; they have given me the chance to get to know them and learn from their experiences. They have shown me that I can overcome anything and everything;. Moreover, they have also taught me it is not your experiences that define you but how you handle them. I have never met stronger individuals in my life. They walk in with smiles, telling jokes, and ready to work. These five students are the future to our community and I couldn't be happier because these five will change our community for the better.

*Que Ordee Sola*

# Value Life, not Alcohol

Facing our problems isn't easy.

Alcohol doesn't make them easier.

(Drop The  
Bottle)

Let The Pen Flow

Que Ondee Sola

The first time I drank liquor was when I was fourteen-years-old. I ran to get a sip of some tequila while my great grandma left para la tienda. I remember this because it tasted nasty and hot. My second time drinking was at a quinceaños and it was fun. I drank, then danced, and drank some more. My third time drinking was on my quinceaños. I drank champagne and beer y no me importó. After that, I kept drinking and drinking and as time passed I started to like it even more because it got me out of my stress. But little did I know it was messing up my relationship with true friends.

I started hanging with so-called "cool" kids, and almost got caught in school drinking liquor in water bottles, but I still didn't care about the consequences. Even though I did good in my school work, I became the class clown and always had to find a way that the school wouldn't call or send letters to the house, but sometimes that didn't work. So,

I started getting tired of doing everything wrong or bad in school and stopped drinking. Then I moved to Chicago from Texas and I started to drink again.

Back in Chicago I got reacquainted with family and met my Titi Marilyn. But after barely being back in the city for a few months, she passed away.

I was happy to open my

heart and have my family back in my life, but losing one was devastating. She was a beloved mother, Titi, and grandmother. Her health problems, including alcohol abuse, were explained to me and it made me look at the way I was and how I wanted to be more careful with my body. It helped me to stop drinking and value life more. It also made me think of what my grandmother told me: "aquí, ahora, mañana no sabemos donde estaremos" - "here, now, tomorrow, we don't know where we'll be" - and I changed for the better.

I encourage all the youth that are drinkers to drop the bottle and find a place like the Batey Urbano on Paseo Boricua or the Boys & Girl's Club nearby and other youth spaces to change their lifestyles and encourage others that are going down the same path. Live free and help others to live!

# Falling into a Statistic

I really feel that me knowing well the type of attitude that society has towards young Puerto Ricans should have been reason enough for me not to have done what I did. Not too long ago, I was found

by police in a car by my school smoking and drinking with some friends. We were interrogated and laughed at by the cops and I felt embarrassed the whole time. Also, I felt regret because I am suppose to stand against underage drinking in the Barrio, Arts, Culture, and Communications Academy (BACCA) program that I am in, but yet do it myself.

Sometimes in my life I feel that there is no escape from the things that I face and I become even more stressed out when I feel that there is nothing that I could do to better my situation. Reality just hits and sometimes as hard as it can and I feel that my only option is a bottle and a blunt.

However, I now understood how much



damage I did to my image, especially as a student at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School, because the cops called our principal to come to talk to us. I also ruined my image as a Christian. I'm a pastor's son, so I am looked at and expected to be different than other teenagers. I know smoking and drinking would not have fixed my problems, but when you hit that stage where you don't care, ignorant actions take place.

After the incident, I had a meeting with my three BACCA instructors and the rest of my peers and we talked about the core reasons for me dealing with my stress with drugs and alcohol. I can say, in reality, I do not need any type of drugs in my body; that only makes my problems worse. Facing reality sober actually can help you find solutions quicker instead of trying to go the easy route.

*Que Ordee Sola*

## Don't Use Alcohol Just to Fit In

Que Ondee Sola



Alcohol changed my family's life, from addiction to death. What is it about drinking that makes people want it? I believe that the urge to drink comes from within; people are hurt by things in their lives and the only way for them to cope is by drinking. At least that's why I drank.

