

# EL PUENTE Palante!

The Community's Voice for Peace & Justice

NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 1 • MARCH 12, 1997

## EL PUENTE MEMBERS SIGN UP FOR TRAINING

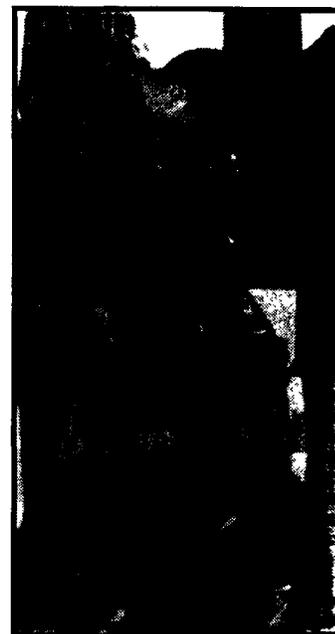


Cristobal Rodriguez, a member of the El Puente Academy's first graduating class of 1997, began the Pre-Apprenticeship Environmental Worker Training on January 21, along with 5 other new El Puente members. In the photograph to the left, Cristobal and fellow El Puente member Jose Alvira put on "Class A" suits and respirators as part of their 40 Hour Hazardous Waste Certification Training. Participants meet every Tuesday night at 6:00pm as part of our 17-30 adult membership.

Jose Ortiz (right) suits up with a visiting journeyman of the Carpenters Union.

A second training group recruited from Williamsburg and Bushwick began February 24th.

*John Fleming*



## B-BOY SUMMIT SHUT DOWN ILLEGALLY

The B-Boy Summit '97 in San Diego California brought over 4,000 people together from around the world to witness the continuous evolution of Hip-Hop culture. A free event for the Hip-Hop community, the Summit offered educational panel discussions, dance demos, fashion shows, a B-Boy/Girl break-off, merchandise and more. As always, the Summit was a peaceful event, with the exception of the San Diego Police Department, local politicians, and the Fire Marshals, whose goal was to see the demise of this

convention. Something about young people of all cultures coming together in mass, elevating to the next level brings fear to the heart of those who control the politics and practices of San Diego. Although they illegally shut down our Graff show and the DJ MC showcase, the only thing they succeeded in was making us stronger. As we spread the word to Summit supporters so they know the deal, we're looking into filing a lawsuit against the City of San Diego.

*Jennifer McLaughlin*

## JULIA DE BURGOS POETRY READING ON WBAL

On Sunday March 9th, 1997, I recently appeared on WBAL's *Ritmo Y Aché* with Nancy Rodriguez along with Sery Colón, owner of Agueybana Bookstore. Poet/singer, Carmen De Lucca and guitarist Miguel Rosa accompanied me in a homage to the greatest contemporary, female poet that Puerto Rico ever produced, Julia De Burgos during Womyn's History Month.

Reading her poetry to the tune of Mr. Rosa's sensual sounds was very special to me, especially since it was done on my 36th

birthday. I felt her presence and her approval as I let her smooth words escape from my mouth and onto the airwaves.

I was very proud to have been representing such a talented woman, who's life was cut short due to a recurring bout with pneumonia in the Summer of 1953. It would have been nice to have met her while she was still alive.

If anyone is interested in listening to a copy of the show please let me know.

*Naomi M. Melendez*

**IF YOU WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE NEWSLETTER, SEE JOHN FLEMING**

# MEMORIAL GROUNDS

I'm gunna miss the 12 steps of criminals slapping pounds every morning cause the ghetto raised us family. Taken out of this world surviving on the misery of my peoples addiction, a painful cough erupted the blood to a war paint style on my face. Mommy and Daddy called for me and failed in loud cries. A victim to street competition was at their sight. Born to broken dreams, died to twenty years was my purpose... Like the old folks say. Hoping they're wrong about what is supposed to happen to me now... Am I gunna get the chance to go to heaven. Yeah!!! I'll be riding up in fluffy white cloud rocking the 100% cotton Hanes that become like shorts to my fragile ass. But what if I don't want that... Whatever happened to that famous saying the neighborhood Rastafarian told me... OH! Yeah! when you die, you only exist in the minds of everybody you leave behind. Why can't heaven be up to me.



Do you really think I want a gravestone in the middle of nowhere... As a matter of fact this gives me an idea... When I die, I want my heaven to be a twenty by thirty foot wall, a tampered jif to resurrect my life in the mist of a thick flat black. I want to bold the pearl white, ebony red letters that will cause my soul to become a wildstyle figure. Most important is my creator and he will be the cleverest of them all, stacking the latest krylon colors like dominoes in his thirty eight by forty fours. Yo, I'm not gunna lie to you, I do want to rest in peace... Yeah a graph piece on 149th street in Grand Concourse, where my boys can raise their kids on the corner which I will live forever... Rare is the child that will not hold a question mark when they see me. It will go on to start my life story as one of struggle and end like a folklore.

