



## Editor's Note

Many stained-glass windows on the Yale campus illustrate milestones in the history of the college. The stained-glass window on the cover of this issue of *La Fuerza*, reflects the composition of the Latino student body and its history at Yale.

One aspect of Yale Latino students' history reflected through this window, is the historical primacy of Mexican and Puerto Rican students on this campus. As the Director of La Casa Cultural, Dean Rosalinda Garcia wrote in the last issue of *La Fuerza*, "For years, most Latinos on the Yale campus were either Puerto Rican or Chicano/Mexican American, and for the most part, these two communities operated independently of each other. They had their own cultural centers, Deans, ethnic counselors, etcetera."

Although the Puerto Rican and Chicano cultural centers merged into the all-embracing La Casa Cultural in 1999, still some Yale Latino students far from consider it a "home away from home."

For this reason, in "A Minority's Minority," Lori Flores '05, reports on why some Yale Latino students do not feel they have a voice or presence on campus. While some Latinos may feel this is because they are part of an underrepresented Latino community at Yale, others simply feel like outcasts because they have been deemed by others as "unofficial" Latinos due to their lack of involvement in the Yale Latino community.

But the stained-glass window on the front cover of this issue of *La Fuerza* does not only reflect the historical division among the Latino populations at Yale. Like Eleonora Sharef's '06, editorial: "Latino vs. Latin American," this stained-glass window is also a call for change.

The division among the Yale Latino population is not only between majority Latinos and minority Latinos, or between 'official' and 'unofficial' Latinos, regardless of who defines these terms. As Sharef writes, a division also exists between Yale Latino students and Yale Latin Americans.

All these divisions reflect the different Latino experiences at Yale, in New Haven, and around the globe. Yes, some of these differences are significant and undeniable—differences in socio-economic status, in generation, 'historical primacy' at Yale and perhaps even in the US.

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Although such differences fragment Yale's Latino community, La Casa, the Latino ethnic counselors, the Latino organizations on campus that are featured in *La Fuerza*, and even *La Fuerza* itself—Yale's Latino Student News Magazine—all seek to focus on the things that bind us, rather than those that separate us. Such things include our history, our culture, our ties to our heritage, similar upbringing, perhaps even to the same language.

For this reason, the stained-glass window on the front cover of *La Fuerza*, like other stained-glass windows on the Yale campus, also honors and celebrates our common history, culture, and struggles. Read Carlos Hann's '06 article on the Puerto Rican gubernatorial elections; Michael Fernández's '07 editorial on his family's struggle to flee Cuba and Castro's regime; or Julia González's '05 piece on MEChA de Yale's history of 35 years of Chicano Activism. All of these relate *our* historical political struggles and social concerns. Moreover, take a look at the Profiles sections and read about Yale Latinos making history at Yale—not only as undergraduates, but as faculty members as well.

Thus, the stained glass window reflects our divisions and commonalities, and at the same time, is a call for change. This call for change is a call for dialogue, for the development of a truly unified and strong Latino community at Yale. The struggle did not end with the unification of the cultural centers. As the title of this news magazine suggests, the Yale Latino community needs to make use of *la fuerza*. *La fuerza* that comes from working together, acknowledging and accepting our differences, but more importantly, embracing what binds us together.

Perhaps more importantly, Yale's Latino community must also recognize that it's not just La Casa's, or Yale's responsibility to allow for our voice to be heard or our presence to be seen. It's our responsibility—collectively and individually—whether we identify ourselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Colombian, Cuban, Dominican, 'official' or 'unofficial.'



*La Fuerza* welcomes readers and writers of all nationalities, ethnicities and backgrounds; it invites outside submissions, as well as letters to the editor. Please feel free to send submissions, questions, and/or comments to marisol.leon@yale.edu.

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# Latino vs. Latin American

## A call for a dialogue between Latino and Latin American students at Yale

*by Eleonora Sharef*

I am Colombian and I want to make something clear: Latin American and Latino are not the same thing. Before coming to Yale I had—like many Americans—confused the two terms. Knowing next to nothing about the large immigrant communities living in California, New York, and everywhere in between, I had always assumed that those who migrated from Latin America to the United States remained essentially Latin American. Little did I know that in the U.S., as immigrants have fused northern and southern cultures into a unique and vibrant hybrid, a new and different genus has evolved: the Latino. Whereas Latin American implies being *from* Latin America, Latino implies being of Latin American descent and living in the United States.

In most places in the U.S. the distinction between Latino and Latin American probably does not matter much. Mexican immigrants who cross the border into San Diego or Eagle

“To put it simply, families of Latino students left Latin America precisely because of families like my own ...”

Pass may not immediately feel Chicano, but with time they usually assimilate into the Latino community, and start viewing themselves as Mexican-American rather than Mexican.

But at Yale things are different: Not all who come are here to stay. For most Latin American students, Yale and the United States by extension, is only a temporary home—a glorious, enlightening stop-over, no doubt, but nonetheless a stop-over. Most Latin American students are not immigrants who will stay in the United States long enough to come to see themselves as Latino. Rather, we tend to see ourselves as visitors, as foreign guests residing in New Haven for a four, six, or ten year stay.

Because of this peculiarity, Yale provides a unique forum for interaction between Americans of Latin American descent, and foreign nationals who still hail Simon Bolivar, not George Washington, as the great liberator. Both the Latinos and the Latin Americans recognize that we cannot be entirely separate groups and that there must be some connection between us. As one Latin American friend put it, "we do share a common heritage." But the term "common heritage"—like "shared values" or "national interests"—is one of those slippery ex-

pressions that we often use as an escape route from what otherwise might be an uncomfortable conversation. Instead of a vibrant discussion, what we find at Yale is the absence of any constructive relationship between Latinos and Latin Americans.