Nothing ever seemed right until I had a bottle. There was just one thing that I wanted growing up and it was to fit in since everywhere I went I felt hated. So, I started drinking. With me drinking, I felt like I belonged, but did I ever belong or will I

ever belong anywhere? Being addicted to alcohol only caused more problems for me. It makes one feel so dirty and sick. I never fully understood why it wasn't working the way I imagined it would. That was it for me: I knew it would never feel the way I imagined because alcohol is nothing but poison, poison that you willingly inject into yourself. No matter how, the bad side of alcohol always, always creeps into your life, affecting your family or friends. You have to ask yourself: Is alcohol really worth your life? Is alcohol worth your time?

# Teens, Drop the Bottle

Why do some people believe it is ok for parents to introduce alcohol to their teenage kids? In my opinion, it is not ok in any aspect.

I am currently 18-years-old and was 15-years-old when my father handed me a beer for the first time. I told him that my mother wouldn't want that, but he insisted, so I took the bottle and drank most of it.



After that experience, I started having relationship and family problems that no one around me knew about. Every morning if I woke up mad or upset about a situation, I would stop at my 8th grade friend's house and we would drink. The alcohol would make us laugh and be goofy on our way to school. I made it an even worse habit when I moved with my dad. I drank with him and then behind his back. After almost a year being with my dad I got bored with him and went back with my mom. I started changing my life and took a positive turn to an alcohol-free life. I realized that alcohol was not the solution to my problems.

After a year and a half, I wanted to improve my educational opportunities. I wanted to go to a school where teachers cared about me and my education. I was introduced to

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School (PACHS) through one of the programs of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Vida/SIDA. I went into the place to get condoms and came out with a pamphlet about the school in my hands. This is how my journey to a better education started. I have been in PACHS for almost a school year now and I love it. The school offers great opportunities to

join after school programs, to be a part of the community, and it encourages us to go to college. Due to that school, I was introduced to the Barrio, Arts, Culture, & Communications Academy (BACCA), a great program that conducts an anti-underage drinking campaign.

The campaign teaches us the importance of getting our voices heard, to give back to our community, and also how to expand this idea to others. These are the reasons why teens should not be introduced to alcohol. We need our education more than the bottle. Parents should not introduce and encourage alcoholism to their children. Parents and youth, please be a part of positive change and introduce us to a better education than the bottle. We want a successful life and not to stay down in a cycle.

*Que Ordee Sola*

# The Chain Reaction of Underage Drinking

Que Ondee Sola



( Drop The  
Bottle )  
Pick Up The Script

Facing our problems isn't easy. Alcohol doesn't make them easier.

The start of my brother becoming an alcoholic was when he ran away from home. I was five-years-old and he was thirteen. Our mom was addicted to pot and we didn't like it. Although we were young and couldn't take care of ourselves, let alone each other, we still knew that we were being mistreated and neglected. He was forced to go back home but he then illegally dropped out of school and was never able to get an education. After that, he became an alcoholic before he was even at a legal age to drink.

Now, at the age of twenty-four, my brother has a police record for all of the crimes he has committed while under the influence. He is now living in poverty because of his

lack of money and a decent job. This is a serious problem because my brother cannot provide for himself or his three kids. It is a shame that such a talented young man grew up to be an alcoholic.

Even though it seems many of us are alone and feel like we need alcohol to accompany us, there are alternatives that we can turn to. There are places like the Batey Urbano youth space on Paseo Boricua where we, as young people, feel welcomed and can find acceptance. At the Batey Urbano, we can drop the bottle and be a part of the possibilities, such as bettering others in need and giving back to our community institutions and programs.

# The Community as a Campus

A Concept of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center & the Puerto Rican Agenda

## Project Need

Greater Humboldt Park is a community located on the near Northwest side of Chicago. A vibrant, well-organized neighborhood community of over 38,400 residents, Greater Humboldt Park boasts a fifty-year history of community-driven development. Despite this legacy, Greater Humboldt Park faces critical social and economic issues including high concentrations of poverty and limited resources and support to transcend systemic barriers to end the cycle of poverty and secure a better future for its residents. The area is a contiguous 72-block area that includes parts of Chicago's Humboldt Park, West Town and Logan Square community areas. The specific boundaries include Bloomingdale Street on the North side; Chicago Avenue on the South side; Western Avenue to the east and Kedzie Avenue to the West.

