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Que Ondee Sola - September 2006

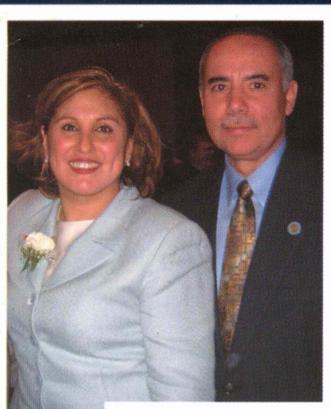
Xavier Luis Burgos

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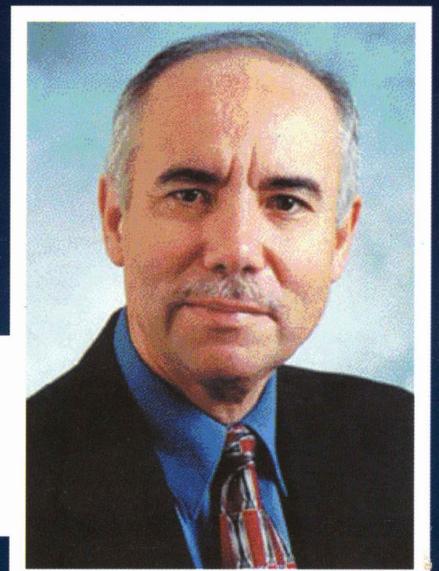
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State Senator Miguel Del Valle and State Representative Cynthia Soto lead Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus in public hearings at NEIU on the status of Latinos on campus

Special Interview with Senator Del Valle inside...



Editorial: Freedom, never just a word

word Xavier "Xavi" Luis Burgos

Freedom! Not just a word and sadly not yet a reality for so many. Freedom to express. Freedom to live in peace. Freedom of identity. Freedom of community. Puerto Rico is yet not free, but still a colony of the U.S. Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora are not free, but everyday our communities, like Humboldt Park, are slowly being gentrified and under the assault of racist police, greedy developers, and nosey city inspectors. "Our words," says Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos, "are our weapon." Expression is a form of resistance. However, in a world ravished by the historical forces of white supremacy, especially in this post 9-11 reality, expression/resistance is oppressed.

Former Que Ondee Sola editor Michael Reyes is one struggler for freedom and artist that the U.S. President's Secret Service would like to silence.

However, he details his experiences in this very publication that will never censor the truth. Nor will we censor the young Boricua graffiti artist who explains the history of his clandestine art. Nor will the young sexual health educator looking-out for her fellow [Latin@s](#) and hopes for her community will be censored. A participatory democracy is needed in all mediums of life and that is why there will be public hearings on the Latino Status at NEIU, detailed in an exclusive interview with State Senator Miguel Del Valle in this issue.

This publication and student organizations such as Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) and ChiMexLa are examples of freedom manifested into reality, of oppressed people reaffirming their identities, our communities, and our art. Freedom never should be just a word.

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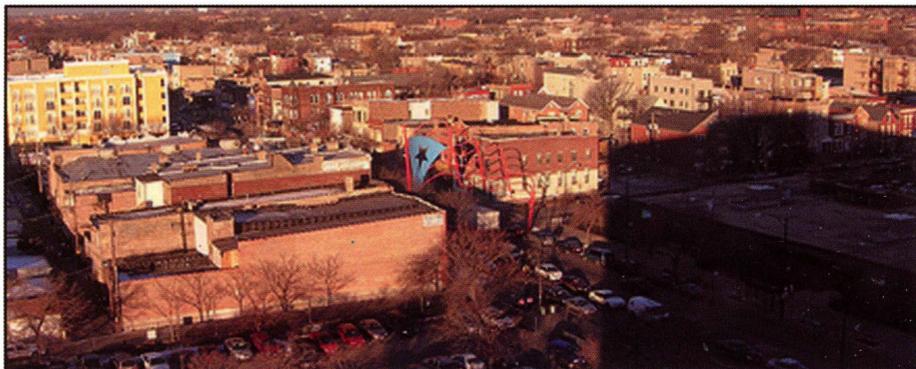
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We appreciate and encourage suggestions and contributions.

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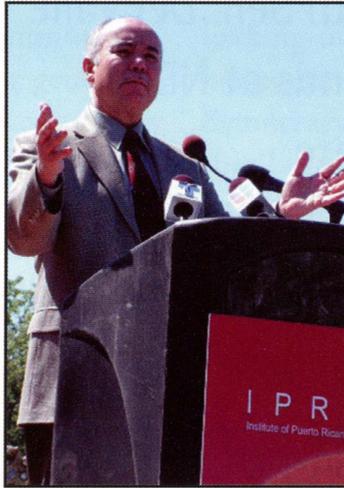
Mission:

Que Ondee Sola was established in 1972 and remains the oldest Puerto Rican/Latin@ university student publication in print. Our mission is to provide the NEIU campus with a relevant and engaging publication that deals with student issues with a focus on Latinos, our Latino communities, and Latin America. Que Ondee Sola continues to affirm the right of Puerto Rican self-determination, freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners, and support for a truly participatory democracy.

Harvesting a Latino Future at NEIU: Exclusive interview with Illinois State Senator Miguel Del Valle

words Xavier "Xavi" Luis Burgos

On a quiet Wednesday morning I sat down with an articulate and reserved gray-haired State Senator who has made it his life's work to assure the advancement of Puerto Ricans and Latinos in Illinois. When Senator Miguel Del Valle spoke about his time at the youth wing of the Spanish Action Committee he exclaimed "We wanted change. We wanted Latinos to improve our overall status." The first in his Puerto Rican migrant family to go to college, he went to Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) where he joined the Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS). The young Del Valle also helped found this very publication, Que Ondee Sola (QOS), in 1972, struggled for the creation of the first Latino college recruitment program, Proyecto Pa'Lante, in the city, and demanded the hiring of the first Latino counselor at NEIU, Máximo Torres. "We were laying a foundation so the university



would be responsive to Latinos and fill [its] obligation to Latinos as a public university." Soon, Del Valle will return to NEIU, still with his keen sense of social justice and positive change, but as a powerful State Senator.

