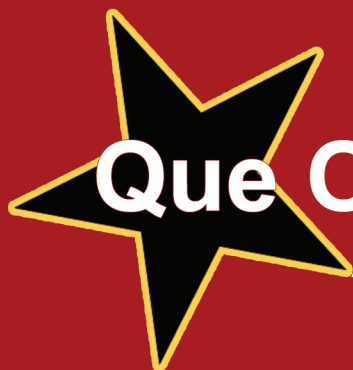


Plantando Semillas

The Latina/o Agenda at NEIU



Que Ondee Sola

April 2009 Vol. 37 No. 3

For the past four years the Latina/o students of Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) have hosted an event exclusively dedicated to highlighting the important issues facing Latinas/os on campus and to recruit for the Latino & Latin American Studies program (LLAS). From discussing Latina/o retention, the importance of Latina/o studies programs, undocumented students, and Latina/o faculty recruitment to the struggle for a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center, Plantando Semillas or "planting seeds" has served as a forum for open discussion and a

collective call for a comprehensive Latina/o Agenda at NEIU. This year's event is an opportunity for all the Latina/o organizations and programs to present what specific projects they would like to carry out so that NEIU can truly be "an institution of choice for Latinos," as stated in it's strategic plan. This provides a unique opportunity for the entire university and those in power, including elected officials, to know what are the visions and goals of the university Latina/o community so that our issues and concerns can be strategically addressed.

Cover Art taken from *Diego Rivera's Flower Vendor, 1941*

Que Ondee Sola

is published at Northeastern Illinois University. The opinions expressed in Que Ondee Sola do not necessarily reflect those of the Administration. Responsibility for its contents lies solely with the staff.

We appreciate and encourage suggestions and contributions.
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Misión

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.

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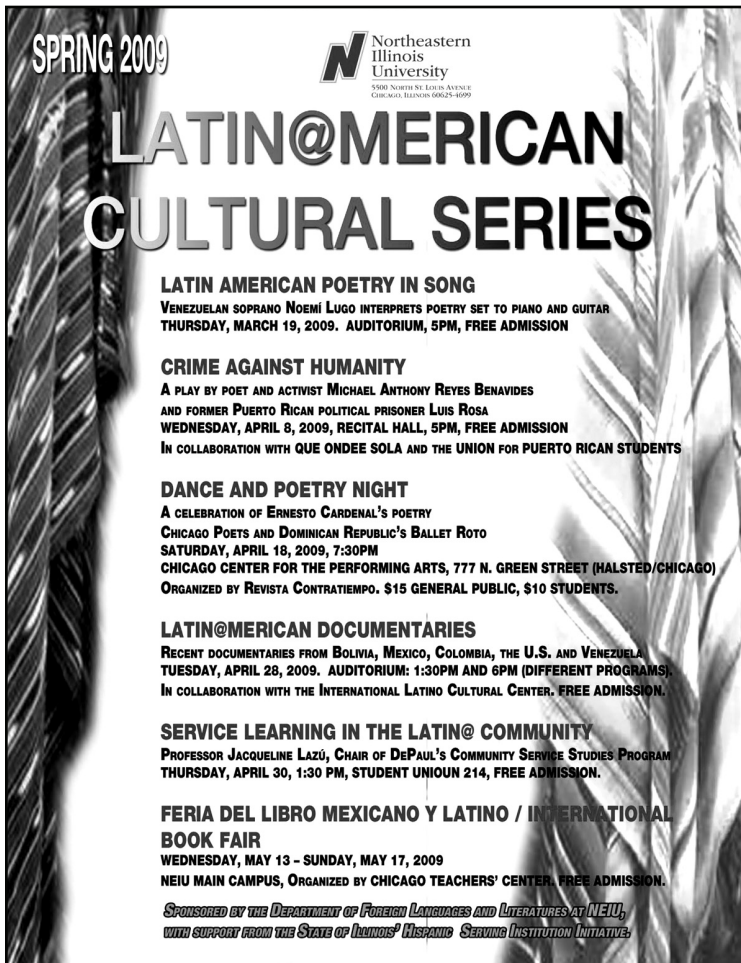
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LATIN AMERICAN POETRY IN SONG
VENEZUELAN SOPRANO NOEMÍ LUGO INTERPRETS POETRY SET TO PIANO AND GUITAR
THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009. AUDITORIUM, 5PM, FREE ADMISSION

CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY
A PLAY BY POET AND ACTIVIST MICHAEL ANTHONY REYES BENAVIDES
AND FORMER PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL PRISONER LUIS ROSA
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2009, RECITAL HALL, 5PM, FREE ADMISSION
IN COLLABORATION WITH QUE ONDEE SOLA AND THE UNION FOR PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS

DANCE AND POETRY NIGHT
A CELEBRATION OF ERNESTO CARDENAL'S POETRY
CHICAGO POETS AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S BALLET ROTO
SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2009, 7:30PM
CHICAGO CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, 777 N. GREEN STREET (HALSTED/CHICAGO)
ORGANIZED BY REVISTA CONTRATIEMPO. \$15 GENERAL PUBLIC, \$10 STUDENTS.

