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Que Ondee Sola - December 2009

Xavier Luis Burgos

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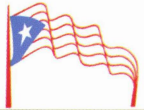
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Vida/SIDA

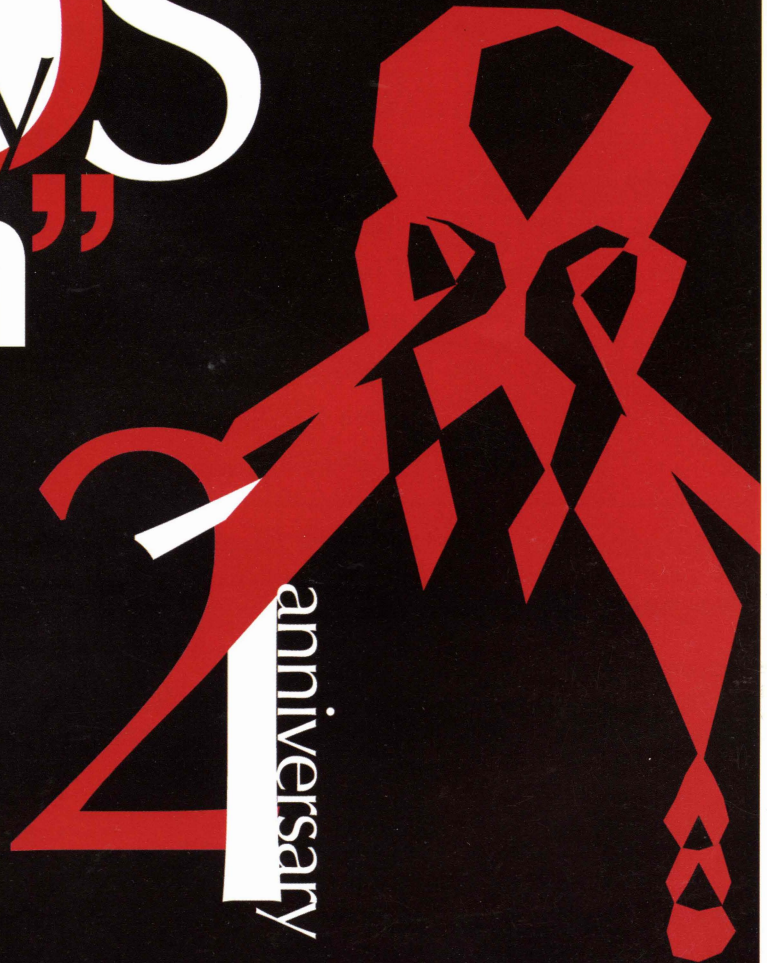
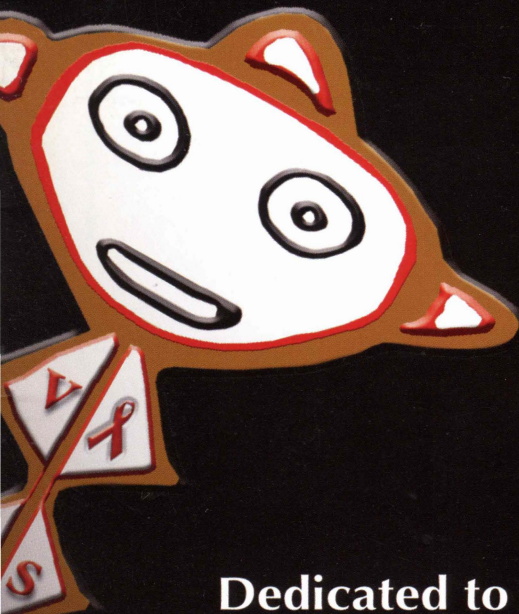
Bartolo Hernández de Jesús

HIV/AIDS Initiative



World
AIDS
"I Am"
ay

Tuesday, December 1, 2009



Dedicated to the memory of Daniel Sotomayor

• **Altars & Candlelight Vigil / La Casita de Don Pedro**
2625 W. Division Chicago, IL 60622
Time: 4:30-5:00pm >>>> FREE

• **Opening of "A Hero Comes Home"**
Institute of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture (IPRAC)
3015 W. Division Chicago, IL 60622
Time: 5:15-6:00pm >>>> FREE

• **Reception / Dinner**

Casa Puertorriqueña - Daniel Ramos
1237 N. California Chicago, IL 60622
Time: 6:30pm-9:00pm Tickets: \$30 (RSVP - 773.278.6753)

• **Vida/SIDA HIV/STD Prevention Project**
2703 West Division Street, Chicago, Illinois
(O) 773.278.6737 (F) 773.278.6753

Sponsored by **Vida / SIDA Advisory Board** & La Voz del Paseo Boricua Newspaper

Nov. 09 Vol. 37 No. 9
Que Onde Sola

December 1, for many, is just another day on the calendar. For Chicagoans in particular it is another day in the midst of winter and one day closer to the warm breezes of spring and summer. Some might say that it is just another day in the banal life of an individual, breathing one inch closer to death. It is true that people die everyday - we will *all* one day perish and become particles that fuel the stars - but one cause of death in particular brings special meaning to that day.

For those who have had loved ones die of complications from AIDS, it is day that marks their memory. It is a day of remembrance and awareness of a horrifying disease that has plagued and destroyed millions of lives around the world. Even more so, it is a day that honors life - for that so many live with HIV and AIDS

and still struggle for survival, respect, and dignity. December 1 is a date that has transformed into World AIDS Day so that the silence of shame may no longer distract what needs to be heard and known.

In Humboldt Park, as a community, we celebrate this day with the very dignity and responsibility that we challenge all those with the disease to live with. Every year for the past two decades, with the leadership of the Vida/SIDA health center, an institutional pillar in the Puerto Rican and Latina/o community, residents join in a silent procession and vigil to bring attention to this plague on our people. This edition highlights this event as well as information on this disease and its disproportionate consequences on our community. I hope you can join us on December 1.

