



BROOKLYN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Brooklyn Historical Society
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For Immediate Release
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BHS and City Lore Celebrate Immigrant Heritage Week With Exploration of Early Puerto Rican Settlement

WHAT:

Puerto Rican Steamship Migration to Brooklyn

The Brooklyn Historical Society and City Lore invite you to join the celebration during the **Mayor's Immigrant Heritage Week** with a look at early Puerto Rican migration (as opposed to immigration) to Brooklyn. Puerto Rican community historian **Ralph Mendez** will present his collection of steamship artifacts and research about early-20th century migration from Puerto Rico to Brooklyn. Folklorist **Elena Martinez** will discuss audio clips from BHS's Puerto Rican Oral History Project collected in the early 1970s with narrators telling their steamship migration stories; and all will be complemented by a presentation of portraits of pioñeros by Brooklyn photographer **Tony Velez**. For more information visit www.brooklynhistory.org/resources/oral_history or www.citylore.org. Many thanks to Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College, legendary restaurant El Viejo Yayo and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs for supporting this event.

WHEN:

Sunday, April 20 3:00 – 5:00pm
Free and open to the Public

WHERE:

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Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-222-4111 www.brooklynhistory.org

WHO:

Ralph Mendez's family migrated from Arecibo, Puerto Rico and settled in Brooklyn and later Tarrytown, New York. Ralph currently lives in Manhattan and for the past 20 years he has been a collector of all things Puerto Rican. He considers himself a *protector*, not a *collector* because items of Puerto Rican history are scattered in many places and he tries to bring as much of it together as he can to make it accessible for the Puerto Rican community.

Elena Martinez received an M.A. in Folklore at the University of Oregon in 1997. Interested in material culture and urban folklore, she took a full-time position at City Lore in 1997. As staff folklorist at City Lore she is the primary fieldworker for Place Matters, and its sub-project, the South Bronx Latin Music Project, conducting interviews with musicians from the South Bronx, conducting photo and archival research, and producing public programs. This project culminated in the making of a video documentary, "From Mambo to Hip Hop: A South Bronx Tale," which she co-produced and which aired on PBS in September 2006. She curated the exhibition, "¡Que bonita bandera!: The Puerto Rican Flag as Folk Art," and she was the Festival Coordinator for the People's Poetry Gathering, a 3-day festival which explores literary poetry's roots in the oral tradition.

Tony Velez was born in the South Bronx, to Puerto Rican immigrants in 1946. Interested in photography from childhood, Velez studied photography at the New York High School of Art and Design between 1961 and 1964. In 1966 he volunteered for the United States Army and served in Vietnam, where he experienced and documented the war. These early experiences laid the foundation for his future work as an artist. His projects have connected him to his community, the Latino communities of New York and New Jersey. Since 1987 he has taught photography in the Fine Arts Department at Kean University in Union, New Jersey, in the rank of Professor (full), where he coordinates the "Arts Dialogue", an artists lecture series, and the B.F.A. Photography program. His work has been published nationally and locally and has appeared in the New York Historical Society, the Kenkeleba Gallery, El Museo del Barrio and many other institutions including the Brooklyn Historical Society's current exhibit "In Our Own Words: Portraits of Brooklyn's Vietnam Veterans."

La Migración Puertorriqueña de los Buques de Vapor

EL EVENTO:

The Brooklyn Historical Society y City Lore les invitan a unirse en la celebración de La Semana del Patrimonio de Inmigrantes del Alcalde con un evento sobre la migración de puertorriqueños a Brooklyn.