LATIN@AMERICAN DOCUMENTARIES
RECENT DOCUMENTARIES FROM BOLIVIA, MEXICO, COLOMBIA, THE U.S. AND VENEZUELA
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2009. AUDITORIUM: 1:30PM AND 6PM (DIFFERENT PROGRAMS)
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL LATINO CULTURAL CENTER. FREE ADMISSION.

SERVICE LEARNING IN THE LATIN@ COMMUNITY
PROFESSOR JACQUELINE LAZÓ, CHAIR OF DePAUL'S COMMUNITY SERVICE STUDIES PROGRAM
THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1:30 PM, STUDENT UNION 214, FREE ADMISSION.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 - SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2009
NEIU MAIN CAMPUS, ORGANIZED BY CHICAGO TEACHERS' CENTER. FREE ADMISSION.

SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES AT NEIU,
WITH SUPPORT FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS' HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION INITIATIVE.

The Call for a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center

It is absolutely no secret that for decades the Latina/o students at the Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) have been clamoring for a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center (LCRC) on campus. As exhaustively described in the October and November 2008 editions of *Que Ondee Sola*, that struggle recently experienced a sonic boom in terms of organizing and possibilities. The allocation of \$1.5 million by Senator Iris Martínez to NEIU due to its "Hispanic Serving Institution" (HSI) status opened up a lot of doors but also a lot of new challenges. An "Intercultural Initiative Committee" (IIC) was established by the university president Sharon Hahs in order to produce specific ethnic cultural centers. As Latina/o students concerned about our education, we made it loud and clear what we wanted for a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center, organizing multiple well-attended events and even meeting with Sharon Hahs herself (who was visibly annoyed that we met with Senator Martínez herself to discuss this matter). Many of our concerns and ideas were listened to but we believe never fully heard. Finally, the committee drafted a proposal for the President's Council on January 30, 2009, which is still lacking.

First of all, the committee realized the effort that we placed on keeping a comprehensive LCRC on the table, stating: "Based on conversations with the students available for input, the Latino student organizations demanded a separate Latino Cultural Center... with the stipulation that the Latino portion of the center have adequate space and be easily identifiable and that Latino and Latin American Studies (LLAS)

and Proyecto Pa'Lante and Project Success be included in the space and program initiatives" (p3). Furthermore, they stated that, "The Latino students were more direct in expressing the desire for these [student] clubs to be physically and programmatically housed [in a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center]" (p4). Secondly, they drafted four blueprints for "intercultural center," ironically placing bits and pieces of our own LCRC blueprint into each of their plans. The first blueprint has equal space for all the major ethnic groups, Latina/o, Blacks, Asians, and an ambiguous space for "cultural initiatives." This strikes us as unusual since Latinas/os make up 1/3 of the university and even in their own report they recognized that "there was no opportunity to receive input from the Asian American student population even though there were outreach attempts by their advisor and some committee members" (p3). This first blueprint does not include spaces for student organizations nor any of the resources/programs that we demanded. The second and third blueprints are virtually identical with large open spaces that resemble a dancehall than a cultural center. The third blueprint is different in that they do include spaces (in the form of cubicles) for student organizations. Again, Latinas/os get equal spacing and no specific resources in these floor plans. The fourth and last blueprint is the most encompassing, but again falls short. It is ironic that the discovery of the earlier draft of this last blueprint is what sparked our active involvement in this process. It includes our own draft for a LCRC with space for Proyecto Pa'Lante/Project Success, the Latino & Latin American Studies program, and offices for

student organizations (but does not specify if they are Latina/o), but places the "Casa Latin@" on the second floor. They technically could have placed the "Casa Latin@" on the first floor near the Latina/o resources and office spaces and we would have somewhat of a Latina/o section of this "intercultural center," but they did not. Again, our wishes were not met. Even worse, we nor our friends on the committee have heard anything from the president since. Worry not. The Latina/o students at NEIU will continue to make this issue a priority. We are hosting our fourth annual Plantando Semillas event on March 31, 2009 and are in constant communication with Senators Martínez and Delgado.

