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Que Ondee Sola - May 2004

Yvonne Nieves

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QUE ONDEE SOLA

May 2004 · Vol. 32 No. 4



Editorial: Capturing the Imagination

The following pages of this Que Ondee Sola issue are very significant. We cover some of the most incredible advancements taking place in the Puerto Rican community. Here you can read about the collective participation of students (many of which are from NEIU), faculty, and community residents whose imaginations have been captured by these groundbreaking innovations.

One of the major life changing initiatives that we feature in this edition is the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project, a program that started as a way to apply “deep democracy” to a community that is in dire need of services, resources, and resident involvement while it faces the giant claws of gentrification. Participatory democracy is an inspiring and true example to utilize any community’s resources at its highest potential.

Another project, which we have mentioned in previous QOS issues, is Café Teatro

Batey Urbano. For two years now, the space has been a center for an upsurge of energy, culture, and creation. Their most recent ideas include that of the *Latino Renaissance* in which youth redefine and recreate their identities through authentic actions and expressions.

Our cover features the Puerto Rican flag of Paseo Boricua, the wrought iron symbol of our united strength and determination to create options for those in our community and to struggle in the name of generations to come.

PS: Que Ondee Sola congratulates all of the Latina/o graduates of NEIU, including our very own Christopher Estrada.

Cover Credits:

Photograph of “El Sembrador” mural in Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Alternative High School. Mural by **Richard Santiago**.

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MISSION

Que Ondee Sola is a 31 year old Puerto Rican/Latina/o monthly student magazine. Our mission is to provide our campus with a relevant and engaging publication that deals with student issues, particularly those of Latinos and issues that are of importance to our communities.

Que Ondee Sola continues to affirm the right of Puerto Rican self-determination.

Participatory Democracy

Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project

Que Ondee Sola is extremely excited to share this special section with our readers. Participatory Democracy, though not a new term or practice, has re-emerged as a response to neoliberal globalization throughout Latin America, in such places as Chiapas, Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil. In the following articles, you will encounter the Puerto Rican initiative in Humboldt Park to build a participatory democracy. QOS hopes this encounter will answer as many questions as it poses, simultaneously opening vital space for dialogical yearnings by conveying the honest and humble hopes of a community threatened by displacement and oblivion.

EXERCISES IN SELF-DETERMINATION: THE HUMBOLDT PARK DEMOCRACY PROJECT

Michael Rodríguez Muñiz

Who should determine the future of a community?¹ In our complex world, this seemingly simple question is rarely posed, and even more rarely answered. However rare, I believe that the overwhelming consensus, and the only ethical response, would be that a community should determine its future. But like all systems of oppression, the forces of colonialism and its urban overseer, gentrification—continue to contradict our ethical sensibilities.

In Chicago's Humboldt Park/West Town area, gentrification is threatening the future of the Puerto Rican community. Gentrification, a process of spatial de-concentration, destroys inner city communities (often of color) through various methods. Without so much as a vote or an opinion poll, developers and speculators are attempting to determine what is to become



Humboldt Park. Obsessed with the construction of luxurious condominiums, they develop the plan to displace the long-time residents of area. As property taxes rise, so do rent costs, resulting in more and more families being economically forced out, against their will. Still more, gentrification does not end with displacement; it continues with the

confiscation and subsequent obliteration of a community's legacy.

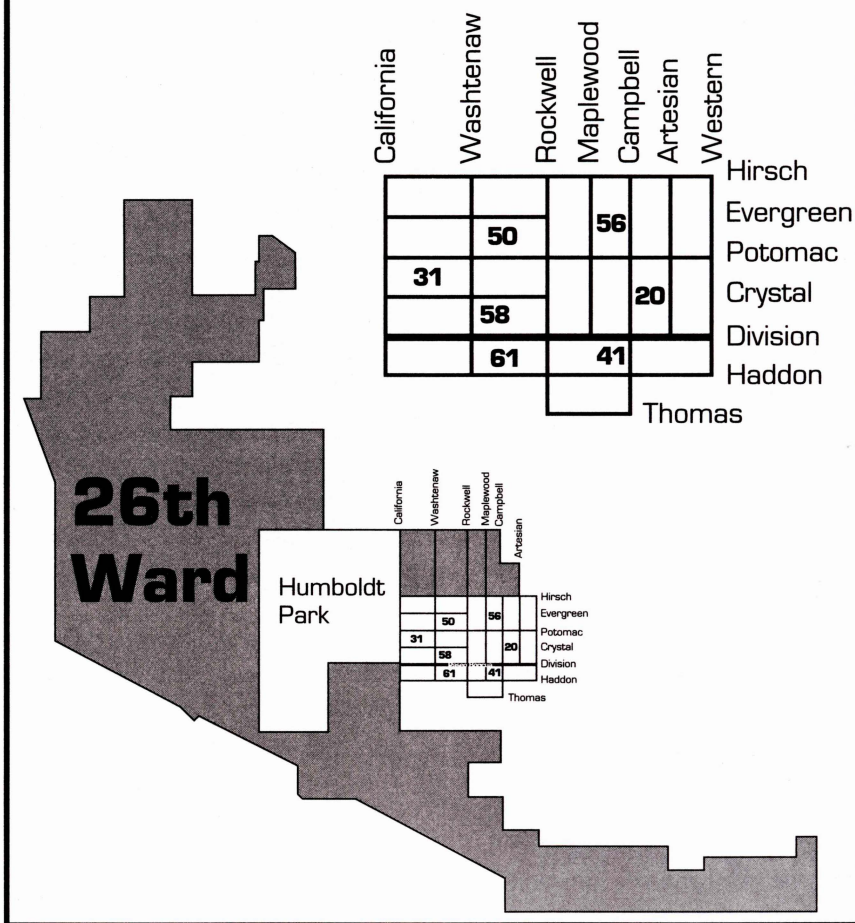
The recent and repeated attempts to obstruct the oldest Puerto Rican mural in Chicago with a condominium, teaches us how this process destroys community symbols, public art, and popular culture. This lesson is

driven home further with the example of Lincoln Park, which was once a vital Puerto Rican community but today has lost all vestiges of this history; ask anyone in Lincoln Park today about that fact and you will realize how gentrification erases history.

For over 40 years, Humboldt Park has been synonymous with Puerto Ricans. Here, like no other place in Chicago, this area has been the focal point of Puerto Rican activity, culturally, politically, and economically. In a sense, this area is akin to Boston's Villa Victoria and New York City's Spanish Harlem. Being one of the largest Puerto Rican community outside of New York City, Humboldt Park has had a long Puerto Rican history, including the yearly celebration of the Fiestas Patronales and Puerto Rican People's Parade, which grew out of the 1966 and 1979 Division Street "riots" (rebellions). The most recent of these historic developments has been the establishment of Paseo Boricua and the movement to build a stable, viable, and autonomous Puerto Rican community.

"Paseo Boricua," the term that affectionately refers to Division Street between California and Mozart, is marked by the two towering Puerto Rican flags erected in 1995.² Vigilantly cognizant of the movement of gentrifying forces displacing Puerto Ricans from Wicker Park and most of West Town, community organizers established Paseo Boricua to be the anchor of the Puerto Rican community, *el barrio boricua*.

Participatory Democracy Project: A Precinct by Precinct Operation



Along with the transformation of Division Street into a cultural-economic corridor, community efforts have resulted in the organization of a community-wide revitalization plan known as the Humboldt Park Empowerment Partnership (HPEP), as well as the formation of the Puerto Rican Agenda. In particular, the Puerto Rican Agenda, an ad-hoc committee made up of professionals, students, community activists, and local politicians, has worked tirelessly to help maintain and stabilize the Puerto Rican community.

Together, these organized bodies have developed numerous strategies; for example, several new programs seek to increase home ownership and affordable housing, while other program address health and employment needs. This reclamation of space, both geographical and cultural, is all the more impressive when understood within the socio-economic context of this Puerto Rican community. As an internally colonized people, the Puerto Rican community suffers from astronomical dropout rates, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, rampant gang violence, poverty

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and unemployment. Though the challenge is great, community efforts have made substantial inroads in addressing these needs and strengthening its economic infrastructure. Lamentably, however, gentrification is a persistent foe.

Armed to the teeth with outside financial and political force, gentrification has begun to displace many Humboldt Park residents. In actuality, Puerto Ricans, once the majority group, have suffered over the course of the last decade a significant population decline.³ Nevertheless, as history has proven, Puerto Ricans are determined to remain in Humboldt Park.

A new initiative of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), a long time beacon of resistance, is focused on further engaging residents by posing the following question: *who is to determine our fate in el barrio?* The PRCC, espousing the concept of participatory democracy, believes that this question can only be answered and fulfilled by the collective participation of the community. Without increased participation in community development—gentrification will not be stopped.

The PRCC, in collaboration with various community organizations such the Near Northwest Neighborhood Network (N4N), the Division Street Business Development Association (DSBDA), and counting on the support of Alderman Billy Ocasio and the Puerto Rican Agenda, seeks to



transform its grassroots precinct operation into a galvanizing force for community participation. It is seven precincts, located in the 26th Ward, which will serve as the base for the participatory democracy project.

In January 2004, the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project was launched with a 10-week pilot program and 35 participants from Northeastern Illinois University, University of Illinois at Chicago, Columbia College, University of Chicago, and youth from the Family Learning Center and other surrounding high schools, in addition to several community activists. This young cohort took part in a series of workshops, skill-building exercises, and door-to-door visits. The workshops included among others, discussing existing community resources, learning about the levels of government, and facilitat-

ing resident participation. The door-to-door visits had several goals: 1) to assess and address community needs by linking residents to existing community service providers; 2) to build relationships with residents in order to dialogue about community life; and 3) to foster and nurture spaces for community members to participate in community development.⁴ In all, the goals of the project sought to accomplish within the ten weeks are part of an ongoing process to build a participatory democracy in Humboldt Park.

Participatory democracy, however, is not to be confused with “representative democracy.” Representative democracy, particularly the United States model, is (largely) equivalent to electoral politics, by where participation is merely punching a hole through a ballot. Thus, reducing the role of a person from a participant to

a pandered voter. Voting, in turn, becomes an individual's primary method by which to influence government, in true liberal fashion. By this singular act, people delegate their political power to a representative, and therefore compromise their opportunity/responsibility to effect change, both individually and more importantly, collectively.

Ever increasingly, critical political theorists have questioned democracy as solely electoral politics. Critiquing "thin democracy," Benjamin Barber writes, "Representation is incompatible with freedom...Men and women who are not directly responsible through common deliberation, common decision, and common action for the policies, that determine their common lives are not really free at all."⁵ In other words, people must be directly involved in giving shape to the processes that govern the character and quality of their lives.

The Puerto Rican experience further critiques U.S. representative democracy due to charges of colonialism and racism. For over 100 years, Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States, entirely under the subjugation of the United States Congress. The island, as the Supreme Court ruled in 1922, "belongs to, but is not a part of" the United States.⁶ In fact, it is U.S. colonial rule (which by the way is innately anti-democratic), which industrialized the island and caused the massive airborne migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States, migration that created

Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project

Goal

To facilitate the building of a participatory democracy in the Humboldt Park community.

Objectives

Workshops

- **Week 1: Introduction**
 - 1) Introduce program, objectives and goals, expectations and responsibilities
 - 2) Discuss the challenges of gentrification, and the possibilities of building community
 - 3) Overview of precinct basics
- **Week 2: Door Knocking**
 - 1) Discuss gang reality in Humboldt Park
 - 2) Understand basic door knocking techniques
- **Week 3: Levels of Government**
 - 1) Distinguish between levels of government; discuss important facts and responsibilities at each level that we have representation.
- **Week 4: Our Elected Officials**
 - 1) Learn about our elected officials, and what they are doing for our community.
- **Week 5: Existing Resources (Part 1)**
 - 1) Discuss various resources/services currently found in our community.
- **Week 6: Election Day**
 - 1) Learn how to run precinct on election day.
- **Week 7: Existing Resources (Part 2)**
 - 1) Discuss various resources/services currently found in our community, and how to connect residents to these services.
- **Week 8: Puerto Rican Agenda (Part 1)**
 - 1) Discuss various Puerto Rican agenda initiatives: Culture/ Economics/ Housing
- **Week 9: Puerto Rican Agenda (Part 2)**
 - 1) Discuss various Puerto Rican agenda initiatives: Youth/ Health/ Education
- **Week 10: Facilitating Participation**
 - 1) Discuss the significance of participation and how to effectively facilitate participation in community-building process.

Door-to-door

- **To begin preliminary ASSESSMENTS**
 - 1) Door-to-door visits of your precinct (weeks 1-10)
 - 2) Service requests (weeks 1-10)
- **To ADDRESS resident needs**
 - 1) Pass out community resource directory
 - 2) Give information about existing services and resources with a focus on our parallel institutions
 - 3) Serve as a liaison between community organizations and residents
- **To initiate DIALOGUE with residents**
 - 1) Facilitate one-on-one discussions with residents about needs, concerns, and issues facing community (weeks 1-10)
 - 2) Organize exchanges with multiple residents to discuss the linkages between individuals needs and community issues.
- **Facilitate resident PARTICIPATION**
 - 1) **VOTER registration/ turnout**
 - a) Increase Voter registration
 - b) Election Day turnout
 - 2) **Resident ATTENDANCE at community events**
Attract a minimum of 20 people to participate in community events/ parallel institutions (Weeks 1-10)
 - 3) **IDENTIFYING resident leaders**
Through entire precinct operation effort we expect to identify a minimum of 14 (2 per precinct) resident leaders. (Weeks 1-10)
 - 4) **Precinct specific initiatives**
Based on assessments and house discussions, we will begin to organize with concerned residents around precinct issues

communities now threatened by gentrification.

