

December 9, 2010



# El Boricua



House of Puerto Rico San Diego Newsletter  
<http://www.HouseofPuertoRico.com>

## A Special Issue of *El Boricua*:

### A History of La Casa de Puerto Rico (San Diego): 1972-1987 – The First 15 Years

#### Executive Board

**President:** Emily Vélez-Confer  
**Vice President:** Martin Crespo  
**Treasurer:** Angel Ramírez  
**Secretary:** Aned Muñiz

#### Board of Directors

Ralph Costas  
Antonio Grillo-López, M.D.  
Rosario Camacho  
Casilda Pagán  
Dennis Flores  
Gus Freeman  
Daisy Cruz  
Angel Ramírez  
Emily Vélez-Confer

#### A History of La Casa de Puerto Rico (San Diego): 1972-1987 – The first 15 Years

By **Daniel M. López, M.S.**  
(co-Editor, *El Boricua* newsletter)

**Introduction:** I was asked to write an essay on the “History of La Casa de Puerto Rico” (its name was later changed to its

current name, the House of Puerto Rico-San Diego [HPRSD]). The purpose of this essay is to provide our membership with a sense of our organization’s history as well as some of its many accomplishments on behalf of the San Diego Puerto Rican community.

La Casa de Puerto Rico was founded in San Diego, CA on October 28, 1972, or 38 years ago. This essay covers its first 15 years (1972-1987).

**Methodology:** Hundreds of pages and documents were reviewed including the originally-typed notes, in Spanish, of the “Minutes” from the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of La Casa, titled, [and copied verbatim]:

*“Primera reunion y planes iniciales de amigos puertorriquenos en San Diego, CA. el dia 28 de Octubre de 1972.”*

A copy of the “Agenda” from the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of La Casa, held on November 18, 1972, titled, “*Segunda Reunion de amigos puertorriquenos, San Diego, CA*”; and the original dated, signed and notarized copy of La Casa’s *Articles of Incorporation* (1974) were also reviewed.

#### Using “Original Documents”:

I reviewed *original* documents, i.e., documents written by La Casa writers and members in the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to add authenticity to this essay.

#### The New York City “Casa de Puerto Rico” of 1925 in its Historical Context: The First (1<sup>st</sup>) La Casa in the U.S. -

Puerto Rican Professor and Historian, Dr. Virginia Sánchez-Korrol (Brooklyn College, N.Y.C.) in her book titled *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (1994) indicated that from 1920-1930, New York City

was the center for the beginning of a substantial number of Puerto Rican organizations, having a social and/or a political emphasis. One of these organizations was called the **Casa de Puerto Rico**. Dr. Sanchez-Korrol wrote that the “purpose” of this organization was: “to promote Hispanic culture, customs and traditions.” It should be noted that the first **La Casa de Puerto Rico** in N.Y.C. was formed in 1925.

### **La Casa de Puerto Rico (San Diego) in Historical Context: The Early Years (1972) -**

The U.S. Federal Census (1970) listed a total of 578 Puerto Ricans living in San Diego--338 males, and 240 females. In contrast, the City of Los Angeles had a Puerto Rican population of 5,511--2,721 males, and 2,790 females. *Note:* the 1970 Census only listed those persons that were actually born in Puerto Rico.

In January 1980, a pamphlet titled, “*Puerto Ricans In California: A Staff Report of The Western Regional Office, United States Commission on Civil Rights*”, (U.S. Commission of Civil Rights 1980) cited the following population information: California had a Puerto Rican population, in 1970, of 46,495. In 1980 Puerto Ricans were defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (the Federal Government), as being: “persons of Puerto Rican birth or parentage....” However, the then Puerto Rican community of San Diego was mentioned in only two

*paragraphs* in this government document (p. 17). For historical comparisons, in 1970, the State of New York had a Puerto Rican population of 1,379,000.

Most relevant for this essay and for the founding Pioneers (*Pioneros*) of La Casa (in San Diego), is an observation which was put forth by this government publication, that: “Puerto Ricans feel strongly that they are treated as a nonexistent group by most Californians [at least during the 1970s]” (page 15).

### **Names of those who attended the First (1<sup>st</sup>) La Casa de Puerto Rico Meeting in SD in 1972:**

The typed-written “**minutes**” from the **1<sup>st</sup> meeting** of La Casa cited the names of some of the attendees: Milton Rios; Belia Rios; Casilda Pagán; Agustín Lugo; Henry Ramírez; Angelita Hernandez; and Mercedes Font. [The original “sign-in” sheet could not be located].

Several original members of La Casa, i.e., “The Founders”, were interviewed for this essay: Jose Quiñones (75) (former Director), Angel Soto (74) (former President), and Benjamin Santiago Rivera (former President). Señor Quiñones was one of the original Directors; and Doña Casilda Pagán was Interim President, during the early years of La Casa from 1972-1974.