As I stated in the November 2008 edition of *Que Ondee Sola* "If NEIU, as an official 'Hispanic Serving Institution,' seeks to be a prominent institution for incoming Latina/o students, as it stated in its Strategic Report, then it must dignify and holistically address the Latina/o experience and our needs. If NEIU is to have a Latina/o Cultural & Resource Center and truly be connected to resources then... it must provide central, visible, and easily accessible space for existing Latina/o-focused programs... Such ideas are not about wasting space or money, but enhancing the educational experiences of all students at NEIU and raising the level of prestige of NEIU as a 'global university.'"

The Latina/o Agenda at NEIU

Interviews with Faculty, Administrators, and Student Organizations

As stated in the university's strategic plan, this institution "*strives to make NEIU, as a Hispanic Serving Institution, an institution of choice for Latinos*" (Strategic Goal Three, Action Step Four). **What is your vision programmatically to carry out this vision?**

Conducted by Samuel Vega, Juan Morales, & Xavier "Xavi" Luis Burgos

Víctor Ortíz, Director of the Latino & Latin American Studies Program



"Latinos have an extremely important role towards the development of the Latino agenda. The president in the task force that created the strategic plan for the university showed a great alertness with their

role in creating a university that properly serves Latino students. In that vision we appreciate and recognize the importance of Latinos in the city and in the state. The task in hand remaining is the creation of a strategy to turn the worthy goal into a reality. The initiative that *Que Ondee Sola* serves is trying to bring Latino Voices together to contribute to a strategy that is important and cannot be exaggerated. Latino students, faculty, administrators can and must provide key

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insights about the needs and wants of Latino students on campus. We must provide the most affective education for the future ahead. I look forward to a university wide meeting in which the leadership of Que Ondee Sola is providing for the university can flourish for the whole Northeastern community as well as the Latina/o constituents. I know that such dialogue will greatly increase our capacity to secure funding for such a worthy vision along the line of the \$1.5 million provided by senator Iris Martinez with the state legislature for Northeastern. We must present a well organized and focused plan of action to satisfy the senators expectation, that the money provided is used affectively with clear goals in mind. We the Latino community at Northeastern are ready to contribute to the formulation of a plan to generate a Latino agenda to the university. "

Biography

Victor M. Ortíz directs the Latino and Latin American Studies program of Northeastern

Illinois University. Dr. Ortíz has a doctorate in anthropology from Stanford University (1993) and a Masters in Latin American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. His ethnographic work encompasses a vast range of topics related to both sides of the Mexican and U.S. border: labor strikes in export oriented factories (*maquiladoras*) in the Northern region of México, alleged abuse cases by INS officers, and collective initiatives to respond to NAFTA in the city of El Paso. His book, *El Paso: Local Frontiers at a Global Crossroads*, was published by University of Minnesota Press, (January 2004). Doctor Ortíz co-wrote the Ford Foundation grant that started the Immigration and Legal Enforcement Monitoring Project of the American Friend Service Committee in 1988. He also designed the first database for this project, which was used to survey cases of border patrol abuses in five sites along the U.S. Mexican Border until 1994.

Christina Gómez, Associate Professor of Sociology



"Step one is student's that come in get out. Step two is while they're here we give them

the best education possible, and that includes having an education about Latina/o history, culture, and identity. Step three is that we recruit Latina/o students across the state and within our communities who normally don't have access to higher education. Northeastern should not only be a choice for Latina/o students, but be a university where Latina/os graduate from, and the reason I say that is because Latina/os are a interesting group. Those of us who graduate from high school in fact do go on to college, mostly two-year colleges. What we're not good at is finishing college. Our retention rates are very low. In fact nationally only 25 percent of Latinos who

start college ever finish. Northeastern can be the choice for Latina/os because it will be a school where you know if you start you will finish. It will be amazing if Northeastern can say 100 percent of Latina/os who start at Northeastern graduate with a B.A because I know it matters when Latina/os get a diploma.”

Biography

Christina Gómez is an associate professor of Sociology and Latino and Latin American Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. She has also taught at the University of Chicago and Dartmouth College. Her research focuses on race relations, discrimination, and immigration.

Christina graduated from the University of Chicago with a B.A. in Romance Languages and Literatures. She holds an MBA from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business with a concentration in marketing and organizational behavior and a PhD from Harvard University in Sociology. Christina’s research has concentrated on racial identity construction in the United States. Her book, *Mi Vida, Mi Voz: Latino College Students Tell Their Stories*, is an edited anthology of fifteen essays written by students about growing up as a Latina/o in this country. Other research includes an examination of skin color discrimination among Latina/os.

