Diana Gitesha Hernandez
"I've built this place to pay my due to the real world" Miguel Algarín.

I first met Miguel in 1974 when as a teenage poet crossing the Brooklyn Bridge headed for Loisada, I stumbled across The Nuyorican Poets Cafe. On Halloween 1989 I sang at the cafe's reopening and soon after started moonlighting as their bartender. From 1989-1993 Miguel's cafe (his dream) truly became my second home. There I had a platform to express my trilogy of creativity; poetry, music, and art for which Miguel would inspire, encourage and challenge me. Miguel demanded commitment from those around him and attracted creatives from all walks of life; famous and infamous people buzzed around him. He was not only intellectually educated, but was dangerously street smart, and politically savvy. After hours, midnight till 4 am was the cafe's bewitching hour. Miguel would hold court with unannounced visitors, stories would be told, poems would be read or written, and the music spun off the hook. We both shared a true love of jazz, and he and I would often sing standards, harmonize and salsa dance till dawn or until Julio (the cafe manager) would put us all out. Miguel had a particular charm of being utterly himself that could disarm you. He was a powerful influence that gave me renewed Puerto Rican pride with a fresh Nuyorican identity, and a license to express my unique voice with the cojones to be the creative warrior I am today. Forever grateful. La La La Le Le La… La La Le, Le-ahhh...Miguel!

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Diana Gitesha Hernandez, aka Gitesha, is an NYC poet, born in Puerto Rico, bred in Brooklyn and longtime resident of Loisaida, NYC. Beside being a poet, Hernandez is a multimedia performance artist, jazz singer and drum percussionist who often weaves music with her words. She is author of several collections of poetry, and cd's and has had her work published in numerous literary magazines and anthologies. She is also a visual artist and licensed massage therapist. She performs and exhibits regularly in NYC and beyond. http://www.gitesha.com