On Tuesday, September 12th many members of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus will hold public hearings focused on the low retention rates of Latinos (17%) at NEIU. Sen. Del Valle vows to stay until every voice is heard in order to have a full picture of the status of Latino programs at NEIU, their relationship to Latino communities, the quality of the teacher-training program, and the employment of Latinos at the university. "I want Northeastern to become the premier institution for the field of education at the undergrad and graduate level; to offer their skills to the community."

More Comments by Senator Del Valle on NEIU:

What is your vision for NEIU?

"[NEIU] has to acknowledge it has a responsibility to the State but added responsibility [as] a public institution that serves the urban areas and people with low-enrollment [rates in college]. There is always a special place in my heart for the university, UPRS, QOS, and Proyecto Pa'Lante, because I lived through those periods when they were created and proud of the fact that we opened-up doors as students. Am I satisfied? No! Do I think much more can be done and needs to be done? The answer is yes! The history of Latinos at NEIU was when students [and] community pushed for change.... If we want to take NEIU to the next level, that must happen."

What is your vision for education?

"[Education] is more important as ever because we are a part of a global economy and technology is expanding rapidly. If you are not prepared in education you have fewer opportunities.... It's about opening doors. We all have a responsibility to the greater community."

The public hearings will take place Tuesday, September 12th at Alumni Hall from 10 AM to 1 PM and is sponsored by UPRS, QOS, ChiMexLa, and the Coalition for Latino Success.

The following are the demands of the Coalition for Latino Success, UPRS ,Chemexla, Que Ondee Sola and Latino students

We the undersigned, recognize the important access that NEIU has provided to the Latino community in terms of enrollment. Currently 30 % of incoming class is Latino and represent a very significant 26 %.

We the students at Northeastern Illinois University call for an in-depth and meaningful analysis on the success and failures of NEIU in regards to Latinolas on campus. Further we call for plan that will address the failures while improving the successes.

We want to draw urgent attention to the disquieting Low graduation rate of Latino students. Thus, while the university is successful in attracting Latino students, it still needs to greatly improve its performance in graduating these students.

Addressing this incongruent failing we demand

The recognition and thorough understanding of the severity and complexity of the problem and the development of a comprehensive strategy that would include the following;

Improvement in advising with an effort to understand more consistently the practical and cultural particularities of Latino students

The creation of a Latino cultural and resource center

Effective monitoring of the progress of Latinos through diverse points of their enrollment at NEIU as they complete their degrees

Foster educational opportunities that draw from the strengths and assets of Latino community institutions in the city and in particular the Latinola community.

Structured follow up with benchmarks to increase of Latino faculty, staff and counselors

Increased resources for undocumented students

Increased funding for existing programs that service the needs of Latinola students

If you are interested in working with the coalition stop by the QOS office at E-041.

The Union for Puerto Rican Students (U.P.R.S.): A Space for Boricua Advancement

words Xavier "Xavi" Luis Burgos, U.P.R.S President

When I first enrolled into Northeastern Illinois University, I was more preoccupied on the aesthetics of the campus let alone what it could offer me besides textbooks and exams. However, as I walked for the first time through the university's grassy and expanding landscape, a close friend and fellow student informed me of two Puerto Rican organizations on campus. Well, I've always considered myself a sort of "Puerto Ricanist," obsessed with everything Puerto Rican, so of course I was intrigued to discover that there were student organizations for Puerto Ricans on campus and even a Puerto Rican/Latin@ publication! So, after a few days of inquiry, I finally located the office of the Que Ondee Sola magazine, meticulously placed in a quiet hallway near the lunchroom. I walked-in and became acquainted with the magazine's staff and the members of the Union for Puerto Rican Students (U.P.R.S.). I was excited to meet like-minded individuals and soon became enthralled in Puerto Rican Chicago history and university and community activism. I also soon discovered that U.P.R.S. is full of a leadership-shaping history that has left an undeniable positive legacy for Puerto Ricans and Latinos on campus and in our communities.

The Union for Puerto Rican Students is a well-known 35-year-old student organization. Established in 1971 during the anti-colonial struggles in the United States and throughout the world, it sought to address, in context, the concerns and realities of the growing Puerto Rican and Latino populations at NEIU and in our communities. Despite much resistance from the university's administration and some students, the organization has survived and created many door-opening legacies. Examples of such legacies include our sister organization, the publication Que Ondee Sola, which was established in 1972 and continues to be the oldest Latino student publication in the country still in existence, and the Latino college recruitment institution of Proyecto Pa'Lante, the first in the city.

U.P.R.S. as well as the Chican@ Mexican@ Latin@ Student Coalition (ChiMexLa) have also maintained and

supported the Latino & Latin American Studies minor formerly known as the Mexican & Caribbean Studies minor and continues to fight for its transformation into a major. Furthermore, U.P.R.S. and ChiMexLa created the Albizu-Zapata Center, which was shut down by the administration 1980's.

Other examples of the positive contributions of U.P.R.S include the number of activists and leaders in the Paseo Boricua - Humboldt Park community, which has become one of the most organized Latino communities in the city and the most organized Puerto Rican community in the country. Some of U.P.R.S./Q.O.S.' alumni include 26th Ward Alderman Billy Ocasio, 4th District Congressman Luis V. Gutiérrez, State Senator Miguel Del Valle, Division Street Business Development Association (DSBDA) Director Enrique Salgado Jr., Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Alternative H.S. Principal Lourdes Lugo, published poets Eduardo Arrocho, Jovannie "D.V.S." Vargas, and Janeida Rivera; La Voz del Paseo Boricua newspaper editor Michael Rodríguez Muñoz, professor and author of Puerto Rican Chicago Dr. Wilfredo Cruz, and many more.