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Character design by Hector Arias for

**EL PUENTE**  
DESIGN

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## RESTRUCTURING UPDATE

The Interim Leadership Circle (ILC) has set up 3 new committees to complete the restructuring process begun this past summer. The committees, the chairpersons, and participating members of the ILC are as follows:

- **Membership Development:**  
Chairperson John Fleming,  
Josephina Santiago, Ernesto Malave
  - **Membership Manual/Personnel Policy:**  
Chairperson Gino Maldonado
  - **Training & Political Education:**  
Chairperson Rossy Matos,  
Hector Calderon, Monica Rivera, Joe Matunis
- Each committee must meet prior to the next meeting of the ILC on Wednesday, March 26th, and must be prepared to present to the ILC at that meeting. The ILC has set the end of July as the target date for the completion of all restructuring activities. If you would like to participate on any of the above committees please contact the chairperson

## SOCCER

Jorge Mosquera will be facilitating a soccer program. The meeting time will be Mondays and Thursdays 3:30pm to 5:30pm at McCarren Park.

## MARCH DATES

3 / 1 4 / 9 7  
-Cap & Gown Day (HIP)

3 / 1 9 / 9 7  
-Pollution Prevention Seminar  
6:00pm - 8:30pm

3 / 2 0 / 9 7  
-6pm Lecture Demo (Dance)  
-Open School Night

3 / 2 0 / 9 7  
-Open School Day

3 / 2 2 / 9 7  
-Lemon-Aid 8pm

3 / 2 4 / 9 7  
-Program Committee Meeting 2pm

3 / 2 6 / 9 7  
-Abdel Salaam & 651 meetings with Senior Class and Staff 1-3pm  
-Pollution Prevention Seminar 6:00pm - 8:30pm  
-ILC Meeting

3 / 2 7 / 9 7  
-LEAP Awards Ceremony @ Henry Street Settlement House

3 / 3 1 / 9 7  
R A C I A L  
J U S T I C E  
D A Y

## WOMYN'S HISTORY MONTH

In recognition of Womyn's History Month the Womyn's Group will be hosting a Womyn's Dinner and an acknowledgement ceremony for the female Directors and coordinators of El Puente. The ceremony will be held on Friday, March 21st from 5:30pm to 7:30pm on the 2nd floor. Invitations will be placed in your mailboxes. Contact Person: Joanne Nokland.

**Lemon+Aid**  
fundraiser for Andrew Anderson  
**live poetry & hip hop**  
featuring:

- All That! Jazz Band
- Mums the Schemer
- High Priest
- Suheir
- The Welfare Poets
- Full Circle Dancers
- Universes from the Bronxside
- Siah & Yeshua the P.Oed
- El Puente Academy All Stars

**Saturday**  
**March 22, 1997**  
8pm - \$7 w/ flyer \$10 w/o

now on sale!!

**EL PUENTE**

navy-blue windbreaker jackets: \$20 (xl & xxl)

long sleeve black t-shirts: \$10 (l, xl & xxl)

See Edgardo to Place Orders

# EL PUENTE

Academy for Peace & Justice



inspiring  
& nurturing  
leadership  
for  
peace  
& justice

## “A Bridge from Hope to Social Justice”

*N.Y. Times, front page, May 23, 1994*

The El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is the first public high school for human rights in America. Opened in 1993, through a unique New Visions/ New York City Board of Education initiative, the Academy is the academic, research and technology arm of El Puente, a fifteen year old community institution headquartered in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Since 1982 El Puente (Spanish for “The Bridge”) has worked from a neighborhood challenged by poverty, pollution and political negligence to connect young people and their communities across New York City and across the nation for development, democracy, healing and human rights.

The mission of El Puente and that of its Academy are one and the same: to inspire and nurture leadership for Peace and Justice. Rooted in El Puente, the Academy is a uniquely integrated

and multi-faceted learning center. Partnering with diverse institutions ranging from the New York City Board of Education to the American Museum of Natural History; from the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation to 651 Arts Center at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Academy offers an exciting array of opportunities and experiences for young people. Faculty and the context for curriculum development are drawn from El Puente’s family health clinic, its (and Brooklyn’s most) comprehensive Latino/multicultural arts center and its celebrated leadership in conservation, environmental justice, public health, community arts development and pre-professional multi-arts training.