International World AIDS Day "I am": Vida/SIDA Reception/Dinner Program

Welcome

Dr. Roberto Sanabria, Member Board of Directors of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center

Marilyn Morales, Chairperson

Introducing the Vida/SIDA Advisory Board

Rick Garcia, Director of Public Policy Equality Illinois
"A Hero Comes Home"-

In memory of Daniel Sotomayor

Dr. Jaime Martinez

Associate Professor of Pediatrics (CT), University of Illinois Division of Adolescent Medicine Stroger Hospital of Cook County

"HIV Overview"

Jovanna Levy and Margarita Garcia

Special Presentation for the "Red Ribbon Bonus Buck"

Illinois Lottery

Trailer- "Nuestro Hogar" and "Trans-gendered Documentary"- Josue Pellot

Angel Ortiz

HIV positive Testimony

Grizel Robles- Schrader- "HIV/AIDS in Puerto Rico" DePaul University- Connect to Protect

David Munar, Vice President
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
"Latinos and HIV/AIDS"

Juan Calderon, Director

Vida/SIDA Bartolo Hernandez de Jesus

"Two decades + 1 later: Vida/SIDA and its work"

Closing Remarks

Dr. Jose E. Lopez, Executive Director, Puerto Rican Cultural Center

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

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

Que Ondee Sola

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Victims of Life on the **Down-low**

Alberto Trevino *Café magazine* 11/16/09



Maria knew there was something wrong when she came down with a fever and the diarrhea just wouldn't disappear. Doctors doled out pills to soothe her symptoms. But what turned out to be the truth for the married mother of two had never occurred to her.

Maria had HIV, but it was not to be diagnosed until she was pregnant with her third child. That's when blood tests revealed the awful reality. Maria, a woman who had had sexual relations only with her husband, had a sexually transmitted disease.

"I'm not angry," the 30-year-old suburban divorcee says now, "but I ask, 'Why did he do that to me?'"

And, what "he" did isn't so uncommon.

Listen up, Latinas: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports you're five times more likely to contract the HIV virus than any white woman, and that rate is likely to spike higher with each passing year.

Juana too is representative of those statistics: one of the more than 125,000 women living with HIV in the U.S., and one of the almost 70 percent of infected Latinas who have contracted the virus due to heterosexual contact.

"I was really, really confused because I knew my husband got sick, but he never told me about his illness," the 50-year-old mother says with a sigh, recalling a time more than seven years ago when she couldn't understand why her husband's health kept failing.

One day, he went to church alone and she searched his jacket pockets in their closet at home. It was there she found the anti-viral medications he had been hiding.

"My God, what is happening here?" she remembers praying, before calling her best friend. That friend instructed her to get tested immediately -- though Juana didn't know why. "He's my only man," Juana said she thought at the time, but she went to the doctor anyway. The results: the worst.

"I told God, 'I'm really, really sad for this situation,'" Juana recalls. "Not about the HIV, because we don't choose our disease, but for my husband!"

She asked God to help her forgive him, and with an open heart Juana did just that. Unlike Maria, Juana remains married to her husband -- the carrier and transmitter of the disease that may eventually kill them both.

Women have several courses of action once they contract HIV. But their failure to assert themselves and take action could have helped them fend off the disease.

When it comes to sexual relationships with men in the Hispanic community, Juana Ballesteros of the Greater Humboldt Park Community of Wellness says, "Women feel like they can't have their man wear a condom or question who they've been with."

Such was the case with both Maria and Juana.

Maria was living in Zacatecas, Mexico, during the early years of her marriage, while her husband was working in the U.S. She suspected infidelity -- though she does not know of what sort and to what extent -- and asked her husband to wear a condom when they were together. "He didn't want to use them," she says, regretful that she couldn't take a tougher stance.

As for Juana, she says she never felt a need to make such a request. But now she acknowledges, "We don't know what happens on the streets with our husbands."

And what happens on those streets can be scarier than these women could have ever imagined.

A SECRET LIFE

"Bisexuality among the Mexican community is huge," says Carlos Chavez, the HIV program director of Latino services at the Renz Addiction Center in Elgin. Because of the secretive nature of such sexual activity, there are no statistics that could support such a claim, Chavez says, but anecdotally at the Renz

Center, such allegations are accepted as fact.

"There is a joke that goes, 'What's the difference between a Mexican man and a gay man?'" Chavez says with a laugh. "A six pack of beer."

Chavez says many married Mexican men while under the influence of alcohol enter a subculture of same-sex encounters in which they insist on playing the dominant role with a homosexual man. "Their mentality is, 'OK, I'm going to play the male role and teach the little gay guy what a real man is,'" Chavez explains.

Many of those engaging in such bisexual practices often have wives at home, unaware of what's happening when their men leave the house.

Julio Maldonado of Chicago's Howard Brown Health Center says it all comes down to traditional gender roles. "The normal thing is men with women, so we follow these rules," Maldonado says. "But then after you realize, 'Oh, my God, I have an attraction to another man,' what do we do? We do it on the down low."

Sex on the down-low involves secretive same-sex encounters. It's practiced while in a heterosexual relationship, and it's often practiced unsafely.

Chavez says there are several reasons behind the unsafe practices - a macho feeling of invincibility, the influence of drugs or alcohol, and because wearing a condom, he says, is "like licking a lollipop with the wrapper on."

But at its root cause, Chavez says, is the esteem in which Latina wives are held. It's an esteem

that also leads to sexual frustration on the part of a sexually curious husband.

Maria says she doesn't know who gave the virus to her husband, and to Juana, it doesn't matter. They were faithful, both say, even if their partners were not.

"(Men living on the down low) engage in oral sex with (other) men," Chavez says of those with the need to look for encounters outside of their marriage. "They won't do it with their wives. She kisses their kids."

For proof, look no further than La Cueva, a nightclub on Chicago's Southwest Side. It's where gay men not only grace the dance floor sashaying as sensuous lovers, but married men sit on barstools solo, scoping the scene in pursuit of their next homosexual encounter while transsexuals provide entertainment and escape.

From 26th Street, no signage can be seen on La Cueva's exterior -- it sits as a bar with no name, a hidden sanctuary for many men masking what they truly desire.

"Their wives think their fantasies are dirty, so they look for another experience," says 38-year-old Ivan Sanchez, a gay suburbanite who travels to La Cueva for the music, but often gets hit on by men with wives waiting at home.

"Many, many straight men are coming not for a relationship but for one crazy night," he explains, before leading his boyfriend to the dance floor.

Fifty-five-year-old Salvador knows he's not straight, but don't call him gay. The father of

four and grandfather of eight works at a tony French bistro downtown, and on his Sunday night off, he passes one dollar bill after another to "Alexis," a transsexual dancer.

Why Alexis? "Because she is the most macho," Salvador answers. "She looks like a real man."