Throughout U.P.R.S.' history, it has fomented the right of Puerto Rico's self-determination, the needs and concerns of Latinos on campus, held NEIU accountable for its responsibility to its students' educational needs, and the freedom of all Puerto Rican political prisoners. We are anti-colonialism, anti-gentrification and actively promote a positive and truthful image of Puerto Rican culture and the Boricua people. U.P.R.S. is not just a place to meet interesting people but a link between community involvement and campus activism, a bridge we are proud to maintain.

For more information, contact us at the office of the Que Ondee Sola magazine, which I am also editor of: 773-442-4583. Also, e-mail us at uprs_movement@hotmail.com and/or queondeesola@hotmail.com. Our meetings are Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:40 – 2:40 pm during Activity Hour. Come and join us Boricuas and Latin@s!

ChiMexLa: No Longer Undocumented

Deyanira Avila, Treasurer of ChiMexLa
Alvaro Rios, President of ChiMexLa

This summer has been full of many protests, marches, and activism. There has been a great deal of activity in the Latino community with issues relating from immigration in the United States to presidential elections in Latin America. Unfortunately, issues do not go away so easily and there is still a long road ahead of us.

ChiMexLa (Chican@ Mexican@ Latin@) Student Union has been an important student activist group here at NEIU for many years. ChiMexLa connects students to their Latino roots and stresses issues important to Latinos and Latin Americans. ChiMexLa keeps students active at schools and their communities. Members of ChiMexLa learn how to be leaders in their community and stand up for justice. ChiMexLa also works with other Latino groups such as UPRS (Union for Puerto Rican Students) and community youth spaces like El Batey Urbano and El Zocalo Urbano in Humboldt Park and Pilsen.

Last year for El Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) ChiMexLa and UPRS members had a powerful procession in which they marched down NEIU halls in silence carrying posters with pictures and information about the violence at the US-Mexican borders. ChiMexLa also co-sponsored many events such as Plantando Semillas and was member of the Coalition for Immigrant Rights. These are some of many things ChiMexLa has done in the past.

If you have been following ChiMexLa's updates during the Fall 2005/Spring 2006 semesters, it should come as no surprise that we struggled together as a club to survive and make our presence known. Due to unexpected circumstances, ChiMexLa existed mostly as "ghost" club, meeting "unofficially" on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Those key members who stuck around during these trying times knew about the many obstacles in our path, but we still fought on as an "illegal and undocumented" club.

However, it seems like all our struggles are finally paying off. For the first time in a long time ChiMexLa has a

genuine chance at reviving itself, much like a mighty phoenix rising out of the ashes of its funeral pyre. This Fall semester of 2006 marks the beginning a new era for ChiMexLa. With Victor Ortiz as our advisor, and four key members presiding as ChiMexLa's officers, ChiMexLa is coming back to NEIU with a vengeance. With Michael Reyes as the secretary, Deyanira Avila as Treasurer, Juliet Gutierrez as Vice-President, and Alvaro Rios as President, ChiMexLa has a strong fighting chance at becoming one of the most active organizations on campus.

ChiMexLa already has future events planned out, including a Film Show for Mexican Independence Day, and a Dia De Los Muertos exhibit planned for November. We also plan on continuing to focus on the status of immigration in the United States. All that remains is to rally all the Latinos on campus to unite together and voice their opinions. Together, we will make such an impact on NEIU, which the aftermath will continue to resonate throughout the halls for years to come.

If you are also concerned about Latino issues and/or would like to expand your knowledge, ChiMexLa doors are always open to newcomers. ChiMexLa is a great organization with a relaxed environment, free of prejudice and open to new things. ChiMexLa meets every Tuesday during activity hour 1:40-2:40 in the Que Ondee Sola office. Come and let your voice be heard and take action in your community.

Aztec calendar stone

Puerto Rican Community Welcomes Elvira Arellano With Open Arms on Paseo Boricua Exclaiming: ¡Boricua, Mexicano, Luchando Mano a Mano!

words Jodene Velázquez, President of UPRS at UIC

On Tuesday, August 15, Elvira Arellano was given a deportation order from Homeland Security. She took a strong stand for the rights of undocumented immigrants in the US by taking sanctuary in Adalberto United Methodist Church located on Paseo Boricua, an action against the broken US immigration laws, which separates families.

Days after her announcement, the Immigration and Naturalization Service made a decision to take Elvira Arellano off of their priority list and said they would not enter the church for the time being. This may be due to the widespread attention or a ploy for her supporters to decrease their surveillance.

Having chosen to take sanctuary in a church in Humboldt Park has raised questions from some residents as to why an undocumented Mexican immigrant would choose a Puerto Rican community. However, it is important to note that her choosing a Puerto Rican community is a response to two historical solidarity practices between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans: 1) It was in the Mexican churches where Puerto Ricans were welcomed as full parishioners, since they were allowed to worship in the sanctuary as opposed to the other ethnic churches where Puerto Ricans were relegated to hold their worship in church halls, social centers and gymnasiums. 2) When the 'migra' raided the Factories Puerto Ricans would divert agents by speaking to them to allow for the undocumented Mexicans to leave through the back door. Arellano chose Adalberto United Methodist Church, which has championed for amnesty for undocumented immigrants and human rights. Through the hard work of

Elvira Arellano, Centro Sin Fronteras, and Cook County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado, La Familia Latina Unida was created to help provide advocacy for the families who face deportation and separation.