These “Founders” of La Casa identified the following persons that attended either the 1<sup>st</sup>, and/or the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Meeting(s), of La Casa. Based upon my interviews of some of the *original members* of La Casa, the following persons also attended the first (1<sup>st</sup>) Meeting: Jose and Enriqueta Quiñones; Casilda and Lalo Pagán; Milton and Belia Rios; Lalo and Petra King; Agustín and Juanita Lugo; Henry Ramírez; Angelita Hernandez; Maria Magdalena Santiago; Tomás Perry; Ramon Paris Lugo; Mercedes Font; Frank de Jesus; Ana Rosa de Jesus; Samuel Ortiz and Dora Ortiz.

Those that attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> **Meeting** (and not already cited): Carmen Boaz; Rafael Montañez and Elga Montañez; Josefina and “Tito” Fanfán; Tony Del Rio and Helen Del Rio; Ruth Carrasquillo and Ralph Carrasquillo; Glennys Collins; Benjamin Santiago-Rivera; and [possibly] Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Santos.

### **The “Minutes” of the First Meeting of La Casa de Puerto Rico – October 28, 1972:**

The typed-written “**minutes**” (written in Spanish) from the **first meeting** of La Casa stated as follows (which I will now quote verbatim, in its *original* form):

*“El día 28 de octubre de 1972 se reunió en la residencia de la familia del señor Milton Ríos radicada en 7910 Anza Dr. San Diego., Ca., un grupo de*

puertorriqueños con el objeto de discutir la formación de una sociedad u organización.

Gracias a la iniciativa de la Señora Casilda Pagán, residente en 1957 El Prado Ave., San Diego, varias familias puertorriqueños tuvieron el privilegio de confraternizar....

Fué deseo unánime del grupo nombrar a la señora Casilda Pagán a la presidencia interina.

Bajo la dirección de la Presidenta Interina se pasó a una discusión general que despertó mucho interés en definir ideales para una posible organización. Temas mencionados fueron entre otros, asistencia económica, reuniones sociales y también de carácter culturales....

Fueron sugeridos para consideración del grupo los siguientes nombres para nuestra agrupación:

1. Club Boriquen;
2. Sociedad Puertorriqueña en San Diego;
3. La Casa de Puerto Rico en San Diego;
4. Unidad Puertorriqueña;
5. Hermandad Puertorriqueña;
6. La Casa de Puerto Rico;
7. Puertorriqueños Unidos

Se resolvió que en la proxima junta se escogería un nombre mediante votación.

Luego discutimos y quedo pendiente, el emblem, ejemplos

para el cual se brindó presentar el señor Agustín Lugo.

Pendientes para discusión tambien quedó elegir la mesa directiva y discutir las cuotas. La Presidente Interina dió las gracias a todos por su participación y al señor Paris por el uso de su grabadora. La cinta será archivada para recordarnos el nacimiento de nuestra organización.

Para la próxima reunión a celebrarse el día 18 de noviembre de 1972, los esposos Henry Ramirez ofrecieron su casa ubicada.... La señora Mercedes Font también ofreció su casa...en caso necesidad.

Adjunto se encuentra una lista de las personas que estuvieron presentes. [Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain this list of those who were present during this first (1<sup>st</sup>) Meeting of La Casa].

The **second (2<sup>nd</sup>)** Meeting of La Casa was conducted on November 18, 1972, and their AGENDA read as follows [copied verbatim]:

*Segunda Reunion de amigos puertorriqueños – San Diego, CA*

2DA REUNION: 3PM-5PM  
AGENDA

1. Abertura de la session;
2. Lectura del resumen de la reunion pasada;
3. Aprobacion de las minutas;
4. Discusion, decision y definicion de las metas de nuestra

organizacion. (Cuales son nuestros objetivos);

5. Seleccion de un nombre para la organizacion por voto;
6. Discusion y decision sobre cuotas;
7. Eleccion de la mesa directiva: Presidente, Vice president, Secretario, Tesorero;
8. Otros Asuntos: Emblema – (distintas presentaciones), Posible actividad par alas navidades – (ideas generals), Proxima Reunion – (Lugar y fecha y hora); Etcetera;
9. Clausura de la reunion

Solicito respetuosamente que todos lunchemos por hacer el mayor uso posible del tiempo que tenemos ya que hay mucho trabajo or delante. Estoy muy agradecida de la cooperacion que todos me han dado y estoy segura que pronto veremos florecer nuestro grupo....

Casilda Pagán  
Presidenta Interina

**1972:** “In October 1972, a group of San Diego Puerto Ricans led by Doña Casilda Pagán joined forces and organized La Casa de Puerto Rico with a vision of preserving the richness of the Puerto Rican culture and acknowledge the need to share this vision with the people of...San Diego...” (see the site: <http://www.houseofpuertorico.com/articles/history2000.htm>).