His lifestyle, Salvador says, eventually led to his divorce, and his children aren't happy about his sexual orientation. Those are the only ones who know, he says, because "it's a private matter."

He hasn't contracted HIV, but it is a constant concern. If he found a partner tonight, Salvador says he would wear a condom, but it only takes one encounter without one to contract a disease that never goes away.

That disease doesn't seem to concern Peter. Alone and sipping a beer, he says he has two hundred reasons in his pocket why a transsexual performer should have sex with him. That attitude offends one of the waitresses who doubles as a performer and insists they are not for sale.

"I can't stand gay guys," Peter says with a laugh. "I'm very heterosexual, but I love transexual women ... men ... whatever they are!"

Peter says he has spent \$25,000 on them. He says he would sleep with a woman tomorrow.

That woman could be someone like Juana or Maria, who can't buy their way back to health.

SCARCE RESOURCES

Juana is seeking counseling and says she feels excellent lately. She has told her family about

her illness, and she encourages all women to practice safe sex -- even if they are married.

"Latino men don't like to use a condom, and women need to make that decision for their life," she says with a sigh.

Maria is feeling well these days, too. She takes three pills in the morning and three pills at night, and she thanks God that her three children did not contract the disease. She has a boyfriend, and when they have sex, it's always with protection.

"I have all the support and love of my boyfriend and I feel good," Maria says.

Part of that overall wellness of being is aided by the Open Door Clinic, a suburban agency that provides lab testing, physician services and counseling. But agencies like the Open Door Clinic are scarce in Hispanic communities, and the programs many offer are too few.

Juan Calderon directs Chicago's Vida/SIDA, one of the only HIV-focused agencies within a predominantly Latino neighborhood in the city. "The Latino community has not been receiving their fair share of the pie when it comes to health services," Calderon says, explaining that Latinos with HIV instead opt to seek help in small clinics where they can find Latino doctors and counselors.

Chavez sees the same trend at the Renz Center. "It's much like many women's preference to be treated by a female gynecologist," he explains, adding that for many Latinas, lack of transportation and day care often are obstacles to going anywhere outside their immediate neighborhood.

But at clinics that cater to Hispanics, the programs offered have been limited by government funding and initiative. Unlike its work within the black community, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has yet to approve any evidence-based program created by and for Latinas.

This fact, Chavez says, impedes his work at the Renz Center. "We're getting leftovers," Chavez says of the CDC programs offered, including one called SISTA, an HIV-prevention program geared toward sexually active black women.

"We can't continue getting whatever is for the African-American community and tweaking it for our needs," he says. Cultural sensitivity is essential, Chavez explains, because the differences between black and Hispanic women are "major."

That's why he is thankful for a federal grant that will fund five years of a program called "De Mujer a Mujer," a five-week HIV and substance abuse awareness class just for Latinas. Fifteen women take the class per session, and Chavez says the waiting list to get in is huge.

He explains most women attend because they want to feel more comfortable talking to their kids about the issues. By the end of the program, his goal is to make them understand they need to be thinking about their own health as well.

"We're trying to make them see they have to take care of themselves first," Chavez says, knowing that for most Latinas family will always be a greater priority.

And it's family both Maria and Juana are fighting

to live for now.

Family members are the only ones who know of Maria's illness; she says she lacks the confidence to inform her friends. "My girlfriends, I can't tell them," she says, "because you don't know if they'll discriminate against you, they won't invite me to their homes ... I've felt that fear."

Living with HIV is a lonely existence, she says, and many days are sad ones. But with the support of her boyfriend, Maria admits she has the courage to go on. "I'm brave," she says with a sigh, knowing that being brave is her only option.

Juana, meanwhile, is busy caring for her 10-year-old son and her HIV-positive husband. She says her disease has only deepened her faith in God, and with his help she's living as full and rich a life as she can, though she carries the burdensome secret of her illness.

"My life is totally different now," Juana says. "I live each day as if it were my last day."

TELL-TALES OF A DOWN-LOW LIFE

Determining whether you're at risk for HIV can be difficult, and women in long-term heterosexual relationships are not exempt.

"Women are more aware when they think their husband is going out with another woman, but when it comes to being gay, they are more likely to block it out," says Dr. Daniela Schreier, an assistant professor at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology and a relationship expert.

Schreier says it's especially difficult to fathom if you think your own sexual relationship with your husband seems OK. "If we don't think about it, it doesn't exist," she explains of the denial often present on the woman's part when the man is on the down low.

But Ruth Houston, an infidelity expert and author of "Is He Cheating on You? 829 Telltale Signs," says women must start thinking about it. "We're talking about a matter of life and death," she says.

She offers 16 tips to help determine if your partner is in fact engaging in sex on the down-low. But first, Houston says, it's important to determine if he really is being unfaithful in the first place because many of the following tips can be misconstrued if no acts of infidelity are occurring. After infidelity has been determined -- then and only then, Houston says -- can you look for signs that he's cheating with another man.

If you suspect your husband is engaging in sex with other men, the first step Houston advises is getting tested for HIV. Then it's important to take precautions. "Start practicing safe sex and don't let him bully you," Houston says.

Eventually, you'll have to confront him with your suspicions. It's a difficult conversation, but an essential one. It may mean the end of your relationship as you know it -- but in such circumstances, Houston says, you must put your health and well-being first.

Here's what to look for:

- *Suspicious non-verbal communication with other men - a look, a touch or a hug that lasts a little*

too long or has undertones of intimacy.

- Possession of gay pornography (videos, magazines, photos stored on his computer).

- Frequenting gay or bisexual Web sites. Check the history in your Internet browser.

- No longer sexually aroused by you or can't maintain his erection.

- A strong preference for anal sex.

- An abundance of male friends with whom he seems to be too close or too familiar.

- Lots of phone calls from other men.

- Buying or receiving expensive, intimate or overly personal gifts from other men.

- Extreme homophobic behavior (overreacts to anything concerning gay or bisexual men).

- Spends more time with his male friends than with you.

- Cell phone or credit card bills traced to gay escort services or gay online dating services.

- Matchbook covers, cocktail napkins or business cards from gay bars with or without phone numbers written on them.

Jessie Fuentes

AIDS

In love infatuated that's exactly what she was.

With a guy that was not worth it that was not enough.

Cheat on her, beat on her gave her a disease.

And soon enough she will be a deceased.

AID's that's what it was called.

Taking over her body infesting it all.

Beautiful, sensitive that was her personality.

But with a disease she had to face the reality.

