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Detroiters Identify Neighborhood Rebuilding, Tackling Poverty And Improving Public Safety As Top Priorities For American Rescue Plan Funds

Cont'd from pg. 1

1st Priority - Rebuilding Neighborhoods
Residents want additional funds for:

- Home repairs for seniors, low-income & disability community
- Grants to block clubs/neighborhood associations to improve vacant land from the Land Bank
- Vacant property cleanouts

2nd Priority - Fight Intergenerational Poverty
Residents want additional funds for:

- Skills for life employment
- Expanded Community Health Corps
- Property foreclosure

prevention

3rd Priority - Improve Public Safety
Residents want to:

- Stop speeding and drifting
- Use technology to fight gun violence
- Add EMS bays to firehouses

Based on the results, Mayor Mike Duggan delivered his plan to Detroit City Council June 18 for consideration. The Council was asked to approve the plan by June 30 and is expected to vote during its formal session June 29. The City has received \$413 million so far, with remaining funds expected to arrive in May 2022. The City must spend ARPA funds by December 2024.

Join us for our Summer Workshops

We've missed you! The Macomb Center for the Performing Arts is excited, thrilled, and exhilarated to be able to offer reimagined versions of our Summer Workshops for the summer of 2021. Learn More about our workshops now!

Drama Workshop |

July 12-16, 2021
Led by: Select staff from All The World's A Stage
Open to students in grades 3-12

Musical Theatre Workshop |

July 19-23, 2021
Led by: Select staff from All The World's A Stage
Open to students in grades 3-12

Show Choir Workshop |

July 26-30, 2021
Led by: Andy Haines and Chris Pratt

Open to students in grades 7-12

Youth Choir Workshop* |

August 23-27, 2021
*Previously Children's Chorus Workshop
Led by: James Picar
Open to students in grades 2-5

JOIN US FOR A SUMMER LIKE NO OTHER!

Just like performers follow their cues, so are we. Due to the ever-changing nature of the pandemic we are following industry best practices and CDC guidelines.

Questions? Contact us: ArtsEducation@macomb.edu or call 586.286.2044

Please visit, www.macombcenter.com/events to learn more about each workshop and to register



By: Ozzie Rivera

PENSAMIENTOS Y RECUERDOS

Community Leaders Angie Reyes and Ines DeJesus

reflect on their time as students in Chicano Boricua Studies

4th in a series on the 50th Anniversary

of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies

I recently sat down with two well-known community leaders Angela

“Angie” Reyes, Director of Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation and Ines DeJesus, retired Detroit Public School administrator and teacher, who at one time was the highest ranking Latina in the Detroit Public Schools Administration. Both were students in the early years of what was then known as Chicano-Boricua Studies(CBS) after the Center had changed its name from Latino En Marcha. We now know it as the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies (CLLAS).

Angie was recruited by Gumencindo Salas one of the Center’s instructors who also happen to be a family friend. She started in April 1972 at Wayne State and already had put in one semester before going to Monteith, the home college for the program. An Anglo advisor at the university tried to dissuade her from entering the newly established program but she decided to join anyway. She resented the fact that the program was being labeled by some a “remedial” program when she knew that definitely not the case. She wanted to learn from other Latino students and activists and since she felt somewhat isolated on campus, she desired to make connections with other like-minded students. She was inspired by program students as well as the instructors and staff leading the program. In addition to Gumencindo Salas she was impressed by instructors Carlos Arce and Isabel Salas.

Ines joined in 1974. She had attended primarily African American schools while living in Corktown. She remembers that at Murray Wright the principal and teachers were progressive and promoted black history. Though inspired by that experience she also wanted to connect with her people’s history. In turn she was motivated by others she saw organizing in the Latino community and wanted to connect to them. Though Wayne State counselors tried to recruit her directly into the College of Education she saw attending Chicano Boricua Studies as helping her become an advocate and community organizer. Like Angie, Ines encountered Wayne State staff trying to dissuade her from joining CBS. Once she joined, she knew she “was in the right place”. From the start other program students played a key role in making her feel welcome. There were others who entered CBS from her same high school and community, including a small group of fellow Puerto Ricans. Saturdays and Sundays she would see many of them in the community, at church etc. Thus, she really felt comfortable and “at home” in CBS. “I fit in here”, she reflected. Further she was inspired seeing older students with established families, giving guidance to and mentoring younger students. One such student was Pearl McMann who would go on to become a social worker. Others like Margarita Oxham would educate students about life and politics in Mexico, highlighting real lived experiences. “Thus it was not just about book knowledge”. She knew she was witnessing “Something bigger than yourself”

Angie, a first-generation student, agreed with Ines further adding “I

learned so much, so quickly from other CBS students”. In 1975 she married and soon started her family. Thus, she left the university for a short period of time. Angie returned to her studies in 1983 taking a few courses, including those that focused on the Latino experience. Those early classes in CBS she says grounded her. What she learned at CBS she would in turn share with her children. This would lay the groundwork for their own history of activism and careers. In reflecting on her growth and sharing with others she remembers a quote from a dear friend and fellow CBS student Clemente Tovar who would often say “Once you learn something you can’t unlearn it.”

