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Cover Page Footnote

This article is from an earlier iteration of *Diálogo* which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."

Letter from the Editor

La necesidad e importancia del diálogo

by Félix Masud-Piloto

Nearly three years ago a group of friends at DePaul University's Center for Latino Research (CLR), concerned about the many challenges facing Latin America and Latino communities in the United States, began discussing ways of creating an outlet to encourage dialogue among all members of these communities. As we discussed the possibilities, we realized that scholarly journals, while important and necessary to advance Latino scholarship, are, by definition, too exclusive and limited in scope and content. We wanted to provide a forum with a wider and more inclusive perspective and readership that would not consign Latino creative expressions to library collections and archives. Our communities deserve and demand a larger and more direct participation in discussions of the issues that affect them.

Diálogo strives to provide this more inclusive forum by publishing scholarly articles, essays, interviews, and creative work concerning Latino communities in the United States, as well as Latin American affairs. Likewise, our pages welcome not only the work of scholars, but also of community leaders, organizers, artists, workers, and students. We hope that the honest and responsible exchange of ideas will build bridges that will shorten or eliminate the distance between the world of academics and the life and struggles of our communities.

Diálogo also hopes to encourage and help Latino communities to document and preserve their histories and experiences that for too long have been neglected, denied, and distorted. Such a task would be impossible, however, unless we study and analyze our experiences in this country within the context of Latin America and that region's political, economic, military, and cultural relationships with the United States. These links are vital to understanding our realities. Thus we have conceived *Diálogo* as a multilingual publication that welcomes opinions and discourse from Latinos in the U.S. and Latin Americans everywhere.

We further felt a pressing need to provide an arena for ongoing conversation about the particular concerns of Latinos in the Midwest. Chicago has one of the most diverse Latin American populations in the U.S. It is the only U.S. city with large communities of the nation's two major Latino groups, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. In addition, during the past two decades, the

city has experienced the influx of numerous immigrants from Central and South America. Today Latinos constitute 23% of Chicago's population, and the city's Latino population has grown to more than 500,000. Yet, despite the numbers, and the fact that for over eighty years Latino immigrants from all over Latin America have contributed to the social, political, and economic development of this region, we are still perceived as the "new ethnics" by the heads of institutions and policy makers.

By the year 2050, Latinos will make-up 24.5% of the U.S. population, making it the largest minority in the nation. As we prepare to take on the new burdens and responsibilities that will come with our new status, dialogue among ourselves becomes vitally necessary and important. Our highest aspirations are to help advance that dialogue, and the causes of social justice, civil rights, cultural survival, and economic development. We hope to initiate open and historically sound debates on the issues that most directly affect our communities: identity, culture, immigration, politics, gender and class differences, health, housing, and education, to name only a few. Most of us have been engaged in these debates for some time and will continue doing so in the pages of *Diálogo*.

Diálogo will be published twice a year. Each issue will include various sections which we hope will encourage the submission of diverse forms of expression. **Desde el Taller** will include artistic work, photo essays, poems and short stories. **Chispas** will provide brief and current information concerning Latino and Latin American Affairs. **Reseñas** will be dedicated to the review of books and movies about Latinos. **Dialogando** is where we will publish interviews with community leaders, educators, political activists, artists, social workers, and business people both in the US and Latin America. **Desde el Mero Medio** will feature articles and creative work that highlight the Latino experience in the Midwest. **De La América Nuestra** will include pieces concerning Latin American issues that are of particular interests to U.S. Latinos.

We invite you to participate in the dialogue by contributing to *Diálogo*. Your opinions and commentaries are important not only to us, but also to the future of our communities.

To Our Readers

The staff at *Diálogo* is in the process of identifying community leaders, artists, writers, and scholars to serve on our Editorial Advisory Board. If you would like to recommend individuals to serve on the Board, please send us their name, address, and telephone number so we may contact them. The names of the Editorial Advisory Board will be published in the next issue of *Diálogo*.

Gracias Por La Solidaridad

The creation and production of *Diálogo* has been a truly collective process that brought together many talented people, united only by their strong belief in our mission. First and foremost, I would like to thank **Marisa Alicea**, **Mervin Méndez**, and **José Solís**. Without their enormous creative energy, insightful discussions, and sharp social analyses, *Diálogo* would not have been possible. I am also most grateful to **Neici Zeller**. Her skillful writing, proofreading, and typesetting have been invaluable, specially for this critical first issue. To **Amor Montes de Oca**, I simply want to say THANKS. Her photographs are much more eloquent than I'll ever be.

Many in Chicago's Latino communities were also instrumental to the conception and development of *Diálogo*. So many have contributed with their comments, suggestions, criticisms, and creativity, that at the risk of omitting some, they shall remain nameless. They know who they are, and we will never forget their generosity. The great outpouring of human solidarity we received from our communities are our greatest satisfaction and richest reward. We look forward to many years of constructive collaboration.

I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to our colleagues and friends at DePaul University who have supported us from the beginning and contributed selflessly to our efforts: **Mirza González**, **Juana Goergen**, **Marta Caminero Santangelo**, **Bibiana Suárez**, **Ted Anton**, **José Soltero**, **Rose Spalding**, and **Enrique Arias** deserve special recognition. Also at DePaul, the Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs, **Richard Meister** and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Dean, **Michael Mezey**, supported *Diálogo* from the beginning. Thanks also to **María de los Angeles Corral**, **Susana Ochoa**, **Marisol Morales**, **Miguel Morales**, **Alejandra Ibáñez**, and **Rubén Rivera**. Their great energy and enthusiasm inspired and encouraged us throughout this process.

Félix Masud-Piloto



Diálogo's editorial staff at the Center for Latino Research offices. From left to right: Neici Zeller, Mervin Méndez, Marisa Alicea, and Félix Masud-Piloto.