That her days were limited to live.

27 years old expecting a kid.

Hurt, confused, torn apart.

Would this have happened if she had thought from the start.

That yearly you should always get tested.

And during sexual intercourse stay protected.

R.I.P due to a disease.

With a child that won't live to see past three

Gender Inequality's Deadly Toll

Geneva: In its inaugural report on women's health from the cradle to the grave, the World Health Organization found that HIV is the No. 1 killer of women ages 15 to 49 worldwide and that unequal access to sex education and health care leads to millions of preventable deaths each year. Traffic accidents, suicide and breast cancer are the top causes of death in high-income nations, while HIV/AIDS, maternal conditions (such as dying during childbirth and unsafe abortions) and tuberculosis account for 1 in 2 female deaths in poorer countries.

Top 10 causes of death for women ages 20 to 59 worldwide (in thousands)

HIV/AIDS: 835

MATERNAL CONDITIONS : 453

HEART DISEASE: 429

STROKE: 360

TUBERCULOSIS: 313

BREAST CANCER: 223

SUICIDE: 204

LOWER-RESPIRATORY INFECTION: 190

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT: 172

PULMONARY DISEASE: 149

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

By Alice Park; Harriet Barovick; Laura Fitzpatrick; M.J. Stephney; Randy James; Alex Altman; Claire Suddath; Alyssa Fetini; Frances Romero; Tamara Weston

Want to know about Puerto Rico and the Caribbean?

We recommend you take one of the most popular classes in the Latino & Latin American Studies program this Spring 2010:

Puerto Ricans & the Caribbean

Registration # 20866

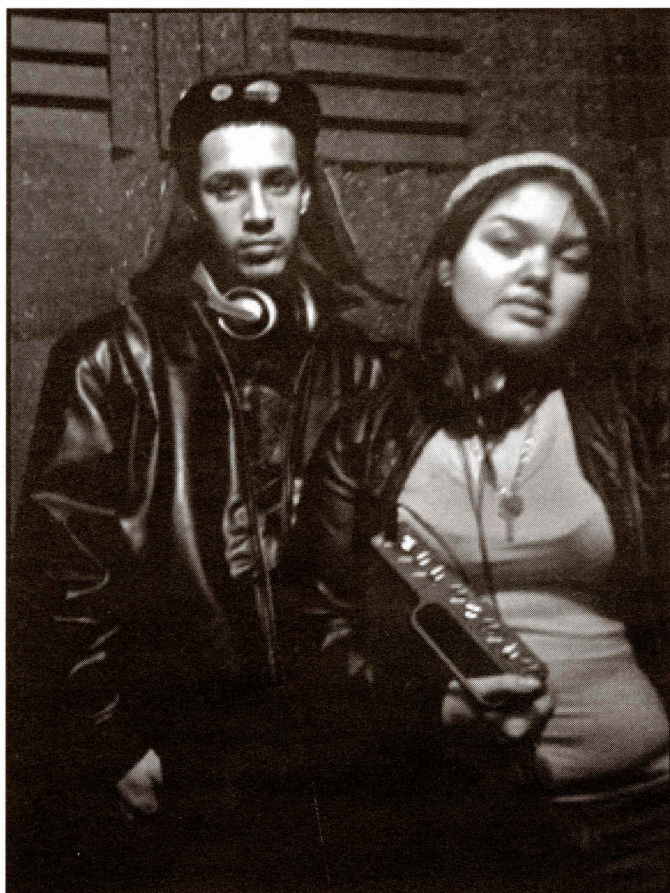
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:25am-10:40am

Science Building, Room 111

Our Struggle

Can I reminisce when my ancestors went through this struggle.
 Being put away cause they were thought of as nothing but trouble.
 I can only imagine what they felt inside .
 Being beat down not being able to stand up for there pride.
 Due to them being latina or latino they weren't given equal rights.
 So we had people Like Dr.Albizu put up a fight.
 With so much soul and pride he did it for us .
 Almost like Rosa Parks didn't want to sit in the back of the bus.
 So many struggles we have to face.
 Gringos putting us down now we sitting in disgrace.
 I 6 political prisoners were sitting behind bars.
 Because they didn't want the United states tearing us apart.
 Segregated, gentrified and we still don't have a solution.
 Our prisoners are sitting there in a state of mind of mental execution.
 With the unbarring thought if they would ever get out.
 To help the rest of the latinos get out of this drought.
 Cause isn't what this is a deserted island.
 Looking for our prisoners but we can't find them.
 We are the people in thirst and the desert is the gringos.
 But we find water cause we are Tianos.
 Strong, intelligent just like everybody else.
 Just a different complexion and some without wealth.
 I want to rewind this all cause I don't think yall catch my drift.
 I want the gringos and latinos to switch.
 Mind, body, and soul.
 To get put down and hear everything we were told.
 To feel the struggle and pain that tears us apart.
 From being in the brightest room to sitting alone in the dark.
 You see to some people this situation might be debatable.
 But to my community these feelings are irreplaceable.

Tuning In at the BACCA Radio Station



Students in the Barrio, Arts, Culture, and Communication Academy (BACCA) radio class, located at the Batey Urbano youth space have been taking on quite a challenge these past two months. Diving into unknown waters, learning to chop up and fade in/out sound waves. Not just on some shareware you can download for free online, but on the industry standard software, that Hip Hop artists such as Kanye West or Reggaetón artist Ivy Queen use to lay their tracks, called Pro Tools. They have been learning to use this powerful program to put their voices on air and let people know their perspectives on the Humboldt Park community. They do this through raps, poetry, and short stories that they can record and upload online for the world to

hear:

Tania Castillo, 17, a second year student in the BACCA Program learned about the class through a mentor. Ever since she started up with the program back in the Fall of 2008, she has always come back each cycle. "I wanted to try something new and ever since then I've liked it." She has recorded and published several of her projects online: poetry, short stories, and interviews she has done with community residents regarding underage drinking. Tania has gone into the Humboldt Park neighborhood and captured stories that Fox News nor NBC could get their hands on. Considering the reality of a digital divide Tania is also grateful that she not only learned Pro Tools, but also some computing skills. "I didn't know anything about Macs before this program... I Love Macs... I'm a Mac!"

Fabian Restrepo, 18, got involved in the program through his school, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School. "I had an interest in music. As a rapper I wanted to know how to record myself to save money and to be able to work on projects when I wanted to." Someone like Fabian, aka FABLE, would only experience being in a studio behind a microphone. Now, he is behind the scenes on his own projects. "As a rapper I can use these skills now and in the future."