The Greater Humboldt Park community is 70% Latino, 18% African American and 12% white. The median income in the area is \$29,000, which is 26% lower than the median income for all of Chicago. An unconscionable 31% of the community's residents live below the poverty level with 17% using public assistance as their sole source of income.

The area has been hit hard by gentrification,

thus driving some residents out of the community due to property taxes increases and rent burdens. Many residents in this community pay monthly rent at an excess of 50% of household earned income. As a result food, health care and other necessities are often compromised.

The community's young people feel the effects of these extreme socio-economic conditions heavily. The demographics for the Greater Humboldt Park community reflect the negative effects of poverty on youth. Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of pregnant mothers in Greater Humboldt Park who received first trimester health care increased by 25% and the number of births to young mothers (10 to 17 year olds) decreased by 24% (Chapin Hall). Despite these trends, the percentage of low birth weight babies increased by 25% and the infant mortality rate remained high and in fact slightly increased by 7.5%.

These seemingly contradictory data might best be explained by the statistics on childhood poverty in Greater Humboldt Park. During a similar time period, 2003 to 2008, the percentage of children on Medicaid rose from 69.3% to a whopping 94.2%, an increase of 35.8%. The number of children receiving food stamps also rose in that time period from 42.9% to 58.3%. By 2008, the number of children living in poverty in this area was 48.4%.

*Que Ordee Sola*

The additional health implications of the socio-economic conditions in Greater Humboldt Park are also of great concern. The community has been designated a food desert, an area with little or no access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Area residents have a high prevalence of obesity with 35% of adults identified as either overweight or obese and nearly 50% of children categorized as obese. Among adults in the area the prevalence of diabetes and high blood pressure is high. The death rate from diabetes is 68/100,000, a rate that is 172% greater than the US diabetes mortality rate. Additionally, life expectancy in Humboldt Park is nearly three years below average. Among children, one-third of children in the area have asthma. According to a Chicago-wide study by Chapin Hall, when asked how they spend time after school, 73% of students responded that they spending time alone doing sedentary activities like watching television or playing video games. A total of 65% of teens in that study indicated that they get little of no physical activity. Most of these young people cited lack of safety and social cohesion as reasons for not participating in physical activities. These conditions persist in poverty-stricken communities like Greater Humboldt Park.

In addition to health, educational attainment in the Greater Humboldt Park community is plagued with severe obstacles. Roberto Clemente Community Academy (Clemente) is the neighborhood public high school. It is currently on the federal list for reconstitution and has been on the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) probation lists for several years. For the 2008-09 school year, Clemente received

a score of 4 out of a possible 36 points (11.1%) on a CPS accountability assessment tool. This score was down from the prior school year. Clemente's daily attendance rate was a low 60.3% and its student mobility rate was high at 23.7%. The number of students graduating from Clemente remains stalled at about 50% (although some estimates place the school's dropout rate as high as 65%). Of the 15 elementary schools that feed, in whole or part into Clemente, nine are on probation. The five schools located within the boundaries of the Greater Humboldt Park community area are all on probation.