Upon arriving to cities like Chicago and New York, Puerto Ricans faced blatant and often times violent racism; and up until the early 1970's, for example, were not even fully enfranchised due to language requirements. With all of representative democracy's obvious, and some would argue intentional limita-

tions, Puerto Ricans, like other historically oppressed peoples (i.e. Native Americans, Blacks, and Mexicans), have been denied full and meaningful political participation rendering self-determination a dream. Still worse, there are many examples of how "democracy" has been used against oppressed people, often as tools of pacification and dependency. Not only has gen-

continued on the next page...

Our Principles of Participatory Democracy (Deep Democracy)

- Participatory Democracy is an **interdependent** grouping of individuals, a collective struggle to survive materially, culturally, spiritually, and psychologically.
- It generates **self-consciousness** about the need and the possibility to make structural change.
- It is **asset-based**; that is, it builds off the strengths of the community— its skills and wealth. It does not believe in the deficit model of the community, nor does it believe that only government can provide for the needs and rights.
- It defines, builds, and controls **parallel institutions** beyond those of the government or other bodies in order to provide the services that it has deemed necessary.
- It **disperses leadership** so that its initiatives are broadly under the control of everyone.
- It is **never fully realized**; it never comes to an end and never offers a complete answer. It is a process that is in constant motion, stable enough to act collectively and persuasively but also flexible enough to be reformed.
- It is **intercultural** and **pluriethnic**. Difference not only characterizes our lives, but it is also the best way to live. It tries to minimize the hierarchical dimensions that emerge because of difference.

The above principles were organized by Professor Rafael Cintron (UIC), and are largely modifications of ideas discussed in an interview by Peter McLaren with Roberto Flores and Greg Tanaka titled, "Autonomy and Participatory Democracy: An Ongoing Discussion on the Application of Zapatista Autonomy in the United States."

uine democracy been denied but the rhetoric of democracy has been used as a mechanism to perpetuate inequality and injustice. It is no surprise that this democracy of the elite is insufficient and unable to address issues of community autonomy, de-colonization, and self-determination.

In the site of persistent colonial dilemmas, expanded, localized formulations of direct democracy enable creative responses to socio-political problems. Participatory Democracy, therefore, is precisely about people taking responsibility for their lives and communities. Central to this notion, at least in its most radical conceptualizations, are the *liberatory* properties of par-

ticipation. Active community participation *authorizes* people—as individuals within a collective—to confront every problem with an unshakable resolve. It is through this ongoing praxis of action and reflection that the chains of imposed dependency and learned helplessness are broken. Through resistance, the barriers of marginalization and alienation are constructively torn down so that freedom can be born. Discussing the "pedagogy of freedom," the late radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wrote, "freedom will gradually occupy those spaces previously inhabited by dependency."⁷ Through this humanizing process, "spectators" will become "privileged actors" in

the ground-up and grassroots construction of an autonomous and self-sufficient community.⁸ No longer are solutions to be found outside of the community; instead, they are created and acquired through the hard, day-to-day work of struggling for change.

In a profound refutation of the traditional deficit model of development used on communities of color, Humboldt Park's efforts have been sustained by building on existing community assets. Invigorated through the masterful harnessing of *social capital*, the struggle against gentrification has led to a proliferation of interconnected projects responsible for the community's holistic

vision. Social capital, which can be defined as the transformation of disparate human and financial capital into collective assets, allows for a multiplicity of persons to participate in community work. Though still economically depressed, many historical accomplishments have been achieved in Humboldt Park through the amalgamation of community assets found in the business, cultural, social service, electoral politics sectors, as well as in the community's parallel institutions.

Parallel institutions, or in other words alternative community institutions, are the foundation of the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project.⁹ These grassroots organizations serve a community in at least two major ways. First, parallel institutions, for example, like Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Alternative High School provide services and resources, in this case to underserved Puerto Rican youth, that the government and mainstream service organizations have systemically denied the community. They are institutional manifestations of a community taking care of its own needs. Secondly, these institutions are centers of political and cultural engagement, providing a site for the experimentation of progressive initiatives and models.¹⁰ The Puerto Rican community in Humboldt Park over the last 30 years of struggle has developed several parallel institutions which address health, education, human rights, youth, and childcare needs.

Participatory democracy, though

much stronger and more deeply rooted than representative democracy, does not altogether rule out voting. Understanding its limitations, voting and elections are considered spaces to be transformed to the extent possible into vehicles for change. Under this purview, voting is just one component in an overall effort to build an autonomous community. In Humboldt Park this struggle counts on the relationship between the community and its elected officials, including Congressman Luis Gutierrez, State Senator Miguel Del Valle, Commissioner Roberto Maldonado, State Representative Cynthia Soto, and Alderman Billy Ocasio. The participatory nature of this relationship ensures that elected leadership is responsive to grassroots community work, and that political power is enjoined effectively at both ends. The Participatory Democracy project is working to complement the work of the elected officials, by launching regular voter registration campaigns and aiming to increase voter turnout in the upcoming elections. The idea here is simple; create an electoral "power base" to ensure that the concerns and needs of the community are respected and addressed within official governing bodies, to the extent possible.

None withstanding, this democratic initiative is not only indicative of local and national circumstances, but also of the hegemonic quagmire known as neoliberal globalization. Communities around the planet, regardless of rural or urban settings, are being adversely affected by the neoliberal

project. The thorough economic restructuring of the city, widespread de-industrialization, rapid dismantling of the "welfare state," and above all the exaltation of transnational corporations and banking centers, has placed already marginalized communities in a more precarious position.¹¹ In response, communities have undertaken imaginative steps, laying the groundwork for tomorrow's societies. But these creative responses are not necessarily new; chances are they are modifications of past struggles more properly situated in the present day. "What appears here is not a new rationality but a new scenario of different rational acts—a horizon of activities, resistances, wills and desires that refuse the hegemonic order, propose lines of flight, and forge alternative constitutive itineraries."¹²

Drawing many parallels from the Zapatista experience in Chiapas, Mexico, and over 30 years of radical Puerto Rican struggle, this project is as much a reflection of a global phenomena based on localized resistance, as it is the result of the struggle for Puerto Rican self-determination. Gentrification, as an ever present backdrop, reminds community organizers of the impact of neoliberal globalization domestically, as well as heightens the sense of community necessary to combat it—most pertinently through resistance built upon participation, cultural affirmation and parallel institution building. As Rachel Rinaldo noted, in her analysis of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park, *continued on the next page...*

“For a colonized, marginalized group to express such collective identity, to assert its right so self-definition through cultural representation, through physical space, is certainly a form of resistance to colonial domination.”¹³ Participatory Democracy is another example in this community of space transformed into a instrument for socio-political change. Out of urban decay, imposed

poverty, under funded schools, internalized self-hate, and paralyzing hopelessness— quite the colonial reality— a community is laying the foundation for its own recovery. Through meaningful participation, the chance to create a just future is etched out slowly, day-by-day and via the collective articulation of solutions and responses of the entire community rather than by the forces of

gentrification. They know the “grandiose glare of history’s floodlights” is upon them; and that is why these Puerto Ricans exercise in self-determination.¹⁴

The author is a coordinator of the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project, as well as a former editor of Que Ondee Sola and NEIU graduate.

Update: The Participatory Democracy Project supports Centro Sin Fronteras’s position on the undocumented immigration legislation presented by Congressman Gutiérrez called SOLVE. We also support their “Latina Familia” voter registration campaign and their efforts to build a city-wide Sanctuary movement.

1. The following words are the result of numerous ongoing discussions at the Juan Antonio Puerto Rican Cultural, Chicago.
2. For more a detailed analysis of Division Street and the Puerto Rican experience of gentrification in Chicago, see Flores-Gonzalez, Nilda, “Paseo Boricua: Claiming a Puerto Rican Space in Chicago.”
Link: www.centropr.org/journal/jrnl24.html.
3. Puerto Rican Agenda. Economic and Housing Development Committee Concept Paper. 2003.
4. PD student reflections found in this edition of Que Ondee Sola provide a further look into the 10-week program.
5. Barber, Benjamin. Strong Democracy.
6. Duffy, Christina, Foreign in a Domestic Sense.
7. Freire, Paolo. Pedagogy of Freedom.
8. Fanon, Frantz. Wretched of the Earth.
9. Interview with Roberto Flores and Greg Tanaka by Peter McLaren, “Autonomy and Participatory Democracy: An Ongoing Discussion on the Application of Zapatista Autonomy in the United States. Link: www.inmotionmagazine.com/auto/ijer.html
10. Sinclair, Minor. The New Politics of Survival Grassroots Movements in Central America.
11. Moore, Joan and Pinderhughes, Raquel. In the Barrios Latinos and the UnderClass Debate.
12. Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. Empire.
13. Rinaldo, Rachel. “Space of Resistance.”
14. Fanon, Frantz. Wretched of the Earth.

Untitled

By Erika Abad

Talkin with my grandmother
 When I was explaing to her
 my activist dreams
 she told me to party
 enjoy my youth
 don't carry the world's misery.
 When we were discussing my liberated theol-
 ogy
 she encouraged my faith
 but not my liberty
 at least not in Tanama* country
 When we were arguing about my energy

the rebellion within me
 that keeps me going
 She lowered her head
 pleading for my silence, my mercy
 “For if Abuelo hears,” she said,
 “he’ll hit me.”

*Tanama is one of the residential hills in Arecibo, where my grandparents live.

Action & Student Reflections

PD: THE POTENTIAL TO SAVE A COMMUNITY FROM DESTRUCTION

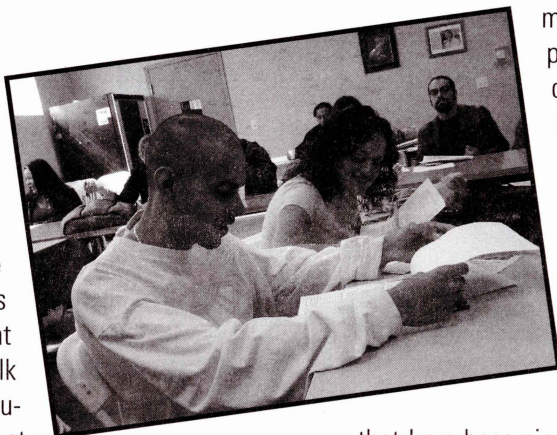
Orlando Ortiz, UIC student

The Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project was created to combat the growing concerns of gentrification in the Humboldt Park Area and to establish a sense of community involvement in the political process. Seven precincts within the 26th ward were identified as the target for this unique project.

Seven precinct captains prepared us on what to expect from community residents throughout a variety of workshop explaining the day's agenda and objectives. These workshops were valuable tools to us considering the fact that when they first started to walk their respective precincts a couple of years ago, they were not aware of how to conduct themselves as far as getting information out to their precincts. It was pretty neat to have them help us out by constructing the workshops to make us feel comfortable with our efforts. They did not have a solid base structure like those of us were able to have because of them. They should be commended for that and I cannot stress that enough.

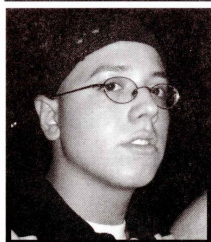
A number of people that spoke at the workshops let us know two things. First, they informed us on what their respective institutions have done and hope to do to contribute to the growing economic, political, and social development in the Humboldt Park area. Enrique Salgado Jr. of DSBDA and Eluid Medina of NNNN spoke on what it is they do to make sure that Puerto Rican and Latino businesses

are able to grow economically, as well as, their importance to the community of Humboldt Park. Secondly, they, along with José E. López and Alderman Billy Ocasio, stressed that what we are doing is very important to the continuing development of the Humboldt Park community. They instilled in us a sense of pride and admiration by showing us how our project was something of great importance to not only the Humboldt Park community but will also serve as a model for future projects to come. They made us feel like we were making history, and we were.



I learned very important things throughout the whole ten-week process. Through this interaction I feel

that I am becoming more aware of myself. To actually see community building and a type of grassroots efforts taking place right before my eyes was a very valuable experience. Getting to know people that volunteered, and people in the precinct who I helped is something that the average person has not done. I was part of a group of people that built a stable foundation that will result in a community standing up for itself instead of not doing anything while it is being raped by gentrification. It starts out with a few people that want to improve the conditions of the community and it feels good to know that I, along with the volunteers, precinct captains, and the residents who participated were part of the start of something that has the potential to save a community from destruction.



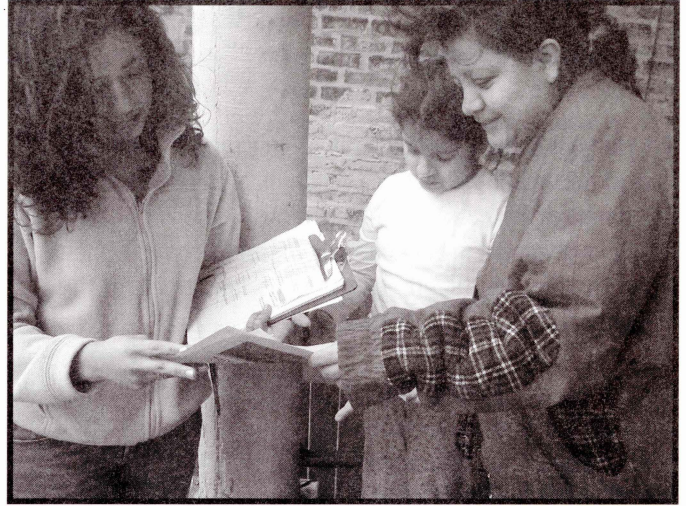
“Participatory Democracy was a humbling experience that personally helped me reconnect with the community. As a young person of color, I felt great helping people, which in turn helped me gain confidence.”