The BACCA program has been teaching local youth how to utilize this technology for the past 3 years. By 2010, Batey Urbano will have a fully functioning online radio station with a large pool of students already trained and ready to broadcast.

Check out the student's Anti-underage drinking campaign projects:

<http://bateyurbano.squarespace.com>

Vocalo.org - Search: Barrio Arts Culture and Communications Academy

<http://prcc-chgo.org/bacca>

Crystal Martínez and Jaleen Starling

BACCA Students Reflect on Underage Drinking in Humboldt Park

For the past three years the Barrio Arts, Culture and Communication Academy (BACCA), an afterschool program in Humboldt Park, has been providing a space for youth to develop their skills in media fields such as radio, photography, graphic design and print journalism.

Through BACCA students become more involved in their community by addressing issues that affect local youth. Currently students are engaged in a campaign against underage drinking. Crystal Martínez and Jaleen Starling, BACCA print journalism students, interviewed each other on the subject of underage drinking in Humboldt Park.

Crystal Martínez believes underage drinking happens because it's a "get away from life," or perhaps amusement for teenagers. "Stress has a big impact on drinking," said Martínez. She believes that drinking is a temporary relief from anxiety and stress of our every day lives. There is also a repercussion of health problems as a result of drinking and it does not help solve a stressful situation, said Martínez.

Martínez also said rappers could have an effect on teenage drinking because their videos advertise drinking, smoking, and half-naked women. She offered three main responses

to underage drinking: Reduce the quantities of liquor sold, be stricter on the storeowners in getting proof of I.D and stop selling liquor altogether, which she doesn't think would ever happen. "There's always a flaw in human society," said Martínez.

According to Jaleen Starling underage drinking is more of a problem in Humboldt Park than nearby Wicker Park. "There are more advertisements in the urban area we live in than areas where mostly white people live," Starling said. She added that there are also more liquor stores in our neighborhood compared to other prominently white areas. In her opinion, bars in these areas are stricter in checking IDs.

Starling also stated, "To me the proper age to drink is 18 because if the government allows you to buy cigarettes, which eventually kills you, at age 18, why not give them the right to purchase liquor at the same age?" Even though Starling had this point of view she said does not recommend underage drinking because it often results in drunk-driving accidents.

BACCA radio and multimedia students will be creating audio and visual components to the BACCA anti-underage drinking campaign in the upcoming weeks.

Film Review: **Nothing Like The Holidays**



There's nothing like a Puerto Rican Christmas in Chicago. It's close to freezing outside with a foot of snow on the ground, but that doesn't stop you from running to the bodega. No sooner do you walk through the door does the aroma of lechón, tostones and arroz con guandules hit you. Mami comes rushing to you with hugs and kisses saying she thought you'd never make it back home, while Papi pulls her off and hands you a cup of coquito. You sit down in the sala with your siblings and cousins, only to find out cousin Macho is still giving you shit for running out of the basement like a little punk because they tricked you into thinking El Cuco lived there. You just laugh it off and remind him of the time you caught him singing in the bathroom with a comb pretending he was the next Menudo. You smile and look

forward to the mini parranda you would have later on. However, that's not the Christmas the Rodriguez family would have. The family is busy chatting while the clanks of silver wear and bowls add to the loudness, as the family passes the food around.

"Why is everybody fighting?" asked Sarah (Debra Messing) over the noisy table

"Oh, they aren't fighting... we're conversating," says Mauricio (John Leguizamo) even louder:

The chatter at the table finally calms down and everybody looks around to see who is going to say grace when all of a sudden Papi's (Alfred Molina) cell phone goes off. That's when Mami (Elizabeth Peña) says loud and clear,

"There's something I'd like to say... I'm leaving your father."

It is dead silent when all of a sudden Johnny (Luis Guzmán) starts laughing and is quickly interrupted by Mauricio.

"Come on, stop that Ma. You can't... your old." "Nothing like the Holidays" includes a cast of Freddy Rodríguez, John Leguizamo, Jay Hernández, Debra Messing, Alfred Molina, and Elizabeth Peña. The family experiences heartache, the true meaning of family, personal boundaries, love, coming clean with the past, all while trying to celebrate the cheerful spirit of Christmas.

I, personally, feel that this movie captures the true essence of family during the holidays: everything from the family jokes, family arguments, and the optimism of Christmas. While there were many parts where I laughed, smiled, and cried, only two

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In Loving Memory of...

I know nothin' I can say can ease your pain
And even though I can love you infinitely, it's just not the same
But I want you to know that I'm hurting with you
And whatever you need or want, I will try my best to do
I need you to know you're not alone
And no matter what, you always have a place in my heart and home
Life just isn't fair and I wish justice could find its way
But God never forgets and will give them what they deserve one day
Please do your best to stay strong during such a hard time
And understand that 2 wrongs don't make a right
When it seems like it's too quiet to talk, call me
When it seems like it's too cold, reach out for a hug and I'll be waiting
When it seems like things and life can't and won't ever be as it was
I want you to think of all the hugs, love, laughs, tears, nights, talks, thoughts, smiles and memories you shared cause
They would want you to be happy and to smile on everything you two went through
Just think, the person they were, was influenced by you
All of the greatest things that made up their smile, charm, love for cookies, travel, self expression, deep thoughts,
music and outgoing attitude was because of you
All of that combined into one person who not only touched your soul, but the souls of others
All of that combined into one person who not only inspired you, but inspired many others
All of that combined into one person who not only made you think, but made others think
All of that combined into one person who not only loved you, but loved others too and made them love
All of that combined into one person who not only made you believe in change for the better, but made others
believe in change for the better too
An unforgettable person that will stay in your memory forever challenges you...

"We ARE the future. How will you make it better? How will you be remembered?"

In loving memory of Francisco "Frankie" Valencia

Dedicated to his family...love you guys

Money Trickles North as Mexicans Help Relatives



Adriana Zehbrauskas for The New York Times

Sirenia Avendano wept as she spoke of sending money to her sons in the United States.

MIAHUATLÁN, México — During the best of the times, Miguel Salcedo's son, an illegal immigrant in San Diego, would be sending home hundreds of dollars a month to support his struggling family in Mexico. But at times like these, with the American economy out of whack and his son out of work, Mr. Salcedo finds himself doing what he never imagined he would have to do: wiring pesos north.