## The Rationale

Major problems affecting community education in Humboldt Park including:

- Brain Drain
- Gangs
- Drug sale and use
- Social emotional needs of students and their families
- Lack of relevant teacher and educational training opportunities
- Lack of relevant parent engagement and training opportunities
- Lack of meaning academically sound after school opportunities for youth
- Violence

The Puerto Rican Cultural Center in conjunction with the Puerto Rican Agenda, propose the creation of "Community as Campus", a concept designed to address the myriad of issues related to education facing

# Key Values / Characteristics

- Schools as safe and inviting places to explore the world
- Teachers as intellectuals
- Administrators as facilitators of teacher-student engagement
- Police, fireman, nurses, health workers, maintenance workers, janitor, lunchroom staff, teacher aides as mentors, tutors, and as significant adult figures in a student's life
- Parents and youth as engaged citizens in their schools and community
- Educational process of understanding the world about us, acting responsibly upon that world, and transforming the world
- Network of supportive services that include providing homework net sites also addressing the social emotional issues of students and their families (i.e. health, housing, safety, culture, and spirituality)
- Pipelines to successful educational goals such as higher education or meaningful careers
- Success re-defined as increased social responsibility and as transformative engagement
- After school programs with strong academic, rigorous outcomes as an extension of the school day incorporating internships, practicums and culturally relevant and meaningful practices
- Three Learning Institutes to promote "grow our own teachers and administrators" and life long professional development programs, "school/ community without walls" adult popular education programs, and a youth leadership development initiative
- Promotion of a sustainable community rooted in the "greening of the Greater Humboldt Park Community"
- An interconnected community of wellness
- An integration of technology and workforce development for the informational city of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Creating a community of engaged and fulfilled learners that speaks to the citizenship of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, embracing everyone from pre-birth to the twilight years

the Greater Humboldt Park community. The establishment of Greater Humboldt Park as an educational campus would create a pipeline of learning opportunities through linking elementary schools to a high school hub and higher education institutions. The "Community as Campus" will serve to combat the historically extraordinary high rates of drop-outs/push-outs, to address declining enrollment in Roberto Clemente Community Academy (RCCA), and to provide meaningful options to high school students, particularly those enrolled in RCCA, that allow them to study within their community. This model addresses the lack of community and parent engagement in a manner that validates

their lived experiences and dignifies the culture of their neighborhood. The notion of a community-driven educational agenda ensures that all schools would share resources, coordinate programs, and, most importantly ensure that their curricula and school cultures are aligned in such a manner as to allow students to progress seamlessly from one school to the next.

## **Eighth-Grade Academic Center & Pipelines to Careers**

Brain Drain is known as "the departure

of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another". In our community our youth are opting for high schools outside of the community. In Greater Humboldt Park continual "brain drain" occurs as higher performing students go outside of the neighborhood to magnet and selective enrollment high schools. In fact, the feeder schools tend to discourage their students, especially their higher performing students, from attending RCCA, the neighborhood high school. Currently, according to school administrators, approximately 30% of incoming freshman from the feeders schools actually attend RCCA.

In partnership with post-secondary institutions such as the Wright College-Humboldt Park Vocational Educational Center and Northeastern Illinois University "Community as Campus" proposes the creation of an early high school/early college program that starts with 8th graders and includes options for dual enrollment for college level courses as well as a wide array of advanced placement classes. In addition to providing above-grade level courses, this program will offer high school to college to career pipelines in urban agriculture and green technology; health careers; and teacher education. Furthermore, under the "Community As A Campus" youth will have various arts-focused, vocational, and entrepreneurial options that lead to the development tangible skills that can lead to employment opportunities, in partnership with community-based organizations, i.e. bicycle manufacturing with West Town Bikes/Ciclo-Urbano. Students, parents and

elementary schools, within the proposed Greater Humboldt Park "campus", would see Clemente as a viable and important option for their high school education. All students entering the 8th grade will automatically enroll into the academy and be given the opportunity to enroll in high school level courses if they qualify.

Most of the RCCA feeders operate as isolates within the community. This isolation inhibits the type of collaboration that would benefit all of these schools. In the "Community As Campus" model all schools would share resources, coordinate programs, and, most importantly ensure that their curricula and school cultures are aligned in such a manner as to allow students to progress seamlessly from one school to the next.

