

GARIFUNA AMERICAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION UNITED



GAHFU, INC.

Presents



5th ANNUAL GARIFUNA COMMUNITY FORUM '09



Saturday, September 26 2009 10 am to 6 pm

www.garifunaheritagefoundation.org

Free admission

"Preserving the Garifuna legacy: past, present and future"

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- Dr. Cadrin E. Gill, Honorary Consul General of Saint Vincent & The Grenadines (Yurumein)
- Dr. Oliver Green Film "Play, Jakunu Play" & a Discussion on Garifuna Mass - DÜGÜ
- Ruben Reyes - Garifuna Culture & Language School Teacher - Garifuna Dictionary, Author
- Enita Lambey Barrett - Structure & Usage of the Garifuna Language - University of the West Indies
- Carlos Domingo Alvarez, Garifuna Master Drummer and GAHFU School Teacher
- Greg Palacio, Garifuna Artist-Painter - Art Exhibit of his oil paintings & more
- Anita Martinez - Garifuna History & Culture
- Filmmaker Ali Allie from "The Spirit of My Mother"

PERFORMANCES BY:

- **CULCHA JAM GARIFUNA BAND**
- **IDEAL ROLANDO CASTILLO**
- **GEORGETTE LAMBEY**
- **BOOTSIE RANKIN'**
- **GUWIE POSSEY BAND**
- **LIBAÑA BABA CULTURAL DRUMMERS**
- **SCREENING OF THE DOCUMENTARY "THE SPIRIT OF MY MOTHER"**
- **SCREENING OF THE DOCUMENTARY "PLAY, JANKUNU PLAY" THE GARIFUNA WANARAGUA RITUAL OF BELIZE BY DR. OLIVER N. GREENE, JR.**
- **ARTS & CRAFTS, GARIFUNA ASSOCIATIONS, BUSINESSES & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES BOOTHS**



CAL STATE UNIVERSITY LOS ANGELES

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5th Annual Garifuna Community Forum

California State University, Los Angeles

5151 State University Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90032

Saturday, September 26, 2009

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

"Preserving the Garifuna Legacy: Past, Present & Future"



Presented by:

Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United (GAHFU)

California State University, Los Angeles

Salvadoran University Student Union (U.S.E.U)

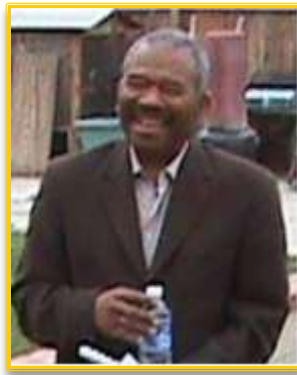
El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA)

Keynote Speakers



DR. CADRIN E. GILL

Consul General of St. Vincent & The Grenadines



“Vincy Homecoming 2009”

Dr. Cadrin E. Gill is the Honorary Consul General of St. Vincent & The Grenadines for the Western United States. A Garifuna native of Sandy Bay, Garifuna Reservation in Yurumein, Dr. Gill practices family medicine in his clinic in Los Angeles, California. He has been working with the Garifuna community of Los Angeles since the early nineties.

Dr. Gill will be bringing us an update on what transpired at the Vincy Reunion (*Vincy Homecoming 2009*) during the month of July where all natives of St. Vincent & The Grenadines were invited to go back home and celebrate a big reunion, which included the trip organized in New York by The Garifuna Coalition USA. Several Garinagu from New York traveled to Yurumein to be part of this historic reunion and Dr. Gill represented GAHFU, Inc. and the Garinagu from Los Angeles, California.



OLIVER GREENE

Ethnomusicologist, Georgia State University



“Dügü The Garifuna Mass”