Lawrence P. Frank, Provost



“Strategic Goal 3:4 is closely connected to 3:1- Improve preparation for higher education by working with k-12 schools, and 3:2 - Review and integrate the University’s outreach to community service functions, with a special emphasis on unique programs provided by CTC, CCIS, and El Centro to strengthen community partnerships.

The proportion of Latino students is 28% and incoming freshman is [about] 40%. So the biggest concern is the progress and graduation of freshman. With that said, we have been for the past few years trying to concentrate resources toward freshman. The main thing we have done is the Creation of the First Year Experience program, which is a way of concentrating faculty and resources for freshman who typically don’t get these benefits until they have declared a major, so they can be more engaged and therefore be more likely to succeed. I wouldn’t say this is Latino focused program but it was very consciously aimed at keeping freshman and especially the [about] 40% of Latino freshman in the University. This is for all students, not only Latino students but also it does have a *disproportional* impact on Latino Students. Our next step is to think of something for sophomore students.

With the H.S.I. [Hispanic Serving Institution]

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money we got from the legislature we asked for a whole bunch of proposals throughout the university to create programs for this semester only, that are focused on Latino students or Latino organizations. For instance a group of students are going to El Paso to look into questions of immigration, and another group is going to the University of Guanajuato with the LLAS [Latino & Latin American Studies] program.

The main thing we said about the H.S.I was that we wanted to strengthen academic programs in the university that are delivering services to not only Latino students but to Latino communities and strengthen our ability to do that by graduating students that can work in those ways. We identified four such places, two in arts and sciences and two in the college of education, hiring faculty members who will teach students that will potentially work in these communities and in Latino schools. The educational leadership program is something we have already; we want to create a stream that focuses on Latino schools and Latino students.

One of the main projects through LLAS and the H.S.I initiative has been their peer-mentoring program called D.A.L.E, which is potentially a big project. Our sense is that peer mentoring is a very effective mechanism, because students are more open to advice from other students than from staff.

We are trying to use Proyecto Pa'Lante as a model to see how it can be applied to other students, because most Latino students come in to NEIU and meet the requirements so as a result those students that meet requirements don't get the benefit of the support services.

There is no question that there will be something like a multi cultural center or a Latino Resource center but we haven't found a location for it. Space is our biggest problem, NEIU has the least amount of sq ft per person of the state universities and the cultural center is probably going to be very large.

In a Latina/o Cultural Center I think that there will be a central office for programming, events and maybe the peer-mentoring program D.A.L.E., will be there accessible to everyone, and it would synchronize services and events important to Latino groups."

Biography

Lawrence Frank has been Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Northeastern Illinois University since 2002. He received a BA in Political Science from Northwestern University and MA and PhD degrees in Political Science from Columbia University.

While serving as chair, dean and provost at universities in Chicago, Dr. Frank interests have come to focus on urban education and on the challenges facing urban students in higher education. In recent years, the issue of graduation rates has become increasing important and Dr. Frank has participated in two national studies of graduation rate outcomes conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

During his years as a faculty member, Dr. Frank taught nineteen courses on African, comparative and international politics. He has studied problems of higher education at the College Management Program of Carnegie Mellon University and at the Snowmass Institute of Strategic Management.

Teresita Díaz, Director of Proyecto Pa'Lante & Project Success



"Every year Proyecto Pa'Lante/Project Success has a recruitment plan established. We focus mostly on Chicago Public Schools that have large Latina/o attendance such as Clemente and Schurz and some private schools. This is where we get 90% of our enrollment every fall semester. We also work with community agencies such as Aspira, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and throughout the city. We also work with organizations in Evanston and Harper College. 95% of our students are Latina/o – our focus. We also have programming for students where we highlight career options – the sooner that students identify what they could do their retention and graduation is much more secure. Many are interested in justice studies, social work, and education. This year we are doing a Career Awareness workshop series in April. We also plug them into student organizations and services. We try to help students connect in that way. We provide a college survival course

and encourage students to go to student-organized events. We e-mail these events to students – we want to engage them. All of our staff are bilingual and we provide students and parents flexibility through questions and concerns, especially at our family orientation which is available in Spanish. We also have an Open House in the fall and an award ceremony in the spring to make sure that those that achieve exceptionally well academically and at the university are recognized. We invite everyone at the university to this event; its important to show our successes so that they know our students are doing well."

