

**La Causa  
Alumni  
Newsletter**

# Intercambio

Vol. 1, Issue 1

Spring '06

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*Y Que No Se Te  
Olvide....*

- RSVP for the 1st annual Latino Alumni Weekend in April
- Fill out and mail or e-mail the Alumni Update form
- Visit our website at [www.amherst.edu/~lacausa](http://www.amherst.edu/~lacausa)
- Contact us at: [lacausa@amherst.edu](mailto:lacausa@amherst.edu) with any questions or comments.

## Let the Exchange Begin

To the distinguished Latino alumni of Amherst College:

As Alumni Representative of La Causa, Amherst College's Latino student organization, I am proud to present the first issue of our now-resurrected semesterly newsletter—*Intercambio*. The newsletter's discontinuation in recent years had cut students off from the potential of a vast alumni network, one that can so richly inform and enhance our experience at Amherst. It also left interested alumni themselves in the dark as to what efforts were being made on our side to continue spreading awareness of Latino culture on campus. Together, we must insure that communication between student and alum become a permanent, thriving, and self-sustaining force.

This first issue will serve to facilitate a true intercambio, a two-way exchange in which we will update you on what La Causa's primary objectives and recent efforts have been, but also hope to hear about all of your accomplishments and concerns since graduation. Our organization's ultimate goal is to have an updated directory in the José Martí cultural center for student reference. Please take a moment to fill out the reply form included (p.8) and return responses by regular mail or e-mail.

This issue also includes an invitation to the first annual **Latino Alumni Weekend** that is taking place at Amherst College on April 21-23. While other affinity groups—from Black, Asian, LGBTQ communities—have been hosting bi-annual reunions for years, the Latino alumni have yet to formally come back to campus to reminisce, reflect, and interact with each other and current students. That must and will change—but only with your enthusiastic participation and support. We ask that you contact your own fellow alumni and urge them to attend as we'd love to meet and learn from you all. Details and RSVP information are on the following page.

We at La Causa have recently been digging through our archives, trying to uncover the history of our founding and of the evolution of our organization's goals and purposes through the decades. We have been inspired by the pages of petitions we found for the successful 1978 takeover of Fayerweather snack bar for what became our treasured José Martí room. Our current efforts to secure a Latino Studies department have been reaffirmed by evidence that former members have secured Latino faculty in the past, and that our E-board over a *(Continued on p.2)*

## La Causa: Now and Then





# Let the Exchange Begin

*(Continued from front page)*

decade ago had committees devoted to that very subject. It is this kind of exchange that gives us hope that our efforts can indeed succeed, but that also reminds us how much hard work is left to be done.

La Causa was founded during an era when student political and social activism was at its peak. While notable improvements must not be ignored, the same dismal numbers in “diversity” are present, and cultural insensitivity is still visible. Nowadays there are no sit-ins or student protests, yet the same problems exist. As we continue to reevaluate La Causa’s role at Amherst College, thinking about what steps to take to increase minority enrollment, Latino studies courses, and community empowerment—we ask that you share your own experiences at Amherst and beyond with us. You were here first. You effected change. You are now changing the world. There is no need to start from scratch.

Join us in reviving this valuable relationship. We hope to hear from you—or better yet—see you in April!

Atentamente,

Oscar Baez ‘08



## First Annual Latino Alumni Weekend

Below is the preliminary schedule for the Alumni Weekend. There is no registration fee. For hotel and travel information visit [www.amherst.edu/alumni](http://www.amherst.edu/alumni) or contact Marcy Larmon at [mlarmon@amherst.edu](mailto:mlarmon@amherst.edu). A detailed schedule and *Intercambio*, can also be found at the site.

Friday, April 21	Saturday, April 22	Sunday, April 23
9:00a.m.-4:00 p.m. Attend classes, visit former professors.	12:00-1:00 p.m. Lunch with students	9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Breakfast with students.
10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Mead Art Museum	2:00 p.m. Roundtable Discussion: The Latino experience at Amherst College and its reflections on Latino Identity.	10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. 2008 Latino Alumni Weekend Planning Committee meeting.
6:00-7:00 p.m. Registration	4:00 p.m. Keynote Speaker	
7:00p.m.—Welcoming Reception	6:00 p.m. Dinner and address by Les Purificación '76 and Tom Gonzales '76, co-founders of La Causa .	
9:00 p.m. Social Meet and Greet	Followed by an after-party at La Casa.	

**RSVP by April 1, 2006. Contact La Causa at**

**[lacausa@amherst.edu](mailto:lacausa@amherst.edu), or call Oscar Baez (617)308-1984**



# Voices : The Tradition Continues

By: Virginia Lora

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual *Voices for the Voiceless National Diaspora Poetry and Spoken Word Concert*, sponsored by La Causa, the Chicano Caucus, DarkSouls Art Collective, and several other organizations from the nearby colleges, took place at Amherst College last fall.