## **Wrap-around Networks of Support**

The social emotional needs of students in the Greater Humboldt Park area are immense. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of housing resources are commonplace. These conditions lead to drug dealing, drug use, homelessness, violence, and countless other social ills. While strengthening the community's academic program and school climate is the top priority, the "Community As Campus" will also bring to bear the weight of resources that exist in the Greater Humboldt Park Community to provide support services to community students and their families. Potential partners include various community-based organizations

such as the Association House of Chicago, West Town Leadership United, Casa Central and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center; affordable and supportive housing organizations like Hispanic Housing Development Corp., LUCHA, and Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.; and health/wellness services provided by the 72-Block-by-block Diabetes Awareness Campaign, the Community of Wellness Coalition that includes Erie Family Health Network, Access Community Health Network, Sts. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital, Norwegian American Hospital, and Mt. Sinai Urban Health Network.

This network of support will provide opportunities for students to train and be mentored through the creation of homework-net sites at community institutions such as faith-based organizations, hospitals, fire and police department and public libraries. These sites would set aside space for youth to receive assistance on their homework. In addition these sites would provide mentoring opportunities where youth can shadow police officers, fire fighters, etc. and see themselves in those institutions; youth would be able to intern and work summer jobs at these institutions. The net sites would positively alter the relationships between these institutions and community youth; they would become the future employees in our community.

Beginning with early child education and ending with tangible job opportunities the "Community As A Campus" will provide a continuum of education from the cradle to careers. The ultimate goal is to mold

our young women and men as "agents of change" who come back to be part of the solution to all the social ills in the community.

## **Learning Institutes**

There are three core "academies" that provide a solid foundation for developing leaders within the "Community As A Campus":

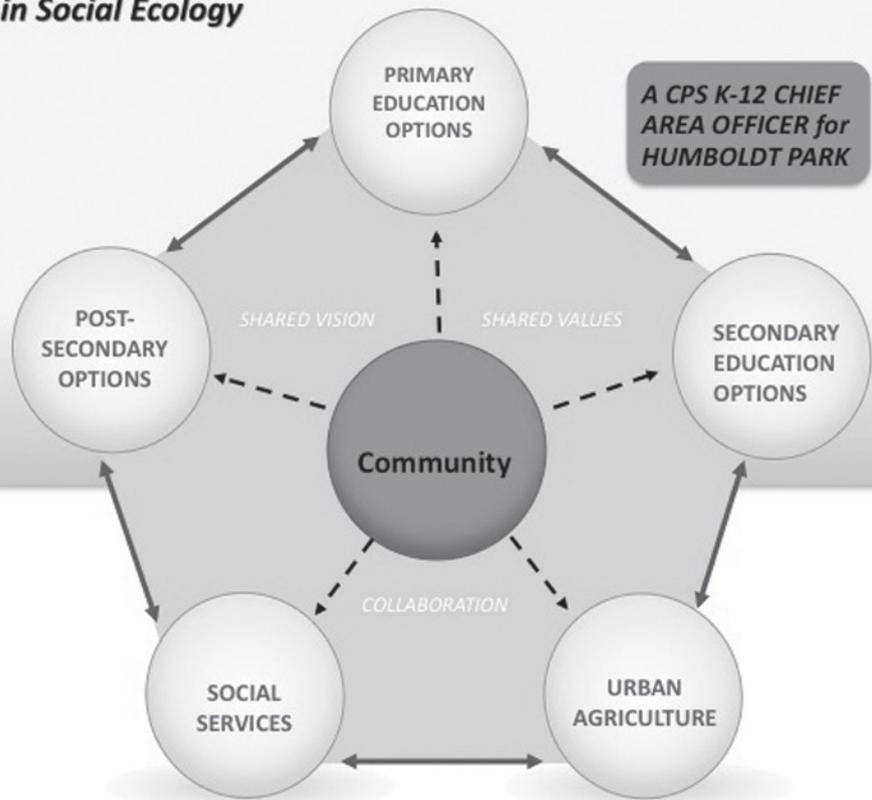
1. Popular Education Institute
2. Teacher & Education Leader Professional Development Institute
3. Youth Leadership Development Institute

