

Stephanie A. Agosto



Meeting Miguel Algarín was such a powerful moment for me. I had read some of his material in my Latino literature course at Hunter College, however, meeting him and reading at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe was an experience I will never forget. I remember Pedro Pietri taking me to the Cafe to read and to meet Miguel and everyone else at the Cafe. I remember feeling so happy and nervous at the same time. I was so impressed that Miguel was not just an amazing writer and co-founder of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, he was also a proud Boricua gay man. I, at the time, was

working for Dr Louis Parrish at his office on the upper east side of Manhattan. Dr. Parrish specialized in Parasitology and HIV/AIDS. He was the physician that opened the first gay medical practice in New York City, knowing that gay men especially of color had been underrepresented at the time. I was so proud to meet Miguel Algarín, a pioneer in multiple ways. I remember Miguel like many others at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe encouraging me to continue writing. He made me feel like the Cafe was created for all generations of artists and writers including me and it instantaneously became a place where I felt accepted, appreciated and loved. I will never forget Miguel's smile, warm eyes and unique laugh. I would hear him, Pedro Pietri, Jesus Papoleto Melendez and Steve Cannon cheer me on every time I read at the Cafe. Miguel Algarín's support of my work meant so much to me then, and still does. I feel privileged to have met him and to have shared time together. The warmth of his spirit and the power of his words will always live in my memory.

A poet, and spoken word artist, **Stephanie A. Agosto** is the former producer and host of *Universal Beats*, a weekly television series on Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). She also produced a twelve-week poetry series at Alexis Cafe in New York City. She has performed at numerous venues, including Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Teachers & Writers, The Julia de Burgos Cultural Center, A Gathering of the Tribes, The Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, Aaron Davis Hall, New Paltz University, the University of Puerto Rico and more. Stephanie served as the Executive Director and board member of 2Leaf Press Inc., and previously served as a board member for the Intercultural Alliance of Artists & Scholars, Inc. (IAAS).