However, Arellano continues to gain sympathizers for the struggle of the 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country, including Centro Sin Fronteras, the leading organization in the immigration movement in Chicago. Rallies held in front of the church have drawn hundreds of spectators and organizational leaders. Several Puerto Rican elected officials have visited and sent public statements on their behalf including Congressman Luis V. Gutiérrez and Cook County Commissioner

Roberto Maldonado. In addition, Arellano also received a statement from Mayor of Chicago, Richard M. Daley.

To show solidarity, understanding and support for Elvira, the Puerto Rican Cultural Center published a public statement that is posted outside of the church and has also asked its members to volunteer to hold a Puerto Rican flag in front of the church as well as answer any questions about Elvira's decision to stay in Paseo Boricua.

There is a Puerto Rican adage, ¿Quién es tu madre, quién es tu hermana? Es tu vecina muy cercana (Who is your mother, who is your sister? It is your closest neighbor). Without a doubt our closest neighbor is the undocumented Mexican.

México's Two Presidents: Leftist Lopez Obrador vows a separate government

words Michael Reyes Benevides

It has been a two-month drama that played out in front of the world with México center stage as the two presidential candidates, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Felipe Calderón, faced-off in an election that was said to be to-close-to-call. The deciding votes were less than 240,000.

Felipe Calderón of the conservative National Action Party (PAN) became President-elect of México on Tuesday, September 5th, when the nation's top electoral court voted unanimously to reject allegations of fraud and certify his narrow victory. The Federal Tribunals of Election's decision is a final one that cannot be appealed.

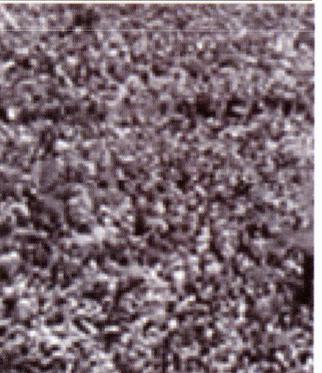
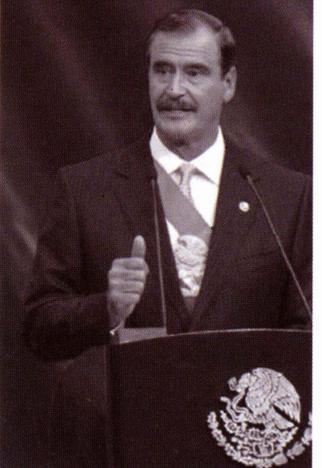
Mexican democracy has been a long and difficult struggle seeing its share of fraud and corruption during a 71 year hold on power by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). However, the Mexican people have endured and resisted those in control of their country at every point of the way. México has a long and historic legacy of a peoples democracy we can look at many examples through out its poetic history of strikes, walkouts, protests and even military action, the Zapatistas being the most well known. This election has been no different then the fraudulent elections of the past.

Weeks have gone by as thousands of supporters of the former México City mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) have blocked Mexico City's historic central plaza known as the Zócalo, reviving images of its Meso-American past, resisting what they see as fraud, illicit government spending, and outright lies that swayed the election in favor of Felipe Calderón, a member of President Vicente Fox's (PAN).

Andrés Manuel López Obrador has said he will not accept a ruling against him and is moving forward with plans to establish a parallel government. The PRD has pledged to keep Felipe Calderón from being sworn in before Congress on December 1st.

Judge Alfonsina Berta Navarro Hidalgo stated that the Tribunal had found evidence of problems, but not enough to annul the presidential election although many precincts reported otherwise.

This is sure to be the first chapter in a long fight for democracy in México.



“The Book of Genesis According to St. Miguelito”

words Miguel Pinero

before the beginning,
god created god.
in the beginning
god created the ghettos & slums
and god saw this was good.
So god said,
“let there be more ghettos & slums”
and there were more ghettos & slums.
but god saw this was plain
so
to decorate it
god created led-based paint
and then
god commanded the rivers of garbage and filth
to flow gracefully through the ghettos.
on the third day,
because on the second day god was out of town,
on the third day,
god’s nose was running
& his jones was coming down and god
in his all knowing wisdom knew he was sick
he needed a fix
so god
created the backyards of the ghettos
and the alleys of the slums
in heroin and cocaine
and
with his divine wisdom and grace
god created hepatitis
who begat lockjaw
who begat malaria
who begat degradation
who begat
GENOCIDE
and god knew this was good
in fact god knew things couldn’t git better
but he decided to try anyway
on the fourth day
god was riding around Harlem in a gypsy cab



Miguel Piñero

Miguel Piñero (1947-1988) migrated very young from Gurado, Puerto Rico to New York City’s Lower East Side (Loisaida). There he experienced the oppression of crime, drugs, and racism. Incarcerated many times, his tough experiences served as a backdrop for his many award-winning plays and poems. Miguel Piñero was also one of the leaders of the Nuyorican Movement in the 1960’s and ‘70’s and a founding member of the Nuyorican Poet’s Café.

when he created the people
and he created these beings in ethnic proportion
but he saw people lonely and hungry
and from his eminent rectum
he created a companion for these people
and he called this companion
capitalism
who begat racism
who begat exploitation
who begat male chauvinism
who begat machismo
who begat imperialism
who begat colonism
who begat wall street
who begat foreign wars
and god knew
and god saw
and god felt this was extra good
and god said
VAYAAAAAAA
on the fifth day
the people kneeled
the people prayed
the people begged
and this manifested itself in a petition
a letter to the editor
to know why? WHY? WHY? que pasa babyyyyy?????
and god said
"My fellow subjects
let me make one thing perfectly clear
by saying this about that:
No COMMENT!"
but on the sixth day god spoke to the people
he said..."PEOPLE!!!
the ghettos and the slums
and all the other things i've created
will have dominion over thee"
and then
he commanded the ghettos and the slums
and all the other great things he created
to multiply
and they multiplied
on the seventh day god was tired
so he called in sick

collected his overtime pay
a paid vacation included
but before god got on that t.w.a.
for the sunny beaches of puerto rico

he noticed his main man satan
planting the learning trees of conciousness
around his ghetto edens
so god called a news conference
on a state of the heavens address
on a coast to coast national t.v. hookup
and god told the people
to be
COOL

and the people were cool
and the people kept cool
and the people are cool
and the people stay cool
and god said
Vaya...