## **Popular Education Institute**

In order to address a lack of parent engagement in our schools the "Community as Campus" Model will include a Popular Education Institute that will serve partially as a "schools without walls" where the lived experiences of parents are acknowledged, validated and supported. This institute will allow parents to earn their high school diploma or GED when appropriate. In addition, parents will have access to opportunities and resources to enroll in post-secondary educational institutions. The Institute will provide various including basic parenting, financial literacy, street law, computer literacy, youth development, health and nutrition and community organizing. Finally, the Institute will facilitate opportunities for parents to develop the

## COMMUNITY AS A CAMPUS

*An Ecosystem Rooted in Social Ecology*



**Rethinking Education: Reinventing the City and the Greening of Humboldt Park**

necessary soft skills to effectively advocate and become more involved in their child's education and school. The Institute's offerings will be aggressively promoted to all parents within the Greater Humboldt Park campus.

### Teacher & Educational Leader Training

In the Community As Campus Model teachers of schools within the community campus will be treated as intellectuals and life-long learners and not scapegoats. To this end, we will seek to partner with Illinois College, the University of Illinois at Chicago

College of Education and Northeastern Illinois University to develop a teacher-training institute for teachers engaged in Latino-focused schools. The Institute will provide opportunities for continuing education, i.e. type-75 certification, professional development, and opportunities for attaining higher degrees.

In addition, the principals and administrators selected to guide our schools will be exceptional educational leaders who believe all students can learn and deserve high quality education, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to a student-centered approach to education, understand education as an act of liberation and accept

their role as “engaged” learners. Our university partners will develop professional development opportunities for Principals, Assistant Principals and Area Leaders that will not only challenge them with the latest methodologies and pedagogy around urban education, but inspire them to guide the school with this knowledge in collaboration with the school staff.

## **Youth Leadership Development Institute**

The Youth Development Institute has a two-prong approach to both connect youth to resources for constructive and positive youth development as well as opportunities to implement and exercise leadership. In the “Community as Campus” model, afterschool programs will be offered that provide meaningful, academically sound experiences. Youth will be offered leadership development opportunities in the basics of grassroots organizing, addressing issues that affect them and their neighborhoods, which will integrate them into the fabric of the community so they are seen as part of the solution and not the problem.

The “Community As A Campus” will connect students to existing youth

development programs that are academically sound and engage youth in creative ways as opposed to merely extending the school day such as the Café Teatro Batey Urbano, the Barrio Arts, Culture and Communications Academy (BACCA) and programs offered by other community-based organizations. The programmatic outcomes of these initiatives include positive effects on the self, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, enhanced connections to extra-familial and connections to the community at large thereby reducing social isolation and alienation. All of which have been found to be associated with decreased risk of school dropout and other related risk behaviors as well as decreased psychological distress and depressive symptoms. Intentional connections will be made by the partner institutions to mentor students, provide homework assistance, internship and after-school/summer job opportunities so that our young people see themselves working in these institutions when they graduate from high school or university.

The “Community as Campus” framework and proposed institutes seek to build an infrastructure and network of community resources to encourage and support young people to return to their neighborhood as transformative beings and give back to their community.

## In the Path of Oscar López Rivera, Part I

Interviews with the friends & family of the last Puerto Rican Political Prisoner

During spring break, I was given the opportunity to travel to the island of Puerto Rico for issues relating to last held Puerto Rican political prisoner and patriot Oscar Lopez Rivera. During my stay, I conducted a series of short interviews with friends and family members of Lopez Rivera.

Lopez Rivera, greatly known for his community activism and his commitment to serving the Puerto Rican people, has positively impacted and touch the hearts of many Puerto Rican people in Puerto Rico and in the Diaspora. The interviews consisted of two questions.

1. In light of Oscars contribution to the Puerto Rican struggle, what role and responsibility do Puerto Ricans have in the Diaspora?
2. What does Oscar mean to you and how has he impact your life?

