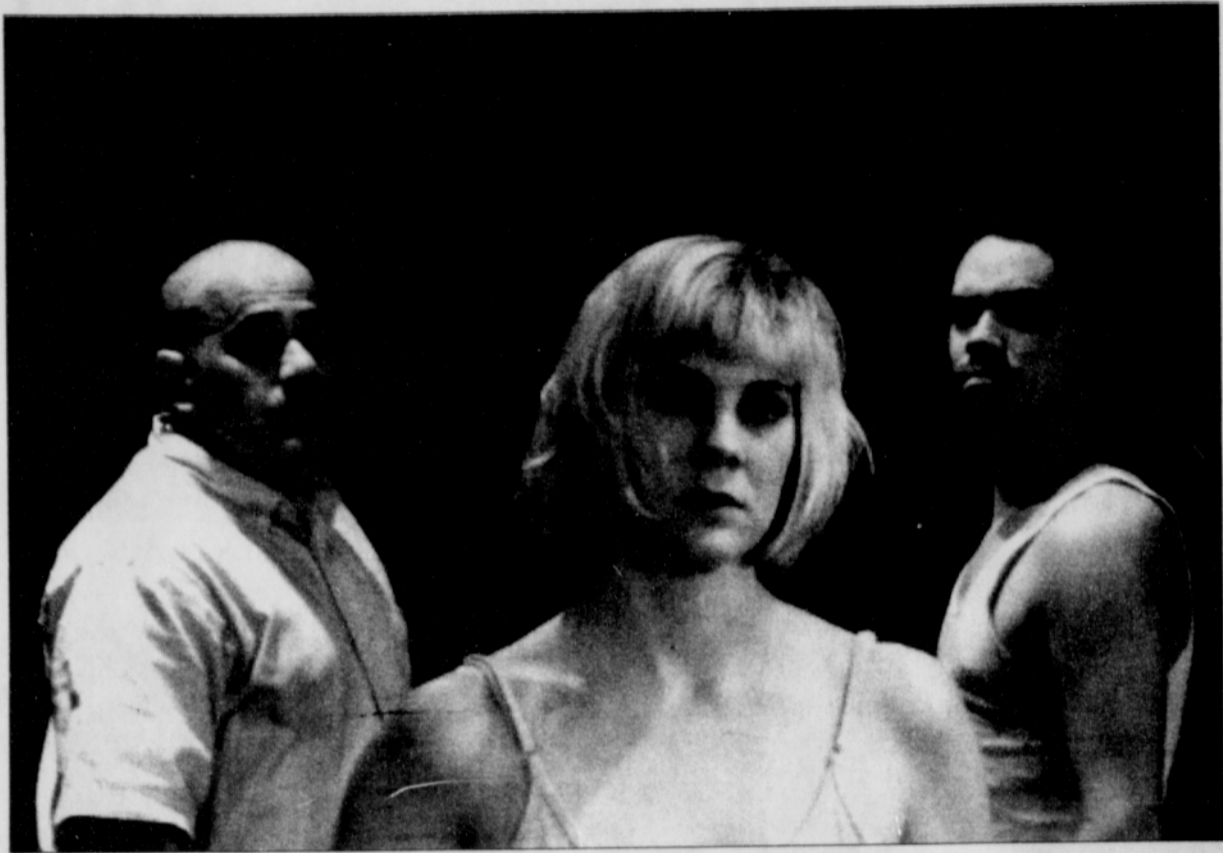




Metro / EL OBSERVADOR

Miracle Mainstage presents *El Paso Blue*



Miracle Mainstage Theatre will be celebrating its 15th anniversary season with the final production of *El Paso Blue*. Company players of the play include (from left to right) Ted Schultz, Kellie Johnson, and Jack Lozano.

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Take a trip through the west Texas desert, Jornada del Muerto and the dark shady streets of El Paso and uncover the secrets of *El Paso Blue*, a sexually charged and passionate story of vengeance, love, pain and loss of culture experienced by two generations of men. The road to the "American Dream" is full of potholes and detours in *El Paso Blue*. Through the stupidity of his best friend, Alejandro spends a year in prison for a burglary he didn't commit. Alejandro doesn't get along with his father, Jefe, yet he asks him to take care of his wife Sylvie, a former beauty queen, while he is away. Upon his release Alejandro discovers his wife and father have run off together. Bent on revenge, the hunt begins as he sets off to find his wife and father.