El historiador comunitario **Ralph Méndez** presentará su colección de objetos de buques de vapor y de la investigación de la migración desde Puerto Rico a Brooklyn al principio del siglo 20. La folclorista **Elena Martínez** discutirá segmentos de audio del Proyecto de la Historia Oral de Puertorriqueños del Brooklyn Historical Society recogidas en los 1970s con narradores hablando de las historias del establecimiento de la comunidad en Brooklyn. La presentación incluirá una exposición de retratos de pioneros puertorriqueños por el fotógrafo de Brooklyn, **Tony Vélez**. Para más información vea los websites del Brooklyn Historical Society, www.brooklynhistory.org/resources/oral_history y City Lore, www.citylore.org.

Muchas gracias al Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños en Hunter College; el restaurante legendario, **El Viejo Yayo**; y la Oficina del Alcalde para Asuntos del Inmigrantes, de su apoyo a este evento.

CUANDO:

Domingo, 20 de abril 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Gratis y abierto al público

DÓNDE:

Brooklyn Historical Society

128 Pierrepont St.

Brooklyn, NY 11201

718-222-4111 www.brooklynhistory.org

QUIEN:

La familia de **Ralph Mendez** emigró de Arecibo, Puerto Rico y se estableció en Brooklyn y más tarde Tarrytown, Nueva York. Hoy en día Ralph vive en Manhattan y por 20 años ha reunido una colección de objetos puertorriqueños. Él se considera a sí mismo *un protector* y no *un coleccionista*, porque las cosas de la historia de Puerto Rico están en todos partes y él quiere colector como mucho tan posible así puede ser accesible para la comunidad puertorriqueña.

Elena Martínez recibió una Maestría en Folclore de la Universidad de Oregon en 1997. Interesado en la cultura material y el folclore urbano, ella tomó una posición en City Lore en 1997. Como folclorista en el City Lore ella es el investigadora principal para Place Matters, y de sus sub-proyecto, the South bronx Latin Music Project. Este proyecto culminó con la realización de un video documental, "Mambo to Hip Hop: A South Bronx Tale", que co-produjo y que fue presentada en PBS, en septiembre de 2006. Curó la exposición, "¡Que bonita bandera!: La Bandera de Puerto Rico como Arte Popular", y ella fue la coordinadora del People's Poetry Gathering, un festival de 3 días que explora la poesía literaria raíces en la tradición oral.

Tony Vélez nació en el Sur del Bronx, a los migrantes de Puerto Rico en 1946. Interesado en la fotografía desde la infancia, Vélez estudio fotografía en el New York High School of Art and Design entre 1961 y 1964. En 1966 se ofreció para el Ejército de los Estados Unidos y sirvió en Vietnam, donde vivió y documentó la guerra. Estas primeras experiencias sentaron las bases para su trabajo futuro como artista. Sus proyectos se han conectado a él a su comunidad, las comunidades Latinas de Nueva York y Nueva Jersey. Desde 1987 ha impartido clases de fotografía en el Departamento de Bellas Artes en la Universidad de Kean en la Unión, Nueva Jersey, como Profesor (plena), donde coordina el "Diálogo de las Artes", una serie de conferencias de artistas, y el programa de Fotografía. Sus trabajos han sido publicados a nivel nacional y local y ha aparecido en el New York Historical Society, la Kenkeleba Galería, El Museo del Barrio y de muchas otras instituciones, entre ellas la Sociedad Histórica de Brooklyn actual exposición "In Our Own Words: Retratos de la Brooklyn Veteranos de Vietnam."

City Lore's mission is to foster New York's - and America's - living cultural heritage. As cultural activists we are committed to the principles of cultural equity and democracy. We believe that cultural diversity is a positive social value to be protected and encouraged; that authentic democracy requires active participation in cultural life, not just passive consumption of cultural products; and that our cultural heritage is a resource for improving our quality of life.

*The mission of the **Brooklyn Historical Society** is to connect the past to the present and make the vibrant history of Brooklyn tangible, relevant, and meaningful for today's diverse communities, and for generations to come. Founded in 1863, BHS functions as a library, museum and urban education center dedicated to the people of Brooklyn, providing opportunities for civic dialogue and thoughtful engagement.*

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