Biography

Ms. Teresita J. Díaz is the Director of Project Success and Proyecto Pa'Lante at Northeastern Illinois University. She has been active in the Latina/o educational community in the city of Chicago for more than twenty years. Ms. Díaz has been working at NEIU for eight years. She has been the Director of both programs for two years and Coordinator of Proyecto Pa'Lante for six years. Prior to her appointment at NEIU she worked with underrepresented students at UIC for ten years. Ms. Díaz is presently a member of the Chicago Public School Higher Education Advisory Taskforce, a city-wide committee that supports college and career preparation for high school students. She is also a Board Member and Treasurer of the Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE).

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Paul Schroeder Rodríguez,

Chair of Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures



"The Fall 2009 incoming freshman class is over 40% Latina/o, so NEIU is already an institution of choice for Latina/o students. That said, the question is how do we define NEIU as an institution of choice for Latina/os, not only in terms of numbers but in terms of services. The University does have some programs that address the needs of a small sector of the Latina/o student body, namely Proyecto Pa'Lante and the McNair's Scholars Program, but again, only a very small number of our Latina/o students come in contact with these programs. I, like most NEIU students and employees, think that the University can improve its academic advising in general, and in particular, its academic advising in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. This would mean educating employees

at all levels (faculty, staff and administrators) on the specific needs, both culturally and linguistically, of our Latina/o students. A very easy way of doing this would be to make information available in both English and Spanish, at least in our websites, down to the College level. In our Department we are working on doing this and I expect to have a fully bilingual website by December 2009. A more important project is the planned Cultural Center, which will serve as a clearing house of University services to Latina/o and non-Latina/o students at NEIU. I really look forward to the creation of this center, both as a center of advisement, but just as important, as a place where Latina/o students and non-Latina/o students get to work, study and play together."

Biography

Chair, Foreign Languages and Literatures, was chair of the Spanish program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. He is the author of a book on Cuba's foremost filmmaker, "Thomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker" (Routledge, 2002), and his articles on literature and cinema have appeared (or will shortly appear) in Latin American Research Review, Revista Hispánica Moderna, Jump Cut, Senses of Cinema, Chasqui, and Rethinking Marxism. His research interests include teaching and researching from a perspective that transcends national and linguistics boundaries. His office is CLS 2039, ext. 4279.

Movimiento Cultural Latino Americano



"In order to successfully carry out Northeastern Illinois University's goal of becoming a university of choice for Latinos, Movimiento Cultural Latino Americano [MCLA] has a crucial role, which is redefining what it means to be an institution of choice for us Latina/os. As a student organization, MCLA is actively pushing for the creation of a Latino and Latin American Studies Major which is significant as it reinforces the diversity and re-cultivates our forgotten, or to some extent, stolen roots.

MCLA is also part of the ongoing struggle for a resource center that is required to centralize and give us the assets to increase our graduation rates. This resource center must be developed based on the needs of the students and our professors.

At the core of our involvement, MCLA is re-establishing the ideas of belonging and identity. Home is a very sacred place for us Latina/os as the concepts of community are the essence of our well-being. This is why *el Movimiento* has been creating strong relationships in which we have entered a process of collective learning within our communities. Bridging the

gap between the University and our communities has been the heart of our movement as our struggles and voices are amplified. Our work simultaneously aims to prepare young Latina/os to

enter our University and the world there after.

We, Movimiento Cultural Latino Americano, believe that a low cost of tuition is not enough to be an institution of choice for Latina/os, but rather we are endeavoring to create a sense of belonging as we are actively working with our communities to learn about their struggles and how they relate to ours."

Biography

Movimiento Cultural Latino Americano is a student based organization which over the course of two semesters has transformed into a strong political movement with sound political ties to the community, addressing immediate social and political issues through student activism, but most important by learning from the community's struggle itself. Our long-term goal is to achieve a global community that transcends national and political boundaries to end the hegemonic coerce of powerful developed nations over economically under developed countries and the consequences that derive from that sphere of influence.

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Matthew Rodriguez: An Inspirational Educator for All

This past December as I was strolling the halls of our school I came across the newspaper *La Voz del Paseo Boricua*. I immediately picked it up because I enjoy newspapers, especially those that cater to the Latina/o community. It was refreshing to read about the different community programs in Humboldt Park, as well as the pride of the residents in keeping their “pedacito de patria” alive in Chicago. However, I was most impressed

with the list of community leaders under the age of 30, especially Matthew Rodríguez, who, at the age of 27, was principal of Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS).

