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From the Editor

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From the Editor



"Yo no quiero entrar en la historia. Yo quiero entrar en la zona del Canal." Omar Torrijos

Defendiendo lo Nuestro

Félix Masud-Piloto

Unlike many publications that during the past year focused much of their attention to compiling long lists of the 20th Century's best athletes, writers, entertainers, heroes, scientists and other celebrities, *Diálogo* is happy to continue focusing its attention on the issues and problems that affect and interest our communities. In this issue we try to recognize and remember the tens of thousands of Latinas and Latinos who have served with distinction and courage in the U.S. armed forces.

Despite that honorable record, a recent Pentagon study revealed that 79% of Latinos currently serving in the U.S. military have experienced racially offensive encounters, some including threats involving another service member or Defense Department employee. Thus we hope that the stories of "Private Atzlan" and other Latinos who fought in every war the U.S. was engaged in during the past century will help create a higher awareness and better understanding of the many contributions Latinos have made to the defense and preservation of American freedoms. In a similar vein, we hope that the exposés of the U.S. Navy's ecological damage to the island of Vieques and its political ramifications will contribute to the national debate over the political status of Puerto Rico.

It was most reassuring and satisfying, however, to have ushered the new millennium with the Panama Canal under Panamanian sovereignty. For three-

quarters of the 20th century, United States control of the canal-zone was a constant reminder of U.S. interference and power in Latin America. On the other hand, Puerto Rico remains a colony of the United States after more than a century of colonialism and Cuba remains, after nearly 40 years, economically blockaded by its powerful northern neighbor.

To focus on those and similar issues, we are introducing a new permanent section, **Defendiendo lo Nuestro**, (Defending What is Ours). This section will provide a forum for specialists, practitioners and organizers, with diverse points of view, to discuss issues, problems and historical events of special interest to Latinos, particularly those that are ignored and neglected by the mass media. In future *Diálogos*, we will discuss the roots and roles of Afro-Latinos, the effects of gender and class, the immigration debate, as well as issues affecting labor, religion and politics in Latin America and U.S.-Latino communities.

As *Diálogo* continues to take on the task of providing a place for the respectful discussion and exchange of controversial issues and ideas, we would like to remind our readers that the opinions expressed in our publication belong to the authors that contribute generously to our efforts. In the best spirit of *Diálogo*, we welcome and would be glad to publish challenges, rebuttals and counterpoints to our articles.