

# Voces Unidas

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## **ECCSF Fall 2006: “Cruzando Fronteras: Illegality, Identity, and Invisibility”**

Cecilia Flores

The East Coast Chicano Student Forum, began as a product of Pachanga. Pachanga is a yearly gathering that takes place during Thanksgiving break. Students who could not afford to go home, met in one of the affiliated schools and held a conference. These same students formed the ECCSF in order to further educate Latino students about current issues and get them to take part in them. The conference also offers students a chance to network with each other and visit schools along the east coast. The ECCSF has been a long-standing tradition.

This fall, Columbia hosted the conference titled, “Cruzando Fronteras: Illegality, Identity, and Invisibility.” The first workshop dealt with issues that the lesbian, gay, transsexual, bisexual, and questioning (LGTBQ) communities encounter within the Latino society. Tasha Amezcua, a Columbia student, led the discussion and helped address how our society could be more open to the LGTBQ communities. The second workshop was a lecture led by Dr. Jose Castaneda, former foreign minister of Mexico. Dr. Castaneda used both U.S. and Mexican perspectives to speak about current immigration issues. Nicholas De Genova, a Professor at Columbia University, led the third workshop titled, “Race Theory and Chicano / Mexican American Identity.” His lecture focused on several topics that concerned the definition of ones self and what factors influence our self-definition. All of these workshops were very informational.

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## **Spanish- Speakers Discriminated Against in Neighboring Latino Community**

Ashley Zurc

On August 2, 2006, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against the city of Springfield. According to the lawsuit, the city was violating the rights of its Spanish-speaking community. Springfield, which is about twenty to thirty minutes from Northampton, has a large Hispanic community that constitutes 27.2% of its population and 22.2% are of voting age. Despite these figures, Springfield had failed to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking voters. Bilingual poll workers were scarce and voting materials were only available in English. Discouraged by their lack of representation many Spanish-speaking voters would leave the polls without voting while others did not appear at all. As a result, it was concluded that Springfield was in violation of Section 203 of the Voters Rights Act.

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### **Upcoming Events**

**11/1**

Luz Maria de la Torre  
Amaguana

Neilson Browsing Room

**Lunch-12:15pm to 1:00pm**

**Lecture-4:30pm**

**11/5**

Nosotras General Meeting  
Unity House

4:00pm

**11/8**

**Chiapas Media Project  
Weinstein Auditorium  
(Wright Hall)**

**7:00pm to 9:00pm**

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**11/10**

Big Sib/Lil Sib Movie Night  
Unity House

8:00pm

**11/13**

Salsa Night  
Campus Center 103/104

7:00pm to 8:30pm

**11/19**

Nosotras General Meeting  
Unity House

4:00pm



For more info checkout  
The Nosotras Website

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Letter from Editor

## *While You Were Watching Project Runway...*

Justine González

These days, it is bad enough that college students tend to get caught up in their own separate worlds but when the media clouds the daily international news with stories either about the Muslim world and all the ‘crazy terrorists’ that they are harboring, or about another band of drug-lords who are destroying life in Latin America, it becomes harder and harder to find out what is actually happening outside of Northampton. So, to help Smithies stay up to date with what’s going on in the Latin world (Latin world stated here as an umbrella for the Caribbean, Central and South America), here is a recap of some current events. If you are interested in learning more about any of these stories, please feel free to look at other online newspapers.

**Nicaragua:** On October 19<sup>th</sup>, the Nicaraguan legislator passed a total ban on all abortions, even if the mother is raped or if her life is in danger. A lot of Latin American countries have a ban on abortions, but only Chile, Nicaragua, and El Salvador have a total ban on abortion without exceptions. Before this new law, illegal abortions were punished with jail terms up to six years but the new law has yet to determine specific terms of punishment.

**Panama:** Plans on expanding the canal that the U.S constructed in 1914 have recently been proposed. An overwhelming amount of Panamanians supported the idea, as shown in a preliminary with 80% supporting, along with the government, and claim that the addition will create more jobs and keep the canal as an important part of the lives of future Panamanians. But at the nation- wide referendum, there was a low outcome of only 40%. The question of whether the canal will be a success or if Panama can afford to embark on a project with an estimated cost of 5.25 billion dollars, is still up in the air.

**São Paulo, Brazil:** Recently in São Paulo, Brazil, the Museum of the Portuguese Language was opened in an attempt to assert Brazilian identity and self- affirmation. The natives of Portugal often view Brazilian Portuguese as a kind of slang. To counter these ideas and spread knowledge of the language to outsiders, the museum illustrates the importance and beauty of their language. One way that the director of the museum is attempting to do this is by sending exhibitions abroad. Many of the people that support the museum hope that this is a first step to gain U.N recognition as an official language that can be used in diplomacy and business.