Oliver N. Greene, Jr. is an associate professor of music at Georgia State University where he teaches courses in traditional and popular world music and carnival in Trinidad & Tobago and Brazil. He holds a Ph.D. in musicology (emphasis, ethnomusicology) from Florida State University and masters and bachelors degrees from Southern Methodist University and the College Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, respectively. He has published articles in the *Black Music Research Journal*, *Continuum*, *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* and in the book *The Garifuna: A Nation Across Borders*. Research presented at the *Seminaire d'Ethnomusicologie* at the International Gwoka Music Festival in Guadeloupe, French West Indies, is published online. Oliver Greene has also presented research at meetings of the Caribbean Studies Association, Society for Ethnomusicology, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, the Center for Black Music Research (CBMR), and the International Council of Traditional Music. In 2005 he directed a study abroad trip on the music and arts of carnival to Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, Brazil. As a recipient of a Rockefeller fellowship at the CBMR in Chicago in 2000, he conducted fieldwork and research on the relationships between art, dance, and music in the expression of identity in the wanaragua (Jankuno) ritual of the Garifuna of Belize. He has also conducted research on popular music and ancestor veneration rituals of the Garifuna in Belize and Honduras. *Play, Jankunú Play - The Garifuna Wanaragua Ritual in Belize* has been screened in the Bronx, NY at the 2007 Garifuna Community Forum, in Dangriga, Belize at the 2006 Conference of the National Garifuna Council, in Honolulu at the 2006 Annual Meeting for the Society for Ethnomusicology, and in Atlanta in several venues.



ENITA LAMBHEY BARRETT

Professor



“Structure and Usage of The Garifuna Language”

Enita Lambhey Barrett was born in the beautiful village of Seine Bight, Stann Creek District, Belize. She received her high school diploma from Belize Junior Secondary School #2 now known as Gwen Lizarraga High School and Belmopan Comprehensive School. She holds a teaching diploma from the Belize Teacher’s College and a Bachelors in Secondary School English Education from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. She also holds two Masters Degrees from the University of North Florida- One in Educational Leadership and the other in Secondary School Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)..

Mrs. Barrett entered the teaching profession in 1983 and remained a teacher until 1998 when she became principal of Gwen Lizarraga High School. She held this position for four years before retiring and moving to the United States to pursue her terminal degree. She has taught at the University of Belize and played the vital role of writing and teaching an Introduction to Garifuna course at the University of the West Indies. This course has been offered by the UWI since it was approved in 2003.

Mrs. Barrett’s passion is the study and research of the Garifuna language. She has spent the last ten years collaborating with the UWI Department of Language Linguistics and Philosophy in an attempt to understand the linguistic make-up of the Garifuna Language. It is her hope that this knowledge will enable us to write more linguistically accurate Garifuna grammar text books for use in our Garifuna classes.

Currently, Mrs. Barrett is on the dissertation year of her Doctorate in Educational Leadership at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida where she is also an adjunct professor of ESOL Methods and Curriculum.



ANITA MARTINEZ

Community Activist & Educator



“Garifuna History & Culture from a Woman’s Perspective”

Anita Lambey Martinez has been a community activist for nearly thirty years. She started her service to the community after she immigrated to the United States in 1978. In 1981, she joined the Preservation of the Garifuna Culture Society (PGCS). She served as President of the group and organized Garifuna participation in the Opening Ceremonies of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. During this time, she also directed the Walagante Garifuna Youth Group and was co-editor of “Luganute Garifuna” newsletter.

Mrs. Martinez has always had a passion for motivating youth. This motivation extends beyond the Garifuna community, as she has served on the El Camino Youth Motivation task force and is a mentor to first-year college students at El Camino College. As Co-Director of the Wagiameme Performing Troupe, she has had the opportunity to educate numerous Garifuna and non-Garifuna youth about Garifuna language and culture. Mrs. Martinez also established a monthly Garifuna forum, to discuss and learn about current issues affecting the community and to teach basic Garifuna language and history.

Mrs. Martinez has made presentations on various aspects of Garifuna culture at universities, cultural events and on the radio. Mrs. Martinez served as a Community Liaison to the Garifuna population for the UCLA Community & Education Project and continues to serve her community on various projects.

Mrs. Martinez got her B.A. in Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Sociology from California State University, Dominguez Hills. She is currently preparing to pursue graduate studies.

Presenters



Sharron Williams Gelobter

Immigration Attorney



“Workshop On Immigration”

Sharron Williams Gelobter is a Garifuna who was born in Punta Gorda, Belize and raised in Belize City and New York City. She immigrated to the United States in 1978 and lived in New York City until 2001 then relocated to Northern California. Ms. Williams Gelobter is an attorney and the principal of Yurumein Law Firm in Oakland, CA. She is admitted to practice before the State Bar of California. She practices broad-based immigration law, general civil litigation and debtor bankruptcy law. In her immigration practice, Ms. Williams Gelobter has managed a high-volume caseload of various nonimmigrant and immigrant visa petitions, citizenship applications, family-based petitions, and re-entry permits for both corporate and non-corporate clients throughout the U.S. and abroad. Ms. Williams Gelobter also represents individual clients in deportation and removal proceedings, asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile petitions, and immigration appeals to the BIA. In her bankruptcy practice she represents consumers and small businesses filing for Chapter 7 and Chapter 13 bankruptcies. Prior to becoming an attorney, Ms. Williams Gelobter worked in the New York fashion industry for 10 years. During this period she volunteered as an advocate for undocumented women working in the sweat shops of the industry. After leaving the industry and before attending law school, Ms. Williams Gelobter became an advocate at the United Nations for women’s human rights issues.