Reading about a young Latino professional succeeding in his career and impacting his community was inspiring, to say the least. I thought how Matthew was an excellent role model for any student and I wanted to ask him a million questions about his time in school and his life as a principal. Fast forward to March, I had the opportunity of attending a speech organized by D.A.L.E. and the Latino & Latin American Studies program (LLAS) where the speaker was, to my surprise, none other than Matthew Rodríguez. During his speech, Matthew addressed the role PACHS has played in Humboldt Park, while answering many questions from the audience.

The philosophy of PACHS is one unlike any other school I have ever heard of. This school is concerned with the student body’s need to learn about their culture and have even integrated math and science concepts to create community greenhouses. Students are expected to be critical thinkers and engage



themselves in their neighborhood. Furthermore, even though the Puerto Rican, Mexican and Black nationalist flags are displayed in school, Matthew emphasized that students are encouraged not to be angry at the United States.

The passion in which Matthew described his neighborhood, school, students and faculty reawakened in me the desire to go into teaching. I have always thought about becoming a teacher, but not until recently has this idea

become more tangible. Matthew and his school reminded me of how teaching can truly be a rewarding career. Not only that, but learning about Latino solidarity in Humboldt Park has made me proud to be Latino more than ever. During all of Matthew’s speech I was impressed. For example, the faculty and staff of PACHS eats lunch with the students and the seniors are required to present a portfolio to a panel to defend their graduation, where as in other schools it seems as though students are pushed out. This alternative school has found success with students that other schools did not want to deal with.

There are many reasons why PACHS has triumphed since its establishment in 1972. Matthew is the leader of a group of staff that wants to be there and wants to help the student body. After the speech was over, I felt great, not only because of the delicious lunch from Nellie’s Puerto Rican Restaurant, but because I finally felt I had a clear path: teaching. Just as I found myself surprised meeting Matt after having read about him in *La Voz*, perhaps one day I will find myself teaching at PACHS and sharing my pride and experiences with the Humboldt Park community, which is becoming a new chapter in my life.

El Pirata Cofresí: Pirate of the Caribbean



Roberto Cofresí Ramírez de Arrellano was born in June 1791 in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. Better known as “El Pirata Cofresí,” or “Cofresí, the Pirate,” he was a Robin Hood like figure because of his reputation for defending the poor and sharing with them the booty from ships that he had attacked. Legend has it, he hid what was left over inside of a cave in his hometown.

Cofresí gathered up a crew (also from Cabo Rojo) and together they established their hideout in a small island between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic called Isla Mona. Cofresí and his men first targeted ships that were not flying the Spanish flag. Their main target was ships that were from the United States. The reason for this is due to a grudge that he had with an American captain. Eventually Cofresí would also attack Spanish ships because Puerto Rico and Cuba, two of Spain’s few remaining possessions,

were facing political and economic problems. This along with his support for Puerto Rico’s independence from Spain influenced his decision to aim his cannons at Spanish ships.

After escaping from jail in the Dominican Republic, Cofresí and his men fled to the island of Vieques on a ship they found and later seized. Once they reached Vieques, a new hideout was made as well as some new additions to the crew. In one particular instance, his crew attacked eight consecutive ships in the 1820s. From that point on they raided more and more ships with no apparent end in sight.

However, the Spanish government and a United States navy ship would be responsible for bringing Cofresí and his legacy to an end. After being engaged in battle with an American ship, he was forced to retreat to land, then he was later captured. In late March of 1825, Cofresí and his crew were taken to the fields of El Morro and were executed by a firing squad after being found guilty by the Spanish court. It is rumored that his body was buried in the fields of El Morro. According to the legend, Roberto Cofresí is the first person to fly a flag representing Puerto Rico, even though no one knows what it looked like.

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Interview: 3/19/2009 with Carlos Colón

Que Ondee Sola

What Is YOUR Next Stop?

Interview with author Ivan Sánchez



Ivan Sánchez is the critically acclaimed, Nuyorican author of *Next Stop: Growing Up Wild Style in the Bronx*. This book is a memoir of his experiences as a teenager growing up in New York City during the late 80's and early 90's, a time when crack cocaine dominated the streets of the Bronx and surrounding boroughs. *Next Stop* has been described like a train ride that takes the reader on a fast journey through the jungles of NYC as Ivan remembers it.

I have had several conversations with Ivan in regards to *Next Stop* and why he decided to write it years later. I learned that this book began as a release for Ivan. Many images of the friends that he lost along the way still haunted him, especially that of Godfather Zen, his protector and mentor. This book was also intended to be a diary that he would give to his daughters so they could know about their father's struggles, sacrifices and the determination to make a difference in his life, influenced by the birth of his first daughter, Heaven. So I had to ask, "What is your *Next Stop* now that this book has been published, released and successful?" Ivan responded, "I want to help inspire youth and motivate them to make something out of themselves. The

streets will take you in two directions, prison or death. I was that young boy that I now meet on a regular bases, lost with no self value. We have to start taking responsibility for our youth."