This article, written in 2000, went on to significantly point out that: “in becoming so, La Casa de

Puerto Rico has reached out to our roots and built something more than an organization, La Casa de Puerto Rico built a family."

### A Special Recognition to the "Founder" of La Casa de Puerto Rico (San Diego) in 1972:

Although no one individual is usually totally responsible for the forming, and the eventual growth of any one organization, La Casa can point to its "founder", and initial driving force, Doña Casilda Pagán. Bill Phippard (he and his wife, Vicky Burgos Phippard, joined La Casa in 1973) stated: "Casilda was a 'prime mover' for La Casa."

Also, the "Founders" of La Casa which I interviewed *all* expressed that **Tomás Perry** was a pivotal player in the founding, and growth, of La Casa. Mr. Perry was referred to by Angel Soto as being Casilda's *advisor* since, "Mr. Perry advised Casilda as to what were the proper steps to follow in setting up an *organization* [i.e., La Casa]."

On March 18, 1995, Doña Casilda Pagán was presented with the following Certificate to the founder of San Diego's organization back in 1972, by the President of La Casa Rafael Olmeda, wherein the Certificate read as follows:

### "Certificado de Apreciación".

*Se Le Presenta A Casilda Pagan, Su orgullo, y dedicacion a la cultura Puerto Riqueña como. Fundadora de la Casa de Puerto Rico y por lo tanto se le otorga esta certificado por medio de La Casa De Puerto Roco, San Diego, CA.*" (cited: verbatim)

### The "Founders" of La Casa:

I defined the "Founders" of La Casa as those who attended the 1st, and/or the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Meeting of La Casa in October/November 1972. Quoting extensively from current Attorney, William Phippard, whose affiliation with La Casa is from 1973, he emphasized that the *women* who we members of La Casa in 1972-1973, and thereafter: "worked tirelessly to create the original seed money from which all later cultural events and scholarships evolved. **Lydia Soto, Olga Rivera, Josefina FanFán** and other women members who were never officers or directors [of La Casa] spent countless hours preparing traditional Puerto Rican dishes (pasteles, alcapurrias, bacalaitos) Which were sold at meetings or events to raise funds. They made it possible for La Casa to sponsor bigger events such as the Christmas dances which, in turn, made all else possible."

In addition to the "Founders", there were a number of "early members", those that joined La Casa in 1973, and during the early 1970s, who also contributed

greatly to the growth and the development of La Casa, such as, Carlos and Olga Rivera, who both "were constant members throughout the 70s," constantly working "to raise funds for La Casa." One of the "original members" of La Casa said that **Benjamin Santiago-Rivera**, "is probably the longest standing remaining [original] member" of La Casa. He served constantly as the Treasurer throughout the 70s and probably into the 80s and was loved and respected."

It is noteworthy that the La Casa "Founders" used two publications that helped organized their formal organization, and meetings: *Roberts Rules of Order and Henderson's Parliamentary Guide for the Chairman and Members of a Deliberative Assembly* (1945). (Toastmasters International, Santa Ana, CA).

### "Constitution" of La Casa - February 24, 1973:

A three page document, dated: 24 Febrero de 1973, San Diego, California, written in Spanish, titled "La Casa De Puerto Rico:

### CONSTUTUCION - PREAMBULO", stated in relevant part:

*"Los objetivos de esta asociación incluyen:*

- 1. Estechar los lazos de hermandad contribuyendo al mutuo crecimiento moral, social, cultural e intelectual de cada*

*miembro de esta asociación y de la sociedad en que vivimos.*

*2. Tratar de establecernos como una familia y buscar solución a nuestros problemas.*

*3. Ayudarnos a crecer culturalmente e intelectualmente para así dar ejemplo a nuestros hijos.*

#### **ARTICULO I – NOMBRE**

*Seccion I – El nombre de esta asociación será LA CASA DE PUERTO RICO*

#### **ARTICULO II – MEMERESIA**

*Seccion I - Podran ser miembros todas las personas nacidas en Puerto Rico y sus descendientes y todo pariente por sangre y por ley. Otras personas interesadas en compartir sus esfuerzos y tiempo en los objetivos de esta asociación, tendran que regirse por los procedimientos descritas en los estatutos.*

#### **ARTICULO III – OFICIALES**

*Seccion I – Los oficiales de esta asociación serán: Presidente, Vice Presidente, Secretario, Tesorero, Parlamentario.*

*Seccion II – Los oficiales para cada puesto serán elegidos por papeleta secreta de entre los candidatos presentados por el comite nominador. También se podrá hacer nominaciones desde el piso de la asamblea. El candidato que reciba el mayor numero de votos para un puesto será declarado electo. En caso de empate el procedimiento descrito*