She sits on the boards of the Charles Houston Bar Association (Northern California’s membership association for attorneys of African descent), the Bar Association of San Francisco and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration. Besides being a full time practicing attorney and a mom, Ms. Williams Gelobter is a writer of children’s stories, short stories and poetry. She has a long history as a spoken word poet in New York City.

Ms. Williams Gelobter received her first bachelor's degree in marketing for the fashion industry from the Fashion Institute of technology, a second bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies and Political Science from Hunter College of the City University of New York and her law degree from Fordham University School of Law in New York City. She is married to Michel Gelobter, an environmental entrepreneur and academic. They have three children Troy, Rhys and Nathan.



Greg Palacio

Garifuna Natural Life Artist



“Garifuna Heritage Art Exhibit”

Ulmar “Gregory” Palacio an indigenous Garifuna artist is from Dangriga, Belize. Greg P as he is referred to has 2 teenagers Nisie & Arunei. He is from a family of 9 and the son of Rita & Clifford Palacio. Greg worked 24 years for Delta Air Lines prior to taking an early out and returning to college in order to further his career in Game, Art, & Design with concentration in Animation. To date he has released 11 postcards, 2 calendars in 2008 & 2006, also a book-cover named 'A Garifuna Tale'. His exhibits: (2009) Central American exhibit downtown Los Angeles, November 19th art show LA Maba Cultural Center alongside Isiah Nicholas, Atlanta Rialto in conjunction with honoring the late great Andy Palacio coordinated by Oliver Greene (2008), El Camino College during black history month (2004), participated in first Garifuna Forum, also a poster-art for a traveling live stage show by Marvelous Production, in 2002/1992 Pasadena Public Library, California, 1998, Fields Museum and Noyes Gallery Chicago Illinois, plus Cambridge University Boston in conjunction with Andrea Leeland's Garifuna Journey, invited by NICH to Baron B liss Institute of Arts Belize, Central America (1994) and collaborated with known African American photographer Dennis O. Callwood in 1992 at the Black Gallery in Los Angeles. In addition he won 1st place in a competition for *Vision 2000 held in Hollywood. His masterpiece “Dügü” was sought after by Smithsonian but kept producing album/CD covers for Punta Rock, Bruckdown, Soca & Reggae artists, which made his artwork collectable internationally. Greg is also a member of a cultural drum band based in Los Angeles known as "Libaya Baba".

Ulmar Greg Palacio has a brush with purpose. Born in Belize, Central America on November 17, 1962 and raised in Dangriga Town. He is the fourth of nine children to Rita and Clifford Palacio. “Greg P” always showed interest in art. At an early age while

attending Sacred Heart School, he was chosen to go from classroom to classroom to draw colorful Christmas themes on blackboards. When Ulmar migrated to the United States and attended Loren Miller Elementary School in Los Angeles, California, his artistic ability was recognized by his 6th grade teacher and was nurtured ever since.

Greg's paintings are visually vibrant. Working in various mediums, he incorporates the spirituality and rhythms of his indigenous Garifuna heritage, which is truly sensational. In 1990, Palacio entered an art contest held in Hollywood, California from artists from Latin America and North America. His painting depicting a ceremonial dance from his culture called Dügü took first place. This accomplishment ignited his career. Although this early success did not have major curators or art collectors knocking at his door, the little money Greg received was well-invested. Presently Ulmar does commission work when time permits. Since 1992, Greg has participated in several art shows throughout the United States and Belize.

Greg has designed and painted several album covers for various Garifuna performers and he is a member of Libaña Baba Cultural Drummers.

Greg was recently invited to do a presentation of his oil paintings at Georgia State University. He was a member of the discussion panel featuring Dr. Joe Palacio, Michael Stone, Andrea Leeland focusing on the life of the late Andy Palacio.