– Jason López aka DJ Wrek, a Pueblo Sin Fronteras/Batey Urbano youth, is a senior at Noble High School and an incoming NEIU freshman.

PUERTO RICAN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Alejandra Moya, UIC student

Participatory democracy was definitely nothing like I had imagined. Several precinct captains largely directed the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy project. They did a very good job of convincing me to stay [in the program]; through educated and well thought out explanations, skits, and demonstrations of authentic dedication, and care for the community and its well-being. They are a motivating bunch of people; many are college students and/or directly related to other programs in the community.



Precinct captains relayed to us the importance of getting out the vote. They did this by explaining the importance of educating and explaining the importance of individual votes to the community members. They were able to relay the message through creative skits and plain facts.

Another agenda was to get service request forms filled out for community members. These forms were then to be delivered to Alderman Billy Ocasio’s office. These forms included requests to remedy problems in the community such as; rat infestation, lack of speed bumps, street issues, graffiti, parking, immigration, and even block parties (which isn’t the remedy to a problem, but a definitely a possible contribution.)

The residents I met were by far the most influential. There specifically was a resident by the name of Adela and her two daughters who definitely won my heart. They have made me realize that what has been said about deep democracy in the quote for the Principles of Participatory Democracy is true. “It is never fully realized; it never comes to an end and never offers a complete answer. It is a process that is in constant motion, stable enough to act collectively and persuasively but also flexible enough to be reformed”. This quote is very powerful because it demonstrates that this is a cyclical type of project and invites it to be reformed for the better, hence inviting people, all people, to participate.

Adela, a Mexican woman is fairly new to the community, yet feels its push effect regardless. She was familiar with some of what the community had to offer as far as English classes, which she soon plans to take as soon as her second daughter enters school. Luckily, we were able to give her information about childcare while she is in class. She said she would look into it. She was also eager to learn more about what the PRCC, as well as other programs in the area had to offer.

My experience for the ten weeks as a volunteer at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center was definitely memorable. I wouldn’t change a thing. The experiences, people, and lessons acquired were priceless.

“I hope that I reached out to someone and made them feel like there is still a chance for them to stay here in Humboldt Park—where we call home.”

– José Cartagena, a Family Learning Center Student.

“We were able to engage residents in reshaping our community, not only did we listen to their concerns, but action was taken to meet their needs.”

– Samuel Q. Reyes, a Columbia College student.

DIVISIONS VS. SOCIETY

Jovannie Vargas

I am a student from Northeastern Illinois University, a Puerto Rican poet/mc known as D.V.S. My experience in the community has changed me to become a stronger person. It is through my involvement with the many grassroots organizations such as the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School, Batey Urbano and the rest of the Puerto Rican and Latino community, that on Paseo Boricua I have found my home. A home I am prepared to fight for.

We live within a society that has been systematically gentrified and oppressed, especially here in Chicago, so we fight back; what do they expect us to do? Let people come in and erase our presence and our culture? I don't think so.

So, then when we got together and started a Participatory Democracy Program, we knew what topics we needed to hit the community with. We invited our youth to come out to the Batey Urbano and participate in events revolving around the Latino Renaissance, using art forms such as poetry and hip-hop. Too often, we are denied our creativeness.

Another point that we discussed with the community was the issue of affordable housing. Every Saturday we searched for people that needed resources and we supplied them with the information they needed to help them stay in the community as opposed to leaving the community and having no alternative.

As a recent collective member of the Batey Urbano, I've learned to give and put into the community, rather than just taking from it. This is our main goal, our mission. Let's come together and break the chains...

DESPIERTA BORICUA

Jovannie Vargas (DVS)

DESPIERTA BORICUA

VAMOS A LEVANTARNOS COMO DIJO ALBIZU.

UNIDOS EN LA LUCHA DE LIBERTAD.

NUESTRA GENTE SIGUE SUFRIENDO,

Y POR ESO TENEMOS QUE SEGUIR PA'LANTE.

SACRIFICIOS DE SANGRE Y SUDOR SOBRE LA PIEL,

Y NUESTROS HIJOS.

CON LA MENTE ENREDADA EN UN INFIERNO.

TENEMOS QUE RESPETAR NUESTRA HERMANA

Y TAMBIÉN NUESTRO HERMANO.

PORQUE ENTREMEDIO DE UN FUEGO

SIEMPRE SALE UN DIABLO.

SIN AMOR NO TENEMOS NADA

Y SIN EL RESPETO TENEMOS MENOS.

POR ESO TENEMOS QUE SER RUIDOSOS.

ES HORA DE SALIR DE LAS NUBES

QUE YA MISMO NI EL TECHO NOS AYUDA DE LA LLUVIA.

LA ÚNICA MANERA DE SALVARNOS

DEPENDE EN NUESTRA LUCHA DE LA GENTE.

LA VOZ ES LA LLAVE MÁS IMPORTANTE DE LA VIDA.

Y POR ESO TENEMOS QUE ABRIR LAS PUERTAS

PARA SER LIBRE.

DESPIERTA BORICUA, NO ES TIEMPO PARA DORMIR.

EL SUEÑO ES MALO Y NESECITAMOS CONTROLARLO.

EL DEMONIO SALE DE LAS VAGANCIAS.

Y TE TERMINA

COMO UN LECHÓN ASADO ACABADO DE TERMINAR.

NO TE DEJES LLEVAR BORICUA.

NO TE DEJES LLEVAR.

PARTICIPATING IN HEGEMONIC DECLINE

Christopher Estrada

My first personal encounter with the power of grassroots mobilization in Humboldt Park is a vivid memory. As I was leaving my apartment one morning in the spring of 2003, I came upon a somewhat impromptu demonstration in front of a mural about two blocks away. This mural depicted the key figures of the *nacionalista* party and movement in Puerto Rico – Pedro Albizu Campos, Lolita Lebron, and Rafael Cancel Miranda -- in a crucifixion scene depicted to resemble the biblical Calvary against a backdrop of the revolutionary flag of Lares. The protest was not in objection of the content, but rather to what had begun to happen to the mural itself merely one day earlier: a developer had begun construction on the vacant lot adjacent to it, and rather than beginning with the foundation of a new structure, they had commenced with covering up the mural. It turned out that the proper permits had not been obtained by the developer to begin construction, and with pressure from several community organizations and the ward alderman, the city issued a “cease and desist” order. Although irreparable damage had been done to the mural, as cinder blocks and cement now covered the painting between four and five feet up

from the ground, a chain-reaction of outrage, mobilization and strategizing had occurred within the space one working day to bring a (temporary) end to the process.

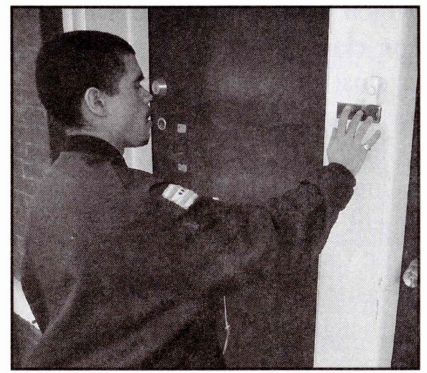
The protest took the form of signs planted in the ground and

HOW DOES A
COMMUNITY, WHICH HAS
HISTORICALLY BEEN
WORKING-CLASS
PUERTO RICAN, FIGHT
AGAINST THIS
DISPLACEMENT?

attached to the chain-link fence that had been hastily erected and only partially completed before the opposition halted their progress. These signs featured slogans such as “Stop Erasing Our History” and “End Gentrification”. A small camp-style tent had been erected in a grassy area near the sidewalk, where activists stationed them-

selves to provide information to curious passers-by about the history of the mural and its impending fate. The mural was thirty-five years old, the oldest such public monument to the Puerto Rican presence not only in the Humboldt Park community, but all of Chicago. An activist explained how the Alderman, who had grown up in the neighborhood, was working to stall the development project and had initiated negotiations with the individual who had purchased rights to the lot. Activists came and went and huddled from the cold inside the tent. I left the scene, but when I returned that evening I found a makeshift altar had been added to the mix, complete with candles and a copy of the Bible, and the activists were steeling themselves for an all-night vigil.

But as I moved along down the sidewalk that morning, a little girl about seven years old stopped and asked me, “Who is the man in that picture? And why are they covering it up?” I told her that he was Pedro Albizu Campos, a political leader from a long time ago who was very important to Puerto Rico. I had no simple answer to her second question. Since the young girl was African-American, for a fleeting moment I



considered saying to her: “Imagine if someone started painting over a mural of Malcolm X or Nelson Mandela; imagine the outrage and public outcry.” But something held my tongue; besides my personal distaste for historical analogies, the girl had already returned to playing with her friends.

The defacement of a history; a legacy of social and political struggle; the contestation of identity and territory were all embodied in this single scenario. The mural had been constructed as a direct response to the riots that broke out on nearby Division Street in June of 1966 that marked a pivotal moment in the history of the Puerto Rican diaspora in Chicago. (Ramos-Zayas 2003: 185)

The possible destruction of this landmark carries extremely portentous overtones for the community, and hearkens back to earlier struggles over contested identity and space in its history. “The mural”, as it came to be referred

to discursively during subsequent discussions and forums on gentrification and displacement, became a meta-trope that encapsulated an entire struggle in miniature. An entire year later, it continues to serve this purpose. When I had first moved here in 1998, I was cursorily aware of the history of political activism and community organizing associated with the Humboldt Park neighborhood. I was cognizant of how the Puerto Rican diaspora in Chicago had been gentrified out of the nearby Lincoln Park and Wicker Park neighborhoods, and how real estate interests were transforming Logan Square to the north as well as areas formerly home to massive housing projects to the south and east. When Lincoln Park was undergoing development and ‘urban renewal’ in the 1960’s, the Young Lords organization was at the forefront of opposition and efforts to resist the displacement of the predominantly Puerto Rican community there. (Flores-Gonzalez 2001: 9) During the late 1970’s, the gentri-

fication began in the impoverished area of West Town that would soon be christened “Wicker Park” against a backdrop of continual police harassment of Puerto Ricans, a devastating spate of suspicious arsons in adjacent Humboldt Park that destroyed up to 30% of the available housing in the area (and simultaneously set the stage for redevelopment of those same properties), and the lack of political leverage in the Puerto Rican community. These factors coluded to result in another outbreak of civil unrest and rioting in June of 1977. (Perez 2001: 58-9)

The process of ‘urban renewal’ and displacement has continued throughout the eighties and nineties, inextricably bound up with a housing crisis that finds a shortage of affordable housing coupled with escalating property taxes and real-estate speculation. On the other hand runs a universalist argument of “Why can’t we all just get along and live together”, a perspective that is eminently ahistorical and seeks to deny the fact that Chicago, the famous “city of neighborhoods”, has always had a systemic pattern of segregation along racial lines (c.f. Hirsch 1998, Massey & Denton 1993) How does a community, *continued on the next page...*

which has historically been working-class Puerto Rican, fight against this displacement? As a result of my decision to return to college and attend Northeastern Illinois University, and my subsequent involvement in UPRS and Que Ondee Sola, I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with a group of activists and community organizers whose tireless effort and dedication has never ceased to impress and inspire me. This winter and spring, I also had the privilege of being a part of the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project, which is attempting to answer the above question.

“Gentrification would be good if it was inclusive, but it’s not – it’s exclusive.” –Saúl Meléndez during one of the workshops.

One of the major hurdles in many discussions on gentrification is the notion of its inevitability. I find this idea to be an example of hegemony in action: the concept implies that communities are helpless before the blind will of market forces, a convenient myth by which neo-liberal economic theory tends to justify itself. (Bourdieu 1998: 29-44) The appropriation of space by a dominating Other, the sanitization and “whitewashing” of an area’s history, and the attempted erasure of the Puerto Rican struggle for self-determination have all been construed by the activists I worked with as directly contingent upon processes of colonialism and globalization. In fact, Michael Rodríguez has drawn overt parallels between the struggle of the barrio and struggles for land and autonomy in Chiapas

among the Zapatistas, as well as the “Bolivarian circles” of Hugo Chavez’ democratic revolution and the neighborhood democratic cooperatives of Porto Alegre, Brazil. These conceptualizations resonate with Jonathan Friedman’s view that globalization is intrinsic to a variety of “indigenous movements” and cultural revitalization in which subaltern histories are reclaimed during periods of hegemonic decline. (Friedman 1992, 2003) The context of the struggle in Chicago is framed against an ideology of the free market and economic mobility that seeks to obscure its role as a homogenizing force of displacement, disinvestment and reinvestment, and a frontier mentality. From this vantage point, the contested terrain of West Town and Humboldt Park is not particular to Chicago but also a reflection of global processes taking place in other urban spaces (c.f. Smith 1996) Activists in Humboldt Park are explicitly framing their endeavors as creating a ‘space of resistance’ that is philosophically and ideologically informed by the Brazilian educator and social theorist Paulo Freire. Activists have utilized his conceptualizations of “critical pedagogy” and “critical consciousness” in application to the everyday struggles of the Humboldt Park community, and many of their popular education initiatives are close parallels to Freire’s “culture circles” that stressed the identification of self in the learning process and the “democratization of culture”. (Freire 1970; 1973: 81)

The initial social science literature of mainland Puerto Rican com-

munities, and United States minority groups generally, had roots in a paradigm that emphasized the negative and dysfunctional. The “culture of poverty” theories formulated by Oscar Lewis (1965) and expanded upon by other scholars (e.g. Moynihan and Glazer in “Beyond the Melting Pot”) located the obstacles to social and economic mobility in the cultural traits and behavioral patterns of what was described as an essentially apathetic, disengaged subculture. Even the more sophisticated analysis of recent scholarship often tends to play upon the conflict, tension and internecine struggles that frequently compose a significant portion of the daily experience of barrio residents. Yet, a grassroots activism developed from this environment that has persisted across generations. Building upon a foundation and history of community activism and political resistance, bound up with this particular geographic area of the city for roughly forty years, a new generation of activists has emerged.