Originally created by former Mt. Holyoke student Lydia Okutoro and former UMass student Shaggy Flores, *Voices for the Voiceless* is a cultural event that has as its main objective, as Ron Espiritu, primary event coordinator, said: “to expose the Five-College and New England Area to the diversity, the complexity, and power of the Latino, African-American, and Asian-American national poetry scene.”

“[It] serves to empower not just the Latino community and all communities of color,” said La Causa representative Angelica Cesario '08, “but also the arts of spoken word and poetry, media that are often not recognized.”

The spoken word concert, whose theme this year was “Latino Lingo: The Funky Bilinguals,” was held on Saturday December 10, 2005 in Keefe Campus Center. This year, the event brought an even larger lineup of poets and spoken word artists than ever before. Among them were three poets—Jose Montoya, Jesus Tato Laviera, and Roberto Vargas—who were very influential in establishing world-recognized poetry scenes, such as the Nuyorican Poetry Café, the Bowery Poetry Club, and HBO’s Def Poetry Jam.

As part of the event’s celebrations, Montoya, a poet Laureate of Sacramento; Laviera, a pioneer in Nuyorican literature; and Vargas, a Nicaraguan poet, community organizer, activist, and diplomat; were honored as recipients of the Louis Reyes Rivera Lifetime Achievement Award. Joining them were fellow performers, Shaggy Flores, Nuyo Massarican poet from Springfield; Tonia Maria Mathews, Afro-American poet from D.C.; as well as Giles Lung-Hwa Li, Crystal Senter-Brown; Jahipster, Maurice “Soulfighter” Taylor, Robert Karimi, Mahogany Brown, and Truth Thomas.

The performances were intimate, powerful, and spectacular. The crowd of over three hundred stayed enchanted for all four hours of the event. “Jesus Tato Laviera’s performance was



Ron Espiritu '06 poses with literary legends, among the twelve spoken word poets who performed at Voices

very spiritual and powerful and got a standing ovation from the crowd,” Espiritu remembered. “For me, having read Jose Montoya’s poetry for years ... to meet him and to hear his poetry was a great honor.”

Acting as MC was Flores, who between introductions and musical interludes found time to invite the crowd to support the artists with the following straightforward, if candid, phrase: “Poets are broke; buy some product.”

And products they bought. By the end of intermission, most of the books, CDs, T-shirts, and other paraphernalia the poets had brought to sell were long gone. At the end of the performances, the poets autographed their products and event posters.



What made *Voices* of 2005 different from that of previous years, in addition to the greater array of artists that were invited to perform, was that this year *Voices for the Voiceless* was aired in New York City on Bronxnet. Another particularity of the occasion was a pre-concert panel, the first Five College Dialogue between National Community Poets and Academics. The event, a discussion on Latino and African Diaspora Studies and their relationship to the spoken word, took place at Pruyne Lecture Hall on December 9. Among the panelist were Montoya, Laviera, Vargas, and Rivera, who led a debate about the role of spoken word not solely as an art form but also as a way of political expression, and whether it continues to be used as such by later generations of Latinos. The discussion was followed by a reception catered by *La Veracruzana*, during which students had a chance to talk one-on-one with the poets. *Voices* simply continues to grow. As *The Amherst Student* stated, “Since the original gathering seven years ago, “Voices” has become one of the College’s premier cultural events.” To secure this premier cultural event, along with the Harlem Renaissance and Keepers of the Word, a few students are working towards including it as one of the events funded under the College’s master general fund (money from the student activities’ fees allocated for specific events). This would guarantee funding for *Voices*, and institutionally give it the security and respect that this event—La Causa’s biggest of the year—has earned .



# Backpacking

# Latin



## Fall 2005

**Oye Loca...Ven P'aca!** La Causa's first party of the year with DJ Therion of Boston. The party attracted a line of students that went down the block, raising over \$1,200 for the semester.

**Flamenco Performance and Dance Lesson!** La Causa invited Yvonne Gutierrez, a flamenco dancer (who has worked with various people including Tito Puente) to perform and then teach those who attended a dance. La Causa served home-made tapas and sparkling grape juice.