Unemployment has hit migrant communities in the United States so hard that a startling new phenomenon has been detected: instead of receiving remittances from relatives in the richest country on earth, some down-and-out

Mexican families are scraping together what they can to support their unemployed loved ones in the United States.

"We send something whenever we have a little extra, at least enough so he can eat," said Mr. Salcedo, who is from a small village here in the rural state of Oaxaca and works odd jobs to support his wife, his two younger sons and, now, his jobless eldest boy in California.

He is not alone. Leonardo Herrera, a rancher from outside Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the southern state of Chiapas, said he recently sold a cow to help raise \$1,000 to send to his struggling

nephew in northern California.

Also in Chiapas, a poor state that sends many migrants to the United States, María del Carmen Montufar has pooled money with her husband and other family members to wire financial assistance to her daughter Candelaria in North Carolina. In the last year, the family has sent money — small amounts ranging from \$40 to \$80 — eight times to help Candelaria and her husband, who are both without steady work and recently had a child.

“When she’s working she sends money to us,” the mother said. “But now, because there’s no work, we send money to her.”

Statistics measuring the extent of what experts are calling reverse remittances are hard to come by. But interviews in Mexico with government officials, money-transfer operators, immigration experts and relatives of out-of-work migrants show that a transaction that was rarely noticed before appears to be on the rise.

“It’s something that’s surprising, a symptom of the economic crisis,” said Martín Zuvire Lucas, who heads a network of community banks that operate in poor communities in Oaxaca and other underserved Mexican states. “We haven’t been able to measure it but we hear of more cases where money is going north.”

At one small bank in Chiapas that used to see money flowing in from the United States, more money is going out than coming in.

“I’d say every month 50,000 pesos are sent from here to there,” said Edith Ramírez Gonzalez, a sales executive at Banco Azteca in San Cristóbal de las Casas. “And from

there, we’d receive about 30,000 pesos.” Fifty thousand pesos is \$3,840.

With nearly half its population living in poverty, Mexico is not well placed to prop up struggling citizens abroad. Mexico could lose as many as 735,000 jobs this year and its economy may decline 7.5 percent, government economists predict, making the country one of the worst affected by the global recession.

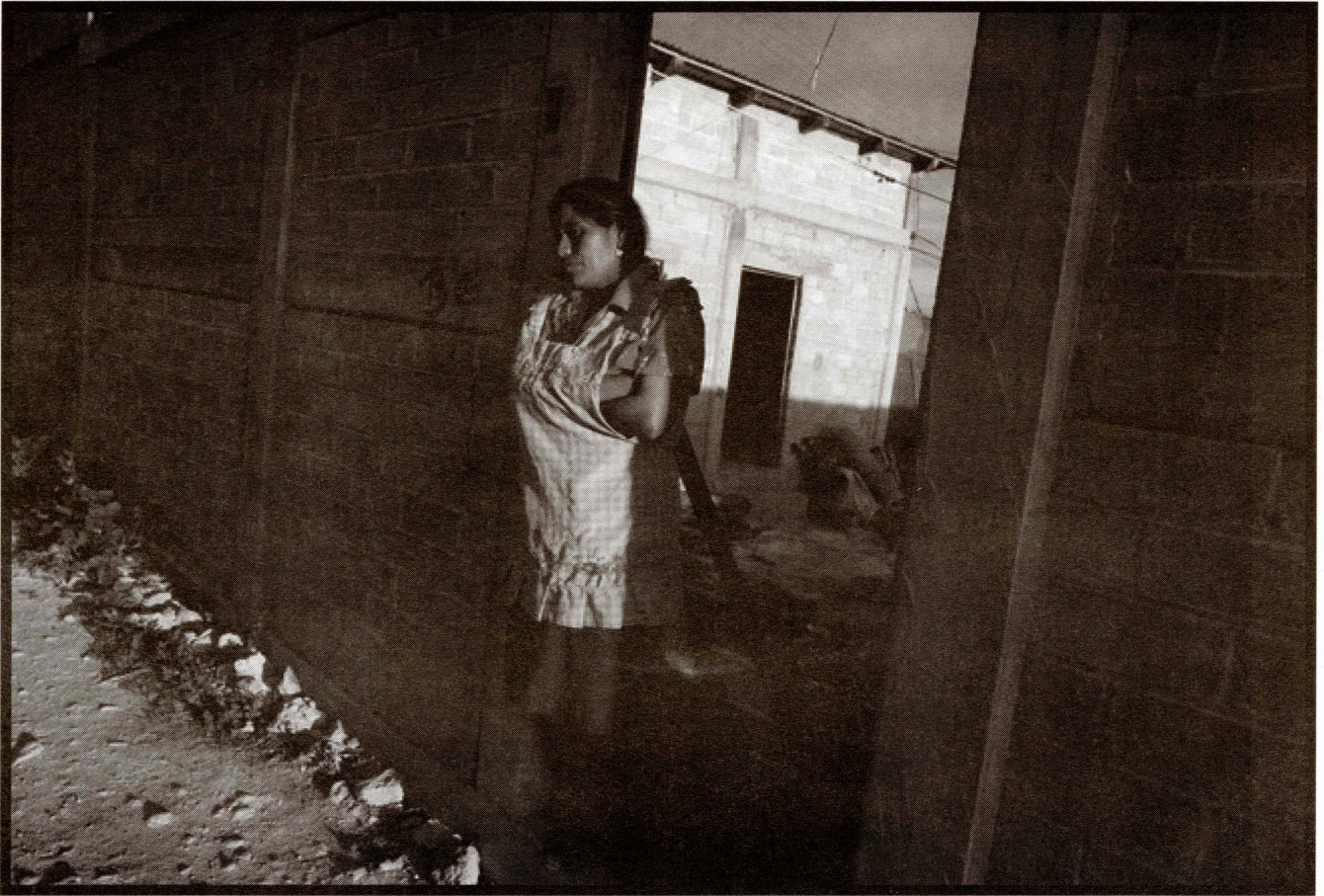
Still, poverty is a relative concept. It is easier to get by on little in Mexico, especially in rural areas, allowing the poor to help the even more precarious.

In Miahuatlán, Sirenia Avendano and her husband may be more down and out than their two sons, both in their 20s, who wait tables at a Mexican restaurant in central Florida and have seen their hours reduced and their tips drop precipitously. But they live in their own home, on land they use to grow corn and other crops.