Ines credits her experiences in CBS to helping her as a lifetime educator. Teaching, especially in social studies courses, she literally influenced thousands of students because she was able to provide an alternative view to how our history and people was portrayed. She understood that something was not right in how our history and conditions were/are being presented. “Once you get that awakening you share it and live it”. Continuing “I am still connected with the Studies program and sharing that history”. Sadly, she feels that the state of promoting that view in education is “worse today than before”

In a moment of painful recollection Angie stated she was opposed to the perception many at Wayne State University had of students who participated in the program “as if they something less than”. In fact, these students had a lot to contribute. “Our strength was that cooperative learning is embedded in Latino culture.” She continues. “Though I had the advantage in “book smarts” I never felt I was better than anybody because I was learning so much from the students who were there, their life experiences and what I learned from them in organizing and strategic thinking. From the very beginning our heart was into the program.”

Ines echoed the sentiment that students were the program’s strength. Most participated in group study sessions. Upper classmen and women felt that commitment to new students. “You either became the tutor, or became one of the tutored.”

Our conversation turned to the difficulties CBS experienced relatively soon after its inception. Wayne State University soon moved to close down Monteith College, home to CBS, in 1975. A long faculty and student led struggle to stop those efforts ensued lasting a couple of years. Though in the end Monteith was not saved Ines, who was one of those student leaders, noted that in this and other student organizing efforts Latinos often played a leading role within multiracial coalitions.

At this time Wayne State tried to transfer CBS students and programming to Project 350. Students noted Project 350 only provided student support services program and was not an academic program. Again, they faced the nagging narrative of students not being capable of succeeding. The reality was different. Many CBS students came in with good grades and full scholarships and most of those who did need additional supports had tremendous potential

and “were incredibly intelligent”. Angie recalls “mind blowing” conversations with many of them. Ines underscored it by referring to her readings of Latin American intellectuals who felt strongly that the primary role for the university is to serve students. In effect combatting an elitist view of higher education.

In 1975 staff and students countered the university’s plans with a proposal to have CBS established as an academic department within the College of Liberal Studies. They advocated it should have four academic programs. Their proposal included the following: 1) a first year freshman program, 2) a Latin American Studies, 3) a Chicano Boricua Studies Graduate Program and 4) a bilingual education program. They also demanded funding for a Latino financial aid advisor. Seasoned veteran student activists liked Pearl McMahon presented this proposal before administration officials at major meetings.

Finally in Fall of 1976 Chicano Boricua Studies was reconstituted as a co-major program in the College of Liberal Arts. Activists were not happy that CBS did not receive the designation as a “major” which would have cemented its credentials and stature within the university. In fact, it galled activists and professors that the university then pushed to classify CBS professors as “Lecturers” denying most of them the possibility of securing tenure. It wasn’t till the mid-80’s when the program was facing another institutional crises that Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, who had tenure in Anthropology, came over to CBS that the problem was remedied to a certain extent. In 1989 Jose Cuello was hired coming starting right away with tenure. His hiring followed significant community advocacy.

Over the years Angie stated that students, faculty and community supporters have countered Wayne State’s destabilizing efforts by asking for and in turn providing, when the university failed to do so, data which pointed to successful student retention rates in Chicano Boricua Studies over the years. On a regular basis they would bring up the fact that CBS student support services CBS followed established national models. Even in recent years Angie and others have challenged the University’s low retention rates for students of color by pointing to CBS’ historical record of success. Recently CLLAS (CBS) won university wide recognition for its successful learning environment and methods. Something that was set in motion in its early years.

On noting the long-term impact CBS had on the community, they were extremely proud of the fact a significant number of community organizations were either founded and/or impacted by the leadership and organizing efforts of CBS graduates/alumni. The fact that CBS, currently in the form of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, survives and that activists never gave up on it, attests to its influence and impact a full fifty years later. Much of what has transpired in Detroit’s area Latino community in the decades since CBS’ founding was built on this work and otherwise may not currently exist. They noted they themselves would not be who they are without having attended the program!

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