These activists are creatively addressing the conditions and problems within their communities by utilizing the tools provided by their predecessors, and through innovations generated by their own experiences. I feel it is important to emphasize the creative and progressive aspects of community-building and agency represented by these efforts. Such aspects of the project are underscored by the formation of alliances across factional and ideological lines, as well as the active involvement of community residents. Through the participation

of the community in its own history and self-direction, I think we are witnessing what Antonio Gramsci described as a response to the declining hegemony of the ruling classes. (1971: 210, 276)

This Participatory Democracy Project spanned ten Saturdays and involved a steady group of volunteers drawn from students, community residents, and educators in sessions that were split evenly between informative workshops and actual 'hands-on' engagement with a community-building project. The project evolved out of "precinct work" previously undertaken by several of the key players in the activist community, and explicitly aimed to create "parallel institutions" to service the community needs that were not being met by the structures of the nation-state.

Interestingly, this strategy toward empowering the community is indirectly involved with local electoral politics in Chicago, as it essentially involved placing volunteers as intermediaries between community residents and official power structures. This was attempted through the actions of soliciting "service requests" for basic city services from barrio residents including: garbage collection issues, rodent problems, abandoned automobiles in alleys, problems with high gas bills, unemployment and day care. Informational forums were also held on equity and property taxes, to which community residents were encouraged to come. Some observers may question what exactly is political about such everyday concerns; a viewpoint that reflects the narrow definition of the "political" in popu-

lar discourse, and one which is being challenged by current research into the relationship between social movements, cultural identity, and politics in Latin America. (c.f. Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998) By connecting residents with available resources or assisting them with information on how to obtain those resources, the organizers aimed to open up a dialogue within the community addressing issues of displacement and gentrification as a "point of articulation". Obviously, such bold ambitions are not to be completely realized in a project spanning a mere ten weeks. But it's a start, and a movement, in the right direction.

The author is a recent NEIU graduate.

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DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

Jonathon Rosa, University of Chicago Student

What is the nature of the relationship between individuals and communities? Do you know where I can find a job? What are the ways in which these relationships take shape with respect to particular sociopolitical (and geographical) contexts/histories? Can I get a new garbage can? How might community involvement serve as a tool by which disenfranchised populations could lay claim to their legitimacy as individuals and groups?

The sequence of these questions might come across as somewhat nonlinear, maybe even nonsensical. In reflecting on my participation in the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project, I've found that these are precisely the types of questions that arise not only in theory-based planning discussions, but also in direct interactions with members of the community. There is always the danger that theoretical questions might promote distant analyses of the experiences of some essentialized "other." An acute awareness of this danger helps to account for the seemingly illogical juxtaposition of the questions listed above.

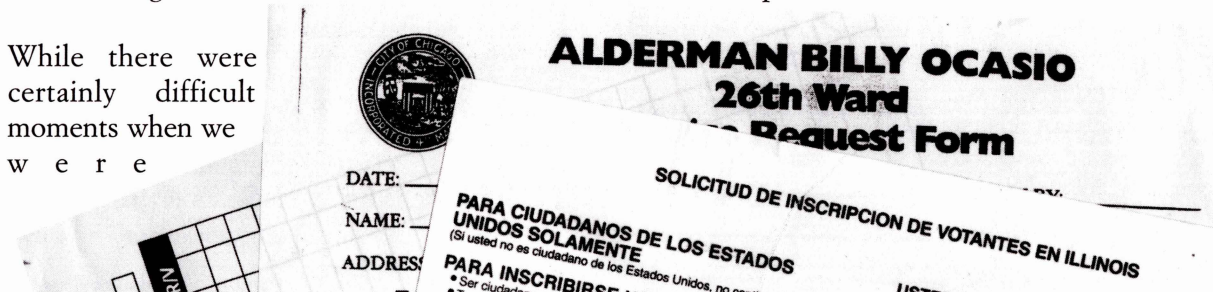
It is important to recognize the organic nature of this particular project; that is, this project's organizers—the people asking these questions—are residents of this community. This means that our answers to these questions must stem from practice, which in this case takes the form of the experiences of community-members. For example, a distant analysis might provide a framework for understanding the nature of social inequality, but does it take care of the rats that residents can't get rid of? By speaking with residents directly, our theories took root in the problems for which residents themselves were seeking answers.

While there were certainly difficult moments when we were

unable to address residents' pressing needs immediately, there's a sense in which the act of naming these problems and seeking to find ways in which to deal with them is highly productive. This project is largely about the assertion of collective ownership of and responsibility for the community. This involves a radical restructuring of relationships between residents, which includes denaturalizing the idea that each person need only look out for their own well-being. In this framework, problems (and responses to them) are to be shared collectively among community residents.

There is an intended connection between the approach to this project and the type of community that its participants seek to build. The approach involves a dialectical relationship between theory and practice, with community experiences leading to questions, and questions seeking to address experiences. The community involves a type of membership which is constituted by members' questions regarding the nature of their of their relationships with respect to fellow residents and the larger community. Both the approach and the intended community are constituted by action derived from critical questions.

I am excited about the potential for this project to serve as an ongoing effort seeking to assert a community's right to determine its future. The act of naming problems and concerns is to be viewed here as a step toward establishing a sense of collective responsibility. The force that exists in this collective makes possible not only the proposal of ways in which to address current problems, but also the imagination of decidedly agentive futures without these problems.



The Boricua Initiative: Encuentro Boricua2004

Dear Compañera/o:

On behalf of the Coordinating Committee of **The Boricua Initiative**, I am inviting you to participate in **Encuentro Boricua2004/Boricua Roundtable2004**. The Encuentro is a historic event scheduled to take place on Friday night and all day Saturday, May 21 - 22, 2004, at Hostos Community College in The Bronx, NY. The Boricua Initiative is a coalition of Puerto Rican community activists from throughout the United States who came together last year to build on our community's successful campaigns to remove the U.S. Navy from Vieques and secure a Presidential clemency for the Puerto Rican political prisoners. Despite the fact that the stateside Puerto Rican community has grown to close to 4 million and is now a population as large as the total population of Puerto Rico, there hasn't been a major national gathering of our advocates in quite some time. With all the attention the Latino vote is getting during this Presidential election, more and more activists in Puerto Rican communities throughout the country have been calling for the development of a progressive Puerto Rican agenda to inject into the national debate. **Encuentro Boricua 2004** is being organized for this purpose.

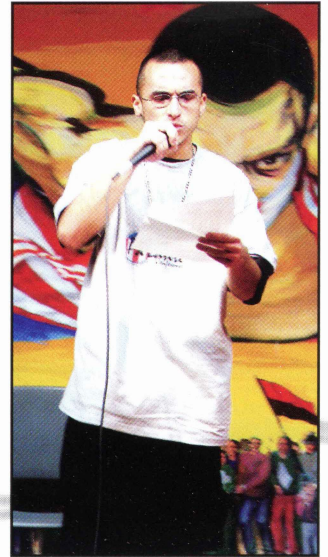
Encuentro Boricua2004's mission is to convene Puerto Rican leadership from across the United States to discuss the state of our communities and new initiatives to promote our effective participation in the broader Latino agenda and national politics of the United States. The **Encuentro's** projected outcomes are to:

1. Develop a strategy for establishing a national Puerto Rican voice that provides a framework for stateside Boricuas to participate in a broader Latino Agenda while strengthening local initiatives;a
2. Establish in clear and accurate language the need for a new progressive Boricua Agenda and to project this message effectively;
3. Build widespread community support for two of the Boricua Initiative's new projects, the Encuentro eMagazine and October 2004 mobilization to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the massive Madison Square rally in support of self-determination for Puerto Rico;
4. Guide the direction of The Boricua Initiative as the coordinator/convener of the activities and projects agreed upon at the conference;
5. Document the discussions and results of the conference for wide dissemination in state side Boricua communities to promote local and national organizing and strategizing.

Sincerely,
Encuentro Boricua 2004



Words by Yvonne Nieves
& Matt Rodríguez



Que Ondee Sola is proud to have participated in the 10th annual Pa'Lante Conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In addition to helping with a publicity campaign, with set up and take down, representatives from Que Ondee Sola and the Union for Puerto Rican Students were also a part of the student-run college fair. With that, we take these pages to reflect on our experience in coordination with PRSA of UIC.

This year, the Puerto Rican Student Association hosted its 10th annual Pa'Lante conference with the theme: "Social Problems Attacked with Community Solutions". The panelists and the environment that was created, was used to highlight the historical work that is taking place as we speak. The Puerto Rican community in Chicago on Paseo Boricua, has taken the lead on the development of several innovative plans of strategic action to address the many problems that Puerto Ricans face in this day and age.

The Batey Urbano, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos alternative high school, Centro Infantil, Vida/SIDA, and the Family Learning Center are all components of the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. These departments—dealing with, among other things, health disparities, the increasing student push-out rates, and gentrification—are some of the tangible manifestations of over thirty years of strategic community building. With its resiliency, persistence and effectiveness in the face of political opposition, the Puerto Rican Cultural

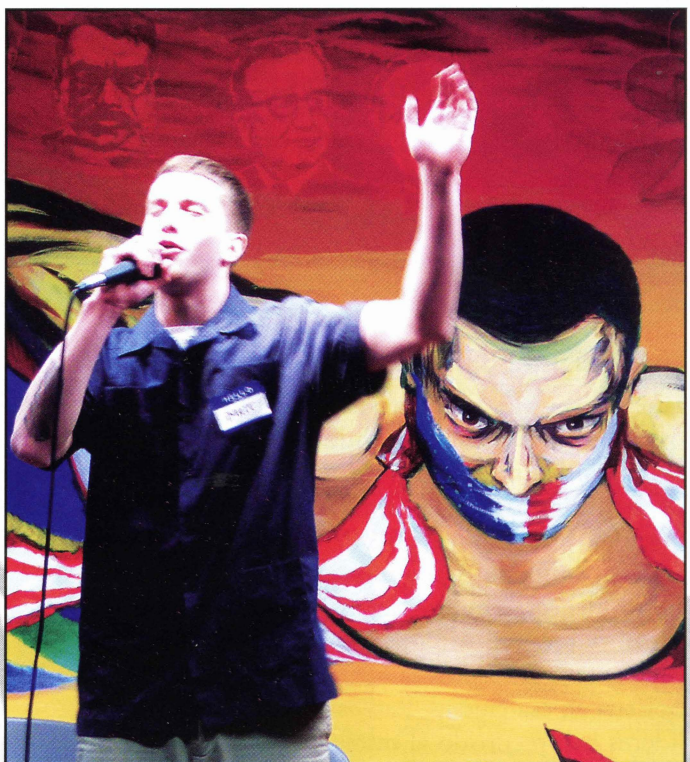


Center has shown the importance of community building and developing alternatives. Each of these departments engaged the university students and other participants in the dialogue about how the theoretical framework, through which they operate, is developed in constant interaction with community realities.

Throughout our week-long conference, we had over 500 people in attendance, and have received nothing but enthusiastically positive responses to our events. In addition, the participation of the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center and all of its projects, the generosity of our Paseo Boricua restaurants, and the involvement of National Boricua Human Rights Network, all played an essential role in the success and significance of what we set out to accomplish.

Given that the Puerto Rican experience provides a prime example of how oppression manifests itself, one of our main goals was to have Puerto Rican and Latino student organizations participating from across the city. The LUCHE group (Latinos United to Change Higher Education) was a major force in making this goal a reality. Both LUCHE and the Batey Urbano helped bring together the Puerto Rican Student Association from UIC, the Union for Puerto Rican Students and Que Ondee Sola from Northeastern, the Puerto Rican Student Association from DePaul, the Latino Alliance from Columbia College, as well as Puerto Rican and Latino students from Wright College, Robert Morris and the University of Chicago.

The Puerto Rican Student Association sends out its thanks to all of the participants of our 2004 Pa'Lante conference. Without the engagement of the many people and organizations, the week would not have been nearly as successful. In the end, we expect that the success of our conference will be used as a stepping stone in two ways—PRSA hopes to continue to work with our community and Paseo Boricua, as well as, continuing to open a dialogue within city universities and colleges about the influential work of Paseo Boricua.





Los Boricuas Radicales de Chicago

Jorge Duany, Catedrático de la UPR

¿POR QUE los puertorriqueños establecidos en Chicago tienen fama de ser más nacionalistas que sus compatriotas en la Isla y otras partes de Estados Unidos? ¿Por qué muchos activistas comunitarios de la diáspora se han alineado con movimientos izquierdistas como las Fuerzas Armadas para la Liberación Nacional y los desaparecidos Young Lords? El reciente libro de la antropóloga Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*, intenta contestar tales preguntas. Mediante una minuciosa investigación de la comunidad boricua en esa ciudad, Ramos-Zayas demuestra que sus líderes han recurrido al discurso nacionalista para adelantar múltiples agendas ideológicas y materiales, tales como los intereses de clase, raza y género de los inmigrantes.

