

# Edwin Melendez's Remarks for Rosskam Inauguration Ceremony

(May 10, 2012)

Saludos! Welcome to the Louise Rosskam exhibit! We are proud to be able to say that it is the Centro Archives collections that served as the major source of primary materials for this exhibition.

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 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.

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.

In celebration of our new state-of-the-art facilities in the Samuel Silberman School of Social Work building, and in order to expand our collections and make them even better and easier to access, I want to take this a opportunity to let you know that Centro has launched the 100 Puerto Rican Campaign. The 100 Puerto Ricans Campaign is a strategy designed to encourage individuals and organizations that have made or are making a difference in our community to record and document their experiences with our archives for the benefit of future generations. We hope to add 100 collections to the archives to make our holdings more comprehensive and balanced by November 2012. So if any of you here today think you know a person or organization that would enrich our collections, don't hesitate to mention it to me or someone in our staff today.

This exhibit, Picturing Puerto Rico Under the American Flag, is a unique tribute to the Puerto Rican people and to their history. Louise Rosskam sought to depict the story of the men and women who worked seeking a better life for themselves and their families at the beginning of the government-sponsored industrialization period of the late 1940s, known as Operation Bootstrap.

On behalf of the Centro staff and our broad community of supporters, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of those involved in making this exhibit possible.

First and foremost, we would like to thank Hunter President Jennifer Raab; Joachim Pissarro, Director of the Hunter College Art Galleries; Provost Neal Cohen; and all the Hunter College leadership. Without your leadership and determination this beautiful tribute to our heritage would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank Professor Laura Katzman, the curator of the exhibit, for her dedicated work and for making it a reality. We would also like to thank Mariluz Hoyos, Curator of the Hunter College East Harlem Art Gallery, for her leadership and sustenance of the project.

There are many unsung heroes on our staff and I thank them all. But I have to extend my deepest appreciation to Pedro Juan Hernández, our senior archivist, for his support to the curator as Laura developed the project and for crafting the exhibit. The photos for the exhibit are from our Commonwealth Collection, which contains approximately 1,400 cubic feet, or 352 microfilm reels, of archival materials. Since 1989 Pedro Juan has been the senior archivist in charge of this Collection, first as the head archivist of the Historical Archives of the Puerto Rican Migration to the United States of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and as senior archivist of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies over the last two decades. He was the ideal person to guide the curator through the significant holdings of the collection and in the selection of the most relevant and best materials for the exhibit.

Finally, it is my pleasure to invite Pedro Juan Hernández to the podium. Please join me in a round of applause to welcome him and to thank all of those involved with this beautiful tribute to our people!

Muchas gracias.