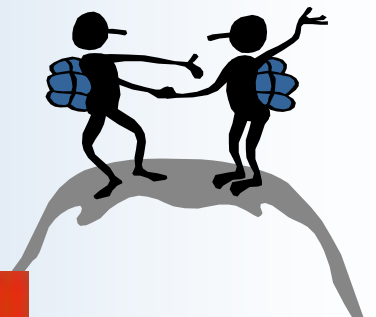
**The Rise of the Latino Middle Class:** Antonio Farias, an educational consultant focusing on diversity, tolerance, inclusion, and equity came to lecture about the rise of the Latino middle class. He is the Director of Diversity Affairs at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

**Movie Night: *City of God*.** La Causa hosted a night in which we showed *City of God*, a film about two young boys growing up in Rio de Janeiro; one takes the path of professional photography, the other of violent drug-dealing.

**Latino Cooking Night:** To avoid Valentine food and enjoy the tastes of home, La Causa members host a cooking night every semester wherein members cook a full dinner and open it up to campus. On the menu: *guacamole, arroz con gandules, quesadillas, chuletas, piña coladas*.

**Lecture by Senator Jarrett Barrios:** Senator Barrios came to speak on topics ranging from the difficulties of his role as the first Hispanic and openly-gay State Senator in Massachusetts, to the fighting for bilingual education and gay marriage. He discussed how his background, upbringing, educational experience, and activism shaped his decision to go into politics.

**Voices for the Voiceless:** La Causa hosted twelve spoken word poets for an evening concert. This event was preceded by a panel discussion on spoken word poetry, academia, and on Latinos' role in the creation of ethnic studies and the importance of a Latino Studies department.





# La Causa's Through America

## Spring 2006

**Burn it Up!** La Causa held its spring party at La Casa (Seligman House), featuring Latin music.

**Peruvian Cooking Night:** Over 75 students came to feast on authentic Peruvian cuisine cooked by La Causa's E-board and membership. The menu: *Causa* (yes, it's a real and delicious dish), *aji de gallina*, *lomo saltado*, *tallarines verdes*, *chicha morada*, and *alfajores*.

**Saturday, April 1: Performance by Comedian Joey Medina.** The famed Latino comic Joey Medina will come to Amherst to give a performance of his unique brand of comedy. Featured in the *Latin Kings of Comedy* film, Medina is a well-recognized comedian and at the top of his field.

**Friday, April 7: Five-College Latino Cultural Dinner: Pa'lante!** The collective Latino organizations of the five colleges will gather to celebrate "community empowerment through the arts" during our annual *Pa'lante* celebration featuring food and music from various regions of the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking world. The event will be hosted by our sister institution Mount Holyoke this year. Expect student performances (including one from La Causa) and Alberto Sandoval as the keynote.

**Friday-Sunday, April 21-23: Alumni Weekend and Latino Jazz Night!**

**Thursday, April 27: Cesar Montes: Stories of Latin American Resistance.** Cesar Montes will lecture on his experiences as a "guerrilla" resistance fighter in Guatemala and the often-disastrous effects of the continent's lingering colonial inheritance.

**Friday, April 28, Samba Night!** The organization will be bringing an authentic Samba troupe to come and teach students and community members how to dance to this famous beat. Brazilian style appetizers and refreshments will serve as welcome respite as the dance floor heats up.

**Friday, May 5: Latino Culture Dinner in honor of graduating Amherst seniors.** This annual event takes the time to honor those seniors who have shown great commitment to La Causa and to advancing the goals for which La Causa stands.



Ron Espiritu



Senior

  
Spotlight

Cristina Morales



By: Anaïd Reyes '08

Senior year at Amherst does not leave seniors with much time on their hands, especially for those double majoring and writing a thesis. But take a look around during a typical La Causa meeting in our beloved José Martí room on a Wednesday night, and in a sea of faces one can see one of La Causa's resident dinosaurs and troublemakers. To Ron Dayid Espiritu '06, La Causa has meant a great deal. After all, it has been through La Causa that he has formed many long-lasting friendships, "The people I'm going to stay in touch with are people I've met in La Causa," says Espiritu.

It was also through La Causa that he got involved in organizing the annual poetry and spoken word festival "Voices for the Voiceless," one of the premier cultural events at Amherst. He fondly looks back at the role "Voices" has had on his academic endeavors and the difference it has made in his life. "It shaped my intellectual interests at the college," says Espiritu. In fact, his thesis for an interdisciplinary major on Latino Literature Studies is a comparative intercultural study on Chicano and Nuyorican poetry where he interlaces the biographies and stories of many of the artists he has met through "Voices;" such personalities as Raul Salinas, Carmen Tafoya, Pedro Pietri, Jesus Papoieto Melendez and Louis Reyes Rivera.

In addition to his academic pursuits as a History and Latino Literature Studies major, Espiritu has been a constant and respected student leader on campus. Since sophomore year he has been the co-chair of the Chicano/a Caucus and one of Amherst's representatives for the East Coast Chicano Student Forum; he has also been the Five College Representative for La Causa, helping plan such events as "Pa'lante," the five college cultural celebration. As for the troublemaker part, well he's always shaking things up on campus, most recently asking the tough questions during President Marx's Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) meeting as to the future of a possible Latino Studies department and the lack of ethnic studies at Amherst.