*en los estatutos sera implementado.*

*Seccion III – El período a server será un año. Las elecciones tendrán lugar en Diciembre de cada año....*

*Seccion IV – Los nuevos oficiales elegidos tomarán posesión de sus cargos en la junta inmediatamente....*

*Seccion V – Los deberes de cada official serán aquellos asociados al titulo según están descritos en los estatutos.*

*Seccion VI – Los oficiales activos, juntos al presidente saliente y dos miembros elegidos por la asociación constituirán el comité ejecutivo.*

#### **ARTICULO IV – JUNTAS**

*Seccion I – Se celebrarán juntas regulares una vez al mes. También se celebrarán juntas especiales en aquellas ocasiones en que la mayoría de los miembros así lo decidan en una reunión regular....*

#### **ARTICULO V – CUOTAS Y TASACIONES**

*Seccion I – Los cuotas regulares de esta asociación serán descritas en los estatutos. Esta asociación no podrá hacerle ninguna tasación especial asus miembros....*

#### **ARTICULO VI – ENMIENDAS...**

*Seccion I – Esta constitución podra enmendarse en caulquier*

*junta regular por voto de dos terceras partes de los miembros presentes. Debe entregarse una copia de la enmienda a cada miembro....*

*Seccion II – Esta asociación podrá adoptar aquellos estatutos que sean necesarios para llevar a cabo sus funciones y objetivos. Se podrán adoptar estatutos siempre y cuando una mayoría de los miembros así voten en dos juntas corridas. Se podrán revocar estatutos de la misma manera.*

*Seccion III - Se declarará ratificada esta constitución si dos terceras partes de los miembros presentes voten en favor de tal ratificacion.”*

*24 de febrero de 1973  
San Diego, California.*

**1974:** Jose Quiñones provided for my review his original copy of the March 1, 1974 document titled, **By Laws of La Casa de Puerto Rico** (26 pages), wherein it indicated in relevant part:

“ARTICLE III, Section 3.02 – Regular meetings shall be held on the third Saturday of each month, beginning with the month of July 1974 [this date was “hand-written” onto his document by Mr. Quiñones himself], at 7:30 time.... The Nov. regular meeting of each calendar year shall be known as the Annual meeting. At such Annual Meeting, Directors shall be elected, reports of the affairs of the corporation shall be considered, and any other

business may be transacted which is within the powers of the members.” (see: p. 6.)

One noteworthy part of these *By Laws* was cited in its very first paragraph, namely, Section 1.01, wherein it indicated as follows:

“The principal office of the club is fixed and located at **1957 El Prado Avenue** in Lemon Grove, San Diego County, California.

The board of directors is granted full power and authority to change the principal office from one location to another in the county. Any change shall be noted by the secretary opposite this article, but shall not be considered an amendment of these bylaws.” (*my emphasis*)

What is noteworthy from the above paragraph is that the above cited address of **1957 El Prado Avenue** in Lemon Grove, CA, was the home of the founder of La Casa de Puerto Rico (in San Diego), namely, Doña Casilda Pagán. In November 2010, I conducted a phone interview with Doña Casilda Pagán’s daughter, Casilda Pagán, and she confirmed that this address in Lemon Grove, CA, was in fact her mother’s home/house. In an in-person interview with Benjamin Santiago-Rivera, one of the original members of La Casa in 1972, also confirmed that the founder of La Casa was Doña Casilda Pagán, and that the meetings were conducted in her home for the first several years of La Casa’s existence.

### **Special Recognition for La Casa’s first Five (5) “Directors”:**

The “*Articles Of Incorporation of La Casa De Puerto Rico*” was signed and notarized on March 1, 1974, by the five (5) Directors of La Casa: Casilda Pagán, [Tomás] Perry, Jose Quiñoñes, Ramon Paris Lugo, and Maria Magdalena Santiago, and it read as follows:

“Article 1: The name of this corporation is LA CASA DE PUERTO RICO.

Article 2: The purposes for which this corporation is formed are: (a) The specific and primary purpose is to promote the social welfare of the community by establishing, developing, and promoting appreciation and understanding of the civic, educational and cultural needs and background of the Puerto Rican Community....

Article 4: (a) The number of Directors of this corporation shall be five (5). (b) The names...of the persons who are to act in the capacity of first Directors are: Casilda Pagan; [Tomás] Perry; Jose Quiñones; Ramon Paris Lugo; [and] Maria Magdalena Santiago....”

Therefore, this author considers the above cited five (5) Directors of La Casa to be our, so to speak, “Founding Fathers,” i.e., our first leadership inspiration, which then helped this organization to continue to exist, through its inevitable “ups and downs”,

throughout the 38 years of its existence, and continuing till today, 2010. Our organization, therefore, owes these Directors a special show of gratitude for their respective dedication to the then visionary idea of having a Puerto Rican operated organization in the City of San Diego in 1972.

