

# Edwin Meléndez's Remarks for Puerto Rican Day Parade's Presidents Ceremony

(June 8, 2012)

Buenos Dias.

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

The Centro Library and Archives has been serving the faculty and students of Hunter College and CUNY, as well as the Puerto Rican community, for almost 40 years. Now we are in a new home, in East Harlem, El Barrio, and we have renewed our commitment to a broad community education program about the Puerto Rican legacy and heritage.

Since we moved to El Barrio we have implemented a community education program. We sponsored the exhibit *Labor* that brought hundreds of people to appreciate our contributions as people that work, workers that have built the city and the nation.

We currently sponsor the exhibit *Picturing Puerto Rico under the American Flag*. Louise Roskam, the photographer, sought to depict the story of the men and women who worked seeking a better life for themselves and their families. She captured scenes that portray the beginning of the government-sponsored industrialization period of the late 1940s, known as Operation Bootstrap. This is a unique tribute to the Puerto Rican people and to their history, and you are all welcomed to take a tour after we finish today's ceremony.

Most of the photos for this exhibit are from our collection of the records of Office of the Government of Puerto Rico in the United States. This collection alone contains approximately 1,400 cubic feet, or 352 microfilm reels, of archival materials.

This is one of fifty four (54) collections of primary materials of Puerto Rican organizations in our archives. The archives also house over a hundred and fifty collections of personal papers of Puerto Ricans who have made a difference in our communities over the last century. All in all, we have about 5,000 linear feet of primary documents documenting our history and heritage.

In our new home in El Barrio, the Centro Library and Archives is only going to get better. Today we gather at the Centro Library and Archives to celebrate community leaders who have carried the torch with honor and have help built and sustain the Puerto Rican heritage and pride. They have been recognized and nominated, and they have accepted to become part of the 100 Puerto Ricans.

Why are we honoring them? Who are the 100 Puerto Ricans? They are 100 individuals or organizations who have made a difference in our communities and will contribute their papers to the archives

As contributors to the archives, they will be among the greatest, among other pioneers who helped build our institutions and communities, among others who have also changed history. Their legacy will be preserved for generations to come. Scholars will study their legacy and younger generations will appreciate their heritage.

Today Centro's 100 Puerto Ricans Campaign honors The Puerto Rican Day Parade and its present and past presidents. First, I would like to call to the podium President Madeline Lugo to sign the agreement with Centro to donate the organizational papers of the Puerto Rican day Parade to our archives.

Now we would like to call each of the presidents to the podium.

Please welcome Federico Perez Marty.

Mr. Perez Marty was elected to the board of directors of the Puerto Rican Parade in 1968 and moved up to serve as its executive secretary, coordinator, and its president from 1980 to 1986. Among his many achievements:

- He has a BA from Mercy College and Master of Arts in Urban and Bilingual Studies.
- He taught both elementary and high school.
- He represented the South Bronx 17th district as a city councilman.
- He also held the position of president in various community groups, including La Fiesta Folklórica Puertorriqueña, Los Caborrojeños Ausentes Inc., United Bronx and Las Federación de Pueblos de Puerto Rico.

[Applause. He signs the document. He receives a pin as a symbol of his commitment. He can say a few words.]

Please welcome Manny Mirabal.

Mr. Mirabal served as president of the Puerto Rican Day Parade when the cultural institution was growing quickly and gaining widespread English-language television, radio, and newspaper coverage. Currently a principal with Gray Global Advisors, LLC, a Washington D.C. business and government consultancy, Mr. Mirabal has had a distinguished career in both public and private sectors. Among his many achievements:

- He served as CEO of the National Puerto Rican Coalition, the largest national Puerto Rican policy and civil rights organization.
- He chaired several national policy coalitions, including the Hispanic Leadership Agenda, the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, and the Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership.

- He was recognized as one of the 25 most influential Hispanics in Washington, D.C., where he has worked for two decades.

[He signs the document. He receives a pin as a symbol of his commitment. He can say a few words.]

Please welcome María Román Dumén.

Ms. Román Dumén is a co-founder, long-time board member, former president, and current honorary member of the Puerto Rican Day Parade. She is the recipient of the organization's 2012 Lifetime Achievement for her efforts in public service and advocacy of Puerto Rican culture. Among her many achievements:

- In the George Pataki administration she served as a member of the senior policy staff. As principal liaison to the Hispanic community, she was involved in the statewide planning and policy development affecting health, safety, and welfare.
- Her public service include work with the New York State Hispanic Heritage Council, the Hunts Point Multi-Service Center, the Committee for the Advancement of Puerto Rican Culture, El Coqui Lions and Lioness Club, the International Cultures Mission of the United Nations, the Puerto Rican Home Attendants Group, the Northeast Latino Economic Council, Boricua First!, the 100 Hispanic Women, Inc.
- She was selected one of the 50 Mujeres Destacadas by El Diario La Prensa.

[She signs the document. She receives a pin as a symbol of his commitment. She can say a few words.]

Last but not least, please welcome Madelyn Lugo.

Ms. Lugo is the current President of the Puerto Rican Day Parade, and one of its founders. She has been widely recognized by many organizations for her contributions in commerce and community, including by El Diario La Prensa, where she was recognized as Distinguished Women of the Year in 2007. Her corporate achievements and leadership also were acknowledged with other numerous awards, the most recent presented by the New York Federation of Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for being a bridge in the commercial and cultural relations between Puerto Rico and the rest of the Latin American countries. Among her many achievements:

- A specialist in finance and accounting, she has been active in multiple non-profits, such as housing projects for low and middle income families; educational initiatives, such as the charter High School for Architecture, Engineering and Construction Industries, where she is treasurer; and many other local civic institutions.

- She serves on the Centro Advisory Board.
- Ms. Lugo has worked for South Bronx Community Management Company, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, as a controller for the last 28 years.

[She signs the document. She receives a pin as a symbol of his commitment. She can say a few words.]

#### Closing Remarks

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.

When you have a chance, please take a tour of the new home of Centro's Library and Archives. Our facilities are downstairs at the end of the corridor. See for yourself:

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

I would like to thank Madelyn Lugo and María Román for helping us organize the event, Federico Perez Marty and Manny Mirabal for their commitment to the Parade and Centro, and all of the Puerto Rican Day Parade leadership for making this event possible. Thanks for your altruism and dedication.

I would also like to thank our staff. I have to extend my deepest appreciation to Mayra Torres, my loyal and dedicated deputy, and to Evelyn Collazo, our events coordinator, and all others who supported their efforts for following up on all the details of this event.

Dr. Alberto Hernández, Chief Librarian and Archivist will be leading our staff in giving tours of our facilities.

Finally, our Senior Archivist Pedro Juan Hernández will be giving a guided tour of the exhibit *Picturing Puerto Rico under the American Flag*. The Hunter College East Harlem Gallery is also downstairs at the end of the corridor.

Please leave your email and postal address with our staff so that we can send you a copy of Centro's Events Calendar with the fall program when it is printed.

Be proud, celebrate our heritage!

Muchas gracias.