Ivan now spends his time visiting youth centers, elementary schools, high schools, city colleges and universities speaking on the themes of gangs, drugs and how education is the key to liberation. Once a high school drop out, Ivan leads by example, as he is the first in his family to go to college and earn an associates degree in applied science from Virginia's ECPI College of Technology and a B.A. in management from the University of Phoenix. He has started the "WHAT IS YOUR NEXT STOP?" Campaign, working with people like actress April Lee Hernández (*ER*, *The View*, *Freedom Writers*, *30 Rock*) and most recently, the poet, activist, singer, and youth advocate La Bruja (*Def Jam Poetry*). Together they have collaborated on motivational speaking, targeting inner city, and at-risk youth



Ivan has truly come a long way since his days on Kingsbridge and Creston Avenues in the "Boogie Down" Bronx. Regardless of his new

found success, Ivan keeps close to his roots.

set for yourself: "What is YOUR Next Stop?"

He stays humble and thankful to the many people that have helped him along the way. His way of giving back to the world is by taking the time to talk to youth, challenge their abilities, not just answer their questions but ask the right questions... "What will YOU contribute to the world before your time is up? What will YOU leave behind?" And the most important question that determines how you will go about accomplishing the goals you have

Come meet the author!
Friday, April 17th, 2009
Doors Open at 6:30 pm
Event begins at 7:00 pm
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Triunfa el FMLN en El Salvador

Oscar Martínez Peñate/Especial para Claridad, 19-25 de Marzo, 2009



SAN SALVADOR - Las elecciones para elegir el presidente y vicepresidente, se realizaron el 15 de marzo de 2009. Ese domingo, desde las seis de la mañana, muchos salvadoreños esperaban enfrente de los recintos electorales, los cuales abrieron una hora más tarde, como estaba previsto.

La participación masiva del cuerpo electoral se observó desde antes que se iniciara oficialmente

la apertura de las juntas receptoras de votos, fueron ríos de gente que desembocaron en los lugares de votación para dar la victoria al periodista Mauricio Funes, candidato del Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), frente a Rodrigo Ávila, el candidato de la derechista Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA). La elevada afluencia electoral fue la respuesta ante los indicios de un posible fraude electoral, a partir de un día antes de las

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elecciones, cuando algunas personas hicieron llamados a radios nacionales para denunciar la presencia de nicaragüenses y hondureños que fueron albergados, según las denuncias, en el estadio Cuscatlán, instalaciones deportivas salvadoreñas y algunas instituciones del gobierno como la oficina de Correos de El Salvador y el Ministerio de Gobernación.

En el Municipio de San Francisco Menéndez, del departamento (provincia) de Ahuachapán, se presentaron varias personas con el Documento Único de Identidad (DUI) emitidos después de cerrado el padrón electoral, pero la población, convertida en la principal vigilante del proceso eleccionario, impidió allí que se consumara el fraude.

Más de 200 mil militantes y simpatizantes del FMLN se mantuvieron a la expectativa en la defensa del respeto del voto ante el temor de que la derechista Alianza de Renovación Nacional (ARENA) consumara un fraude desde el gobierno, que controló por los pasados 20 años.

Los principales medios de comunicación violaron las disposiciones de no hacer propaganda tres días antes del día de la votación, la cual fue camuflada de noticia, principalmente dirigida a sembrar el temor y a presentar al FMLN como una amenaza para la "democracia", cuyo control ha estado en manos de la oligarquía por más de un siglo y medio.

La propaganda sucia de la derecha no cesó, como comportamiento consuetudinario de irrespeto a la Constitución de El Salvador, incluso, cerca de los centros de votación partidarios del derechista ARENA, entregaron propaganda, por ejemplo camisas, brazaletes y panfletos con el nombre "Yo no entrego El Salvador", en alusión a que una victoria de Mauricio Funes constituía que el país pasaría al control de la Venezuela bolivariana que

comanda el presidente Hugo Chávez Frías.

Esta irregularidad en la diseminación de propaganda se hacía a la vista y paciencia de las autoridades que velan por el cumplimiento de las normas jurídicas; de igual forma se estacionaron cerca de algunos centros de votación vehículos con sonido que entonaba el himno de ARENA y llamaba al voto por el partido derechista.