A Target Can Make You a Target

words Michael Reyes

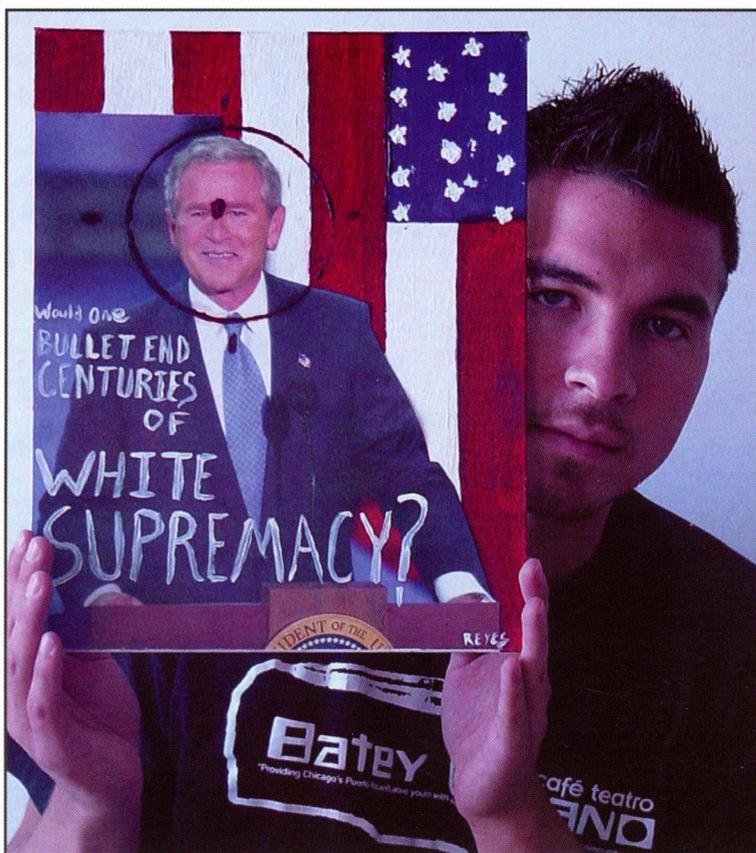
First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

I have been a writer and co-editor of QOS for the last few years. Often in between classes I would take time to read through our old editions and found many stories about the Puerto Rican/ Latin@ student struggles here at NEIU. Dating back to the early 70's, QOS has been involved in many battles, from sit-ins to marches, always demanding the self-determination of the Puerto Rican and Latin@ students on campus, in the community and in their countries of origin. For the past 30 years QOS and many of its staff have been active advocates for Puerto Rican independence and self-determination. Thus placing us under the watchful eye of the United States government even to the point that during the early 80's the FBI raided QOS's office at E-041. Add the fact that many QOS staff have been active community builders and organizers locally in Chicago as well as nationally and internationally and you will see a long history of anti-colonial struggle.

It is with this historical memory and knowledge that the United States Secret Service contacted me in July at the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. The call was in regards to an image of President George Bush published in our March/April edition with a target around Bush's head and in bold captions "Would One Bullet End Centuries of White Supremacy?"

The agent identified himself and asked if I was familiar with the magazine and I stated I was co-editor. The agent then pursued a meeting. I told



him I would have to meet with our staff first and get back to him. He then stated, "It's actually about you and an image you did about President Bush, so I could just meet with you. Don't worry, if it was serious we would just come down and pick you up." At this point I had enough and told him he would have to speak with my lawyer Melinda Powers of West Town Law.

I was then contacted on my cell phone by the same agent (which I hadn't given my number to), he asked if I had spoken to my lawyer and I told him she was

out of the county and she would be contacting him upon her return.

A few weeks passed and my lawyer contacted me with an interesting story. She was told by the agent that the QOS had been taken to the United States Embassy in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I then wondered humorously, when did Puerto Rico win its independence? I thought I may have missed one of the most important battles in modern Latin America. My lawyer had to happily inform this secret service agent (who is entrusted with critical information to protect the President of the United States of America) that Puerto Rico has no U.S. Embassy because it is a colony of the United States. In response the agent stated eloquently, "whatever, that's not the point!"

I was then contacted yet a third time by the Secret Service and this time they just wanted to check and see if I had spoken to my lawyer. I must say that every call I received, the agent was very polite and courteous. I would even go as far to say that he was nice but there was still something very wrong with this whole situation.

I have to be very honest; I was not afraid or scared. I guess the best word to describe how I felt would be concerned, but definitely not afraid of the whole ordeal. Not because I am fearless, I fear many things that most people probably do not. And not because I am a traditional "strong man", I cry probably more than most men, especially during movies, you know those inspirational ones like "Malcolm X" or "Mi Familia." No, the reason for my confidence has come with the knowledge that our community has faced larger obstacles and has overcome them. From FBI raids and investigations, to the incarceration of our Puerto Rican National Patriots, to the contamination and occupation of Vieques by the United States Military. The Puerto Rican people and my community have overcome all of these atrocities, freeing our prisoners, being cleared of any charges by the FBI with a written

apology and forcing the United States military out of Vieques. Building upon this historical memory of victory, a phone call from the United States Secret Service for an art piece does not seem so bad or overwhelming.