Let's be clear about one thing: This opinion piece is a call for change.

It might be easier to continue as we have in the past, exchanging shallow *hellos* and *que más* on the street, without confronting the issues that both Latinos and Latin Americans have on their minds. And since Latin American and Latino student groups serve different purposes and have different goals, at

**“Instead of a vibrant discussion, what we find at Yale is the absence of any constructive relationship between Latinos and Latin Americans...”**

first sight it might even seem redundant for us to deliberately construct a relationship of cooperation.

But what are we missing out on by allowing the invisible barrier between Latinos and Latin Americans at Yale to remain standing? I would argue that by maintaining the status



**Latino** continued on page 11

# What's Next for Puerto Rico?

## Puerto Rican Elections leave many questions unanswered

by Carlos Hann

Many Americans cared enough about the past presidential elections to vote, more so than in recent elections. However, voter participation in the United States rarely matches that of one of its territories: Puerto Rico. This year, once again, the Puerto Rican elections showcased a very tight gubernatorial race, as well as representative voting that was split down party lines.

1,970,759 people voted in the 2004 elections. Considering that the population of the island over 18 was 2,716,509, as per the 2000 census, and 2,447,032 are registered to vote, the numbers are an indicator of how heated politics are in Puerto Rico. One must bear in mind that the four-year elections are comparable to American presidential elections, since Puerto Ricans cannot vote for President. The most heated election is for Governor, in which this year's winner received 48.38% of the vote to the next-highest candidate's 48.18%, a margin of merely 4,000 votes.

Puerto Rico's three official political parties (the Popular Democratic Party, The New Progressive Party, and the Independence Party), are each tied to a status preference: commonwealth, statehood, and independence, respectively. Usually, one party will win control of the governorship, resident commissioner (the island's non-voting representative in Congress), and both legislative houses.

This year, while the statehood party won a majority in both houses and the representative seat, the Governor's Mansion shall be occupied by Anibal Acevedo Vilá, of the commonwealth party. The only other time two parties split the government was in 1968.

The first set of gubernatorial debates, held in October, revealed that Acevedo Vilá had clear plans for the continued

members of his party, he has proposed reforms in the education system, improvement in Puerto Rico's infrastructure (such as energy distribution and economic development), and a dedication to upholding environmental protection and sustainable growth.

The only obstacle to Acevedo Vilá's plans is a legislature that is controlled by an opposing party. The only way the island is going to push forward, rather than getting mired in a partisan struggle, is for members of both parties to set aside

**"The only other time two parties split the government was in 1968...."**

their different wishes for what they wish Puerto Rico to become, and instead focus on working together in order to improve the quality of life of Puerto Ricans.

One thing that will unquestionably lead to an improvement in Puerto Rican politics is if political candidates cease affiliating the political parties to status preference, and instead concentrate on working toward improving Puerto Rico. Granted, such a step would take years of restructuring, but it is necessary for Puerto Rican politics to advance to a stage of productivity, and not mere pandering.

These next four years will be crucial in determining whether Puerto Rico can make the most of its fortunate position near the top.

**"These next four years will be crucial in determining whether Puerto Rico can make the most of its fortunate position ..."**

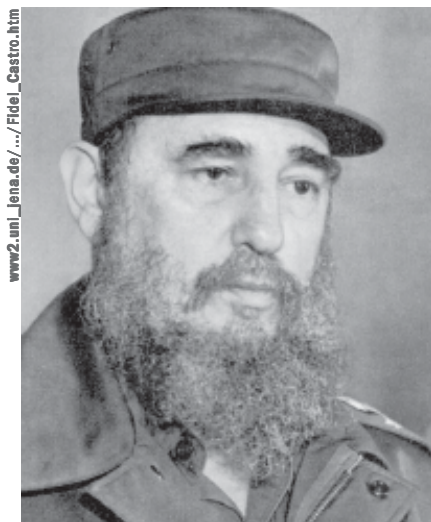
economic development of Puerto Rico, as well as improving quality of life, education, and environmental planning.

While Puerto Rico attracted much attention for its fast-paced development in the middle of the twentieth century, its growth has never reached levels comparable to the United States: Puerto Rico is still poorer, in terms of per capita GNP, than Mississippi. Acevedo Vilá has proposed many programs with the intent to push Puerto Rico further in its quest to be a maximally efficient and productive society. Along with other



*Anibal Acevedo Vilá, from the Popular Democratic Party, is the new Governor-elect of Puerto Rico.*

On November 20, the US District Court and the Puerto Rico Supreme Court (in separate rulings) ordered election authorities to recount votes from the November 2 elections. The US District Court decided in favor of the New Progressive Party's Pedro Rosello's lawsuit. As of the printing date of *La Fuerza*, the Puerto Rican gubernatorial race is still up for debate.



*Fernández criticizes the Castro regime, comparing the industrialized Cuba of the 40s and 50s to what he calls the 'barren' Cuba of today.*

*by Michael Fernández*

The year 1959 marks a turning point in the life of my family and in the history of the island of Cuba. The past 45 years have been a long nightmare for the Cuban people; the life of the average Cuban is worse as a consequence of the dictatorial regime imposed upon the island by Fidel Castro. It was not long after his ascent to power that much of my family fled Cuba. They have not been through an easy journey—being forced to pick up their belongings and start anew in a foreign land. They have been separated from their loved ones and their homeland. Those who fled, like my family, have struggled to rebuild their lives, and those who remained on the island are far worse now than they were before Castro came in.