Según la autora, el nacionalismo ha aglutinado a numerosos activistas y residentes del barrio puertorriqueño en el área de Humboldt Park, donde se concentraron los inmigrantes de la Isla desde los años cincuenta. Actualmente, ese barrio ostenta el Paseo Boricua, un proyecto de revitalización urbana que se extiende por una milla a lo largo de la calle Division, marcada por dos enormes banderas monoestrelladas de acero. Allí se ubican panaderías, colmados, restaurantes, cafeterías, centros culturales, iglesias y una casita en honor a Pedro Albizu Campos. Anualmente se celebran importantes eventos públicos como el

Día de los Reyes Magos, el Desfile del Pueblo y la Fiesta Boricua.

Hace dos años, tuve la oportunidad de dictar una conferencia a una audiencia que desbordaba el local del Centro Cultural Juan Antonio Corretjer, en plena Calle Division. No sé si el tamaño del público se debió al

“¿Por que los puertorriqueños establecidos en Chicago tienen fama de ser más nacionalistas que sus compatriotas en la Isla y otras partes de Estados Unidos?”

grupo de bomba y plena que me precedió o a los suculentos candungos de arroz con pollo que consumieron gratuitamente los asistentes. De todos modos, quedé muy impresionado con el grado de interés, preparación y organización de los participantes en la actividad. Paseo Boricua es uno de los esfuerzos comunitarios más exitosos de los puertorriqueños en Estados Unidos.



La bien sustentada tesis de Ramos-Zayas es que los inmigrantes puertorriqueños y sus descendientes en Chicago han reelaborado los principales símbolos nacionalistas (como la figura mítica de Albizu Campos) como pruebas de autenticidad cultural. Estos símbolos se han difundido ampliamente a través de instituciones comunitarias como las Escuelas Roberto Clemente y Pedro Albizu Campos, y los Centros Culturales Juan Antonio Corretjer y Segundo Ruiz Belvis. A diferencia de la Isla, el nacionalismo puertorriqueño en Chicago combina una ideología anticolonialista con prácticas culturales que no dependen exclusivamente de la lengua española ni la cultura hispánica. Más bien, se trata de combatir la representación



pública de una comunidad criminalizada y marginada, mediante la reafirmación de su identidad híbrida, incluyendo el uso del rap y el "Spanglish".

Pese a su reputación como bastión de radicalismo, la población puertorriqueña en Chicago está compuesta mayoritariamente por trabajadores inmigrantes que probable-

mente no simpatizan con la independencia de Puerto Rico ni con la izquierda política. No obstante, en comparación con otras comunidades de la diáspora, la de Chicago parece estar mejor organizada para resistir el prejuicio étnico, la discriminación racial y el desplazamiento residencial. El excelente libro de Ramos-Zayas documenta la movilización comunitaria en torno al discurso nacionalista de sus principales líderes. Me sigue intrigando por qué ese discurso ha logrado más arraigo popular en Chicago que en otros asentamientos puertorriqueños en Estados Unidos e incluso en la Isla.

Publicado: El Nuevo Día: miércoles, 12 de noviembre de 2003.

Boricua, Tu País Te Necesita

Nanett Konig-Toro, University of Chicago

Para una estudiante regresando a la isla, a su patria, es fuerte ver como siguen las condiciones de educación y servicios al joven: malas. El 25 de Marzo, en una escuela pública en Salinas, un joven de 14 años resultó muerto a manos de uno de sus compañeros en la escuela, quien ya tenía problemas a causa de drogas. El reportaje continuo de este incidente dejó a muchos en la isla sorprendidos, ya que a causa de la muerte del joven, varios recursos que le hacían falta a la escuela han sido establecidas dentro de 24 horas. Por ejemplo, arreglos en el edificio (pintura, tubería, luces) han sido completamente terminados dentro de dos días. Además, sicólogos, consejeros y/o orientadores han dado sus servicios a la escuela por necesidad frente a este trauma. Ya se ve que hacen falta maestros dedicados a sus estudiantes, maestros sustitutos (para que si los maestros faltan, no sea una hora libre para los estudiantes) y consejeros que puedan guiar estudiantes hacia sus metas.

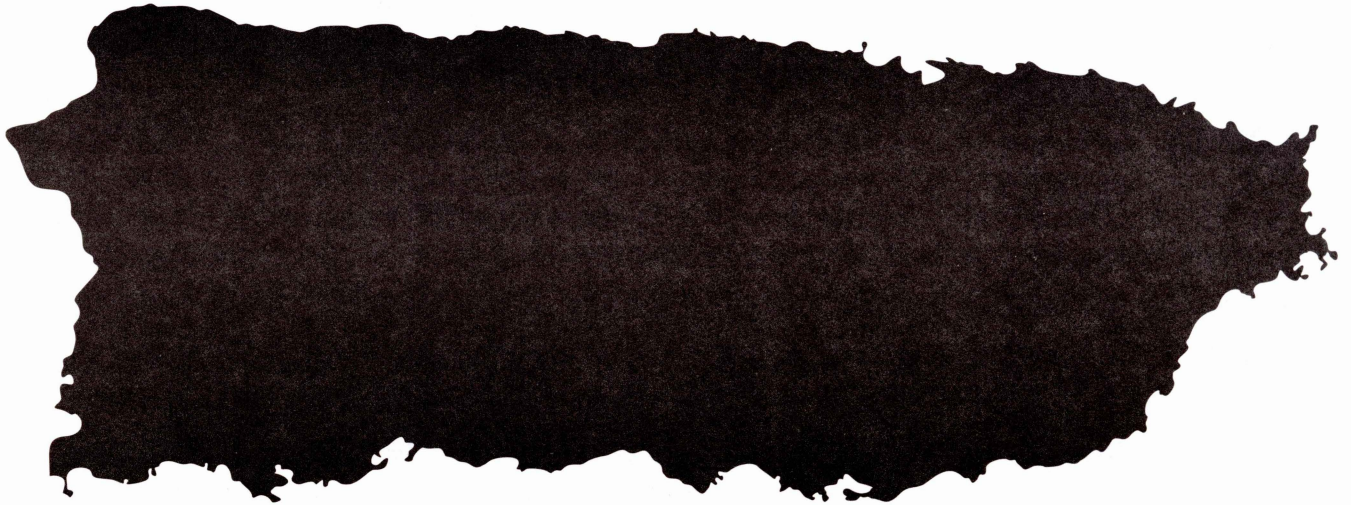
En este aspecto, hay mucho trabajo que se necesita hacer para fortalecer a los programas que ya existen para los jóvenes de la isla. No es que haya una falta de programas, sino falta de empleados dispuestos a enfocar sus energías

en lo mas importante: ayudar a cada estudiante en lo necesario. De los estudiantes de escuelas privadas, muchos van a estudiar fuera de la isla, en los Estados Unidos, en universidades donde su educación será de la mejor y mas alta calidad. Pero al terminar sus estudios, donde toman residencia estos jóvenes boricuas? Regresan a la isla, o permanecen en los Estados Unidos? En mi opinión es importante que regresen a la isla para compartir todo lo que han aprendido y para mejorar el sistema educativo y de servicios públicos en la isla. En mi experiencia, algunos dicen que en la isla no hay oportunidad para seguir adelante, para ganar sueldos altos, para mejorar su calidad de vida. Cada día en el periódico se ven instantes de corrupción, no solamente al nivel de administración educativa, sino políticamente. Con las elecciones acercándose en Noviembre, las tensiones políticas han llegado a un nivel increíblemente alto, y el respeto hacia otro – entre los políticos – es casi inexistente. Pedro Roselló y Anibal Acevedo Vilá (candidatos de los partidos PNP y PPD a la gubernación, respectivamente) se faltan el respeto diariamente, lo cual ha provocado mucha angustia de que la voz del pueblo no sea escuchada. Muchos dicen que los

candidatos simplemente buscan formas de atacarse el uno al otro sin tener en mente que el pueblo necesita líderes políticos que se respeten el uno al otro y que sean representantes de sus comunidades, lo cual hasta ahora no se ha visto mucho.

El problema de la educación llega a todos niveles de la sociedad, desde los mas jovencitos hasta los mayores de edad, entre los políticos y los profesionales. El pueblo se ve afectado gravemente.

Son efectos y resultados de una dependencia inevitable a causa del status colonial de la isla. Un ejemplo relevante que aporta esto es la cerradura de la base naval en Roosevelt Roads en Ceiba, llamada “Rosie” por apodo, que ha estado ahí desde la segunda guerra mundial. En un sondeo de El Nuevo Día se reveló que el mayor porcentaje de la isla piensa que el hecho de que van a cerrar la base causará muchos problemas para Ceiba, no solo en el aspecto de trabajo, sino también en que los marineros de la base daban mucho apoyo en esa comunidad, por ejemplo cuando hubo tormenta, o en los negocios locales. Se publicaron los resultados del sondeo de El Nuevo Día el 23 de Marzo, el cual demostró que de 2804 votos acumulados, 2019



(72.0%) pensaban que el cierre de la base naval tendrá un efecto negativo para Ceiba, 188 (6.7%) opinaron que el efecto será neutral, y 597 (21.3%) votaron en lo positivo. Esto se llama DEPENDENCIA. Es una dependencia que existe al nivel de la isla entera. Los pueblos, como Ceiba, se ven extremadamente afectados por esto, tanto como los políticos en sus peleas diarias. La presidente de los Nacionalistas, Rosario Meneses (nieta de Albizu Campos, líder político del

movimiento nacionalista de la isla durante los años 50) comenta en una entrevista de El Nuevo Día que esta dependencia y el status colonial de la isla son hechos que desprecian al puertorriqueño y al mismo tiempo crean situaciones a propósito, como la que vemos entre Roselló y Acevedo Vilá para destacar que la isla es incapaz de funcionar independientemente de los Estados Unidos y el apoyo económico y político que imponen.

Por estas razones, y muchísimas mas, es importante que esos estudiantes que vayan a estudiar fuera de la isla, apoyen su patria y regresen para trabajar y mejorar el sistema bajo el que obviamente, muchos jóvenes se ven desviados y perdidos, por razones directas o indirectas, bajo el cual no tienen los servicios necesarios para salir adelante y buscar esos trabajos o esas vidas con las que sueñan.

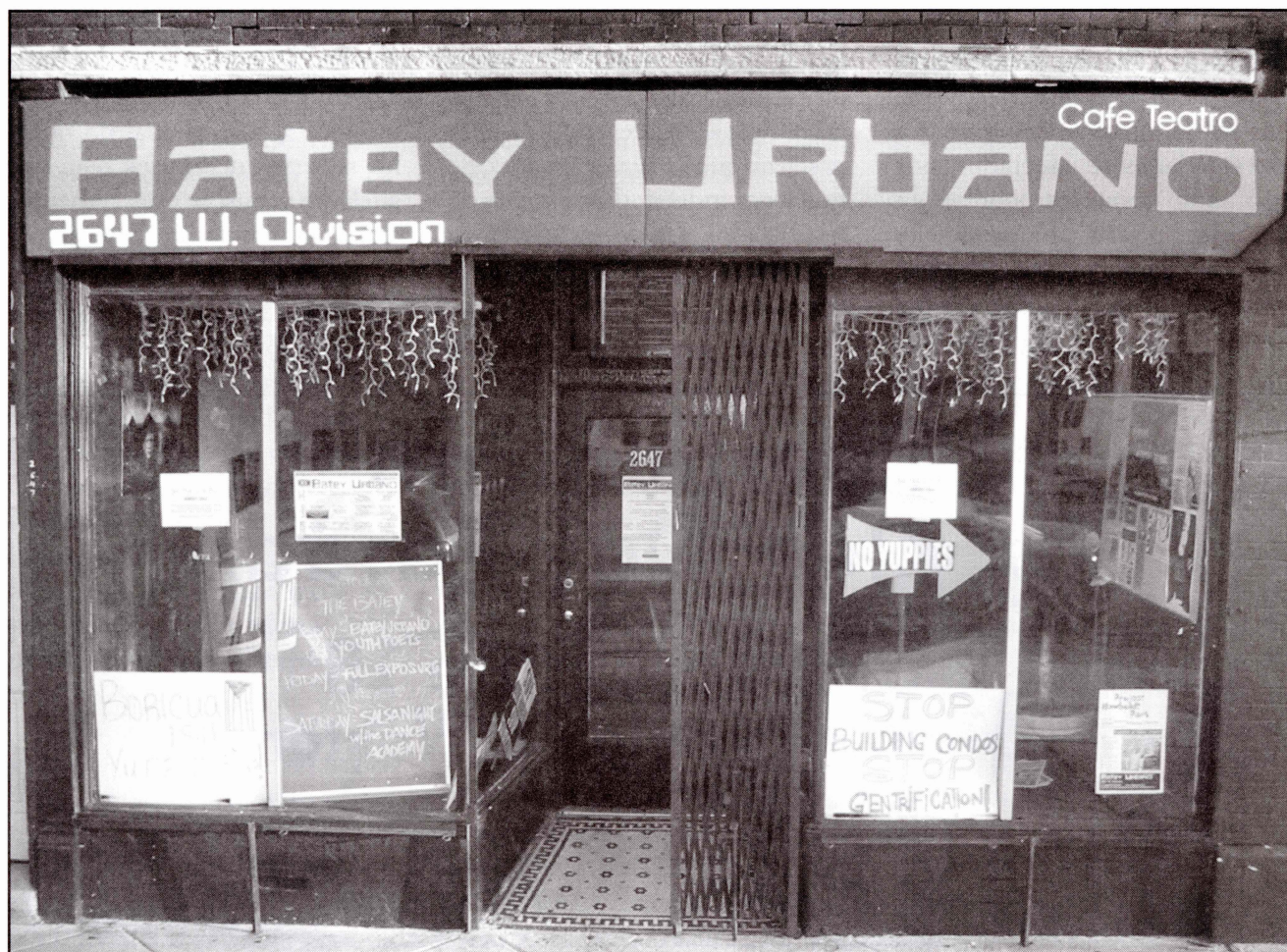
**Puerto Rican
Peoples' Day Parade**
Saturday, June 19
2:00pm • Division & Western
"Return to El Barrio, Return Home"

Layout and Words
by Michael Reyes

Batey Urbano

**Creating Culture, Building Community:
Defining the Latin Renaissance One Stroke at a Time**

In the midst of the growing Latino population a small storefront cafe/theater called the Cafe Teatro Batey Urbano, in Chicago is in the process of creating something magically unique. In the belly of the beast, the artery of the empire, Simon Bolivar's dreams are being shaped, formed, expanded and redefined through poetry, spoken word, hip hop and other more traditional art forms. But it is the day to day community action that the dream truly takes place. The Batey Urbano is defiantly following a path that has been cut generations before them, but this youth lead grassroots space is looking to take that path down new turns and push miles into the future.