An additional “Thank You” should also go out to ALL the members of La Casa from its inception in 1972, up to and including, till today, in 2010.

### **La Casa’s early Fund-Raising (Scholarship) Activities and their Social Activities:**

A Dept. of Treasury document entitled “Application for Recognition of Exemption” (Form 1023) (undated; likely from 1980) indicated that La Casa de Puerto Rico [San Diego] was incorporated on May 29, 1974.

This Application indicated that the original members of the Scholarship Committee were Joe Carballo, businessman Bill Morales, Counselor at UCSD, and Liz Lebron, a principal in the San Diego Unified School District; President Costas was also involved.

This Application Form went on to answer the next Question of, “Describe the organization’s fund-raising program, both actual and planned...”, were as follows: Cultural Dances; Free Drawings; Tee Shirt Sales; Applications for

Grants; Donations.” Ralph Costas was the President, while Samuel Diaz was the Vice President of La Casa at this time. The Treasurer was Benjamin Santiago; the Secretary was Evelyn Correa; the Parliamentary (*sic*) was Joe Carballo, and Joe also functioned as being the “Scholarship Committee Chairman,” (1980-1981).

La Casa was also involved in the following community-related activities in 1974, and thereafter, namely:

“1) Selection and awarding Scholarships to talented needy persons of the San Diego Community. 2) Orientation and assistance to job seeking persons arriving from Puerto Rico and other Areas. 3) Celebration of cultural activities and observance of Puerto Rican traditional holidays. Make available cultural information on Puerto Rico. 4) Representation of the Puerto Rican Community in San Diego County before government and other groups. 5) General Guardian of Puerto Rican interest in the County of San Diego, CA.”

#### **1975 – The April 1975 *El Boricua* newsletter:**

The earliest copy of La Casa’s newsletter, *El Boricua*, which was reviewed, was what appears to have been the first (1st) issue, since it was the following issue: *El Boricua* (No. I, Vol. I, Abril 1975, San Diego, CA); it had an “Editorial” on its first page, as well as a column titled, “Cronica

Social & Cultural De La Casa”. Page three had a column titled, “Pagina Historica-Cultural De Puerto Rico”; another titled, “Datos Historicos: Trad. Del Events in the History of P.R.”; and a poem titled, “A La Tierra Ausente”, written by Nancy Ramírez Nuñez.

**1976:** On June 24, 1976, the **Mayor of San Diego**, Pete Wilson, issued an official Resolution [or Proclamation], on The City of San Diego letter-head stationary, wherein it stated, in relevant part, the following [cited verbatim]:

“WHEREAS, San Juan Bautista was the original name given to Puerto Rico by Christopher Columbus when he discovered the island; and

Whereas, in 1510 the name of the island was changed to Puerto Rico (Rich Port) by Ponce de Leon, the Spanish conqueror, and the name San Juan was given to its capital; and....

Whereas, the people of Puerto Rico celebrate the 24th day of June in honor of San Juan Bautista (Spanish for Saint John the Baptist); and

Whereas, the citizens of the City of San Diego desire to share this day of celebration with their fellow Americans in Puerto Rico; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of The City of San

Diego, as follows:

That June 24, 1976 be [*sic*] and the same is hereby declared, in the City of San Diego, as San Juan Bautista’s Day. Adopted this Twenty-second Day of June in the year, Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-six.”

Signed by: Mayor Pete Wilson, *et. al.*

Attorney William Phippard wrote that: “The Dia de San Juan proclamation by the City Council, signed by [Mayor] Pete Wilson, was obtained through the efforts of Tom Perry.”

#### **The 1980s – La Casa de Puerto Rico in Historical Context:**

In 1980, eight years after La Casa was formed, the U.S. Federal Census listed a total of 6,007 Puerto Ricans that were living in the San Diego SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) 0, of which 5,529 lived in San Diego, CA (i.e., in the “urbanized area”).

Importantly, in contrast to the 1970 Census, the 1980 Census listed “Puerto Ricans” to include those of “Puerto Rican parentage”, and not just those persons that were born on/in Puerto Rico. Interestingly, the 1980 Census specifically listed a total of 65 Puerto Ricans that were living in the City of Lemon Grove---the City where La Casa de Puerto Rico was founded in October 1972. In contrast, the

City of Los Angeles had a listing of 13,835 Puerto Ricans in 1980.