Father and son distant from each other in their hearts find an aching desire for the same woman. In the end she can only be with one. Artistic Director, Antonio Sonera directs an all star cast in *El Paso Blue*. Drammy award winning actress, Kellie Johnson will play the anti-blondie, blues singing Sylvie. Miracle favorite, Jack Lozano will play the tortured Alejandro. Veteran actor, Ted Schultz will play the Old World father Jefe, 3rd floor actor, Andy Buzan will play the radio-transmitting sidekick, Duane, and the Other Side's Vanessa Rios y Valles will play the mysterious seer, China. This exciting new play was the smash hit of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival last season. Solis's play is an imaginative blend of comedy and drama that is set among the clash of Latin and American culture, and is filled with dynamic language and raw steamy blues music, all written and

composed by Rodolfo Ortega. Don't miss *El Paso Blue*, the final production of the Miracle Mainstage 15th Anniversary Season! Experience the passion of the hunt...the pain of a tortured heart...the mystery of Jornada del Muerto. Experience...*El Paso Blue*, by Octavio Solis. Performances of *El Paso Blue* will be Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, March 31st through April 29th. Thursday performances are at 7 pm. and tickets are \$12. Friday and Saturday performances are at 8 pm. and tickets are \$14. There will be a special preview performance on Thursday, March 30th at 7 pm. Tickets are \$7. The Gala Opening night performance will be March 31st at 8 pm. Tickets are \$17.50. The Miracle Mainstage is located at 525 SE Stark in Portland. For reservations and information, call 503/236-7253.

Hispanic dropout numbers alarming

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hispanic students are twice as likely as blacks and three times as likely as whites to drop out of high school, according to Education Department statistics that suggest the nation is ill-equipped to deal with the fastest-growing group of schoolchildren. Education Secretary Richard Riley, hoping to create a brighter future for these children, is asking public school districts to establish in the next five years 1,000 new dual-language schools that instruct children in English and in a native language such as Spanish. "If we see to it that immigrants and their children can speak only English and nothing more, then we will have missed one of the greatest opportunities of this new century," Riley said Wednesday. "It is high time we begin to treat language skills as the asset they are." Riley said dual language instruction has proven to help Hispanic children do better academically as well as preserve children's heritage and promote bilingualism that can help students in an increasingly global economy. "Unfortunately, too many teachers and administrators today treat a child's native language as a weakness if it is not English," Riley said, speaking at Bell Multicultural High School, which is not one of the nation's 260 dual-language schools. "In some places, even the idea of bilingual education is controversial. It shouldn't be." Dual-language instruction is one of three main, often hotly debated approaches to teaching the 3 million

U.S. students with limited English proficiency, of which nearly 75 percent are Hispanic. These students, designated by school tests and other measures as non-English speakers, also are taught in English-only classes or completely in their native languages. Conservative critics of dual-language schools said that such instruction doesn't necessarily give non-English speakers the language immersion necessary to improve. "You are basically using Hispanic kids to help teach English-speaking kids Spanish," said Jorge Amselle of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a Washington-based group critical of current bilingual education programs. While Hispanic children are more likely than other kids to come from poor families where they don't have good access to health care and preschool classes that would make them better students, Riley recounted statistics indicating that language is the chief barrier to learning. In 1997, 25.3 percent of Hispanics ages 16 to 24 had dropped out of high school, compared with 13.4 percent of blacks and 7.6 percent of whites. The dropout rates for Hispanics are linked to a student's language difficulties. Nearly half of foreign-born Hispanic students drop out, while just 16 percent of Hispanic students born in the United States leave school, Riley said. And among U.S.-born students who had at least one foreign-born parent, the dropout rate was higher at 20 percent. While 11 percent of Hispanics age 25 to 29 possessed at least a bachelor's degree, 14.2 percent of blacks and

32.6 percent of whites had finished college. And there are fewer teachers who can teach bilingual students. While 54 percent of the nation's classrooms have students in need of English instruction, just 20 percent of teachers say they feel prepared to teach them, the department said. "Parents and educators want all children to learn English because it is essential for success," Riley said, disclosing the latest research on Hispanic students. "But, whatever the approach to teaching English, it cannot be simply a defensive or reactive one." The trouble with dual-language schools, said Amselle, is that nearly half of them have a 9-to-1 ratio of non-English students. "It really is Spanish immersion, and that's great for English speakers, but not so great for the Spanish speakers," Amselle said, adding that many parents have opposed such schools. But at Oyster Elementary in Washington, a 325-student school where every child learns everything equally in Spanish and in English, children are successful, Principal Paquita Holland said. Each classroom has two teachers who divide the children into two groups. While one group is solving math problems in English; the other is doing the same math lesson in Spanish. At the end of the semester or quarter, the groups switch languages. Nearly half the children there are poor and 56 percent are Hispanic, yet seven in 10 have scored at or above grade level on recent standardized reading and math tests, Holland said.