The Cuba of my grandparents—the one before the Castro take over—was far better than the one my aunts, uncles, and cousins, who live there today know. The 1940s and 1950s were golden years of peace and prosperity for Cuba; for all of its

**"In 1962, the Cuban government took everything my great-grandfather had worked for and owned. Shortly thereafter, he died of a heart attack...a broken and defeated man ..."**

problems, the Cuba of this period was the most advanced country in Latin America. For example, it had the second highest industrial and agricultural salaries of the hemisphere. In many important aspects, Cuba was second only to the United States in the Americas. There was visible progress on the island during this time; it was not an underdeveloped country as Castro has asserted. In fact, it is under his reign that it has become an underdeveloped nation because of the policies he has adopted.

## **Quando Salí de Cuba**

**Yale Student relates pain endured by his family under Castro's regime**

The Cuba of the 1950s was an upwardly mobile society, where one could better their lot in life through hard work. Not until Castro came into power did this change. In 1962, for example, the Cuban government took everything that my great-grandfather had worked for and owned. Shortly thereafter, he died of a heart attack, a broken and defeated man.

Today, Cuba is a barren land, frozen in time. There are two classes: the haves (the communists), and the have nots (the non-communists). Those who live there have nothing to strive for, since they cannot move up in society. The most important and sought after jobs in Cuba are those in the tourist sector because they bring access to U.S. dollars. This is a consequence of the wage controls in place throughout Cuba,

**"Those who fled, like my family, have struggled to rebuild their lives, and those who remained on the island are far worse now than they were before Castro came in ..."**

which stifle social mobility. And yet, the communists are the only members of the society with access to tourists and their money. Consequently, they are the ones who derive the benefits from tourism to Cuba.

Moreover, the nation of Cuba is a closed society. The civil rights and liberties that we cherish in this great nation of ours are nowhere to be found in Cuba. The inhabitants of the island live in fear of the "*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución*," which are neighborhood organizations charged by the regime with monitoring the populace. After Castro came to power my great-grandfather was viewed with suspicion by the regime, and he was held during a round up on the island after the Bay of Pigs invasion at the request of the local *Comité*. Those family members that I have residing on the island are continually subject to this reign of terror.

The heart of the Cuban exile community is still in its homeland after all these years. On the day that democracy returns to Cuba, and the people can yell "*Cuba libre!*" the nightmare will have ended.



## Still Strong after 35 years

A look at MEChA de Yale's past,  
present, and future

by Julia Gonzáles

Graphic courtesy of Julia Gonzales

The Presidential election is over and done with. We can finally take a deep breath and look around us. No, the world isn't over. Though conspiracy theory emails with subject lines proclaiming that "Kerry really won!" are still flooding my inboxes, people everywhere are asking themselves what the next four years are going to look like with President Bush's re-election.

For MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) de Yale, I believe that the next four years are going to be incredibly important. Maybe it's because I am a senior, or maybe it has something to do with the energy a lot of MEChistas and I put into this election; but I believe that MEChA, as an organization, has many historical lessons to offer us.

First off, MEChA has been here at Yale since 1969 – thirty-five years of strong Chicanos, and nine presidential elections worth of activism. The combination puts me at ease because I know that MEChA is not only political, and that is what has sustained us. In our mission statement we acknowledge the history of being Chicano in an Ivy League institu-

**"MEChA uniquely provides everyone a place to come and engage with Yale's Latino and Chicano communities in any way they see fit..."**

tion, and we devote our energy to "foster, empower and strengthen a community in the Yale - New Haven area, through communication and cooperation while respecting all segments of our community...[by] promot[ing] social, cultural, political and educational empowerment and awareness."

Political involvement is just one way to get involved in MEChA. We understand that a lot of times it's hard to be out here on the East Coast, away from beautiful home in Texas or wherever else people might be from (have to throw in my Tejana pride!), but MEChA uniquely provides everyone a place



to come and engage with Yale's Latino and Chicano communities in any way they see fit – whether that's through community service, planning and attending conferences, coming to Shooters and other social events, or even something as simple as making dinner together and watching movies. We have three committees to help delineate our goals: Social Action, Political Action, and Community Action Committees. Much

**"We devote our energy to 'foster, empower, and strengthen a community'..."**

in the same way that La Casa exists to provide a much-needed resource for all students, MEChA exists to give Chicanos a sense of purpose during our time here at Yale. Whatever you want to see happen in the world, MEChA de Yale will help make it happen.

So, what are we going to see happen for MEChA de Yale in the next four years? As a senior, I can only offer up vague guesses. New concerns come up all the time during the school year, but other issues remain constant. On campus, financial aid policies continue to affect many Chicanos (how many times have you had to miss a meeting or an event because you're working, no?). Hiring faculty of color who teach Chicano and Latino Studies, and student recruitment are also continual issues. Remaining connected with alumni is also always very important for MEChA. I'm sure that as time goes by, new issues will come up for MEChA to tackle head-on. For instance, I believe that MEChistas will pay close attention to the national issues of murders and violence against women in Ciudad Juárez and throughout the US-México border region, as well as legislation such as the DREAM Act that would allow immigrant high school youth to attend college. As outgoing moderator, I encourage all of you reading this issue of *La Fuerza* to come to a MEChA meeting to see how you can get involved.

MEChA meets Mondays at 6 p.m. at La Casa. For more information please contact [julia.gonzales@yale.edu](mailto:julia.gonzales@yale.edu).

## LASO

The **Latin American Student Organization (LASO)** is an organization of social, cultural, and intellectual exchange for those with a special interest in Latin America.

This year's LASO is especially interested in bringing non-Latin American students to LASO, so that they may be able to share in the riches of our culture. In addition to our Thursday evening dinners (Morse College, 6 p.m.), LASO offers non-native students an opportunity to practice their Spanish in informal conversation groups. We meet in JE, room 962 on Wednesday's at 8 p.m. to talk, listen to music and relax a little bit.