I am sure if I was some isolated artist I would be fearing for my freedom but when you take into account that people that you have contact with daily have spent nineteen, twenty, and even twenty-five years of their lives in prison because they stood when others were attempting to stand on them, it doesn't seem so scary. And when you know your community will support you even in the face of the United States government why should you fear a phone call and interview with the Secret Service. The phone call was meant to instill fear. It was to let us know people are watching and at any moment, as the agent told me, can "come down and pick you up." With the threat of spies and surveillance this government hopes it can control every aspect of our lives. But we all know well that this is an impossible feat. There is a saying that I often like to quote "where every there is oppression there is resistance," and that is just what we at QOS and in the community of Paseo Boricua will continue to do. Just as the workers that are "undocumented" will continue to work.

Art and images play a very important role in a people's struggle for liberation, especially in Latin America. Some examples being Mexicans fighting for their independence under the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, or youth fighting oppression brandishing images of Che Guevara evoking his revolutionary spirit. The Patriot Act and the policies of Homeland Security have stripped people of their human rights.

This has been yet another shining example of how the 1st Amendment of the United States Constitution only applies to the privileged. I cannot say that this comes to a surprise to me or that I am somehow disillusioned that the U.S. government would feel

the need to question me over a work of art. President Bush has authorized secretive eavesdropping programs in the United States countless times. Using 9-11 as an excuse to implement electronic spying on phone calls and emails without requiring a warrant to do so. Given today's political climate and the U.S.'s imperial history, freedom of speech has been allowed at the government's discretion. We can see many examples of this from the assassination of Black leaders of the 60's and 70's to persuading the press to refrain from showing images of the war on Iraq. It has gotten to the point that even many journalists and artists censor themselves due to the fear of being considered unpatriotic or un-American. Here, in what is supposed to be the "land of the free," many people cannot afford that freedom or are just too scared to exercise it. And as Latin America searches and discovers the power of democratic struggles, such as the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Zapatista of Chiapas, teachers in Oaxaca and the Movement Towards Socialism in Bolivia, the United States continues to move further and further from a democratic process to a post 9-11 world of fear, isolation and control. Civil Liberties have become more an inconvenience in the fight against terror than a basic human right.

"Would One Bullet End Centuries of White Supremacy," is a work of art that was meant to provoke thought and was created for a community art exhibition titled Toy Soldiers to show the violence and gruesomeness of war through military toys. In this political climate, this simple work of art caught the attention of the U.S. government. The piece itself is actually a critique of the "White Left" and those who think freedom can be easily attained by the result of one bullet. The reality is, it has taken hundreds of years to develop such an extensive system as white supremacy and racism, one created to maintain capitalism and the other to justify it. And it will take years to create a genuine participatory democracy. A democracy that we are busy creating in the Humboldt Park community of Paseo Boricua.

What I find to be scary is that in 2006, you can be forced to, or in this case they can attempt to force one to justify one's right to express their ideas. I am not an artist in the traditional sense, just as our community creates to cope with the realities of oppression I create to deal with that reality. Everyday we are bombarded with images of violence against women, against gays and lesbians, against people of color, against those from the Middle East, and against all of those that are marginalized, oppressed, and ostracized as the other, yet it is an image of one man that the United States government reacted to. Is George Bush's life worth more than that of Iraqi children that we see on the news everyday with real targets aimed at them? Is his life worth more than those that do not have legal papers to live in the United States and are targeted everyday, being forcefully split from their families? Is it worth more than others dying in deserts, trying to live because U.S. policies in their homelands have forced them to move? No! of course not. Those lives, as well as all life, is sacred. Under this political administration we have seen some of the worst atrocities committed in our generation. Yet, I would argue that after 9-11 any U.S. administration would have retaliated in the same unjust way.

Fortunately, at every point there has been resistance to these atrocities, the resistance by the Iraqi people, the public outcry against xenophobic anti-immigrant policies, and the unity in Puerto Rico following the FBI assassination of clandestine leader Comandante Filiberto Ojeda Rios. At this point we are unsure of what the outcome of the Secret Service request for an interview will be. In all honesty I feel I do not need to answer any questions they may have for me. It is my right as a citizen of the world to express and create, even create images that defy arrogant power. And just as those that create and resist all around the world, it is my responsibly to create honestly no matter how difficult or threatening a response may be.

Vida/SIDA: Live and Help to Live

words Myra Rodriguez

The disproportion of HIV/AIDS cases of Latinos and other People of Color in the United States is a sad reality, especially in the Humboldt Park area. The Humboldt Park community, mainly consisting of Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and other Latinos/as, are stricken with the lack of services and other resources for people living with HIV/AIDS. In the midst of this systematic neglect, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) developed a satellite project for sexual health education in 1988. Vida/Sida meaning Life/AIDS, consisting of mostly volunteers, brings together Latinos so that we can educate our community about HIV/AIDS, other STIs, and distribute safer sex materials. Now this grassroots project stands firmly on Division Street reaching out to the Paseo Boricua – Humboldt Park community.



I have been working with Vida/SIDA for the past 5 months as a Peer Educator, where I perform street outreach where I give out safer sex materials to the community and engages in conversations with people community residents about safe sex. Vida/SIDA also carries out presentations at schools, health agencies, and other facilities about HIV/AIDS and STIs, discussions on Human Anatomy, and other topics like safer sex. I take pride on what I do, almost feeling like a super hero on a mission everyday when going outside to do street outreach and informing and empowering people in the community.

Vida/SIDA is located on 2703 W. Division St. and has free HIV and other STI testing on Tues., Wed., and Thurs., from 10 am to 5pm. Vida/SIDA also provides free counseling and free distribution of safer sex materials. Day to Day Vida/SIDA continues to help the community and strives by the motto: Live and Help to Live.