**1980-1981 - The San Diego Union newspaper and La Casa de Puerto Rico:** As far as this author's research has been able to determine, the *San Diego Union* newspaper [name latter changed to: *The San Diego Union-Tribune*] published two separate articles relating to Puerto Ricans in the early 1980s. For example, on August 13, 1980, the newspaper published the article titled, "*Puerto Ricans Want Identity: Group Here Fights Alienation*", written by Ricardo Chavira, Staff Writer of the *San Diego Union*, wherein he wrote in this article that:

"Sometimes Ralph Costas feels a little like Rodney Dangerfield. As with the comedian who 'don't get no respect,' [*sic*] Costas is often forced to suffer the minor indignities that go with being a Puerto Rican New Yorker living in San Diego....for the 8,000 Puerto Ricans already in San Diego County."

Although La Casa was not mentioned in this 1980 article, the next year, Ralph Costas was the new President of La Casa in 1981, and was in fact interviewed by the *San Diego Union*, while in his capacity as President of La Casa.

Thus, on June 1, 1981, the *San Diego Union* newspaper did publish an article, titled, "*Puerto Rican Presence Grows: Green*

*Pastures in San Diego*", wherein the Staff Writer for this paper reported that: "San Diego has become a magnet for Puerto Ricans." He went on to write that, "...those who have broken the language barrier and who want to better themselves start looking for greener pastures – and San Diego is certainly that" quoting Ralph Costas, President of La Casa de Puerto Rico "...and San Diego, like Los Angeles, is attractive also because of its large Latino population."

The reporter also indicated that, "Many Puerto Ricans who serve in the Navy and Marine Corps here marry Mexican-Americans and so remain when they leave the service." This reporter further quoted Mr. Costas when he wrote that, "La Casa was formed in 1972 out of an ethnic impulse... originally, La Casa was a social and cultural club...." This article went on to point out that La Casa was raising "money to start a college scholarship program to aid children of Puerto Rican families."

With respect to San Diego's Puerto Rican youth, the article pointed out that, "La Casa is setting up a program to teach young Puerto Ricans about their history, poetry, music, and dance.... On June 21, in a daylong festivity to honor of [*sic*] St. John, Puerto Rico's patron Saint, the group will celebrate Dia de San Juan at Mariners Point on Mission Bay." La Casa's Vice President, Sammy Diaz, was also

cited in this article. Finally, La Casa had an "open house" at their location, at 4670 Park Blvd., in San Diego, just the day before.

It is noteworthy that in 1981, La Casa was in a position to provide the San Diego community with, "Two \$500.00 Scholarship gifts Per Year." The members of the Scholarship selection committee were: Bill Morales, Chairman Scholarship Committee; Joe Carballo, Co-Chairman; Ralph Costas, President, La Casa de Puerto Rico; and "others as appointed."

The Treasurer for La Casa de Puerto Rico in 1981 was Benjamin Santiago Rivera. The address for La Casa in 1981 was at 4670 Park Blvd., San Diego, for 1981. In 1981, the yearly membership dues were \$15.00 for singles, and \$25.00 for couples.

**La Casa's newsletter (from: 1980 and 1981) - A "Select Sample" of its issues:** Other documents from 1980 which this author reviewed were a number La Casa's early published newsletters, which at that time, was called: *El Boricua: Boletín Publicado Por "La Casa De Puerto Rico"*; the publication of this issue was Octubre 1980. The President in October 1980 was Angel Soto, and the Editor of the newsletter was Rafael Costas [Ralph Costas]. Interestingly, this October 1980 newsletter was written strictly in Spanish, whereas the newsletter in 2010



is published in English, and occasionally an article in Spanish.

On the other hand, the 1980 newsletter was published 4 times a year, whereas the 2010 newsletter is published 6 times a year: “*El Boricua* es una prodcion de La Casa de Puerto Rico y esperamos poder publicarnos 4 veces al ano. La presente directiva de La Casa se compone de: Angel Soto, Presidente; Rafael Costas, Vice Presidente; Benny Santiago, Tesorero; Teresa Thompson, Secretaria; Andres Castro, Consultor; Carmen Boaz, Vocal.” (*underline added*)

The August 1981 issue of *El Boricua: Boletin Publicado Por “La Casa De Puerto Rico”* cited the name of the President, Rafael Costas, and the Editor of the newsletter, Samuel Diaz, along with the Co-Editor, Lupe Gomez. The October 1981 issue of the newsletter had the President’s Message from Rafael Costas wherein he explained to the members the proposed change in the status of La Casa, namely:

“As mentioned in our prior message, we are now ready to move into other areas, set new objectives, and refine our organization. The Executive committee has explored the benefits of applying for a non-profit tax exempt status under the I.R.S. ruling 501(C)3 for purposes of our scholarship. We are currently a non-profit organization, organized under section 501(C)7 which is a Social

Club. Under 501(C)3 any donations made to the scholarship committee will be able to deduct their expenses as part of their itemized deductions.”

The Editor for the October 1981 issue of the newsletter was Lucy Concepcion, and the Assistant was Hector Concepcion.