La desesperación de la derecha se notó, asimismo, con el despliegue de exceso de recursos materiales para pretender desprestigiar la fórmula del partido de izquierda FMLN, es decir, al candidato a la presidencia Mauricio Funes y al candidato a la vicepresidencia Salvador Sánchez Cerén.

Sin embargo, a nivel macro se puede afirmar que el proceso electoral se desarrolló sin fraude generalizado, no obstante hubo casos de irregularidades como extranjeros que han entrado al país en los últimos días, y algunos de ellos fueron capturados, de igual forma personas que se presentaron a querer emitir el sufragio suplantando a otras con el DUI.

Desde las 6:00 de la tarde, cuando se iniciaron los recuentos de votos, la población comenzó a celebrar al percatarse de que en prácticamente casi todas las urnas, el FMLN obtenía la mayoría de votos.

La población se concentró en los parques de los municipios de El Salvador para celebrar el triunfo popular, la alegría venció el miedo.

El domingo 15 de marzo se le puso punto final a la corrupción, impunidad, autoritarismo que ha prevalecido en El Salvador desde el tiempo de la colonia. La oligarquía, a pesar de la multimillonaria campaña sucia y de terror psicológico en contra de la fórmula presidencial del FMLN, perdió irremediablemente.

En esta elección ganó la honestidad y credibilidad que fueron la carta de presentación de Mauricio Funes, el fervor cívico y patriotismo manifestado por la población salvadoreña derrotó a la oligarquía; estas elecciones fueron un referéndum en el que la población dijo "bastaya".

La corrupción ya no será política de Estado, tampoco el entreguismo de la soberanía salvadoreña. Este triunfo no es sólo de los salvadoreños sino de toda Nuestra América, pues El Salvador se suma a los Estados con dignidad del continente latinoamericano, como Cuba, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brasil, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Panamá, etc.

Bolívar, José Martí, César Sandino, Farabundo Martí, José Artigas, entre otros apóstoles latinoamericanos, están de fiesta, por la posibilidad de crear la gran patria, la patria grande.

Desde el domingo 15 de marzo de 2009, los salvadoreños han dejado de ser guanacos, para convertirse en cuscatlecos de la talla de los mártires salvadoreños Anastasio Aquino, Prudencia Ayala y Farabundo Martí.

Los magistrados del Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) dieron, ya a las 7:30 de la noche, como resultados que de 33.26 por ciento de las urnas de los catorce departamentos 426,108 votos eran a favor de ARENA, representa el 48.72 por ciento, y 448,524 a favor del FMLN, que representa el 51.28 por ciento. Con estos datos el FMLN obtuvo el triunfo electoral, la tendencia se mantuvo con el 63 por ciento a nivel nacional.

El encargado de negocios de la embajada de Estados Unidos, dijo que montaron un equipo de 70 observadores en los 14 departamentos y, de acuerdo con lo que vieron, fue una asistencia mayor que en las pasadas elecciones departamentales del 18 de enero del corriente.

Los medios de comunicación se dedicaban a poner en duda el triunfo del FMLN, la población estaba pendiente de la evolución de los hechos para proceder a la defensa del voto. Cuando Mauricio Funes y Sánchez Cerén se presentaron a las 9:00 de la noche ante la prensa nacional e internacional, la muchedumbre gritaba "sí se pudo".

"Ésta es la noche más feliz de mi vida, y quiero que sea también la noche de la más grande esperanza de El Salvador. Agradezco a Dios por su protección porque sin su voluntad no me encontraría en esta posición. Agradezco a todos los que votaron por mí, a todos los que vencieron el miedo, y se entregaron a la lucha democrática por El Salvador", expresó Mauricio Funes al proclamar su victoria.

"Este día hemos firmado un nuevo acuerdo de Paz, que consiste en el acuerdo de unidad nacional, invito a todas las fuerzas sociales del país a concretar la unidad nacional. Esta es una victoria de todo el pueblo salvadoreño", dijo a la vez que saludó "a mis adversarios con respeto".

Funes recordó que a partir de ese momento ARENA pasa a la oposición, a la vez que como tal le brindó la seguridad de que será escuchado y respetado.

"Mi gobierno respetará la Constitución, respetará todas las instituciones del Estado, impulsaré un gobierno basado en el diálogo y la negociación. Nuestro propósito es convertir a la economía de El Salvador en la más dinámica de Centro América, nadie puede tomar a la patria como bien propio, El Salvador nos pertenece a todos", subrayó el Presidente electo. Esta victoria del FMLN es, sin duda, el mejor homenaje a los mártires y caídos en el conflicto armado a favor de la paz y la democracia en El Salvador.

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