

DIARY AND UCLA SPEECH

By Raphael Montañez Ortiz June 8, 2017

I thought of a lot of things to say... There are so many People to Thank... I am 83 years of Age and imagined there was nothing that would surprise me, I had just opened the letter from UCLA informing me that I had been awarded the UCLA MEDAL... Well I was surprised, like I had just inherited California... I was running around my living room shouting at the ceiling to my Angel, my deceased wife Monique who had performed with me throughout 14 of our 20 years of marriage in Museums here in the USA, Germany, and Canada... If Monique was still here she would have been jumping up and down with me...

I sat down on the floor THERE WAS A QUITE MOMENT I heard myself Thanking my wife Monique for teaching me about courage during the 5 years She was dying of Cancer Monique would tell me often... Raphael you better live long enough past the Racism for people to recognize all you have Accomplished and Contributed....

Well here I am, a Brown American, who's Portuguese Father and Puerto Rican Mother are Brown, who's Brown Grandfather was born in Mexico, whose Brown Grandmother was born in Southern Spain... who stands here before you with the Spirit of my Great Grandmother a YAQUI, born and raised in Mexico who grew up in Vera Cruz... THANK YOU UCLA, Thank you Chon Noriega Director of The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center for taking me past the Racism, for being the first to as a Scholar and Cultural Warrior recognize and give recognition to my Contributions to Art and Culture... I also thank the UCLA Institute of American Cultures...

I say these things because its all related to my being here before you... I am indebted to my wife Monique who inspired me to trade-in my Macho-hood for Person-hood... She lived her life with the belief that a Woman is as brilliant and strong as she challenges the ignorance of Misogyny and Patriarchy the way Lillith challenged Adam she used to say... By the way Monique was a Phi Beta Kappa with a Blackbelt in American Mixed Martial Arts...

And yes I am also indebted to my Mom who lived to be 101 years of age... Monique and I played poker with her each time we visited her at the nursing home... A day before she died she called me over and whispered your lucky I'm to sick to play poker you still owe me 2 dollars and 25 cents... My Mom grew up in Puerto Rico with 4 brothers and an older sister who left Puerto Rico to live in the States ... My Moms Brown Mother, my Brown Grandmother migrated to Puerto Rico from Southern Spain, the Brown-Man who would become her husband and become my Moms Father, and my Grandfather journeyed to Puerto Rico from Mexico where he was born and raised he and my Grandmother loved horses married and built up a horse farm on one of the Conejo islands off the Puerto Rican mainland...

My Mom like her Mom and Dad was very religious... When I was about ten years old and an Alter-Boy I asked My Mom about GOD She would tell me "You can only Know GOD by Searching for GOD, and YES I am still searching... I Thank my beautifully Brown Mother and my Brown Step-Father who taught me how to play his favorite sport, base ball and My Mom who taught me how to read and write in Spanish and English and how to dance the Puerto Rican Mereñe and a Mexican Posse Doble...

I thank my Sister who as a child studied classical Ballet I would listen to the Latino and Classical Music she always practiced to at home... My Step-Father used to call Classical Ballet and Classical Music Puerto Rican High Culture...

I Thank my 4th Grade teacher Mrs. Bloomenthal who took our class on virtual tours with images from books to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Natural History and the Planetarium... That's when I decided I would some day be an Architect and build a Museum I called that Museum El Museo del Barrio... I merged all of the virtual tours Mrs Bloomenthal took our class on... I decided that I would also definitely be an Artist, and that I would also definitely be a Yaqui, like my Great Grandmother, I also decided I would definitely be an Astronomer like the Mayans and yes I will be a Teacher like Mrs. Bloomenthal...

I have studied and studied and practiced and practiced to be all those personas I am an Artist, I am in Spirit a Yaqui, like a Mayan Astronomer I search the heavens for clues that will reveal GOD to

me, I am a Distinguished Rutgers University Professor of Fine Arts...
I am proud of my Genetic-Cultural Heritage...

Never, Never, Never did I imagine my Brown Puerto Rican,
Portuguese, Yaqui, Mexican, Terra Madura, Bosque, Latino and yes
Irish ME so often referred to as a (SPIC), growing up in a Racist-
Segregated Apartheid time in America, never imagining I would be
free of my Sisyphus-ean Existence.

I Always heard the boulder rolling back down, knowing that my life
depended on my believing that one day when I rolled the boulder up
to the top of the hill it will stay there... UCLA Your awarding me the
UCLA Medal is my sign that it will stay there... Thank you UCLA,
THANK YOU All.....