The December 1981 issue of the newsletter had the President’s Message from Rafael Costas, which covered many different issues and events that served the San Diego Puerto Rican community, such as “celebrating their annual Christmas Fund Raiser Dance.” Another issue dealt with: “La Casa seeks philanthropic status” from the Internal Revenue Service...[and] once it is approved it will prove beneficial to all parties concerned. It will add a tremendous boost to our scholarship fund raising program.” The newsletter also listed the “New Members” of La Casa. Finally, the next “General Membership Meeting” was to be held at: 4670 Park Blvd., San Diego.

In a typed document, on La Casa de Puerto Rico stationary, titled “CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ACTIVITIES – 1 YEAR” (undated) [although presumably written in 1981 or 1982], it listed the following La Casa social and culturally-related activities for 1981 and 1982, namely:

**Oct. 1981–1982:** Ongoing job

referral and youth program; Staff meeting; Publication of newsletter; Dinner Fund Raiser.

Nov. 1981 – Staff membership meetings; Thanksgiving Dinner Food collection.

Dec. 1981 – Staff and membership meetings; Christmas Fund Raiser Dance; Cultural art exhibition; Cultural music program; Christmas traditional *Parandas*; Christmas Dinner food collection.

Jan. 1982 – Staff membership meeting; Met with Los Angeles Puerto Rican organization for exchange of ideas; Used clothing drive for needy persons.

Feb. 1982 – Staff and membership meeting; Letter to members announcing scholarship and urging participation; Domino tournament initiated—cultural activity.

March 1982 – Staff and membership meetings; Free Drawing campaign; Ticket printing; Initiated application Form 1023 – 1035 for tax exemption.

April 1982 – Staff and membership meetings; Contacted Rums of P.R., Coca Cola, for Scholarship; Dance Cocktail; Dinner fund raiser; Made pertinent arrangements for Scholarship fund raiser.

May 1982 – Staff and membership meetings;

Scholarship winner selections;  
Scholarship banquet and dance;  
Worked on Form 1023 & 3500  
application form, Tax exemption;  
Tee shirt purchase and printing  
for sale at picnic.

June 1982 – Staff and  
membership meetings; Free  
drawing ticket distribution;  
Celebration of “*Dia of San Juan*”  
in Mission Bay [in San Diego] –  
cultural activity which draws  
maximum number of Puerto  
Ricans to this picnic type activity;  
S.D. Padre Baseball Fund Raiser.

July 1982 – Vacations

August 1982 – Represented  
Puerto Rico in San Diego’s  
“America’s Finest City” picnic –  
exhibited art from Puerto Rico;  
San Diego Padre Baseball game;  
Fund Raiser; Staff and  
membership meetings; Newsletter  
publication.

The Editor for La Casa’s news-  
letter in 1982 was José Vázquez;  
this issue had a column titled  
“Health Corner,” as well as  
announcing the 1982 Scholarship  
Award winners, namely, Rose  
Diaz and Jacob Rodriguez. This  
issue also cited the extraordinary  
accomplishments of Samuel O.  
Ortiz, “who just recently  
graduated from [the] University  
of Southern California with two  
Bachelor’s Degrees (Art &  
Science). It also cited the Dia de  
San Juan Fiesta Familiar to be  
held on Father’s Day at Mariner’s  
Point, Mission Bay, San Diego.

**1982-1983:** “The Puerto Rican  
community is very much aware  
of the need and value of a higher  
education in today’s market place  
.... I’m happy to announce the  
‘La Casa De Puerto Rico  
Educational Scholarship’ for  
1982-83. This award will go to a  
needy San Diego youth or adult  
who will be attending a college or  
university during the academic  
year of 1982-83.... Our  
children’s hopes and dreams  
become a reality by the nature of  
our response to their needs....”

On May 17, 1982, Jacob  
Rodriguez was mailed a letter  
wherein it read: “On behalf of ‘La  
Casa de Puerto Rico’, I’m happy  
to announce that you have been  
selected to receive the  
Educational Scholarship for the  
Fall of 1982. Your academic  
qualifications were impeccable,  
and make you a worthy recipient  
to receive this award....” This  
letter was signed by William  
Morales, Educational Scholarship  
Chairperson. Further, Rose Diaz  
was also awarded a La Casa  
Scholarship on May 17, 1982.

**1984:** The Editor for La Casa’s  
newsletter in 1984 was Rafael  
Costas; the President was Joe  
Carballo. The President’s  
message stated that “the  
Christmas Dance was a  
tremendous occasion and fun was  
had by all.” A special thanks  
were given to Gerry Hernandez  
and to Sammy Diaz for their  
efforts.

President Carballo provided an  
important and timeless insight,  
namely that: “To promote pride  
in your heritage requires work  
and effort.”