Between the enormous Puerto Rican flags located on Division Street in Humboldt Park, in the midst of blaring salsa, community institutions, gangs, families, mom and pop businesses, activist and intellectuals, exists a small storefront café/theater called Café Teatro Batey Urbano. Its red and yellow sign brightly stand out over the brick façade painted with dark black paint to hide the age of the building it is housed in. It is not much as far as aesthetics, in fact if one would judge it by its outer appearance you might question whether it is open for business or not, but despite it's lack of grandeur and beauty, something magical or perhaps even mystic has been taking place there for the past two years. In this small grassroots space, Latino youth from the Humboldt Park community and throughout the city of Chicago have started to feel something they have not felt in a long time, and that is human.

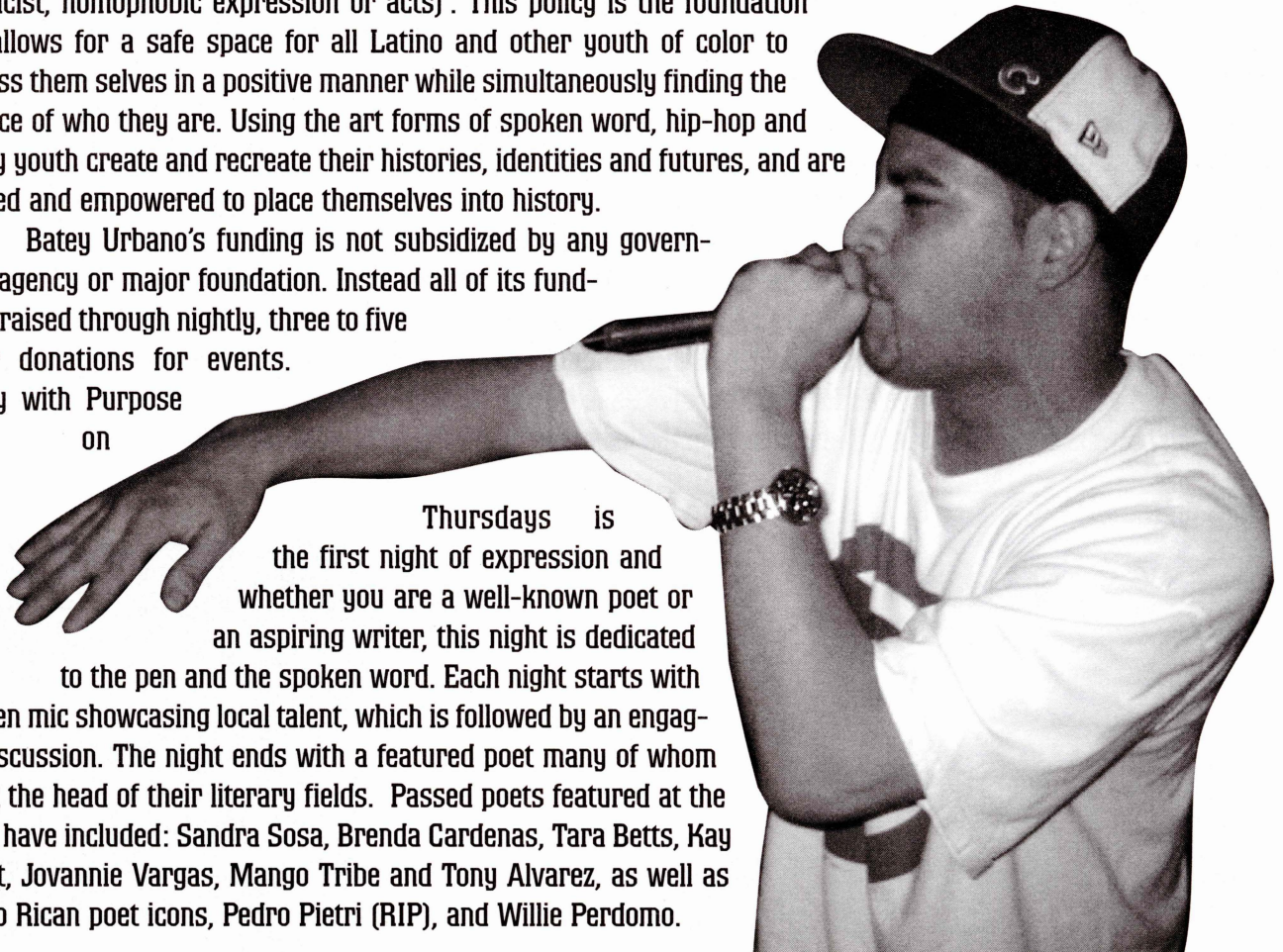
The Batey Urbano was founded by a group of college students from various universities, otherwise known as the Batey collective, whom are student volunteers working in collaboration with the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. The student where from a host of Chicago universities (Northeastern Illinois University, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Chicago and other student supporters from De Paul University, Loyola, Columbia, and Chicago City Colleges such as Wright and Truman) and other community organizations (Near Northwest Neighborhood Network, and the Division Street Development Association) This youth lead collective is responsible for the day-to-day up keep of the space ranging from the financial management to consensus decisions about the overall direction of the Batey.

One of the many aspects of the Batey is its commitment to the dignity of all human beings, actualized in its policy which states: "The uses of any expressions that degrade human beings are not permitted (No sexist, racist, homophobic expression or acts)". This policy is the foundation that allows for a safe space for all Latino and other youth of color to express them selves in a positive manner while simultaneously finding the essence of who they are. Using the art forms of spoken word, hip-hop and poetry youth create and recreate their histories, identities and futures, and are enabled and empowered to place themselves into history.

Batey Urbano's funding is not subsidized by any government agency or major foundation. Instead all of its funding is raised through nightly, three to five dollar donations for events.

Poetry with Purpose
held on

Thursdays is the first night of expression and whether you are a well-known poet or an aspiring writer, this night is dedicated to the pen and the spoken word. Each night starts with an open mic showcasing local talent, which is followed by an engaging discussion. The night ends with a featured poet many of whom are at the head of their literary fields. Passed poets featured at the Batey have included: Sandra Sosa, Brenda Cardenas, Tara Betts, Kay Berret, Jovannie Vargas, Mango Tribe and Tony Alvarez, as well as Puerto Rican poet icons, Pedro Pietri (RIP), and Willie Perdomo.





Annani Mercado
Poet and Painter

Brenda Cardenas
Poet and Professor



Five Elements Hip Hop Expression -open mic on Fridays takes Batey Urbano to hip-hop's origin. Dedicated to the five elements of hip-hop (mc'ing, breaking, beatboxing, d.j.ing and graff writing) events range from, b-boy, mc or scratch battles, to featured performances. The night begins with an open mic and closes with a cipher often providing youth an opportunity to grab the mic for the first time. Past hip-hop features have included many local youth and artists like Prime, One Man Army, Morlocks, Primeridian, Family Tree, Rhyme Scheme, Los Asociados, Master Mind, Free Form Session, Eulorhythmics and Full Exposure. To end the week, Batey Urbano serves as a space of cultural affirmation past and present.

Cultural Engagement which takes place on Saturdays brings together the community to celebrate their cultural histories, the Batey hopes to inspire the preservation of the Latina/o cultures with the understanding that culture changes and is expanded upon by each generation. This engagement is accomplished weekly through art exhibits, movies, speakers, live musical performances of Bomba y Plena, Cuatro, Rock en Español and other Latina/o forms of cultural expression. It is on these nights that many of Chicago's Latina/o talent are in the process of changing and re-defining, poetry, hip-hop, film, painting and Latina/o culture.

The Batey mission is to provide a cultural space/youth center for action and reflection for Puerto Rican/Latino youth. It seeks to create meaningful linkages between universities and the community, based on grassroots activism. Premised on the notion that our memories (our history) is the source of our imagination, Batey Urbano is a space for critical expression through spoken word, poetry, dancing, music, painting, and writing. Armed with this mission, art is being created at a much deeper level than art for arts sake. If you speak to anyone who has been to a Batey night of expression there is something special and unique in the air every night, from the notebooks that poets read from, to the



Kwake
Beat Boxer

Wrek
D.J.





**Rescue
Emcee, Producer**

**O Zone
Emcee, Producer, DJ**

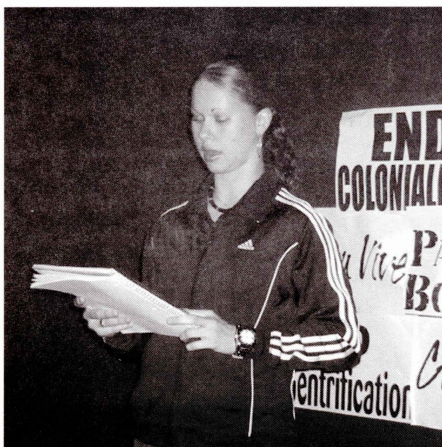
**Sandra Sosa
Poet**



many audience members and participants. The Batey is holy and sacred ground for many Latina/o youth in Chicago, just as it was to the Tainos the creators of the word Batey, used to refer to their ceremonial and communal meeting space. It is to be honored just as the Tainos and many of the indigenous groups of the Americas honored each other through dance and ceremony, only it is through poems, flows and rhymes that the space is appeased. And it is with these forms of expression that Latina/o youth resist a system, of domination, dehumanization and cultural castration to re-humanize themselves through creativity and community involvement and action

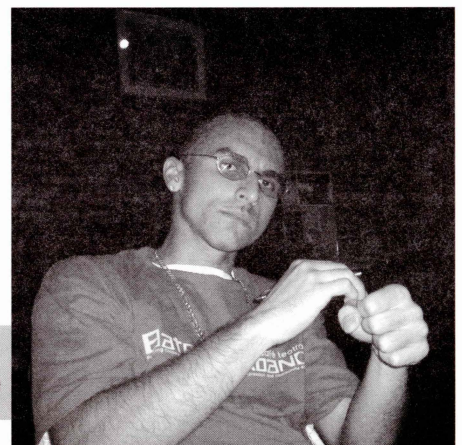
There is a common thread that braids all of these young people together and that is their identity. Defined as a Puerto Rican/Latina/o space the Batey does not simply provide a platform to perform and create art, it also serves as a space where youth may be proud of who they are and proud of their ethnic and national origins. It is this key component that you may find a true multi cultural environment unlike the false superficial government idea of multiculturalism. The Batey serves as a space that one can be Mexican, Dominican or Puerto Rican and be human without having to deny ones Mexicaness or Puerto Ricanness. It is in this space that art and culture are redefined, mixed and expanded upon from a Central American D.J. with a Puerto Rican and Mexican emcee rhyming over a Dominican's beat with bomba (a form of afro/Puerto Rican drumming and dance) drums keeping pace. More so the Batey allows for the creation of an environment of critical thought in which youth are challenged not only to build dialogue, but also to participate in finding solutions to the many problems their community faces. In a "ghetto" this space survives, and unlike a pebble in a pond that makes ripples the Batey is a meteorite that was shot from the darkness of the heaven above that creates huge waves of force, power and delicate beauty to create an imprint upon the world.