“We’re poor, but nobody can throw us out of this house,” Ms. Avendano said, wiping away tears at her kitchen table as she spoke of her sons’ economic travails. “They worry about that. What happens if they can’t pay the rent?” To help make ends meet, she sells chiles rellenos, a popular delicacy, around the neighborhood.

“We have an obligation to help them,” said her husband, Javier. “They’re our sons. It doesn’t matter if they are here or there.”

In other cases, the migrants are returning home, as the many passengers who hop off the bus that runs regularly from northern California to a gas station in Miahuatlán



Inez Juarez, in the state of Oaxaca, said her husband wanted to return from the United States but did not have the money to do so.

make clear. "There's nothing up there," said a young man with an overflowing suitcase who returned one recent night.

Still, although a study by the Pew Hispanic Center from July showed a sharp decrease in the number of Mexicans heading north, there has been no sign of a mass exodus of migrants back to Mexico. Immigrants' families say it took great effort to scrape together the thousands of dollars needed to send relatives to the United States, a sum that includes the fees charged by the people who help them sneak in.

"It's expensive to cross, and it was a great sacrifice for us," said Mr. Salcedo, 43, who

has sent about five wire transfers to his son Alfonso, 18, who this year lost his job as a cafeteria dishwasher.

As expected during an economic slowdown, the money sent home by immigrants has fallen. The Bank of Mexico reported recently that remittances during the first nine months of this year dropped to \$16.4 billion, a 13.4 percent decline compared with the same period in 2008.

The flow of money out of Mexico is believed to be a tiny fraction of the remittances still arriving. "The evidence in this regard so far is anecdotal," said Juan Luis Ordaz,

senior economist at the Spanish bank BBVA Bancomer, who has begun investigating the reverse money flow.

Families of migrants speak proudly of their successful relatives in the United States and use the remittances they receive to do anything from buying livestock to replacing dirt floors with concrete. The importance of such money, which is among Mexico's top sources of foreign currency, cannot be overstated. An estimated 5.9 percent of Mexican households, about 1.8 million families, receive economic support from abroad, studies show. For them, the money represents roughly 19 percent of total income for urban households and 27 percent for rural ones, according to government data analyzed by BBVA Bancomer.

For the Salcedos, the economic woes are intense on both sides of the border. The ones still here had moved to the outskirts of Mexico City seeking opportunity, but now they are on the verge of returning to Oaxaca because

the owner of the land they are squatting on ordered them out.

For Alfonso, the situation has been just as difficult. He crossed into the United States in December with about \$500 that his father gave him, supplemented with money he earned doing odd jobs in Tijuana. He found a job in San Diego paying enough for him to send home \$170 the first month and \$120 the next. The third month, he told his family he could afford to send only \$40.

Then, like so many others, he lost the job and stopped sending anything.

Now his father has begun sending money the other way, usually about \$60, less transfer fees. "We've decided to tighten our belt until we're all working again," Mr. Salcedo said.

Antonio Betancourt contributed reporting from Mexico City, and Dominique Jarry-Shore from San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico.

Continued from page 14

parts in the movie seem to stick out in my mind. The first part that seems to crack a smile on my face every time is the scene where all the men in the family are outside the house attempting to cut down the "ugly" tree in the front, while the women of the family make bets among themselves about the cutting of the tree. Mauricio, who is scrawniest of the family, gets a hold of the chainsaw and tries to cut the tree, but fails and almost falls back with the chainsaw running. That's when Mami comes running down the stairs and starts yelling for him to put the chainsaw down and go to his room. The second part that I feel is unforgettable is the part where the whole block starts the parranda. All you can see is flags galore,

smiling faces accompanied with the sound of a Christmas carol being sung, scratching guiros, and the beat of the mini congas.

"Nothing like the Holidays" is a great family movie that really brings the warm hearted feeling of family at Christmas time even before the first snowflake lands on your nose. Overall, I give this movie five stars out of five for its comedy, originality, production, and likeliness to being a Latina/o family during the holiday season. While this is a movie about a Puerto Rican family living in Humboldt Park, whom at the time is going through their own set of family problems and celebrating Christmas, this movie is for any family who enjoys family during the holiday season.

Ecosystem in Peru Is Losing a Key Ally



tomas Munita for The New York Times

A grove of huarango trees sits amid the sand dunes at the edge of Ica, Peru. The trees help balance the arid valley, capturing moisture coming from the west.

ICA, Peru — A small grove of huarango, the storied Peruvian tree that can live over a millennium, rests like a mirage amid the sand dunes on this city's edge. The tree has provided the inhabitants of this desert with food and timber since before the Nazca civilization etched geoglyphs into the empty plain south of here about 2,000 years ago.

The huarango, a giant relative of the mesquite tree of the American Southwest, survived the rise and fall of Pre-Hispanic civilizations, and plunder by Spanish conquistadors, whose chroniclers were astounded by the abundance

of huarango forests and the strange Andean camelids, like guanacos and llamas, that flourished there.

Today, though, Peruvians pose what might be a final challenge to the fragile ecosystem supported by the huarango near the southwestern coast of Peru. Villagers are cutting down the remnants of these once vast forests. They covet the tree as a source of charcoal and firewood.

The depletion of the huarango is raising alarm among ecologists and fostering a nascent effort

to save it.

"We don't realize that we are cutting off one of our own limbs when we destroy a huarango," said Consuelo Borda, 34, who helps direct a small reforestation project here, explaining how the tree's pods can be ground into flour, sweetened into molasses or fermented into beer.

But many Peruvians view the huarango as prime wood for charcoal to cook a signature chicken dish called "pollo broaster." The long-burning huarango, a hardwood rivaling teak, outlasts other forms of charcoal. Villagers react to a prohibition by regional authorities on cutting down huarango with a shrug.

"The woodcutters come at night, using handsaws instead of chainsaws to avoid detection," said Reina Juárez, 66, a maize farmer in San Pedro, a village of about 24 families near a grove of huarango on the outskirts of Ica. "They remove the wood by donkey and then sell it."

That the huarango survives at all to be harvested may be something of a miracle. Following centuries of systematic deforestation, only about 1 percent of the original huarango woodlands that once existed in the Peruvian desert remain, according to archaeologists and ecologists.

Few trees are as well suited to the hyperarid ecosystem of the Atacama-Sechura Desert, nestled between the Andes and the Pacific. The huarango captures moisture coming from the west as sea mist. Its roots are among the longest of any tree, extending more than 150 feet to tap subterranean water channels.

