

Bob Rosenthal Miguel Algarín

Miguel Algarín photo at Naropa University, by Allen Ginsberg



I remember back to the late 1970's going to the Nuyorican Poets' Cafe where it originated on East 6th Street. I was just starting to work for Allen Ginsberg and he suggested I check out the Cafe. I heard Miguel Algarín read and Miguel Piñero and Lucky Cienfuegos; all read from the tiny storefront stage under the dim lights. Miguel was a kind man who never made distinctions between race or gender; his open heart rang like a bell for all to hear. Miguel loved Allen and Allen returned Miguel's love by always supporting Miguel and reading at the Cafe, reading at benefits, or going on WBAI with Miguel. The Cafe supported many young Puerto Rican writers like Sandra Esteves and Nancy Mercado. And older writers like Victor Hernandez Cruz, Pedro Pietri, and Steve Cannon. The Cafe presented writing workshops and many theatrical productions. I would go to poetry readings at The Poetry Project and the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. Miguel managed everything being Papa Bear taking care of his wild children. He wrote the grants that supported the rent. Miguel was also a beloved professor of English at Rutgers University where he also promoted young writers and brought them to the Cafe to read like Eliot Katz and Danny Shot. Miguel was humble but insistent. Poetry poured out of him in a mighty stream that carried many aspiring poets to new heights. He accepted all the kinds of poetry around him; just like Walt Whitman or Pablo Neruda accepted multitudes into their poetry. Miguel's legacy is that we have poetry composed by the many tongues of the Lower East Side and the songs that can still be heard inside the magic door of The Nuyorican Poets' Cafe.



Bob Rosenthal (b. 1950); *Straight Around Allen: On the Business of Being Allen Ginsberg*, Beatdom Books 2019, *Cleaning Up New York*, republished Little Book Room, 2016. Books of poetry: *Morning Poems*, *Lies About the Flesh*, *Rude Awakenings*, *Viburnum*, and *Eleven Psalms*; plays co-written with Bob Holman: *The Cause of Gravity*, *The Whore of the Alps*, *Bicentennial Suicide*, *Clear The Range*.