There are many cutting edge performers and artist that have blessed the Batey stage, artist like Edith Bucio,



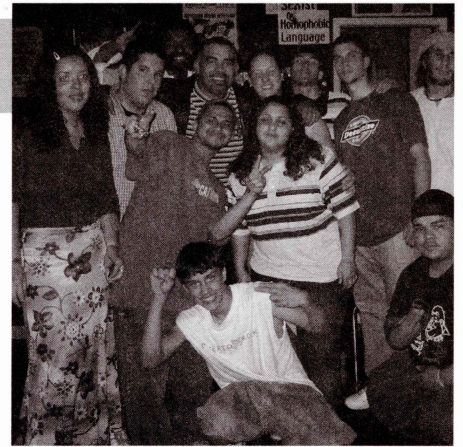
**Karma Rock One
Poet and B Girl**

**D.V.S.
Poet and Emcee**





Willie Perdomo
Poet

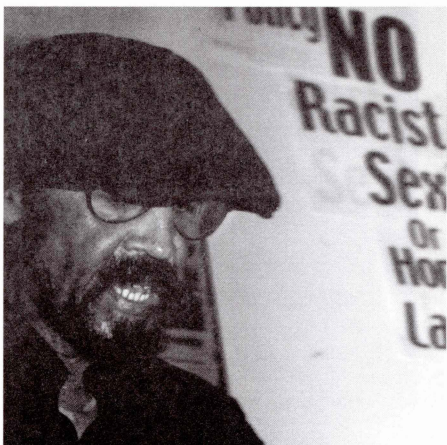


Edith Bucio
Poet

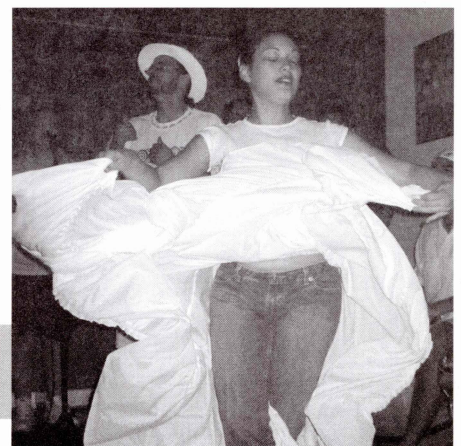
a Mexican queer poet who writes from her heart on many issues such as being woman with skin the “color of mud”, to her coming to terms with her sexuality or poets like Eduardo Arocho a great Puerto Rican Poet from Humboldt Park who writes and performs outside of the slam style and continues to add his own sabor and dimensions to poetry and spoken word. During the hip-hop nights you may find Rhyme Scheme or Visual both whom are Mexican emcees, rhyme over Chicago music production; or Kwake the human ghetto-blaster, a Puerto Rican youth who is one of Chicago’s best beat boxers; and even on a cultural night you may find work by Cuca who is a artisan that creates wonderful Puerto Rican art; or Nuestro Tambo, a young bomba group that adds elements of hip-hop and a fresh new style to a traditional art form.

Batey has also had an impact in the arena of film with last year’s release of Urban Poet a film based around a young Puerto Rican woman, documenting her day-to-day struggles with life in Humboldt Park and her use of poetry as a way to deal with the world. Boricua, the second film featuring Humboldt Park and Chicago as its back drop deals with issues of gentrification and identity, both films have actors, poems or music from youth either a part of the Batey Collective or supporters of the space. Both Urban Poet and Boricua have majority Latina/o cast, and both are directed, and written by Latina/os.

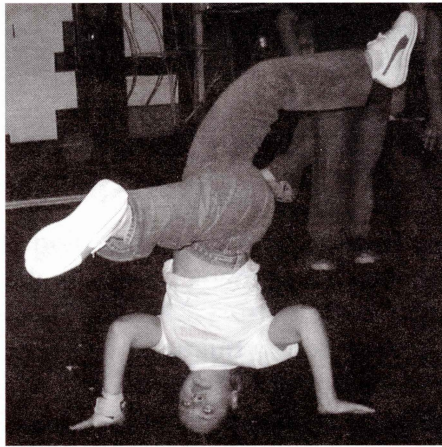
At the Batey’s heart and soul, or its center of the universe, are the many youth that make up the space, they are the driving force that pushes the space to further dimensions. Many of the most talented youth from all over Chicago find the Batey as their outlet and as their voice. In a sort of synchronization of artists, from students attending college or a university, community youth, and professional artists bring this artistic renaissance to fruition. Each one of theses groups adding its own layers, its own stroke on the canvas or line upon the page, to



Pedro Pietri
Poet

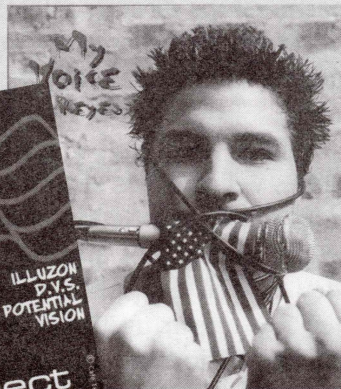
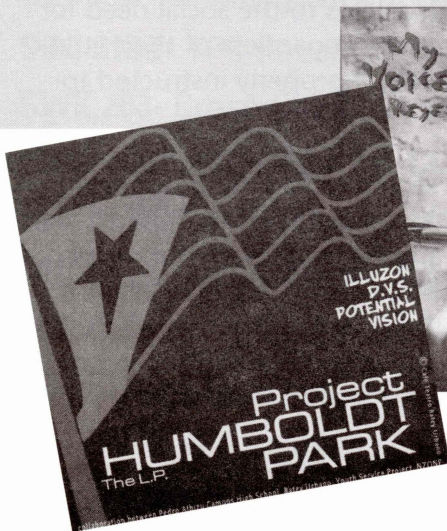


Dancing Bomba



Breakin'

create this artistic explosion in Chicago as well as across the country. Each of these different layers such as, old and young, women and men, Puerto Rican and Mexican, all create a type of maroon society that has been left in the wilderness of an urban jungle known as the Latino metropolis, without adequate resources to sustain themselves and yet they flourish, grow and create art and culture. They combine a part of themselves to push forward this Latina/o renaissance and each artist is well aware that it depends on each generation, each person creating and inspiring one another collectively in the true sense of community. The young depend on the old to give them their history and foundation, just as the old depend on the young to be on the forefront, re-defining and expanding on the path that has been started through that jungle which may never be fully cut and completed, and yet it is in the attempt that the magic happens. It is not that we will surely complete the path, but what we will learn in the process of cutting the vines and branches from it. The Batey's arms are steady, its blades are sharp and there is no vine to large or branch to solid for its stroke whether it be with pen, brush or blade.



The Batey Urbano is much more than a space for creative expression. Within its four walls it serves as a technology center, linking students to online resources and the latest in sound and graphic design applications; functions as a after school tutoring program form Mondays- Thursdays 3:00-7:00 pm; is home to the NNNN Youth Action Team which builds leadership skills with Humboldt Park youth through workshops, trainings and events (the group meets every Wednesday at Batey Urbano); organizes at various Universities with the creation of the university group called Latinos United to Change Higher Education (LUCHE); and organizes in the community through the creation of the Humboldt Park Participatory Democracy Project.

The Mexican & Caribbean Studies Program Update

The Mexican & Caribbean Studies Program (MCS) is happy to announce the completion of the first developmental year for the proposed MCS major. We would also like to thank Latinos United for Changing Higher Education (LUCHE) and the Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) for its contributions to this process. The MCS is also honored to announce its new core requirements: MCS 101: Intro to Latino/a & Latin American Studies; MCS 201: Culture & History of Latinos; MCS 301: Field Seminar in Latino & Latin American Studies. The new requirements will go into effect for the Fall 2004 semester. Below you will find the rationale for the proposed major and those courses offered for the minor in the fall. Given the historical connections between the MCS program and QOS, the input from readership is vital. Please stop by the MCS office (CLS-2086) or give us a call at x.4793.

Rationale for Mexican & Caribbean Studies Major

The rapid growth of Latino residents in Chicago and the country is closely related to the increasing economic and technical integration of Latin America and the United States. Latinos are now the largest minority group in the country and will soon be the largest minority in the region. Free trade agreements throughout the hemisphere further highlight dynamic commercial, manufacturing, and financial exchanges. These exchanges have profound impact on immigration and social transformations that reshape our daily lives and environments. These transformations generate the need for important social and professional services that are attentive to the social and cultural particularities of Latino and Latin American populations. Unfortunately, these needs are not being adequately addressed at the present time. Severe shortages of teachers, health care practitioners, members of the judicial system, and other areas have serious human costs and delay the integration of the skills and strengths of Latino populations into society as a whole.

Northeastern Illinois University is already directly engaged with these processes of change. As a Hispanic Service Institution with a Latino enrollment of 27 % of its total student body, the University is committed to educating students to effectively interact and contribute to a multicultural society. Moreover, its emphasis on community partnerships directly relates to the social need for professionals competent to deal with Latino needs. In turn, our graduates, regardless of their ethnic background, could find ample intellectual and professional opportunities if properly instructed to address these needs in creative and effective ways.

The proposed major in Mexican and Caribbean Studies will provide structured learning opportunities to address the needs of a multicultural world in general, and Latino constituencies in particular. Combining classroom instruction with opportunities for internships and travel abroad, the major will guide students to develop conceptual proficiency as well as applied skills. Graduates of the major will be able to effectively address the needs of and opportunities afforded by a multicultural society, in particular as these relate to the dynamic interrelation of Latinos and Latin Americans with other groups. These graduates will be highly competent in providing leadership that responds conceptually and professionally to such needs and opportunities.

Upcoming Courses for Fall 2004

- ANTH 250-** Latin American Archaeology
- HIST 111D-** SB World History: Latin America
- HIST 353-** History of Mexico
- FL SPAN 224-** Intensive Reading of Spanish
- FL SPAN 240-** Extensive Reading of Spanish
- FL SPAN 325R-** Sem: Business Spanish II
- FL SPAN 329-** Intro. to Span. Amer. and Span. Lit.
- FL SPAN 331-** Hispanic World Cultures
- FL SPAN 359-** Span. Lit- 19th Century
- FL SPAN 362-** Contemp. Span. Amer. Poetry*
- FL SPAN 365B-** Span. Amer. Sem.: Alejo Carpenter*
- FL SPAN 409A-** SM XXC Sp-Am Lit: Post Modernismo*
- FL SPAN 409I-** SM XXC Sp-Am Lit.: Realismo Magic*
- HIST 111D-** SB World History: Latin America
- HIST 353-** History of Mexico
- JUST 314-** Police in Minority Community
- PHIL 361G-** Topics: Critical Race Theory*
- PSCI 307I-** Latinos and Public Policy
- SOC 270-** Sociology of the Latina
- SOC 319D-** TPC Race/Eth: Dealing/Diversity: The Chicano Movement
- SWK 203-** Cross-Cultural Interaction*
- ELAD ICSE 201-** History & Culture of Ethnic Groups
- TED BLBC 338-** Bilingualism and Education
- TED BLBC 340-** Methods Teaching Lang. & Cult. Diverse
- TED BLBC 342-** Assessment in Bilingual Classrooms*
- TED BLBC 438-** Foundations of Bilingual Ed*
- TED BLBC 440-** Teaching Culture and Language Div. Classrooms*
- TED ELED 315-** Teaching Inner City Elementary School

*See advisor- Classes Must Be Approved for the MCS Minor Program

◦ Campaign to Save Vida/SIDA Presents ◦

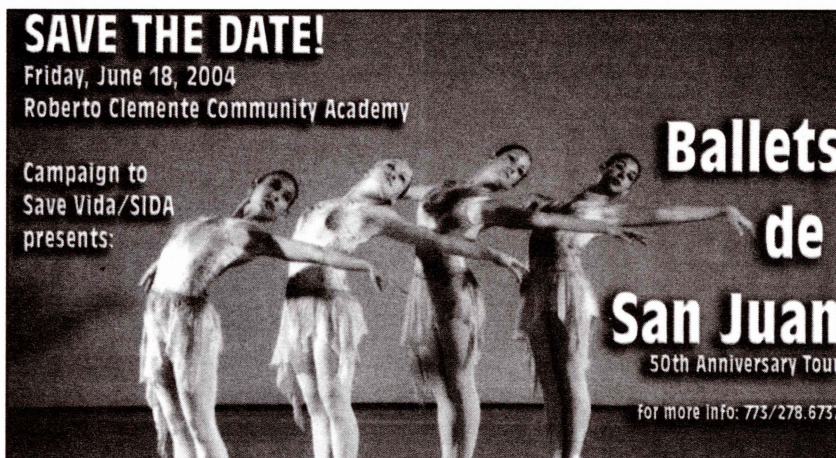
Ballets de San Juan

50th Anniversary Tour

Congressman Luis Gutiérrez to Host Reception Honoring Ballets and the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Teddy and Mirta Ramirez

For the past 50 years, the **Ballets de San Juan** have astounded world audiences with a unique Puerto Rican ballet ensemble fusing Puerto Rican cultural expressions with classical ballet. On June 18th at the Clemente High School Auditorium— an event not to be missed— the Ballets de San Juan will perform before Chicago's Puerto Rican community in all their elegance and grace.

Founded in 1954 by renowned ballet pioneer Ana García, the Ballets de San Juan have since traveled the world performing before crowds in Perú, México, Cuba, Dominican Republic, USA, Italy, and Spain. According to the Ballets, one of their principle achievements “is a Puerto Rican repertory developing original choreographies based on our cultural heritage, including original music commissioned to our contemporary composers framed by the work of Puerto Rican set and costume designers.”



The Ballets de San Juan performance is a fundraising effort of the “Campaign to Save Vida/SIDA.” In less than a month, Vida/SIDA’s multi-year contract with the Centers for Disease Control is coming to an end and funding **will not be renewed.** Vida/SIDA serves thousands of individuals a year with vital health and wellness services, distributing condoms, preventative information about HIV/AIDS and STDS, as well as

HIV on-site and mobile testing and counseling.

On June 18th, the Ballet’s will perform twice, once for the youth at 2pm and then a general showing at 7pm. Prior to the evening show, Congressman Luis Gutiérrez will host a reception honoring Ballets and the golden wedding anniversary of community leaders Teddy and Mirta Ramirez, attendance by invitation only.

General admission tickets for the event are \$20 advance purchase and \$25 at the door and are available by contacting 773-278-6737. Vida/SIDA hopes to count on your support and participation in these upcoming events. Let’s help keep Vida/SIDA open for our community!

What is it about Mexicans?

Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez

For years, right-wing ideologues have littered the country with anti-Mexican billboards and filled the airwaves with other kinds of hate-filled propaganda. But now, it's not just nut cases or hate-radio "discussion leaders" anymore academics and legislators have also entered the fray.