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Essay by Natalie Flores

### Mi historia común

Una de las cosas más difíciles para los jóvenes inmigrantes e hijos de inmigrantes es definir quiénes son y de dónde vienen. A veces pienso que en mi caso es mucho más fácil porque yo nací en Perú. O sea, yo soy completamente peruana. ¿Pero acaso eso es todo lo que soy? Claro que no. Yo soy una mezcla de idiomas, culturas, y sabores. Para entender quién soy yo, primero tengo que reflexionar sobre mi pasado.

Yo y mi hermano nacimos en Perú. Pero antes de que mi hermano cumpliera un añito de nacido, mi papá decidió venir a los Estados Unidos en busca de un mejor futuro para nuestra familia. Gracias a la ayuda de su hermana, tía Ángela, mi papá juntó suficiente dinero para pagarle al coyote. El viajó por avión hasta Panamá y de allí tuvo que viajar en bote, carro, y a pie. El suele contar que sólo hubo una vez en su odisea que pensó regresar. Pero ese pensamiento fue interrumpido por los sonidos de helicópteros buscando mojados en el desierto. Mi papá llegó a Los Ángeles con veinte kilos de menos. El abrigo que usó le daba dos vueltas y lo chistoso es que ahora ya no le queda.

Durante cinco años mi papá trabajó y ahorró dinero para traernos aquí. Primero trajo a mi hermanito porque él no lo conocía. Mi papá se perdió los primeros pasos, las primeras palabras, y el primer día de clases, y pienso que eso le afectó mucho. Pero estos son los sacrificios de todo inmigrante. Al poco tiempo mi mamá pudo inmigrar. Mi hermano todavía era muy chiquito y necesitaba a mi mamá. Yo, siempre siendo la más valiente, me quedé con mi abuelita, mis tíos y mis tías.

A pesar que extrañaba mucho a mi familia al quedarme con mi abuelita sentí un extraño y nuevo aire de libertad. Mi mamá era sobre protectora, pero por muy buena razón. Durante los ochentas y al comienzo de los noventas Perú estaba siendo aterrorizado por el Sendero Luminoso. Me acuerdo que los militares rodeaban mi vecindario con sus armas por si algo pasara. Mi abuelita tenía ocho nietos y dos nietas, así que no podía estar al tanto de todos.

Durante ese año y medio de dulce y triste libertad comencé a pensar como sería mi vida en los Estados Unidos y como sería mi vida si nunca podría salir del Perú ya que cada día era más difícil. En el primer intento de inmigrar ilegalmente a los Estados Unidos llegué hasta el aeropuerto de Los Ángeles. Lo malo fue que los oficiales se dieron cuenta que el grupo con quien yo venía no era legal, así que nos llevaron a un centro de detención. A pesar que era niña no tenía miedo pero sí sabía lo que estaba pasando. La migra nos transportó en un automóvil. Me acuerdo haberme sentado al lado de la ventana para observar Los Ángeles. Se parecía a Lima. No era nada espectacular. Las calles eran iguales de sucias y la gente... bueno la gente era mi gente. Estuve en el centro de detención cinco días hasta que me devolvieron a Perú. Yo, la verdad, disfruté el “viaje,” porque falté clases y conocí otro país (que no era tan diferente, al menos eso pensaba). A mi mamá le afectó mucho porque ella, mi papá y mi hermano habían ido al aeropuerto a recogerme y nunca llegué.

Justo cuando ya había perdido las esperanzas de venir ya que dos intentos fracasaron, un día mi tío me ordenó que empacara porque iba a viajar el día siguiente. No tuve tiempo de despedirme de nadie más que de mi abuelita. El me decía “es mejor, así no tienes mala suerte.” Pero al salir de mi vecindario saqué la cabeza por la ventana del automóvil y gritaba a todos los que me conocían “Me voy a los Estados Unidos, ¡Adiós!”

## Poetry

Flor de Maga: New York to Northampton

By Eva Garcia

Through my window,  
The cold December gust of wind  
Brings me over to a place of clear bright skies,  
Palms swaying in the warm breeze

I am sitting in a room the size of a shoe.  
It is the only room  
I have ever known as my own.  
Outside, the loud, hollow sound  
Of an ambulance siren  
Refracts off the wall  
Of the next building,  
Conveniently located  
Four feet from my window

I am looking through  
The window of my future  
Is it success I see on the other side?  
The sheer joy of accomplishment,  
Like the aroma of roasted coconut,  
Wafting through a window screen  
From which the song of the *coqui* resonates.