During the Spring Semester, LASO will sponsor **Latin American Awareness Week**, during which all aspects of LASO will come to the fore: there will be a talk on Latin America's political and cultural life, a film festival featuring the best of Latin American films, and of course a big party to finish it off! We invite all to come to LASO – all are welcome here! For more information please contact [eleonora.sharef@yale.edu](mailto:eleonora.sharef@yale.edu).

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## Sigma Lambda Upsilon

**Sigma Lambda Upsilon/Señoritas Latinas Unidas Sorority Incorporated (SLU)** exists to create a bridge between all women committed to seeking the political and social advancement of underrepresented populations.

The organization was brought to Yale (Pi Chapter) in 1999, by seven Yale Latinas. The Pi Chapter, along with the rest of the organization, provides sisterhood and support for the Hermanas (the sisters of the organization), while also promoting academic achievement, service to the community, and cultural enrichment.

The Pi Chapter would like to congratulate Yale's four newly initiated Hermanas: **Liara Silva, DC'07 (Enigmática); Natasha Borrero, TC'06 (Alumbrante); Shelly Rivas, TC'06 (Verídica), and Marisol León, ES'07 (Poderosa).**

In early December, the Hermanas of the Pi Chapter hosted the **17<sup>th</sup> annual SLU National Convention**. The event consisted of workshops, panels, and a speaker (María Elena Gaitán), culminating with a formal banquet. The Hermanas would like to thank everyone who attended and sponsored the event.

Plans for the spring semester include community service through JUNTA for Progressive Action, New Haven's oldest Latino social service agency, as well as other projects.

To find out more about SLU and upcoming events visit their website: [www.sigmalambda.upsilon.org/main.htm](http://www.sigmalambda.upsilon.org/main.htm).

## La Unidad Latina

**La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc.** was brought to Yale University (Kappa Chapter) in the spring of 1992 with the plan to help Yale's Latino community thrive in Yale's rigorous environment, and to create a network and support base of professionals for the Hermanos (the brothers of the organization). Since then, La Unidad Latina (LUL) at Yale has grown and thrived.

On campus, LUL is known for various projects in the New Haven community, including the **Amigos program** (a mentoring program that helps at-risk Latino youth), which some Hermanos helped found in the mid 1990's.

Additionally, LUL sponsors the annual party and celebration of culture called **"La Noche Dorada."** 'Noche' (for short) consists of a formal banquet with guest speakers, various performances, and a night of dancing. This year's 'Noche' will take place sometime in the second half of the Spring semester.

Most importantly, LUL stands for the promotion of the entire minority population, its integration into the greater Yale community, the creation of awareness of minority issues, and the unification of the entire student body and faculty.

Currently four undergraduate Hermanos make up the Kappa Chapter of LUL: **Jamil Abreu, DC '07, Carlos Gaviria, CC '05, Gabriel Hernández, DC '07, and Derek Morales, TC '05.** The Hermanos plan on having a pledge class Spring semester and look for pledges who share in the goals of the organization. For more information please contact [derek.morales@yale.edu](mailto:derek.morales@yale.edu) or visit [www.launidadlatina.org](http://www.launidadlatina.org).

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## Alianza

**Alianza** is a cultural organization for students interested in Latino cultural awareness. We are open to all students who are interested in learning and being immersed in Latino culture.

This semester Alianza has sponsored a few events, including its **Quesadilla Appetizer and movie night**, which was a huge success.

Upcoming events include **Nacho Night** and a **trip to Fair Haven**, New Haven's predominantly Latino community.

Alianza meets Wednesdays at 9 p.m. at La Casa Cultural. For more information, please feel free to contact [beatrice.amaya@yale.edu](mailto:beatrice.amaya@yale.edu), or look for Alianza's flyers. We hope you'll join us for good food, good times and great people!

# A Minority's Minority

## Who are the "Other" Latinos at Yale?

by Lori Flores

Student photos courtesy of La Casa Website

*Historically, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students have made up the majority of Yale's Latino student population. Today, this remains a fact. And for members of other Latino backgrounds, the feeling of being less seen and heard within the Latino community is becoming more of an issue than ever.*

At Yale, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students comprise a large part of the entire Latino student population. In addition, La Casa Cultural—the university's Latino Cultural Center—has historically serviced and been managed by these two groups. As communities represented by much smaller numbers, Cuban American, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Salvadoran, Colombian, and Bolivian students, among others, cannot yet claim as extensive a presence or resources on the Yale campus.

### Minority Latinos

"It's all a numbers game," said Luis Vasquez, BK '07, who identifies himself as a Dominican student. "Because Mexican American and Puerto Rican students have historically constituted the majority...the college has afforded them greater attention in the form of cultural houses and assistant deans who share their backgrounds."

While some may perceive the existence of only one Latino cultural house as inadequate, others feel La Casa has succeeded in welcoming students of all Latino backgrounds. "I believe that every Latino student at Yale is embraced by the cultural center and its programs regardless of where they come from specifically," said Reny Diaz, SY '08, who identifies as Cuban. "I have been embraced by organizations such as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) de Yale and the La Casa staff, despite the fact that these groups have traditionally belonged to other ethnic groups besides my own."

Still, many non-Mexican American or Puerto Rican students continue to consider themselves outsiders in the greater

Latino community. And for many, this feeling of marginality does not just stem from differences in ethnic background and nationality, but from the idea that there is a prescribed limited number of "official" Latinos on campus.

### 'Official' vs. 'Unofficial' Latinos

"Honestly, I probably feel that I fit in more within the Yale community as a whole than within the Latino community at Yale, [but] I don't think this is just because I'm Dominican," said Vianney Lopez, DC '05. "The definition of who is 'Latino' here at Yale has been limited to those students who are very involved with the Latino groups on campus, leaving those of us who are not as involved, or perhaps not involved at all, feeling left out."