The resilience of the huarango and its role in taming one of the world's driest climates have long beguiled this country's poets. Schoolchildren here, for instance, recite the words of José María Arguedas, a leading 20th-century writer: "The huarangos let in the sun, while keeping out the fire."

But poetry is one thing. The necessities of human civilizations, and their capacity to wreak havoc on the ecosystems on which they depend, are another.

A team of British archaeologists described in a groundbreaking study this month how the Nazca, who etched their lines in the desert a thousand years before the arrival of the Spanish, induced an environmental catastrophe by clearing the huarango to plant crops like cotton and maize, exposing the landscape to desert winds, erosion and floods.

David Beresford-Jones, an archaeologist at Cambridge University who was a co-author of the study, said that perhaps the only fragment of old-growth huarango woodland left is in Usaca, about a five-hour drive from Ica, where there are still some trees that were alive when the Incas conquered the southern coast of Peru in the 15th century.

"It takes centuries for the huarango to be of substantial size, and only a few hours to fell it with a chainsaw," Mr. Beresford-Jones said. "The tragedy is that this remnant is being chain-sawed by charcoal burners as we speak."

With support from Britain's Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew and Trees for Cities, a British charity promoting tree planting in urban areas, Ms. Borda's reforestation project seeks to



Rolando Dávila cut an espino tree next to a huarango. Wood from the espino is not as valuable.

reverse the damage by the charcoal harvesters, whose mud ovens dot the desert landscape in villages around Ica.

It is an uphill struggle in an impoverished desert. The black market for huarango in raw firewood form thrives. A carbonero, or charcoal seller, can sell a kilogram of charcoal made from the tree for about 50 cents, or a bushel of huarango as firewood for about \$1 — bargains in a place where a gallon of natural gas costs more than \$10.

So far, Ms. Borda's arduous project has planted about 20,000 huarangos in Ica and nearby areas. It also teaches schoolchildren about the history of the huarango in Peruvian culture and its significance as a keystone species for the desert, its roots fixing nitrogen in poor soil and its leaves and pods providing organic material as forage.

But researchers say the project is a trifle of what must be done to reforest Peru's deserts.

"Peru needs a massive rethink about its

development trajectory," said Alex Chepstow-Lusty, a paleoecologist with the French Institute of Andean Studies who worked on the Nazca study with Mr. Beresford-Jones, the Cambridge University archaeologist, analyzing pollen that showed the transformation of Nazca lands from rich in huarango to fields of maize and cotton to the virtually lifeless desert that exists today.

"With Peru's glaciers predicted to disappear by 2050, the Andes need trees to capture the moisture coming from Amazonia, which is also the source of water going down to the coast," said Mr. Chepstow-Lusty in an interview from Cuzco, in Peru's highlands. "Hence a major program of reforestation is required, both in the Andes and on the coast."

Nothing on this scale is happening around Ica. Instead, the growth that one sees in poor villages are of shantytowns called pueblos jóvenes, where residents eke out a living as farmhands or in mining camps.

Outside one village, Santa Luisa, the buzz of a chainsaw interrupted the silence of the desert next to an oven preparing charcoal.

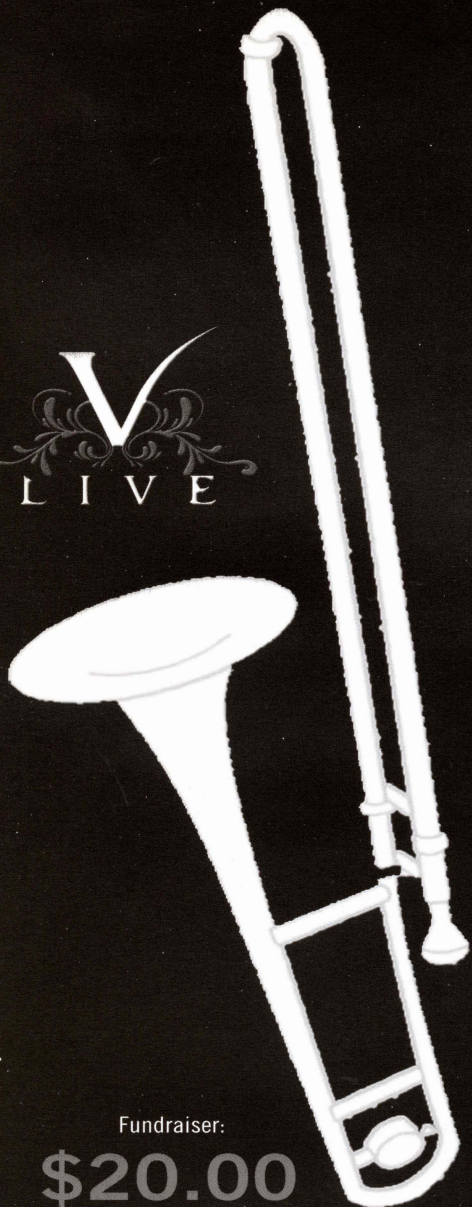
The chainsaw's owner, a woodcutter from the highlands named Rolando Dávila, 48, swore that he no longer cut down huarango but focused instead on the espino, another hardy tree known as acacia macarantha. "But we all know huarango is the prize of the desert," he said. "For many of us, the wood of the huarango is the only way to survive."

Andrea Zárate contributed reporting from Lima, Peru.

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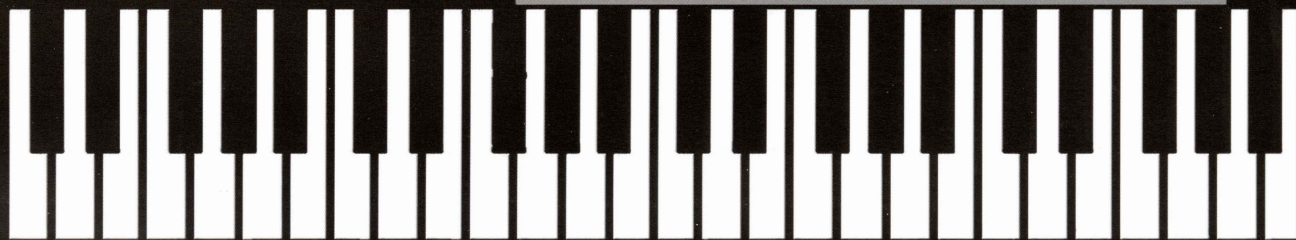
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