Graffiti Art as a Form of Resistance

words José “Jay Jay” Efraín Rivera,

A 16-year-old student at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School



What I want people to understand is that graffiti art is not something to be disregarded but something of great quality and meaning. Graff, tagging, bombing, and getting up are just some of the different names for graffiti. Graffiti is very important to the growing inner city youth art community, which isn't recognized in the so called "professional art world". The "professional art world" is a world filled with young wealthy intellectuals, oh wait, no... yuppies, yeah that's the word. These people do not see that graff writing has a deeply rooted history in the big cities of the U.S. by people of color, particularly Latinos and blacks.

Graff originated in Philadelphia in the late 1960s. One of the first pioneers of this art went by the name of Cornbread. He tagged his name because of the love that he felt for a girl he went to school with. He wrote on her locker and along the street of the school bus route. This trend of message writing spread rapidly throughout the U.S., from major cities like Los Angeles to New York. His style of tag is now known as Cornbread style. Other early pioneers in graffiti are Julio204 and Taki 183. Taki tagged trains in New York in order to get his name known throughout the city.

In the early days, aerosol art was dominated by Latinos, mainly Puerto Ricans, and blacks. Today in every major country and city, you can find thriving graff communities, which are not to be confused with the chicken scratch gangs use to mark their territory. At times, graff may not be very appealing to the eye but it

can definitely be distinguished from gang graffiti. Graff is usually used to set boundaries between gang turfs, which, unfortunately, give true graffiti artists a bad name. Although most graffiti is illegally done, it is a way of spreading a message quickly to a broad audience. The message being spread depends on the artist.

Graffiti is a beautiful form of art that should be practiced by its founders, People of Color. We started graffiti, along with most Hip Hop trends. Furthermore, people don't usually think of women when they think of graffiti. Women have actually contributed to graffiti art from the beginning, and are still active all over the world today such as New York City's Lady Pink. People of color who were living in poverty also used Graff as a means to get a message across in a world where we were silenced. They stole spray paint and defaced public buildings as a way of letting the world know that they were not going to sit back and let the world take advantage of them anymore. The main message of true graffiti artists is a bold statement of who we are, what we have done and what we stand for. We are graffiti.

The Killing of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos

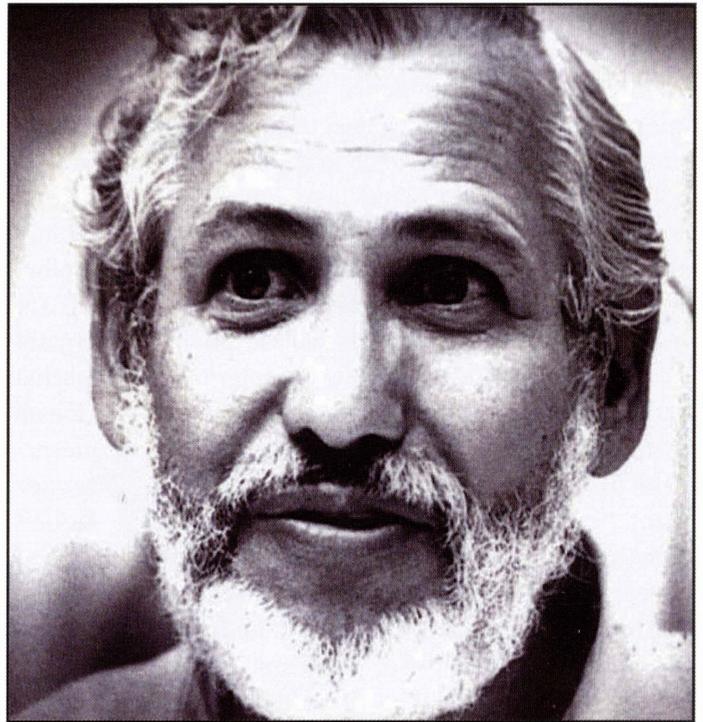
words Félix Jimenez

The spartan house in which Filiberto Ojeda Ríos lived for six years and in which he died did not hide the political leanings of its owner. A small banner with the red-and-green logo of the Boricua Popular Army (Los Macheteros) hung over the wooden balcony. A small Macheteros banner--generally regarded as a nod to the group's most lofty tenets of egalitarian existence--is not a notable or ominous sight in Puerto Rico. Still, the display was odd for a private man who had been incessantly searched for fifteen years after he freed himself of an electronic monitoring device and jumped bail in 1990.

His neighbors in the small hilly town of Hormigueros, eighty-five miles west of San Juan, only knew that the man who lived in that house was "Don Luis," an unassuming 70-something who enjoyed gardening. Silent and reserved, he used to wave at the neighbors from his farmhouse in the Plan Bonito (Beautiful Plan) sector whenever he saw them. No inkling of the leader who served as the emotional symbol of Puerto Rican national resistance for more than two decades, and was regarded variously as icon, legend, hero, madman or cowardly criminal once on the FBI's Most Wanted List for the infamous 1983 heist of a Wells Fargo truck in Connecticut, which netted \$7.2 million for the Macheteros. Earlier this year, the reward for information leading to his arrest was increased to \$1 million, even though the Macheteros have been essentially inactive for the past fifteen years.

But by midnight of September 23, Puerto Ricans just wanted to see Ojeda Ríos alive. It took twenty-four hours to finally learn, in a tense FBI press conference, that the bullet that entered his neck and exited through his back had killed him. This time he could not evade the exacting art of a sharpshooter, even wearing his faithful bulletproof vest.

