

The Peace Drum Project

Elder's Stories - 2007

This year's project was funded by the: Alice Willard Dorr Foundation, Clipper Ship Charitable Foundation, Janey Fund, Stride Rite Foundation, and Linda F. Zuker Memorial Youth Fund, and by the contributions of many generous individuals and businesses. CAI is also supported in part by CommunityWorks and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a State Agency.

Introduction

Each year we look forward to our meetings and activities with the elders who share their stories, thoughts, humor, wisdom, understanding, and encouragement with the *Peace Drum Project's* teen participants. The experience of getting to know these wonderful elders and hearing their stories has been truly rewarding. We know that we have only scratched the surface of their stories in this process, but we hope that introducing them to you will enrich your lives as it has ours. These stories are filled with wisdom and life experience that young people today can learn from and honor. In spite of the differences between eras, the teens learn that many hopes, dreams, *and* obstacles remain constant across generations. Learning first hand that others have faced similar challenges — and have overcome them — gives power to their own hopes and dreams.

We are delighted with the respectful way in which the teens conducted their interviews, and by how the elders were willing to share their very personal experiences and knowledge with our young people. This bridge across the generations reduces isolation and builds new connections between youth, families, and elders that strengthen our whole community. We look forward to continuing this process for many more years.

This year we offer special thanks to Lucia Rodriguez-Sweeney for transcribing and translating the stories of the Spanish-speaking elders. We also thank Cynthia Jimenez, Resident Services Coordinator at Julia Martin House, Nancy Escoto, Resident Services Coordinator at Nate Smith House, and Julia Martin of Bromley Heath, Community Activist and grandmother, for their help in locating elders who wanted to take part in the project this year.

We dedicate these stories to the memory of Charles M. Holley (1937-2006,) CAI co-founder, and inspiration behind The Peace Drum Project. He is greatly missed by all the teens and graduates, elders, artists, and others who knew and worked with him over the years

Susan E. Porter, Director
Cooperative Artists Institute
www.tribal-rhythms.org

Anna Suncar (English)

Interviewed by Karina Rosario and Simara Martinez

“I was born the 2nd of December in 1939. We moved from a very small village to one just a little larger in the Dominican Republic. I don’t remember much, but it was small village, humble, with few people and a church. It was an agricultural community with little poverty. We lived like people of the countryside. When I was little I lived with my mother, but I almost always lived with an aunt of mine. I had five brothers and sisters and I was the youngest. My father died when I was very little. Since I was young I learned to work in commerce, I learned things in school and also how to do housework like cooking and cleaning. I went to a large school. My routine was to attend schoolwork, go to church, celebrate birthdays and I passed the years that way. Sometimes I played with a friend, a neighbor. I only completed the seventh grade. My life did not change much when I left school. It was better to be in school, but they didn’t let me because I had to work. Then I stayed in the house to work. There was not much time to have fun because I always had to work. I had very few friends. I stayed with my aunt, working in her house, and there was never anytime for diversions. Saturdays were the only day for fun. I loved to go to the river to bathe. Swimming made me laugh. I love the color blue because it is the color of running water and of the sky.

My great dream was to return to a large city, like the capital there. I have lived here thirty-three years, almost half of my life. There are always important things in life which one must learn. The best job I had here was one in which I began cleaning, and then they gave me classes as a nurse’s assistant and there I stayed working for seventeen years until I had an accident where I fell and displaced a disc in my back. I liked the work because it was fun, a good job, and I felt intelligent, and it was something different. I felt good because I had climbed up to something better.

The only person I have admired in my life was my mother because she was a good and hard-working. She gave herself totally to her children. She didn’t get anything out of life for herself, she was never anyone’s enemy and she was a good person. God is who I most admire. I like boleros and I have many favorites. On television I only like to watch the news because what it is interesting to know what is happening in the world. I love the springtime because it is neither hot nor cold, and the world begins to awaken and shake the sleepiness of winter. Now I draw the strength to go forward from my beliefs in God.”