

Felipe Luciano

The Daddy of the Nuyorican Poets



There are very few Puerto Ricans who can claim having built an institution that is both revolutionary and artistic.

Miguel Algarín was one of those pioneers. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe was a monument to our having survived the bone-crunching poverty, the murderous brutality of jail, beatings, and mis-education, the trauma of coming to a frigid, impersonal city from a warm, family-oriented tropical island.

Miguel defied the odds and the stereotypes; he rejected jail as a lifestyle though he gave a hand to so many jailbirds because he felt the pain in them... and the voices that were screaming to be released. Miguel Piñero, Tito Goya, Bimbo Rivas, Jorge Brandon (el Coco que habla), Tato Laviera and myself all found a safe haven in his Cafe: a place where we could be recognized as artists and human beings. Women were given real freedom in this place, Nancy Mercado, Sandra Maria Esteves, La Bruja and so were the black and white poet visionaries, Amiri Baraka, Steve Cannon, David Henderson, and Allen Ginsberg. The Cafe was our home, a place where Albizu Campos and Shakespeare had equal footing.

Algarín knew spiritually that no revolution could take place without art and throughout the militant 60's and 70's, the hub, the gathering place for all dreamers was this little place on 6th Street and later 3rd Street of the Lower East Side, The Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

May we be strong enough, loving enough to remember and build on his character and genius.

Que viva la memoria de Miguel Algarín!

Felipe Luciano is the winner of two Emmy Awards for best reporting in New York City. This former WNBC-TV news anchor defied adversity early in life. Luciano was born in New York City and raised in poverty in East Harlem and Brooklyn by a single Puerto Rican mother. He got involved in gangs at the age of 13 and by the age of 16 was sent to prison for attempted manslaughter. Upon his release, Felipe entered Queens College and immediately became a member of the Last Poets and co-founder/chairman of the Young Lords Party.

Luciano recently earned a Master's degree from Union Theological Seminary. His life has revolved around raising his three children, TV reporting, radio talk/music shows, lecturing and writing. He has just finished writing his memoir, *Flesh and Spirit: The Warrior Path, Confessions of a Young Lord*.