The notion that one must participate heavily in Latino student groups or La Casa-centered activities—both of which continue to be heavily comprised of Mexican American and

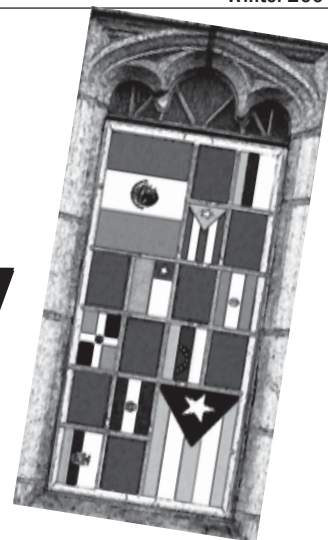
**"I probably feel that I fit in more within the Yale community as a whole than within the Latino community at Yale..."**

Puerto Rican student leadership—in order to be truly "Latino" is an idea which both insulates and intimidates many Latinos at Yale, says Cecilia Cardenas-Navia, DC '05.

"Certain students are deemed 'not Latino/a enough,' others are deemed 'super Latino/a,' and still others are stuck in the crossroads, uncertain of their identity as both a student of color and a student of Latino origin," she said. "No one can state that there is one particular way to 'be' or 'act' Latino/a...yet these petty judgments are made constantly on the Yale campus."

Lopez agrees that criticisms of one's personal expression of his or her "Latino-ness" are detrimental to relations between the different communities. Instead, she says, all students should feel comfortable within the larger Latino population, whether or not they are active participants in Latino student groups.

"I think there should be a greater attempt made to in-







*"As a Dominican at Yale, I feel like a minority's minority," says Luis Vasquez, BK'07*

clude those students who are not 'officially' involved with the Latino organizations and show them that they too are welcome," said Lopez.

### What can La Casa and Yale do?

As a staff member at La Casa, Yalina Disla JE '07 feels improvements can be made at the Cultural Center to make presently 'unofficial' Latinos feel more welcome. Along with suggesting the staff members of La Casa should be changed every year, Disla also proposed the creation of planning committees for La Casa in order to bring in different opinions about the management of the Center.

"Involving students in planning committees is the best way to incorporate and welcome the 'unofficial' students," she said. "I feel it would be more successful than inviting them to events because it requires and acknowledges their own skills and resources."

Diaz agreed that drawing more Latinos to the Center would

**"No one can state that there's one particular way to 'be' or 'act' Latino/a...yet these petty judgments are made constantly on the Yale campus..."**

require some changes in the way La Casa currently operates. If Latinos are not all willing to come to La Casa, he said, La Casa must do its best to come to the Latinos. "In my opinion, hosting La Casa events at places where other Yale events are held, like college common rooms and dining halls, would not be a bad idea every once in a while...I think that La Casa will always be our home base, but there's definitely no reason to restrict ourselves to it."

Cardenas-Navia emphasized how important it was for the Yale administration itself to work with La Casa and try and meet the needs of Latino students from all geographical and ethnic backgrounds. "The services available to the Latino community at Yale need to change, mainly because the students that they serve are changing," she said.

With more and more students coming from historically underrepresented countries such as Colombia, Brazil, El Salvador, and Guatemala in addition to Mexico and Puerto Rico, Yale's own perception of who the Latinos are on campus—and what needs to be done for them as far as providing helpful counselors, deans, and a diversity of student organizations—must keep changing with the times.

Vasquez believes increased recruitment of non-Mexican

American and Puerto Rican Latino students should be part of Yale's solution to helping those Latinos who may believe themselves to be on the periphery of the larger community. Although he acknowledges the Admissions Office's increased efforts in recent years, he affirms that seeing more students ethnically similar to himself on campus would help him to feel better represented.

"As a Dominican at Yale, I feel like a minority's minority," he said.

Disla agreed with the notion that Dominicans, as well as members of other non-Mexican American and Puerto Rican Latino populations, seem few on campus. She also explained that if she had not been a La Casa staff member, she would have felt like an 'unofficial' Latino herself, and excluded from the larger Latino community.

"Exclusion is above all the worst feeling, especially when it comes from one's race or nationality," she said. "I truly feel that it is important to make everyone feel part of the Latino community, whether or not they choose to participate in it."

The freedom to be Latino in one's own way, whether that means joining certain Latino student organizations, leading new ones, visiting La Casa on occasion, or not visiting at all—as well as feeling accepted either way—continues to hold much significance for these "other" Latinos at Yale. While some may feel like a double ethnic minority on Yale's campus through underrepresentation, there are still those who consider the "official" versus "unofficial" Latino paradigm just as strong a divider within the larger Latino community.



*"Exclusion is above all the worst feeling, especially when it comes from one's race or nationality," says Yalina Disla, JE'07*



*"I believe that every Latino student is embraced by the cultural center and its programs," says Reny Diaz, SY'08*

# LatinoHistory.COM

## Two Yale Latinos create website about US Latino Histories

by Fidelia Orozco

**"I** decided to create latinohistory.com as a way to further my own teaching and scholarship, and also to help promote and guide the research and writing of students interested in the history of Latinos and Latinas," says Associate Professor of History and American Studies Steve Pitti.

Indeed, the website, which acts as the homepage for the Latina/o History Project at Yale, serves as a resource for the

**"What we envision the website to be is one of the most comprehensive websites of Latino history out there..."**

study and comprehension of Latino histories of the United States, including Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Dominicans, and the like.

Currently, the website provides a variety of biographical pieces on prominent Latinos in industries ranging from the arts and entertainment to academia and literature. The site also features essays regarding significant moments in Latino history, as well as many links to informative websites related to artwork and murals that portray the Latino experience in



*Professor Pitti is the creator and current editor of [latinohistory.com](http://latinohistory.com).*

the United States.