Ruben Reyes

Entrepreneur, Teacher & Writer



“Garifuna Language & History”

RUBEN REYES is an entrepreneur in Los Angeles, California, born in the city of Tela, Atlantida, Honduras. At the age of 9 his parents relocated to the Garifuna community of El Triunfo de La Cruz. Ruben later developed interest in learning the Garifuna language and culture. He then became a Garifuna activist. At age 11 Ruben built his own 22mm. caliber rifle using wood and parts of an old refrigerator; built guitars for the local youth band, and sort of souvenirs. At the age 14 Ruben became very active in the church leadership (Iglesia San José). He later served 3 years in the First Artillery Battalion in Zambrano, he held the rank of sergeant. He was decorated best soldier by then Honduran President Policarpo Paz Garcia. He attended the parachuting

School in Támara, Honduras, where he became the first Garifuna/afro descendent to graduate parachute from the First Artillery Batallion.

Ruben Reyes was born with a natural ability to draw. He won several drawing and painting contests, in college and in the military. In 1981, he graduated as public accountant in Instituto Triunfo de la Cruz, in Tela, Honduras. Migrating to New York, he became (patronato) president of El Triunfo New York, and was leader of the Garifuna soccer team (San José) from 1982-1984. He managed to send band instruments to the school (Esteban Guardiola) in El Triunfo De La Cruz, Honduras. In 1984, he founded Clamor Garifuna “Lamumeha Garifuna” Radio program in Radio Impacto, Tela, Honduras bringing the Garifuna language to the air for the first time in the region. He was the first president of OFRANEH (Fraternal Organization of Blacks in Honduras) branch of Triunfo de la Cruz. He has translated the Honduras National Anthem into the Garifuna language and was elected president of SONHOCA (Society of Black Honduran in California)

He was a pupil of Dr. Jorge Bernardez and became very fluent and knowledgeable in Garifuna. He’s been working on a trilingual dictionary. He translated the Guatemalan National anthem into the Garifuna language. Ruben also participated in coordinating and was a keynote speaker in the three-day seminar “El Garifuna de frente al Siglo XXI”, in Trujillo, Honduras. He researched information regarding Garifuna National hero Juan Francisco Bulnez (Walumugu) and hired a Garifuna artist to draw his image. In 1998, he spearheaded a relief effort for Honduras after hurricane Mitch. He also designed a Garifuna Flag Emblem. He also produced and published the First Garifuna Ancestry Tree which included over 3000 people from Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and the United States. He is also a Certified trilingual (Garifuna, English and Spanish) interpreter to immigration court in Los Angeles County. Between 2004 and 2005, he co-founded “Wáfadaha Úwara” (Let’s cooperate together) in Los Angeles and in Honduras. The organization installed the first Internet Café in the Garifuna community of El Triunfo de la Cruz providing employment for 4 residents during 12 months. The Blazer Center and Ruben managed to ship 15 computers to 7 Garifuna communities in Honduras. Ruben also invented his own version of the Garifuna Clock. He also led the shipping of an Ambulance to the hospital “Luagu Hátuadi Waduheñu” in Ciriboya, Honduras. GAHFU’s Garifuna Language and History class presentation in Cal State Northridge. In 2009, he translated the US National Anthem into Garifuna.

Since 1995, Mr. Reyes through his plumbing company “Cal Plumbing” has employed and trained over 15 garinagu in Southern California. He teaches the Garifuna Culture & Language Class in Los Angeles as a joint venture with GAHFU and The Blazer Learning Center. He is co-producing a Trilogy Garifuna Film with Ali Allie. And finally, he also hosts “The Sásamu Show”, an online television show.

◆
Ali Allié
Filmmaker



“Spirit of My Mother” Film Screening

Ali Allié is an independent filmmaker; freelance editor and director of photography based in Los Angeles, California. Ali got into film when he was twelve years old. His best friend had an 8mm film camera and they started with stop motion animation using clay and toys. They shot all kinds of stuff and learned the art of patience! Later on in high school he started using video when camcorders came out. “One of the reasons I made *El Espiritu de mi Mama/Spirit of my Mother* (my most recent film) was to reverently pay attention to my mind’s unconscious suggestion is the degree to which your subconscious will continue to support you...” This is a Spanish-language feature film which touches on themes about the everlasting life of the soul and the idea that we are only temporary travelers on this earth.