The least of what they call for is the full militarization of the U.S./Mexico border. And yet, these ideologues -- who warn us about the Balkanization of the nation and the coming "Reconquista" of the U.S. Southwest -- insist they're not bigots. They say they're not anti-Mexican, but rather, anti-illegal immigration, pointing to the absence of the word "Mexican" in anti-illegal-immigrant legislation or initiatives nationally as proof. Great. Equal opportunity hatred.

Truthfully, anti-illegal-immigrant fervor begets an anti-immigrant climate, which in this country targets brown faces. Here, brown translates into Mexican -- all 25 million of them. (Paradoxically, many of them scurry about looking for that one drop of European blood to claim they're actually white, which the Census Bureau is only too happy to oblige in this anti-browning process, to escape that rampant dehumanization.)

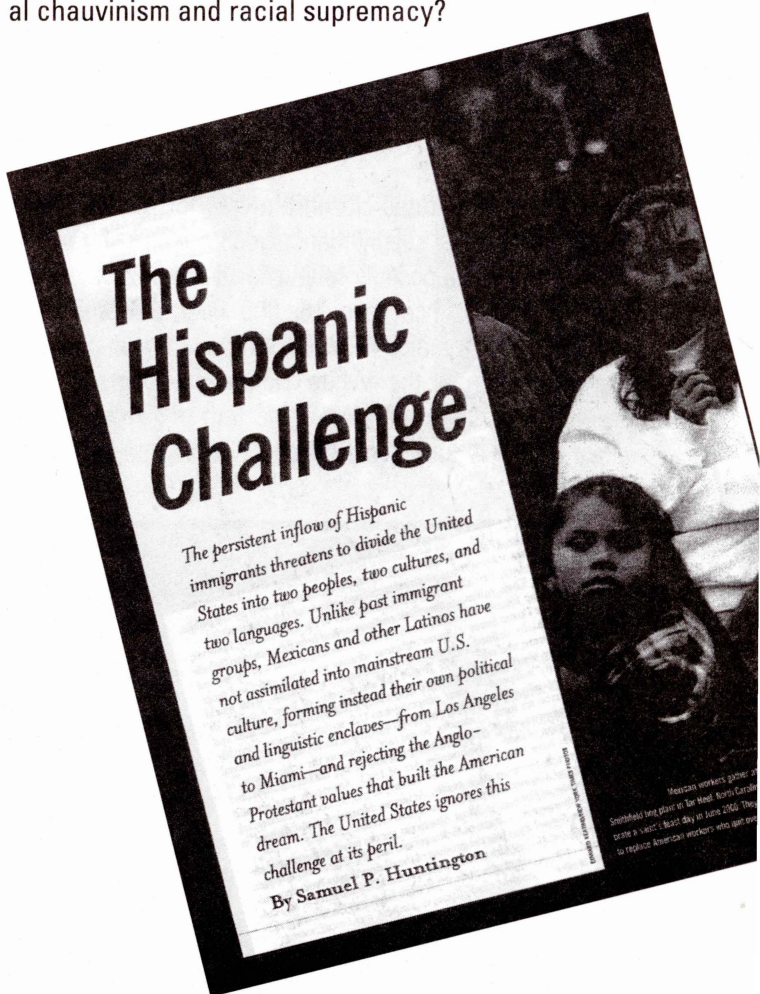
Since bigots can't tell the difference between Mexicans and Central and South Americans, add another 15 million "other kinds of Mexicans" into the mix.

Lies, the bigots cry out: We don't hate anyone; we just think illegal immigration is ruining America. And then along comes Victor Davis Hanson's book "Mexifornia" in 2003. The author, of course, was not trying to stir up fears or hatred against Mexicans. It's just that "Illegalifornia" doesn't quite pack the same punch.

Now comes Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington, who continues to advance the theory (Foreign Policy magazine, March/April 2004) that Mexicans pose a fundamental threat to the cultural and political integrity of

the nation. And once again, there's lots of scurrying -- not to denounce the unadulterated bigotry, but to prove that Mexicans can and are assimilating. It's a big day for pie charts and diagrams.

In this discussion, it is assumed that assimilation is nirvana and that there's a consensus as to what values should be assimilated. For instance, are immigrants supposed to adopt trickle-down economics that favor the rich, militarism, interventionism, cultural chauvinism and racial supremacy?



Enter well-known anti-illegal-immigrant crusader Rep. Tom Tancredo of Colorado. Last week, in a strike against "the cult of multiculturalism" (there's another *continued on the next page...*)

Boricuas in Iraq

Miguel Morales

On Saturday, March 14th, Jocelyn J. Carrasquillo became the 15th Puerto Rican soldier killed in Iraq. He was killed when a bomb hit his vehicle on the main supply route in Iraq. Carrasquillo, as nearly 1,000 other Puerto Ricans Army Reserve and National Guard in Iraq, had no input as to whether the government should go to war.

Few options exist for the people of Puerto Rico, where 13% of residents are unemployed (in some municipalities unemployment is closer to 20%), and the number of Puerto Ricans living under the poverty level is anywhere from 45-60%. In 2002, the per capita income in Puerto Rico was \$11,200 a year. Surviving in an economy that wasn't constructed for their needs, the military is not a real choice for Puerto Ricans especially amid such rank poverty and unemployment.

In 1917, United States citizenship was foisted on Puerto Ricans in order to supply manpower for war in Europe, a war that was supposedly fought for democracy and self-determination. Since then 169,000 Puerto Ricans have fought in all the major US wars, with no legal democratic representation in the White House or Congress. Still worse, Viequenses underwent the fate of perpetual war since the Navy took away their land during and after the Second World War.

But Puerto Ricans are not compliant—even soldiers are resisting the war. Josean González, a Puerto Rican soldier, joined the Army to pay for college. He underwent physical and mental abuse during training. He went AWOL late last year after he got leave to visit his mother. In Puerto Rico, he was arrested and charged with desertion. Both Josean and his mother later learned that he had the right to quit the army as a soldier that had not completed 180 days of service.

The Puerto Rico Bar association and the Independence Party have expressed their opposition to the deployment of Puerto Rican troops. Even the statehood party has taken issue with the disproportionate number of Puerto Ricans dying in Iraq. This isn't a war or government of our choosing. Why should we defend a colonial system that leaves us with few options but to barter our futures for gasoline and SUVs?

For info: www.BoricuaHumanRights.org
E-mail: info@BoricuaHumanRights.org

continued...What is it about Mexicans?

nice racial code word), he entered into Congress a resolution that affirms the importance of Western Civilization to the nation's heritage and origins (talk about more loaded code words). More scurrying (memories of the Inquisition)?

What's next? An official language and an official color?

So what is it about Mexicans that so bothers this country?

No doubt their color -- perhaps a reminder of their indigeness. And Mexicans do serve a useful

purpose in the politics of blame. Traditionally, if there's a problem, blame Jews or Blacks, Asians or American Indians. Such finger-pointing is generally no longer in vogue, though it's seemingly still acceptable to blame Mexicans, as there's no price to pay (though don't forget to use the code term "illegal aliens"). But as we're now seeing, the pretense is over. And don't forget to call them "Hispanics" when you want them to go to war or want their votes.

Incidentally, anti-Mexicanism is no longer limited to rednecks. While it's sad to see anyone adopt these attitudes, it's painful to see people of color pitted

The Case of the Cuban Five

Myra Guzman

5 Cuban men chose honor and bravery when asked to take on the mission of a lifetime, to leave their family and homes in an effort to infiltrate known terrorist groups who had planned and executed previous attacks and were planning more.

Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo, Ramon Labanino Salazar, Fernando Gonzalez Lloret, Antonio Guerrero and Rene Gonzalez Schwerert were doing their duty when they uncovered planned terrorist acts: 68 committed within Miami alone, bacteriological warfare aimed at humans, plants and animals in Cuba, and the hired killing of a Cuban Diplomat in New York, as well as others. These are all the acts of several terrorist/anti-Cuba groups— not in another country or on the other side of the world— but here within the United States, more specifically, planned and committed by an anti-Cuban terrorist group in Miami.

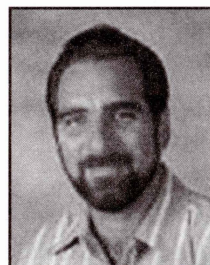
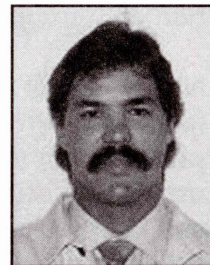
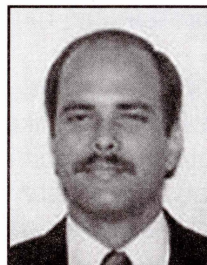
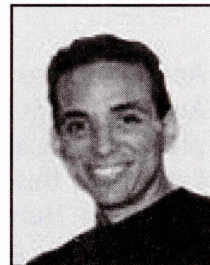
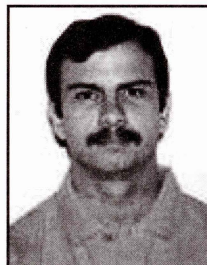
What the U.S. does not understand today, nor 50 years ago with the Puerto Rican Nationalists, is that a spirit cannot be broken when just, when the love for your country is greater than the possible pain and solitude inflicted. These men, not unlike our Puerto Rican Political Prisoners, were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice die for their country. During their sentencing, facing life on conspiracy charges of espionage and of murder, instead of asking the court for

forgiveness and leniency they spoke of their honor and duty to both of their countries to keep its borders safe.

“But I have not lost hope in the human race and its capacity to pursue those values [the values of the founding fathers and we will do so with all the patience, faith and courage that we draw from the crime of dignity”

—Rene Gonzalez Schwerert

For more information:
<http://www.freethethefive.org>



against each other, to turn on each other and, in this case, also adopt the same anti-Mexican attitudes: They're taking our jobs, they're aliens, and they're a threat to this nation, etc. (It must feel good to blame others.)

And yet, most tragicomic is that no one seems to hate Mexicans more than people of Mexican origin. They're the ones doing the fastest scurrying -- trying to prove that they're genuine, loyal and patriotic Americans ... and even white.

It's called self-loathing (though with a bit of societal assistance).

It's also a feeble attempt to escape the rampant big-

otry that's once again threatening to engulf the nation. As it is, many have assimilated the racial politics of blame and are also currently pointing fingers at Arabs and Muslims and feeling good about it. Some call this internalized oppression.

Perhaps Sen. John Edwards and Harvard's Huntington have it right: There are two Americas and two cultures. If people of Mexican, Central and South American origin are expected to assimilate, then perhaps they should assimilate not into Fortress America Inc., but into the one that respects all peoples and cultures and honors and treats all people as full human beings.

A Hispanic Summit Comes to Lincoln Park?

According to the National Hispanic-Latino American Agenda Summit, which is to take place in Chicago from June 17-20, the Fiestas Patronales this year are taking place in Lincoln Park— not Humboldt Park. Of course, this is a silly mistake on their part, but after looking more closely, this error seems to be an indication of Summit's questionable nature.

NHAAS is full of inconsistencies, of which the following words are just a brief sketch. First, it is puzzling that though the Summit is taking place downtown, Chicago grassroots Puerto Rican and Latino leadership is totally absent from the program. Why? Furthermore, if it is supposedly about building a "Hispanic-Latino" agenda does it not recognize the unique experience in Chicago of Puerto Rican and Mexican solidarity organized to build a progressive national Latino agenda?

And even more questions. Why do prominent names appear on the Summit schedule that have not been confirmed, nor even invited? Is this an attempt for political credibility? Or is it just a mistake like the Lincoln Park error?

Much of the Summit is based on the historically-confused analysis of Peter Fontañes, lead organizer. In a contradictory article on "Pan-American Unity" he argues against the

Bolivarian Dream of Latin American unity, falsely characterizing it white, Creole, and elitist, while insisting and affirming the term "Hispanic." Certainly, he is aware that "Hispanic" means "lover of Spain," a term which in no way inclusive of the African and Indigenous presence in Latin America. In terrific schizophrenic fashion, he attacks supposed Bolivarian white elitism, while endorsing Hispanophile terminology.

The language on their website, largely accredited to Fontañes attempts to sound progressive, but it is not convincing. Dotted with homogenized Latino identity, American flags, and Booker T. Washington-type pronunciations, how are we supposed to reach another conclusion? Such inconsistencies, ironies, and contradictions cast a dubious cloud over this Summit, almost forcing the question— what is this really all about? Perhaps, Fontañes' assertion that Puerto Rico may soon be the 51st state is an indication of his political perspective and aims.

With time all agendas are revealed. It will be interesting to watch closely the development of NHAAS as it visits Chicago, and attends our Fiestas in Lincoln...oops, I mean Humboldt Park. (So there is no confusion: the Fiestas Patronales will take place in Humboldt Park— en el Barrio Boricua!)



La Música

Karma Rock One

a clap,
that starts in a nation of palabras
y colores
(more than there are leaves in the fall)

a clap,
that makes the people gather
in a rhythm
that only the gods could have prevented

a song,
bridging together
so many beyond class
o colores
(more than species in the sea)

a song,
that when sung
can never be silenced,
neither by gun or law

la música,
of one
becomes a revolution for two
a revolt from an occupation of capitalistic opportunities,
and colonialism for many

la música,
of one
moves the masses
to take their chances
and make a change
in their faith

4.18.2004

When our majestic Puerto Rican flags
were erected, our collective hopes
were raised 59 feet into
the sky while our roots,
just as deep— like an old
Ceiba tree— prepared
for the storm.