"What we envision this website to be is one of the most comprehensive websites of Latino history out there," says Lori Flores, BC '05, who contributed to the creation of the website during the summer of 2004. "The website is intended to be accessible to a diverse audience, ranging from high school students to graduate students and professors," says Flores.

Flores and Pitti are considering new additions and features to their website.

"I have a number of long-range hopes for the site," says Pitti, "including an interactive timeline, new search tools, and perhaps a series of 'working papers' written by students and younger scholars interested in comments on their works-in-progress." One expanding feature is the site's message board, which is primarily used by some of Pitti's graduate students, "but eventually we hope other students and visitors will use it to share ideas and seek advice," says Pitti.

To date, the Latina/o History Project at Yale and its creators encourage other universities and students to get involved. For further information regarding the Latina/o History Project at Yale, please visit [www.latinohistory.com](http://www.latinohistory.com).

## Despierta Boricua

**Despierta Boricua** is Yale's undergraduate organization for Puerto Rican students, but anyone associated with the University should feel free to join. Despierta Boricua was originally founded in 1972, its main objectives being to foster a sense of community among Puerto Rican undergraduates at Yale, represent and voice the concerns of said community to the Yale administration, and to coordinate and sponsor educational activities dealing with Puerto Rican issues.

We currently strive to meet these objectives through advocacy efforts and by coordinating a vast array of cultural,

service, educational, and social events.

This semester, members of Despierta Boricua have hosted orientation dinners for Puerto Rican students, organized a lecture on the development of Mambo with Master Thompson of Timothy Dwight College, facilitated a cultural presentation (through the New Haven Cultural Awareness Program) at a New Haven middle school, and even held a screening of the Puerto Rican gubernatorial debate.

Despierta Boricua meets every Monday evening at 8 p.m. on the third floor of La Casa Cultural, at 301 Crown St. For more information please contact [natasha.borrero@yale.edu](mailto:natasha.borrero@yale.edu).

**Latino** continued from page 2

quo, we are missing out on a unique chance to begin to understand not only each other, but, perhaps more importantly, ourselves. I cannot speak for Latino students. I do know, however, that by avoiding serious interaction with Latino students, Latin Americans are missing a chance to understand one of the key problems plaguing our half of the continent: inequality.

What has held Latin America back for the past few hundred years is that Latin America has one of the highest rates of inequality in the world. Colombia, my own country, has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest inequality rate in the entire world: at home, three percent of the population owns the same amount as the

**“We will certainly not be able to resolve four hundred years of inequality merely by sitting down to discuss these issues over a nice cup of Colombian coffee ...”**

remaining 97% taken together. In Latin America as a whole, 20% of the population received only 4% of total income. To make matters worse, inequality rates have increased by more than 20% over the last ten years.

Disturbing statistics, surely. But what do these facts and figures have to do with Latin Americans and Latinos at Yale? Consider this. The majority of Latino students come from immigrant families that moved to the United States looking to

better their lot, because Latin America's ingrained inequality and lack of social mobility made it impossible for them to attain a higher standard of living without migrating. Most Latin American students, on the other hand, come from that upper three percent. This is not because of any stinginess on the part of Yale's Financial Aid Office, but because of complex social factors operating within Latin America: realistically, it is unlikely for any Latin American who doesn't have access to a private education and privileged social networks to make it all the way to Yale. I am, of course, generalizing. But to put it simply, families of Latino students left Latin America precisely because of families like my own.

I may be wrong in assuming that this complex and in some cases painful relationship is worth talking about. We will certainly not be able to resolve four hundred years of inequality merely by sitting down to discuss these issues over a nice cup of Colombian coffee. However, it is rare that so many young, bright, and talented Latinos and Latin Americans are given the chance to come together to try to understand who we are and where we come from, and I think it would be wrong to let this opportunity pass us by. At Yale, the future leaders of both Latin America and Latino America mix and mingle. This is a golden opportunity for dialogue. Would it really be so hard for us to break down the invisible wall and seize it?

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# “Esa se va pa’ JAIL”

Meet Lillian Guerra, Assistant Professor of Caribbean Studies

by Gabriel Hernández

*Professor Guerra has lived in Florida, Kansas, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Wisconsin, and now Connecticut. She spent a year in Puerto Rico and has been recognized by the US State Department as the US Scholar who has spent the most time in Cuba. Talk to her about her experiences in either country, her classes, or why she considers herself “from the frontier...whatever frontera you want.” Find out more about one of Yale faculty’s most exciting new additions.*

## Where are you from?

Well that’s a loaded question. My dad was a doctor in Cuba who was committed to the idea of being a rural physician, but was alienated by the revolution’s land policy, so he came to New York. I was born in Queens and lived there until I was five years old. Then we moved to Marion, Kansas, a town of 1,500 people, and I lived there until I was 14 years old and finally to Miami because of a farming crisis, where I lived for three years until college.

## Where were you educated?

I went to Dartmouth College, where there were sixteen Latinos total, graduated in 1992, and then lived in Puerto Rico for a year after graduating. My first time in Cuba was in 1996, where I spent thirteen months straight, totally immersed, working on my dissertation. I got my PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2000, and then went on to teach at Bates College in Maine.

## How was your experience at Bates?

It was good overall; it made me a nicer person. I had a black student once say that Bates was a Historically White College. I had to convince my students to identify with the people they were studying, and I saw it as an opportunity to change the way my students thought. But in the end, the isolation was too great, and it was emotionally draining. I was not just explaining Latin American history, but I was constantly explaining who I was.

## So why come to Yale?

I wanted to be somewhere where I wouldn’t have to do so much explaining. I think I can do things here I can’t do anywhere else, like teaching large numbers of Latino students and fulfilling a need.

