

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jessica Ceballos & Poesia Para La Gente

Chiwan Choi · Wednesday, May 15th, 2013

We have a big trip coming up at the end of the month. Our first show in New York City. Actually, our first show anywhere outside of Los Angeles. A two-day event exploring the idea of underground publishing.

But for now, I only want to talk about one of the most awesome people in our city, [Jessica Ceballos](#), and the great work she is doing.

We recently saw her at the release party for [RA #3](#). She was one of the featured writers in it. It was a great intimate event at one of the nicest lofts in downtown. Jessica read some of her poems. She is a terrific writer.

During the reception, while drinking wine and eating chips, she started telling us about the event she'd recently hosted. Even in telling us about it, we could tell how much Jessica was still moved by how it had all gone down. I had wanted to attend it because, well, for a couple of reasons. One, not only was Jessica hosting the event, my good friend and powerhouse poet [Luivette Resto](#) was going to be reading. And two, I couldn't quite picture exactly how the event was going to play out and I wanted to experience it!

The poetry reading was held on April 27th at [Guerrero's Market in Highland Park](#), in the produce section overlooking the butcher counter. In addition to Luivette, the other poets were Gloria Enedina Alvarez, Yago Cura, Ryan Nance and Julio The Conga Poet.



"We went in expecting to deliver our poetry to some surprised shoppers of the community," Jessica told us, "but it was that moment when the impressionable olive-skinned, not-yet-teenaged girl rolled into the store to buy a packet of chicle and left the store minutes later with the memory of Luivette's three-poem set forever burned into her psyche—it was this moment when we realized it was the response the community delivered to us, that underlined the impact that artistic expression can have when shared with the community in non-traditional public spaces."

We couldn't agree more with that sentiment about community and non-traditional public spaces. As we've been reporting to you, we have been planning so many things, hatching so many ideas, to take the book/bookstore on the road. This is where it goes beyond commerce and to something more elusive—making literature an essential fabric of a community's well being.

But really, these are things we *want* to do. Jessica *is* doing this *right now*.

The poetry and produce event at Guerrero's was part of the Poesia Para La Gente that she programs and hosts through [Avenue 50 Studios](#), a great venue in Highland Park. It's a program that brings poetry to the people of the community in non-traditional places, such as a laundromat, taco shop, the local mercado, and so on.

“What we’re also hoping to do is to bring the traditional poetry community to the areas of North East LA that they wouldn’t usually find a need to visit,” Jessica says. “Some of the locations we choose have been affected in one way or another by economical hardship or various forms of social stigmas.”

Awesome. So what and where is next?

“So...for May 25th, we’ve chosen the Job Day Labor Program of the [IDEPSCA \(Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California\)](#) at the Cypress Park Community Job Center, located directly under the freeway in the parking lot at the Home Depot Center of Cypress Park.”

Poetry reading in the parking lot of a Home Depot. Remarkable.



“The critical portion of the event is the open mic,” Jessica tells us. “I’ve been in communication with the Cypress Park Job Day Labor Program Director and he will be reiterating to the men that there will be an open mic and that they are encouraged to read whatever material they’d like to, whatever they feel the need to express.”

To Jessica, this one-time-only public platform for sharing the power of the spoken word can and will stimulate intercultural understanding within the diverse population of the North East Los Angeles area.

Really, we are floored by what she’s doing with Poesia Para La Gente. We think the entire literary community should acknowledge how powerful this is.

Once again, the event at the Cypress Park Home Depot is on May 25th. [Facebook event page](#).

Go! And if you can’t, spread the word.

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