Is my tomorrow filled with hope, radiant  
As the crystal blue waters of the Carib bean,  
Lukewarm like soup against the skin?  
Or must I face uncertainty,  
Like the icy, distant, dark blue waters  
That surround my world  
On this cold December day?

This poem and its title are loosely modeled after the poetry of Cathy Song, an Asian American poet. *Flor de Maga* is the Spanish term for the hibiscus flower, which is the official flower of Puerto Rico, the island of my heritage. Some of Song's poems are inspired by the artist Georgia O'Keefe, who drew several portraits of flowers to represent female sensuality. Since Song uses location in the titles of these poems, I chose "New York to Northampton", which represents my birthplace, New York City, and the place where life has now brought me, Northampton. I make implicit references to each location in my poem.

In this poem, I am looking towards the future, while reminiscing back to my inner-city past, filled with concrete and lots of noise, but also with the nostalgic sense of *mi identidad* as a Puerto Rican with roots from such a beautiful island. My words portray some of the hopeful, positive feelings I harbor when I look back at my history and ahead towards my future. On the other hand, they also hint at some of those moments of uncertainty I've experienced about getting it all done successfully at Smith when assignments in every class are due, and I've been procrastinating.

(Untitled)  
By Dior Vargas

Again and Again  
I have struck a nerve like a harp  
Demanding of purpose  
Questioning the abandonment

I needed you  
You came years later  
An evil omen  
A hovering presence

This continuing spiral  
Red possession  
Deep brainwash  
You overcome me

Like a newborn baby  
I am watched and observed  
Within these dingy walls of beige  
I conquer this addiction

O demon within me  
Fly free out of my soul!  
Take flight and cease to suffocate me  
I am no longer yours

**Be brave and submit  
your poems!!!!!!!**

In our upcoming issue published  
poet and Smithie, Laurie Guerrero-  
Garcés will be featured.

## ECCSF Conference

(Continued from page 1)

Finally, the fourth workshop, addressed the event that occurred at Columbia University on October 4<sup>th</sup>. The Republican group on campus was hosting a few of the minutemen leaders. These “leaders” have taken it upon themselves to patrol only the U.S. and Mexican border. In opposition to this, many students joined in a **peaceful** protest. Some of the students were attacked by minutemen supporters, which lead to a violent outbreak. The massive media coverage of this incident highlighted the students as the instigators, although the footage proved otherwise.

The evening wrapped up with a dinner accompanied by mariachi. I definitely encourage anybody to attend an ECCSF conference because it is a great way to meet Latino students attending colleges on the east coast. It is also a great learning experience.

## Voting Rights for Bilingual Speakers

(Continued from page 1)

The Voters Rights Act stipulates that areas populated by a considerable amount of individuals that are not native English speakers need to comply with certain regulations. These include providing “registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots” in the language, that reflects the community. The city of Springfield was ordered to abide by these policies. Documents have been translated and bilingual poll workers are being hired. There were 103 bilingual poll workers available for the primary election on

September 19, compared to 37 that were previously employed. Despite these efforts, more changes need to be implemented.

Juan Pablo Jiménez, who teaches in the Spanish department, is organizing interested bilingual students to assist at the polls. He needs anyone willing to work for the upcoming election scheduled for Tuesday, November 7. It is a paid position and training will be held on Friday, November 3, from 2:30 to 4:00 PM in Hatfield. This is a chance to help our neighboring Latino communities. Contact Juan if you would like to get involved.

## The Chiapas Media Project

For many people who live in the developed world use of video cameras, VCR's, TV's, and computers is a daily occurrence. But when one speaks with indigenous peoples about access to this technology they say it is only a dream. For centuries indigenous people and their cultures have been represented by people from the outside. Recently over the past few years there has been an effort to get new communication technology into the hands of indigenous people so that they can represent themselves, with their own words and images. This is what the Chiapas Media Project (CMP) is about.

Where: Weinstein Auditorium (Wright Hall)

Time: 7:00pm to 9:00pm

**Be There!**

¡Hola!

Five pages this time!!!! We are making progress. I wanted to stress that the success of this newsletter and Nosotras depends on if we work as a community. For next month's issue it would be great if people could submit Christmas stories, a review of Ugly Betty and Quinceanera, book reviews, recipes, more poetry, etc., without me having to ask you. Anything that is important to you will be important to the rest of us. Please do not hesitate to ask me or your peers for help.

Con mucho amor,  
Ashlev Zurc