### **Mercedes Lopez Rivera, Oscar's sister**

I respect him the most; he gives me peace. I have spent my life in many different ways. Let me begin. As a child we spent a lot of time together. He was my younger brother, but although he was my younger brother he also was more oriented to me and to life, but as an adult he was like the father for Wanda and he related like a

father. He was very good with them and they loved him. As an adult, when I moved to Puerto Rico and I wanted to open my school, he helped me so much. He found information that he used to send me. He used to send me magazine cuts and write to me because at the time there were no computers or anything like that. When we talked on the phone and when we would write letters, he always gave me so many insights of things I could do with the school and this is 22 years later. I still have the school and it's still working, but that began and started with me. As a political prisoner, I think that a person that has been so long in prison, he keeps his cool, his kindness. None of that, you know, like he probably is affected by because I cannot say he's not affected but through all that, you know, he's so strong. That's what I'm trying to mention. He's strong not only as his body, but his mind. He has such a mind that anybody can relate to.

I think you know with the center and everything he has done in Paseo Boricua, they should relate to that. They, he, or she, or whoever they should look at Oscar as a mentor. The whole place of Paseo Boricua is filled with people that are willing to help the young people and to develop that mind not to be afraid. People shouldn't be afraid of taking chances. I think that's the most important think, is take chances in life. Look at Oscar and

Que Ondee Sola

Jose and all the people that are there they have someone to look as a mentor. I think that the kids and the young people in Chicago are waking up.

**Luis Rosa, Former political prisoner and friend of Oscar**

I feel the role of Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora is a role of affirmation to consistently and constantly affirm themselves not only in their person, but also in their institutions. In that way Oscar has always been an example for me. One of the first impressions I had with the movement was through some of his institutions: the movement to free the nationalist prisoners, the movement to create a school, an alternative high school, the rebuilding of the community, to empower the community. Oscar was very much a part of that. That was my first contact with Oscar and he became, as well as his brother and his family, my mentors.

Oscar is family. Oscar is my brother, my older brother, my counselor. He was and continues to be my teacher. He was the one who provided real clear examples of revolutionary practice, of humbleness, and he continues to enlighten me in that way.

**Luis Nieves Falcon, Educator and Lawyer**

First of all, I think that we should mention that the Puerto Ricans in Diaspora have always been strong elements in the

struggle for independence of Puerto Rico. In fact, in some historic opinions, it has been the input of the Diaspora, which has a spark, which has infused the struggle in Puerto Rico. The fact that Oscar was arrested and jailed in the United States is insignificant to the fact that this is one Puerto Rican that has made his basic idea to give everything that he has for the independence of Puerto Rico. I feel that in joining forces, the Puerto Ricans here and the Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora, we will succeed in taking Oscar out of the hands of the oppressor and make sure that he can be reintegrated with the rest of his Puerto Rican brothers and sisters. What I feel that is required is a joined soul of all Puerto Ricans. The fact that ones are here and ones are in the United States is no difference to me. What I say is that joined forces of Puerto Ricans, whatever they are, for the release of their brother is the important thing.

Very clearly the tradition of those Puerto Ricans who have committed themselves to the struggles of independence at all cost, Oscar, to me is a vivid representation of Don Pedro Albizu Campos, because Albizu Campos hopes for independence and his commitment and struggle is similar to that of Oscar. Something which I have always said and which I believe, is the spirit of the struggle of independence will persist regardless of the stoppages of the oppressor. Oscar is a vivid example of the models that we need in the struggle for independence.

Facing our problems isn't easy. Alcohol doesn't make them easier.

The Barrio, **Arts,** Culture, & Communications Academy (BACCA) is a community-based after school program on Paseo Boricua. We are a project of the **Puerto Rican Cultural Center.** Funding provided by the Illinois Dept. of Human Services



# (Drop The Bottle)

## Pick Up The Mic