Go back to that room full of current La Causa members and he'll also stand out for the mere fact that he's a guy. When asked why he thinks there tends to be a disparity between guys and girls on past executive boards as well as the current one, he thinks it is because "girls get things done." On a serious note, he also remarks that there are only four or five Latino males graduating in his class. As for the future, Espiritu knows he wants to work with Latino youth, perhaps as a teacher, but definitely taking all the privileges he's been given and putting them to good use.

By: Antoinette Flores '08

Cristina Morales '06 is known to a majority of La Causa and the current E-board as a big sister figure. Her graduation is seen as bittersweet because her dedication and role in La Causa over the past few years cannot be replaced.

**Intercambio: Tell us about your role in La Causa.**

**Cristina:** I've been an active member since freshman year, and I was co-chair during my sophomore year.

**I: What do you think your biggest accomplishment with La Causa is?**

**C:** I feel like Causa's accomplishments are mostly group accomplishments, because a lot of the things that Causa does really couldn't happen if it were just one person. Collectively, I've seen La Causa or the E-board get a lot done; cool events, dance lessons, hot parties, cooking nights, and bringing in capable, motivated new members. You could say that the (brilliant) current E-board is an accomplishment of previous E-board/club members, who attracted people to meetings and events, helped them get involved and step up to leadership positions. So I'm really proud of the current sophomores and juniors.

**I: Do you think La Causa has advanced and/or changed in any way?**

**C:** It feels smaller than it used to, but it's stayed strong. Voices expanded impressively this year. Also, we haven't gotten really political, but we've gotten a little more into Amherst politics with the ethnic studies movement. There was a lot of Causa support for the APA certificate, and the push now for Latino studies.

**I: What are your plans after college?**

**C:** To save the world. I'll let you know how it works out. Or, to be a little more realistic, I'm looking for something in environmental research or conservation, maybe work for a non-profit, and maybe something that will send me back to Latin America for a little while (Peace Corps maybe). I might wind up in grad school after that. So...basically, I don't know.

**I: What other clubs have you worked with?**

**C:** MassPIRG, Juarez Activism Group, Newman Club, Chicano/a Caucus, ACF.

Cristina's final comments demonstrate that the bittersweet feeling of her departure is mutual: "I've made a lot of great friends through La Causa and I'm really going to miss it next year! Ok, that sounds sappy but it's true. You're gonna edit this right?"



# La Causa Executive Board, 2005-2006

## Fall 2005

## Spring 2006

Senior Co-Chair	Monica Ortiz '07	Senior Co-Chair	Tahnee Tangherlini '08
Junior Co-Chair	Tahnee Tangherlini '08	Junior Co-Chair	Toni Flores '08
Secretary	Toni Flores '08	Secretary	Alex Clark '08
Treasurer	Jai Roehl '07	Treasurer	Daniel Calvert '09
Publicity Chair	Virginia Lora '08	Publicity Chair	Virginia Lora '08
Five-College Rep.	Angelica Cesario '08	Five-College Rep.	Angelica Cesario '08
Alumni Rep.	Oscar Baez '08	Alumni Rep.	Oscar Baez '08

La Causa meets in the José Martí room in Keefe Campus Center every Wednesday at 9:00 p.m. Our weekly meetings allow members (open to *anyone* on campus interested in Latino culture) to plan events, make announcements, enjoy a study break with great food and music, and strategize about the role of La Causa and Latinos in the Amherst College community. Most weekly meetings are discussion-based. Recent meetings topics include: Latino Identity and the Spanish language, Immigration reform, the Minute Man Project and Machismo with guest Professor Carleen Basler, and a discussion of activism inspired by 1978 *Amherst Student* articles of La Causa's takeover of Fayerweather.



From: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



*La Causa*  
 AC # 2107 Keefe Campus Center,  
 Amherst College  
 Amherst, MA 01002-5000





2005– 2006 Latino Pride Banner signed by the Amherst College community to usher in Mes Latino

## Alumni Update: ¡Qué tal?

La Causa is compiling a Latino alumni directory that will facilitate networking between current Amherst students and alumni, and between alumni themselves. Please take a moment to tell us what you have been up to. Responses may be sent by regular mail to our address at the Keefe Campus Center or electronically to [lacausa@amherst.edu](mailto:lacausa@amherst.edu).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive future issues of *Intercambio*?

Yes

No

Amherst major (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your extracurricular involvement as an undergrad. If you were a member of La Causa, describe your level of involvement.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### Personal Information

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bus. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments:

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