

Edwin Meléndez's Remarks for Centro's Library and Archives Inauguration Ceremony

(October 21, 2011)

Buenos Dias.

It is a great pleasure to be here today, and to share this event with university and community leaders.

Today we inaugurate the new home for Centro's Library and Archives. Our new home has everything we imagined we could have:

- a beautiful reading room where we honor our legacy.
- 24/7 climate control facilities that meet the most rigorous preservation standards.
- the most advanced technologies for our staff to continue their excellent work.

And, our new home is in El Barrio, a place of great historical value and cultural heritage for the Puerto Rican community.

Many people contributed to our move to this state-of-the-art facility. First and foremost, we would like to thank President Jennifer Raab, Provost Vita Rabinowitz, and all the CUNY and Hunter College leadership for sharing our vision for these facilities and for making that vision a reality. Without your leadership and determination this beautiful building would not have been possible.

Please, let's show them our appreciation! [Applause]

I would also like to thank our staff. I have to extend my deepest appreciation to all the Centro Library and Archives staff for enduring the disruption of their work for the last few months and for their dedication to making this move a reality. And what a beautiful space we have!

Can our staff please raise your hands? Please, let's show them our appreciation! [Applause]

We celebrate our new home with a renewed commitment to our historical preservation and educational mission.

Look around. Labor is a unique tribute to the Puerto Rican heritage and to the historic preservation efforts of our organization. Soon you will hear more from the curators, Antonio Martorell and Susana Leval, and from all the artists and other collaborators responsible for this beautiful exhibit.

And in this location, the Library and Archives is only going to get better. We just finished the first meeting of a committee called 100 Puerto Ricans, a group of friends and longtime supporters who will help us work towards an ambitious goal for enriching and expanding our resources – *adding 100 collections to our archives in one year*. This expansion will enhance our resources by making our collections more comprehensive and balanced. We will be adding the stories of Puerto Ricans who made a difference in areas that are currently underrepresented in our holdings, such as the military and business.

We need your help in making this goal a reality. Can the “100 Puerto Ricans” Committee volunteers please raise your hands? Now you know who will be calling on you for support to our campaign.

Please, let’s show the committee our appreciation! [Applause]

In November we continue the celebration of our new space by holding events commemorating Puerto Rican Heritage Month. This year we celebrate with programs about the lives of great Puerto Rican men and women who donated their collections to our archives – Antonia Pantojas, Clemente Soto-Vélez, Frank Bonilla, and Pura Belpré. Centro produced a video for each of them, and the videos will be available to teachers and parents for use in the classroom and at home.

Finally, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of you for been here today. With your support, Centro Library and Archives will continue to be the main source of information on the Puerto Rican community in the United States.

In our new home, we welcome you to share the best we have to offer. Take an Events Calendar with you, come to our fall programs, and enjoy our new space!

Muchas gracias.