## How was your identity as a Cuban shaped by your family and the different places in which you lived or spent time?

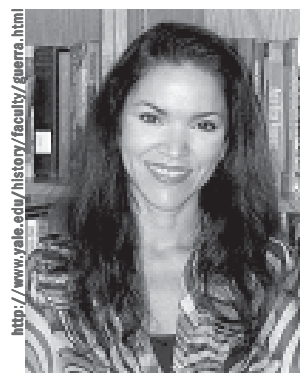
During my three years in Miami, I was always considered a weird Cuban, being from Kansas. I always had the burden of memory. My parents switched politically, and college provided me with the freedom to decide what I believed about myself, about Cuba, about Fidel. I very much wanted to meet my family there. There were times when Cubans rejected me, and it was actually Puerto Ricans who wound up accepting me; my first book was about Puerto Rico, and I look at that as my thank you to the Puerto Ricans who took me in.

## Where do you see Cuban/American relations within the next decade?

Everyone always asks what’s going to happen when Fidel dies, but I think the bigger question than Fidel’s death is when equivalent figures in the Cuban American community will die. As of now, the policy does nobody any good; it fuels revenge, feelings of distrust, and hatred. It’s been too long to have emotions like that of negative energy. Fidel doesn’t own the island, he is one man.

## What’s your favorite kind of music? Favorite kind of food?

My favorite type of music is rumba, and my favorite group is called Maraca. My favorite food is tostones, or tachinos, as they’re called in the part of Cuba where my mother is from, stuffed with pulpo (octopus), and served with tamarindo sauce.



<http://www.yale.edu/history/faculty/guerra.html>

*Professor Guerra arrived at Yale this past semester from Bates College. During her interview she remembered that when she got the job to work at Yale, her “father kept telling everyone: ‘Esa se va pa’ Jail,’ and people would be like ‘Ob, God!’”*

# From East Harlem, to DB, to NY LAW

NY Supreme Court Justice Eduardo Padro '75 shares his Yale undergraduate experience

by Militza Pagan

*Meet Eduardo Padro '75. As an undergraduate at Yale, he helped found Despierta Boricua and dedicated most of his time to the Puerto Rican community at Yale, in New Haven, and elsewhere. In this interview, he talks about his emotional tie to East Harlem, his time at Yale, and how he got involved in Law.*

## How was your childhood growing up in East Harlem?

There is a difference to how I related to it then and how I relate it to now. As I was growing up I hated it. I hated it because of the crime and drugs. But now I'm glad that I grew up there. I now live in East Harlem by choice. I choose to live in East Harlem because of the rich cultural heritage. In different stages of my life East Harlem meant different things. When I was growing up the overriding issue of safety impacted me the most. At the end of high school and Yale I had pride in East Harlem. As I walk in the neighborhood today the past comes back. I have an emotional tie to the neighborhood.

## How did you decide that you wanted to go into law?

I had considered doing many things. I considered teaching, psychology, and math. Law came after I graduated. After Yale, I needed to be refocused. Yale was very trying. I went back to New York and did community work. I was somewhat of an activist. I was worried that I could get black listed since I was an outspoken young man. I figured that if I had a law degree then I could survive anyone or anything.

## How has Yale helped you in achieving the success you have now?

That's an interesting question in the context of the Baby Boomers. At the time, there was a sense of political organization in the country. There was the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power. There was the Chicano Movement in the Southwest. There was also the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. We were the first generation of kids to leave the ghetto and get into high institutions of learning. Each was caught in different ways. We felt the need to be politically relevant. I spent 4 years at Yale organizing. Besides the resources and the academics, Yale provided a place to develop my leadership skills.

I was fighting against an institution because I had the resources to do so. Through this action of organizing, in the long run Yale was a tremendous training ground for what I was to do in the future. I was involved in groups and recruitment. Fortunately, during that time the President of Yale was willing to make changes. We had an annual meeting with the President and I was engaged in that discussion.



Padro after a recent meeting with current DB members.

## What was your experience as a Latino and minority at Yale? Did you encounter any difficulties in that respect?

I think that the difficulties were self-imposed. In the late 60s the South was still struggling for integration, and the north was dealing with separation. On campus, we wanted to separate from the white groups. Part of the reason for doing this came from the tensions that already existed in society. I was never bombarded with racist attacks. I dedicated most of my time to the Puerto Rican community in New Haven, on campus and other communities. Instead of joining existing institutions, we created new institutions that were catered to us.

## I know that you were one of the founding members of Despierta Boricua. As a founding member what was your mission in founding such an organization?

When we founded this organization we were working on two levels. First, we saw ourselves as part of a larger movement, a larger movement that was fighting for equality, and Puerto Rico's self-determination. Here at Yale that meant that we wanted to open doors so that people would have the opportunity to come to Yale, and then go back home and be representatives of their communities. We wanted to recruit Puerto Ricans to Yale and then once they got here make sure that they graduated. In the process, build up consciousness, leadership and support systems.

## Was it difficult to get such an organization started?

It was not that difficult to get the organization started. [Yale] didn't block our efforts. We entered into discussion and gained recognition. I'm impressed that the President was very supportive and that we were able to talk to him. This made it feel like we were doing the right thing. In the first year, (we were actually called Boricuas Unidos,) and there was tension between the Puerto Rican islanders and the mainlanders. It was not a social organization; it was more to service the community.



## Tortilla Wrapped Goodness

Salsa, reggaeton, & delicious burritos:  
What more could you want?

by Derek Morales

Everyday, at around lunchtime there is a line that emerges across the doors from Au Bon Pan. There is no restaurant there, no student hangout, no fast food. What resides on the corner of Elm and York Street is the burrito cart, a subsidiary of the famous latin fusion restaurant, Rumba.