The plot follows Sonia, a young Garifuna woman, who leads a troubled life as a house worker in Los Angeles and is plagued by a haunting memory of a relationship with an American soldier. Her efforts to escape her present circumstances and past trauma are fruitless until she has a dream of her deceased mother who calls upon her with a sacred request. Sonia discovers she must journey back to the North Coast of Honduras to comply with her mother’s request, at the same time leaving behind her old self. She learns from elders in her homeland what she must perform (a *dügü*) in honor of her mother so that she may rest in peace. Ali’s film will be screening at the 5th Annual Garifuna Community Forum at CSULA. Ali Allié is currently casting Garinagu for his new 3-part-movie.



Mingo Alvarez
Master Drummer



“Drumming Workshop”

CARLOS DOMINGO ALVAREZ is a biomedic electronic technician at Cedar Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. He is also a cultural activist, Wanaragua dancer, drummer and educator.

Mr. Alvarez was born in Barrio Cristales, Trujillo, Colon Honduras. He started his musical career as a drummer in his village. He performed regularly at the local events gaining the vast experience he has acquired now as a Garifuna Master Drummer.

As he arrived in Los Angeles, California, he joined Costeños Band which happened to be a very popular Honduran band locally; eventually recording an album which became very popular in radio stations in Central America. Mingo also had the opportunity to work in 1978 with the very popular Isabel Flores and Lady Lard in the album titled "Habinaguile Garinagu" recorded in Brooklyn, NY under John Mariano's production. He also worked with Andy Palacio playing the Garifuna drums for Andy's early albums which he recorded in Los Angeles. As his style and popularity grew among Garinagu in LA, he was later invited to join Chatuye Band in 1981 which landed a juicy contract with Arhoolie record label and recorded the album "Heartbeat In The Music". Chatuye Band went on the road performing at different venues including a unique appearance during the 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta, GA. But before the Atlanta Olympics, back in 1984 at Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, he directed and performed with Walagante Dance Group. Mr. Alvarez is also the co-founder of the Preservation of the Garifuna Culture Group and The Garifuna Settlement Day Committee in Los Angeles which is still around organizing the 19th of November Celebrations since then.

Mingo worked with the very first Garifuna Summit committee and celebrated their event at Medgar Evers College in New York on the 4th of July 1991. He was also part and co-organizer of the 2nd Garifuna Summit at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles in 1992. He also co-organized the Garifuna Culture Towards The New Millennium Summit in Honduras during the month of July, 1996. But most importantly, he helped organize and performed as a dancer and drummer the Los Angeles

Wanaragua ensemble around 1997. This wanaragua group got a special invitation to perform during the Central American Independence Day celebrated by the Los Angeles Galaxy soccer game at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California in 1997.

Information Booths



Frank Palacio

Teacher & Author



Frank Palacio, Author "Middle Schoolin"

I am a third generation teacher. My grandfather and my father were both educators. My parents raised me and my six siblings in a home that was both loving and nurturing; yet at the same time there was discipline and high expectations. It was expected that we would go to high school, college, and then obtain good, professional jobs and become productive members of society.

I grew up in Belize, a small country in Central America, which is a former British colony. I attended Catholic school for my primary and secondary education. Needless to say, the discipline and education were of excellent quality. Looking back, when I became a teacher, I had no clue about the types of students, behavior, attitude problems, or culture of the public schools in the inner city of Los Angeles.

My first experience with the U.S. education system was at the junior college level. I later enrolled at California State University-Los Angeles, majoring in English, and then obtained a teaching credential and a master's degree in education from Chapman University in Orange County, California. In the summer of 2005, I was one of a select group of teachers chosen to attend the UCLA Writing Project as a fellow.

I chose teaching as a career because I wanted to work with this country's youths to help them improve their lives. By igniting a spark in them, they can grow and later achieve their full potential. I also wanted to bring honesty, integrity, and dedication to my profession. I still do. Our young people need to see adults on a daily basis who are worthy of emulation.



Sidney Mejia

Artist



“Garifuna Writers’ Group”

Sidney Mejia was a drummer in the Sacred Heart School marching band as a nine year old. He was the secretary of the Garifuna Settlement Day Committee in his native Dangriga, Belize as a teenage and had his first poem published before graduating high school.