The March 1984 newsletter’s  
Editor was Luis Cerezo and  
Samuel Diaz; the President being  
Samuel Diaz.

**1985:** The Editor for La Casa’s  
newsletter in 1985 was Hector  
Nevarez, with the President of  
La Casa being Samuel Diaz. One  
of the topics discussed in the  
newsletter dealt with the  
“Scholarship Announcement”.  
Specifically, it read:  
“La Casa is currently sponsoring  
an educational/vocational  
scholarship for the 1985-1986  
academic year....We are all aware  
of the value of a good education  
in modern times and with this  
award we hope to assist an  
eligible candidate in the  
attainment of his/her educational/  
professional goals.”

To this end, La Casa was to have  
“The Scholarship Dance (Baile de  
La Beca)” with the L.A. Salsa All  
Stars featuring Bobby Rivas  
providing the musical  
entertainment.

The March 1985 newsletter had,  
under La Casa’s “logo”, the  
phrase: “En Honor a Borinquen.”  
La Casa’s membership was cited  
as being at the “almost 100 mark  
and growing,” as of February 85.

**1986:** The Editor for La Casa’s  
newsletter in 1986 was María  
Torres; the President was Tomás

Perry. One of the topics which were covered was the column titled “Reinado: Reina Infantil 1986”, which indicated that: “*Queremos felicitar a todas las niñas participantes en este lindo reinado que se llevó el día 22 de junio en la playa. Ellas fueron: Athena Rodríguez; Rachel Thompson; Lorna L. Torres; Cynthia Benítez. Nuestra Reina infantil 1986 lo fue la niña Athena Rodríguez.*”

**1987:** The Editor for La Casa’s newsletter in 1987 was María Torres; President: Tomás Perry. One topic in this issue was a Table/Chart titled: “Municipios de Puerto Rico”, wherein it listed the names of several Municipalities in Puerto Rico, as well as their respective “Año de Fundación”, their “Población”, etc.

### **The 21st Century - San Diego and California’s Puerto Rican Population Figures and Information:**

**2006:** According to the 2006 U.S. Federal Census, San Diego, CA, had a total Puerto Rican population of 12,340.

**2008:** According to the 2008 U.S. Federal Census, California had a total Puerto Rican population of 172,978 (or 4.1% of all Puerto Ricans in the continental U.S.), while New York State had 1,088,197 (or 25.8%).

**In 2008,** California therefore ranks 8th among the States in Puerto Rican population, with

New York State, of course, still ranking 1st.

### **Additional Sources Cited:**

1) U.S. Bureau of the Census. *1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population, California.* vol. 1, part 6. (pages 1156, 1157, 1158, 1162, 1163, 1164, 387408).

2) U.S. Bureau of the Census: *1980 Census of Population, California, General Population Characteristics, vol. 1, part 6.* (pages 30, 35, 37, 56, 216, 217).

3) Duany, Jorge and Patricia Silver. 2010. *The ‘Puerto Ricanization’ of Florida: Historical Background and Current status.* CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Spring 2010, Vol. XXII, No. 1, pages 6, 4-31, “Table 1”).

4) Vélez, William and Giovanni Burgos. 2010. *The Impact of Housing Segregation and Structural Factors on the Socioeconomic Performance of Puerto Ricans in the United States.* CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Spring 2010, Vol. XXII, No. I, pages 189, 175-197, “Table 2”).

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the following persons, in alphabetical order, (I hope I have not forgotten anyone) for their invaluable assistance.

Camacho, Rosario  
Costas, Ralph  
Grillo-Lopez, Dr. Antonio

Pagán, Casilda  
Reyes, Jose  
Santiago-Rivera, Benjamin  
Soto, Angel and Lydia  
Quiñones, Jose  
Importantly, Rosario Camacho was gracious enough to **translate** the “original Spanish-written” documents into English, which was invaluable to this author.

Finally, a very special “Thank You” to **Jose Quiñones’s** family which provided this author accessed to his own personal **original** copies of La Casa-related documents for this “History of La Casa de Puerto Rico” (San Diego).

A special *gratitude* is given to Attorney William Phippard, since according to 30-year member, Ralph Costas, Attorney Phippard provided, *pro bono* legal advice and assistance over a number of years. Attorney Phippard was interviewed by this author.

### **The “Founders” of La Casa who were interviewed:**

Milton Rios; Jose Quiñones; Angel Soto; Lydia Soto; Ralph Cartasquillo; and Benjamin Santiago-Rivera. Sadly, many are no longer with us, although their *spirit and impact* still lives with *La Casa de Puerto Rico*.

**Note:** A more comprehensive version of this article can be obtained from this author, upon request, via e-mail at: [DLopez777@aol.com](mailto:DLopez777@aol.com).