I must admit that during my undergraduate career, it was a conscious effort to not conform to the masses that would line up regularly during lunch for their daily fix of tortilla wrapped goodness. However, for the purpose of this article and because I am halfway through my senior year, I had to cave to temptation and try one of their famous burritos. In doing so, I have to say that the taste lived up to all the hype.

There is no real atmosphere outside of the salsa and reggaeton music playing from a small boom-box atop the cart, but the burritos themselves are amazing. With your choice of chicken, beef, or vegetarian mixed with a combo of rice and beans, the burrito cart has a little something for everyone. The fix-ins include cheese, guacamole, tomatoes, onions, sour cream, and hot sauce. Besides the taste of the food, perhaps the best part of the cart experience is the speed with which your meal is made. After tons of customers, the vendors have become quite efficient. For this reason, even the large lines that I originally spoke of, dissolve quickly.



*The Burrito Cart on the corner of York and Elm has become extremely popular among Yalies. Walk on over for a tasty, inexpensive lunch or dinner.*

In addition, the burrito cart provides an inexpensive meal. The burritos are usually about five dollars each and are about as homemade as you will find in New Haven. Not to mention that their taste is exquisite, and they are probably more nutritious than anything you will find under golden arches. Combined with the low price, it is easy to see why the cart has become the popular afternoon stop for many students.

However, the burrito cart's popularity *can* be a drawback. The fact that many Yalies have made burritos a staple of their lunch experience has caused quite a wait during meal times. So, if on the go during dinner or lunch I would have to suggest that you may wish to pass up on the corner of York and Elm. However, if you happen to have ten minutes to wait, I would encourage every Yalie to sample, at least once during their four years, the burrito cart. It is not only a delicious meal, but a reasonably priced dinner.

**The Burrito Cart**  
**Corner of York & Elm**  
**Open Mon-Fri. 11:30a.m.-8 p.m.**

## Combating Racism Through Art

Yale Organization coordinates presentations that educate and spread cultural awareness

by Charlene Araujo

Connie Chan, TC'05 and Jane Bernstein, DC '05 created the New Haven Public School Culture Awareness Program (CAP) in the summer of 2003.

Both Chan and Bernstein had been active with community service projects previously, but felt the need to create a program that specifically addressed issues of cultural awareness and diversity.

CAP's main goal is to combat racism and destroy ethnic stereotypes by exposing children to informative and friendly presentations on race at an early age. Members of CAP act as coordinators between Yale campus groups and public school interns and help coordinate projects and plan presentations. Last year, thirty different Yale groups participated in CAP

and presented at seven different campuses in the fall and eight campuses in the spring.

The presentations usually last fifty minutes and take place every Friday at a New Haven public school.

According to Chan, "[By] using this rotating schedule, we were able to request only minimal time commitment from each of the Yale groups (an average of two presentations per semester), and we were able to expose each participating school to an average of five or six different cultures per semester."

Presentations have included dances, photographs, multimedia, books, and artistic interpretations of cultural diversity. Chan encourages people to contact her for more information at [connie.chan@yale.edu](mailto:connie.chan@yale.edu).

# New Haven Public Schools

## Yale's Public School Intern Program addresses needs of New Haven Public Schools

by Yalina Disla

The Public School Intern (PSI) program at Yale is currently one of the primary programs endorsed by Dwight Hall. Eighteen Yalies have been placed in neighboring elementary, middle, and high schools to serve as liaisons to the schools.

The mission of the PSI program is to support public education in New Haven by fostering civic engagement and understanding of urban education issues. The goal is for the PSI's to be able to detect the needs of the school even if a teacher or student has not requested it—to be more insightful as to what can efficiently be offered and what will and will not be beneficial and successful. In addition, PSIs must overcome the challenge of recognizing that every school is different and that every year the schools undergo great changes, administratively or academically.

The Public School Intern program was started in 1995 by the Yale – New Haven Teacher's Institute. At that time, the institute had set up centers with technology access in every school and called for Yale students to help establish a connection. Soon enough, Claudia Merson, currently the Education Consultant, encouraged the interested seven Yale students to not only serve as ambassadors for the institute, but also to

School, BOLD at Hillhouse High School and on its way is TAC, a Technology and Community at Metropolitan Business Academy.

The process of selecting an intern is based on his/her ability to abide with a two year commitment of weekly visits and direct service at the respective schools. The PSI must

**"Previous PSI's have served as catalysts in establishing many of Yale's most forceful and stable volunteer programs..."**

spend a minimum of four hours at the school and approximately another four hours outside of the school organizing meetings, emailing, and setting up dates.

"In the end, the PSI has become so integrated into the fabric of the school that he/she works with the administrators of the school instead of been seen as *that Yale tutor*," says Hagan.

If you want to help or learn more about the PSI program, or would like to become a bilingual tutor, please contact Stephanie.hagan@yale.edu.

**"The goal is to be able to detect the needs of the school even if a teacher or student has not requested it..."**

serve as Yale representatives.

Today, the PSI program continues to have a relationship with the Teacher's Institute, but is solely based on the supervision of Claudia Merson and student coordinator, Stephanie Hagan '06.

Moreover, the PSI program collaborates with other Dwight groups. Typically, PSIs help programs—such as the New Haven Cultural Awareness Program, Project SAT, and Bilingual Organization for Language Development—establish routine visits and relationships with students, faculty, and administrations. PSIs also help organize trips to Yale's museums, art gallery's, and even help organize campus tours.

Additionally, previous PSIs have served as catalysts in establishing many of Yale's most forceful and stable volunteer programs. For example, Community Health Educators was started by a former PSI at Wilbur Cross High School, the New Haven Cultural Awareness Program at Hooker Middle



Courtesy of Yalina Disla

*Students outside of Wilbur Cross High School. Staff Writer Yalina Disla is a PSI at Wilbur Cross.*