Portland's first-ever conference on Chicano issues

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A conference for the National Association for Chicano and Chicano Studies (NACCS) was held in Portland on Wednesday, March 22. The event marked the first time in NACCS' twenty-seven year history that the conference was held outside of its traditionally preferred U.S. Southwest. Nationally, Mexican-Americans make up 63.3% of the total Hispanic population (National Council of La Raza). U.S. Census data indicates that Oregon currently ranks 18th among states with highest overall Chicano and Latino population, with 6.1% of total state population.

The reception was hosted by Portland State University's Chicano/Latino Studies Program, Dr. Phyllis Edmundson, Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Dr. Marvin Kaiser, Dean of the college of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The reception included a community awards presentation and live entertainment. Honorary guest plenary speakers included Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, nationally known Chicana activist, author and educator, and Ramón Ramírez, founding member of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) a farmworker union based in Woodburn, Oregon.

Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez's best known work is *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*, a bilingual history which became the basis of a two-part video she co-directed, entitled *Viva La Causa: 500 Years of Chicano History*. In fall 1998 she published a collection of essays entitled *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (South End Press).

After graduating from Swarthmore College in the 1950s, she worked in the United Nations Secretariat as a researcher on colonialism in Africa. She also worked as an editor at Simon & Schuster and as Books and Arts Editor of *The Nation* magazine. During the 1960s she joined the Black civil rights movement, working full-time with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as coordinator of its New York office as well as its office

in Mississippi. Later, as part of the Chicano movement in New Mexico, she founded the bilingual movement newspaper *El Grito del Norte* (1968-1973) and co-founded the Chicano Communications Center, a barrio-based organizing and educational project.

Since moving to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1976, she has organized on Latino community issues, taught Women's Studies part-time, conducted numerous anti-racist training workshops and worked with community youth groups. She even ran for Governor of California on the Peace & Freedom Party ticket in 1982. For her lifetime work of activism and education she has received many awards from various academic and professional organizations and well as many community groups. Her new project is the institute for MultiRacial Justice, a resource center that combats divisions and help build alliances among peoples of color.

Ramón Ramírez is a founding member of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) a farmworker union based in Woodburn, Oregon, established in 1985. He has served as either President or Vice-President of the union since 1988. From 1988 through 1995 he has coordinated PCUN's Project to Stop Pesticide Poisoning, which has video-taped unsafe practices, legally pursued possible pesticide exposure cases and enacted effective "right-to-know" legislation. Since January 1996, Ramón has directed PCUN's Immigrant Rights and Empowerment Project and served as a primary leader of CAUSA, a statewide immigrants' rights coalition.

Originally a native of East Los Angeles, Ramón came to the Northwest in 1973, working as an Amalgamated Clothing Worker Union Organizer in Seattle, Washington, as well as being a community liaison for the Chicano Studies Department at the University of Washington. In 1975 he was elected president of MEChA Central, the leadership body of MEChA in the state of Washington. Later he enrolled in Colegio César Chávez in Mt. Angel, Oregon and directed Rescate Press in 1976 and 1977.

Ramón joined the Willamette Valley Immigration Project in late 1977, handling immigrant visa cases for the organization until 1982, when he then coordinated the Immigration Project's fundraising and legislative work until 1985. In addition to his community organizing efforts, Ramón has worked as a teacher and counselor at Woodburn High School from 1978 to 1980.

Usted tiene una familia que lo respalda

Imagínese: hoy cambia todo. "Yo" da paso a "nosotros". "Nuestro" sustituye a "mío". Y vivir feliz el resto de la vida es una meta, no un hecho. ¿Está nervioso? Para nada. Usted cuenta con el apoyo de una familia sólida. American Family Mutual Insurance. Cuando esté construyendo un futuro, la confianza lo es todo; 70 años de experiencia en el campo de los seguros es lo que ambos necesitan para sentirse seguros. En cuanto a compromiso se refiere, American Family mantiene el rango A+ (Superior) que otorga A.M. Best, la respetada autoridad en la puntuación de agencias de seguros. Eso lo dice todo. Sólo llame y, con mucho gusto, uno de nuestros amables agentes le dará más información. Ahora, respire profundo. Luego... ¡avíentese! Nosotros lo protegemos.

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