The operation in which Ojeda Ríos was killed has single handedly turned the former fugitive from a Robin Hoodish patriot of reference into the consensual patriot of preference in Puerto Rico. The FBI's beautiful plan for the Plan Bonito mission, a hassle-free, enter-



the-house, arrest-the-fugitive scheme, was based on a miscalculation: Surrender was not an option for Ojeda Ríos. Or perhaps that fact was indeed considered, and thus the outcome of the mysterious twenty-two-hour standoff, with its concurrent information blackout, was exactly the one desired. But if it was, it set off a political earthquake whose aftershocks may not recede for some time.

Armed with a federal arrest warrant, the agents contend that they found the fugitive armed. "He started the whole thing. He fired first and wounded an agent," said the FBI's Special Agent in Charge Luis Fraticelli. Ojeda Ríos's widow, Elma Beatriz Rosado Barbosa, who was briefly detained by agents at the house and then released, has countered that the FBI contingent entered the house firing. Apparently the bureau contemplated neither Ojeda Ríos's surrender nor his survival. The wounded agent was airlifted to a hospital. Ojeda was not. Special Agent Fraticelli said the FBI "feared explosives might be present in the house and waited eighteen hours after they shot Ojeda Ríos for "fresh agents to arrive in a flight from Quantico to attempt a tactical entrance to the hideout." The autopsy performed on Ojeda Ríos's body

revealed that his wound was not life-threatening and that he could have survived if he had received proper medical attention. Instead, he slowly bled to death. Amnesty International suggested that the killing had the blueprint of an “extrajudicial execution.”

Puerto Rican independence leaders termed the FBI intervention “a shameful spectacle, an unconscionable show of force” against the popular hero, but on this politically divided island even hard-line statehood advocates such as Resident Commissioner Luis Fortuño, along with pro-Commonwealth Governor Aníbal Acevedo Vilá; have aggressively chastised the FBI for its “highly irregular” procedures. The governor formally asked Washington for a thorough internal investigation and vowed to conduct his own. The three Puerto Rican members of Congress, Representatives Luis Gutiérrez from Illinois and José; Serrano and Nydia Velázquez from New York, also pressed FBI Director Robert Mueller for an investigation. Mueller personally called Governor Acevedo Vilá; to confirm that he had asked the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General to conduct an “independent review” of the matter. An FBI spokesman added, however, “We have every reason to believe the agents acted properly.”

There was another factor the FBI failed to consider. The timing of the execution could not have been more incendiary--it was staged during the commemoration of the 137th anniversary of El Grito de Lares, a failed 1868 rebellion against Spanish colonial rule and the most important date for independence advocates on the island, a holiday whose highlight for the past fifteen years had been a taped message by the man who was left dying. By shooting Ojeda Ríos one hour after his last political speech aired, broadcast over radio and television, the agents tapped an emotional nationalist reserve. A monumental FBI mistake forged an instant monument for Puerto Rican independence. Their blunder may be the spark that reactivates the dormant pro-independence camp, whose electoral presence had dwindled to just 2.7 percent in the 2004 elections. Independence leaders now look forward to a stronger showing in future polls. Others are trying to counter the punch. San Juan Mayor Jorge Santini, vice president of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party, called the use of Ojeda Ríos’s death as political strategy “a stillborn, pathetic stratagem.” He said, “If they need someone to die to unite, they’re already dead.”



To the chagrin of political opponents, two days after his death Ojeda Ríos’s face had been fashioned into a cast by an artist, and the government announced that his house would be turned into a museum and the street leading to it would bear his name. The body was accorded all kinds of posthumous honors at the island’s oldest cultural institution, the Ateneo Puertorriqueño, and, to the surprise of many, at the headquarters of the Puerto Rico Bar Association. Even before its official announcement, Ojeda Ríos’s death prompted massive protests. Independentista advocates blocked main highways in San Juan to denounce the FBI operation. Similar protests were staged in New York, New Jersey, Boston and Chicago. A riot at the 23,000-student University of Puerto Rico forced administrators to decree an “academic recess” and allow professors, staff and students to attend Ojeda Ríos’s funeral.

Hundreds of students overturned tables and chairs at the student center and entered food concessionaries. In a frenzy of unmitigated rage, everything that hinted at

colonial domination was game. Hamburgers became projectiles as students scribbled with aerosol and ketchup on fast-food restaurant walls, striking against McDonald's and Burger King. Just as they did at an impromptu gathering the day Ojeda Ríos died, thousands joined in a seven-hour motorcade on September 27, the day of his funeral, singing the Puerto Rican revolutionary hymn and shouting anti-US slogans. Scores of banners reflected popular anger: FEDERAL AGENTS=ASSASSINS; FBI: HERE YOU GO KILLING AGAIN; KILL FEDERAL PIGS. On the day that independence leaders had been chastised by Ojeda Ríos in his taped message for their lack of a unified front against the growing statehood forces, on the day that he vowed to keep on fighting "without opportunism, without hesitation," the FBI unwittingly rearranged the landscape of independence in Puerto Rico by granting instant martyrdom to the old fighter.

The death of Ojeda Ríos has meant more than the provisional rekindling of anti-US rhetoric and flag burnings. While Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton--perhaps concerned by the fact that she had publicly denounced the clemency granted to Puerto Rican political prisoners by President Clinton in 1999 and wanting to avoid controversy--canceled a planned visit to the island, security was tightened in federal buildings....

Filiberto Ojeda Ríos once said that he had always felt "protected by the people." He was buried in his hometown of Naguabo, in a wooden casket adorned with a machete, and all the independence groups, the known and unknown acronyms, were there together, mourning. The Macheteros' response at the funeral was a terse statement, signed by the group's apparent new leader, Commander Guasabara. "[The FBI] made am mistake. The trumpet of liberty still calls us to the struggle."

Instead of the island's possibility for independence approaching death, it felt like death becoming independence





Mural by Gamaliel Ramirez

Return to El Barrio, Humboldt Park es Nuestro!