

Edwin Meléndez's Remarks for NYC Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) Ceremony

(July 11, 2012)

Buenos Dias.

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

This is a special occasion because NYC Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) will make a donation of its New York City Latino labor historical archives and film to Centro's Library and Archives. NYC LCLAA joins other individuals or organizations that have made a difference in our communities.

As contributors to the archives, NYC LCLAA is among the greatest, you are among other pioneers who helped build our institutions and communities, and who have also changed history. Your legacy will be preserved for generations to come.

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*, which features the photographs of Louise Roskam. The collection depicts the story of the men and women who worked hard to achieve a better life for themselves and their families. These are images 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 our history, and you are all welcomed to take a tour tonight.

Most of the photos in 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 labor leaders who have carried the torch with honor and have helped build and sustain Puerto Rican and Latino heritage in the city.

I will like to extend my deepest appreciation to Sonia Ivany, president, and other leaders of the NYC LCLAA for sponsoring this event.

On behalf of Centro's staff and the leadership of Hunter College, we are honored to be recognized by NYC LCLAA for a "long standing progressive role and leadership in the Puerto Rican and Latino community."

I would like to also 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. 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 also like to thank our staff. I have to extend my deepest appreciation to Mayra Torres, Centro's Assistant Director, and to Evelyn Collazo, our events coordinator, and all others who have supported our efforts to make this event possible.

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.