### “Building Social Capital”

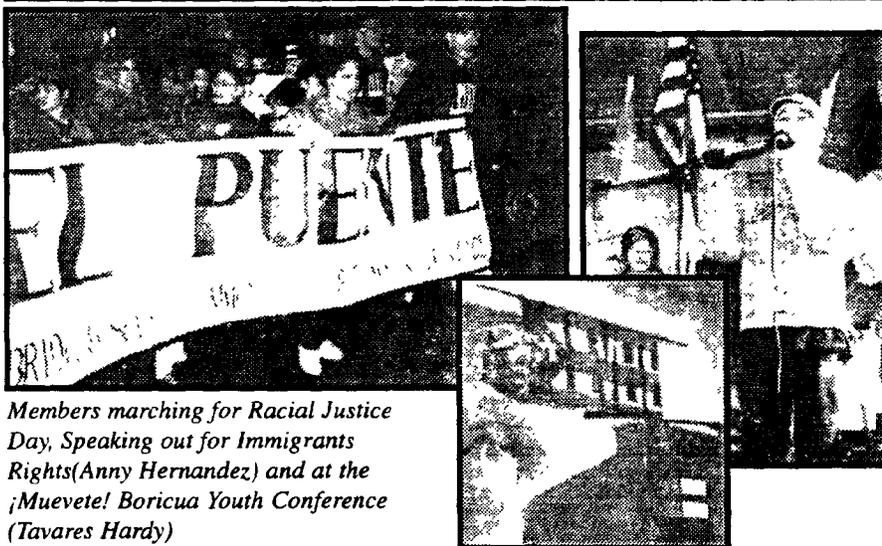
*Rainbow Research Inc  
Evaluation sponsored by the  
Kettering Foundation*

In 1996, El Puente members’ achievements included a graduation from Harvard University, a Tony Award for Best Featured

Actor in a musical (*Rent*) and the successful halt of plans to build a legislated 55 story incinerator through a community coalition of Latino, Hasidic, Polish, Italian and African American residents. As architects of their own history, Academy students join family and faculty alike in community development projects that support learning to serve and serving to learn. An academically and intellectually rigorous curriculum is both informed and reinforced by student driven initiatives that in four years have:

- vaccinated hundreds of children through two community vaccination drives
- screened community children for lead poisoning
- planted one hundred trees in the community
- operated a community soup kitchen
- designed a botanical and concert garden
- produced annual arts and cultural festivals:
  - Three Kings Day Festival
  - Unity Through Diversity Cultural Festival
  - Body and Spirit Arts Showcase
- researched, prepared and conducted community presentations on the epidemiology of upper respiratory disease.
- led community and city wide marches for Immigrants Rights, against Police brutality, for voter participation and advocacy and for environmental justice
- connected with the world via student designed web pages on the internet
- visited cities across our country and as far as Italy, Finland and Russia to promote peace and justice.

## El Puente takes a stand for human rights



*Members marching for Racial Justice Day, Speaking out for Immigrants Rights (Anny Hernandez) and at the ¡Muevete! Boricua Youth Conference (Tavares Hardy)*

## “Human Rights High”

*Rights & Wrongs: Human Rights Television, airdate: May 7, 1994*

“Rights and Wrongs” a PBS series seen in 52 countries declared the Academy “the only public high school for human rights in the world.” The New Republic singled out the Academy as a standard bearer for “theme schools” and the Christian Science Monitor proclaimed it as “one of the most successful players in a small-school revolution sweeping New York and other big cities.”

In truth, the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is less a school for its own sake and more an instrument for the development of an indigenous leadership founded by El Puente’s co-founder Frances

## El Puente nurtures and inspires leadership

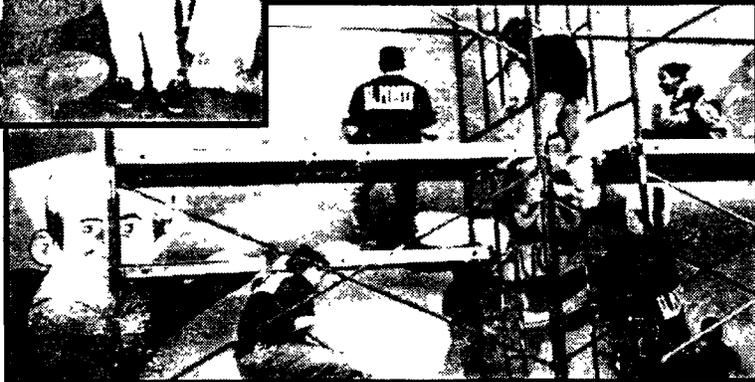


*Creative Writing Class during the evening program, researching on the internet and documenting our own history for the media program*

Lucerna and a team of El Puente facilitators. However, the inspiration came from young people themselves. In October 1990, El Puente

celebrated the United Nations Summit for Children with an evening of tough dialogue among young people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds about the constant violence that threatened them all. At this “Brooklyn Youth Building Bridges for Peace” summit young delegates from throughout the borough created a sacred space for safety and respect in which they could share their mutual feelings of fear and frustration. By the end of the night they were calling for the creation of a high school dedicated to peace and justice. It is in that spirit and with that charge that the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice proudly serves its young people and community.

## El Puente embraces the arts



*Young people rehearsing for the Three Kings Day Celebration, Fine Arts Facilitator Joe Matunis in the art studio and muralists working on the “Erase The Hate” mural for USA Network’s documentary “It Just Takes One” which aired March, 1997*

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## Academy for Peace & Justice

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Immigrant Rights March across Brooklyn Bridge,  
Brooklyn, NY November 2, 1996