After graduation from High School, Sidney migrated to the United States in 1977 to further his studies. He received certificates in Marketing and Management from Los Angeles City College, a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy and Management and a Master of Health Administration degree from the University of Southern California. Mr. Mejia has also earned a preliminary teaching credential from Los Angeles Unified School District where he worked as a teacher's assistant for four years and as a middle school teacher for six years. He has lectured and/or taught classes on the Garifuna culture and drumming at many colleges, universities and cultural institutions throughout the United States

Over the years, Mr. Mejia has expanded his areas of interests to include the arts, entertainment and culture, healthcare, community service and ecommerce. He is co-founder of the Garifuna Writers Group of Los Angeles and volunteers as a consultant on culture to the Belizean consulate in Los Angeles.

In 1981, Sidney co-founded the Garifuna musical group Chatuye and co-wrote and produced the critically acclaimed album “Ahmuti.” The group also recorded a CD on the

Arhoolie label. Chatuye has performed at the Santa Barbara Bowl, the Roxy Theater, Wolftrap, UCLA, Stanford, Berkeley, USC, The Jamestown Arts Festival, Festival at the Lake in Oakland, California Institute of the Arts and numerous other venues. The group is planning a reunion after a twelve year hiatus. Two new CDs will be released shortly.

Sidney, along with his brother Charles own and operate Chatuye Books and Music. Mr. Mejia serves as the Chief Executive Officer and Publisher. Charles is the Chief Financial Officer and Editor. Chatuye Books and Music is dedicated to selling Charles' poems and essays and Sidney's lyrics, music, videos, books, plays, lesson plans, and essays. Sidney has recently completed a play entitled "The Life and Times of Chatoyer" and a book of his lyrics, "Songbook Chatuye" co-written by Simeon Pillich. He is also working on a revision of Don Justo's memoir "The Garifuna Story Now and Then" and has dedicated his life to becoming an expert in Garifuna literature and music.



Angela Palacio
Entrepreneur



Angela Palacio - Herbalist with Nature's Sunshine

I used to have allergies, asthma, high blood pressure, sleep apnea and acid reflux. It seems like you name it I had. I was on weekly allergy shots, daily Claritin for allergies, high blood pressure medication and Nexium and other meds for about five years. I started taking NSP products and now I no longer take meds. I take herbs which are food for the body they nourish your body and heal you of ailments. How many people do you hear of come off high blood pressure medication?

My mission is to educate you about herbs, the uses and the healing properties. Your wellness is my concern. I will be presenting the following products, one product every hour. I will also have information cards how to manage diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, allergies, prostate support, back pain and other ailments.

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Featuring Nature's Sunshine Products, Thai-Go, Liquid Chlorophyll,
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Jacques Rallion
Teacher & Author



Jacques Rallion, Author "Middle Schoolin"

Jacques Rallion I grew up in a home where discipline and education went hand in hand. My dad was a French adventurer who stumbled into El Salvador, Central America, after trying to relocate to Cuba before the Castro era began. My mom was a housewife who made sure that my siblings and I always got up early in the morning to a warm breakfast before we left for school and had a good family lunch when we got home. My dad made sure I was in school every single day from an early age.

One day in Kindergarten, I didn't want to go to school and I thought that if I cried my eyes out, I could stay home watching cartoons. He sent me back to school, with a stern look. Later on in high school, he also praised me with positive remarks whenever he saw me studying late at night. Thanks to my dad, my siblings and I have spoken French since we were small, even though we were born and raised in a Spanish-speaking country.

I came to the United States with the determination to learn English and to get a college education. I obtained my bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and then worked as an application's

engineer at a local company. I then obtained both my teaching credential and my master's degree in education from Chapman University in Orange, California.

I obtained my National Board Certification for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in 2006. I had to put together a portfolio by videotaping myself teaching, gathering student work and teaching materials, and providing detailed analyses of my teaching, comprised of my observations, reflections on ways to improve, and general insights. In addition, I had to go to an assigned testing center to answer six essay-like questions related to what I teach: Computer Technology. I waited for the results with much anticipation. When they became available and I read, "Congratulations, you are a National Board Certified Ed Teacher (NBCT)!" on the NBPTS Web page, I fell to my knees and gave thanks. I have worked in the field of education, first as a teacher's assistant, then as a computer lab and science lab instructor. I have taught science, math, and now computer technology. I also taught English as a second language (ESL) and then computer literacy to adults at night school.
