

The Peace Drum Project

Elder's Stories - 2007

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Introduction

Each year we look forward to our meetings and activities with the elders who share their stories, thoughts, humor, wisdom, understanding, and encouragement with the *Peace Drum Project's* teen participants. The experience of getting to know these wonderful elders and hearing their stories has been truly rewarding. We know that we have only scratched the surface of their stories in this process, but we hope that introducing them to you will enrich your lives as it has ours. These stories are filled with wisdom and life experience that young people today can learn from and honor. In spite of the differences between eras, the teens learn that many hopes, dreams, *and* obstacles remain constant across generations. Learning first hand that others have faced similar challenges — and have overcome them — gives power to their own hopes and dreams.

We are delighted with the respectful way in which the teens conducted their interviews, and by how the elders were willing to share their very personal experiences and knowledge with our young people. This bridge across the generations reduces isolation and builds new connections between youth, families, and elders that strengthen our whole community. We look forward to continuing this process for many more years.

This year we offer special thanks to Lucia Rodriguez-Sweeney for transcribing and translating the stories of the Spanish-speaking elders. We also thank Cynthia Jimenez, Resident Services Coordinator at Julia Martin House, Nancy Escoto, Resident Services Coordinator at Nate Smith House, and Julia Martin of Bromley Heath, Community Activist and grandmother, for their help in locating elders who wanted to take part in the project this year.

We dedicate these stories to the memory of Charles M. Holley (1937-2006,) CAI co-founder, and inspiration behind The Peace Drum Project. He is greatly missed by all the teens and graduates, elders, artists, and others who knew and worked with him over the years

Susan E. Porter, Director
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Maximo Ciprian (Español) ***Entrevistado por Bielka Liriano***

“Nací el 29 de mayo de 1928 en Santo Domingo ni en un campo ni en un pueblo. Vivía con mis padres y mis hermanos. Mi mamá era muy fuerte pero mi papá no tanto. Casi no tuve horario. Asistí a una escuela pequeña. Vivíamos en el campo y entonces siempre había miedo de que se encuentre uno en una situación difícil. Como joven cazaba por la montaña y aprendí a evitar los peligros del monte. El miedo se queda donde tú vas. Amanecía muchas veces durante la juventud, con muchas adivinanzas como ‘si la veo no la cojo y si la cojo no la veo.’ Pero yo era determinado. Tuve que aprender a trabajar en la calle desde joven. Yo tenía muchos amigos. Mi mejor amigo es quien más le admiro. Jugaba pelotas y con bolitas. Para divertirme me encantaba bailar. Mi favorita tipa de música es el bolero, especialmente el bolero, yo, se bailaba mucho antes, ya pasó moda. También me gustaba el merengue de Santo Domingo. Cuando llegaba a la casa me gustaba leer y escribir.

Mi primer sueño fue ser abogado. Eventualmente, aprendí el oficio de camarero y servía la comida, limpiaba las mesas, en hoteles y restaurantes. Llegué a ser un administrador y después a otro puesto más grande. Cuando yo trabajaba en la ciudad de Nueva York vendiendo fruta y ahí hacía frío pero yo me ponía una canela, camisa, suéter un abrigo pesado, doble pantalones, y no me daba frío. Tú te quitas más fácil el frío que el calor y es porque prefiero el frío.

He sembrado muchos árboles en mi vida. Mi esposa y yo tuvimos doce hijos. No hay nada como cargar a una niña que te dice ‘papá.’ En mi vida he pensado que el propósito es sembrar árboles, tener hijos y escribir un libro. Estoy en el proceso de escribir mi libro; tengo una gran libreta, yo sigo escribiendo aquí. Me gustaría la oportunidad de enseñar al demás todo que el mundo me ha revelado.

A mí me gusta haber ido a la universidad y nunca pude ir porque la gente de antes no sabía más o menos que es el desarrollo- el desarrollo intelectual. Es la obligación de los padres de llevar a los hijos a la escuela entonces juré que todos mis hijos iban a tener la oportunidad de asistir a la universidad, y casi todos mis hijos son profesionales. Tengo siete hijos, hay cuatro profesionales y otros estudiando carreras profesionales.

Me encanta el rojo y el negro. Me gusta jugar dominó y practicar. Nadie casi me gana. Mis favoritos tiempos son la primavera y el otoño. La primavera porque se levanta la tierra, los árboles, las flores y en el otoño se ocupa para desnudar los árboles, para vestirlos de nuevo con la nieve. Mirando la nieve es como una poesía. Me gusta mucho en el otoño, especialmente en los Estados Unidos, los montes se hacen jardines con un sinnúmero de colores. Todas las estaciones tienen sus ventajas. Yo

admiro la naturaleza, escribo de la naturaleza, que nunca se equivoca.

Ahora vivo para mi familia, para escribir, para seguir disfrutando de toda la belleza que hay en la vida. No temo la muerte, la muerte es solamente una transición. La muerte no es mala depende como tu haya vivido. No debes temer porque Dios no castiga solamente juzga. En la vida siempre tienes que apreciar todo que Dios te ha dado.

Maximo Ciprian (English)
Interviewed by Bielka Liriano

“I was born May 29th 1928 en Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic with my parents and siblings. I was born between the city and the country. My mother was very strict, but my father not so much. I practically had no curfew at all. We lived in the country and there were always things to be feared, facing difficult situations. As a young man I hunted in the mountain and that way I learned to avoid the dangers of the mountain. Fear always follows you. I would often wake up during my youth with revelations on my tongue, “if I see it I don’t grab it, and if I grab it, I don’t see it.” I was very determined. I had to learn how to work in the streets from a young age. I had many friends. My best friend is the man I most admire. I played baseball and to have fun I loved to dance. My favorite kind of music is the *bolero*, especially the *bolero*, I danced to it often in the past. I also like the *meringue* of Santo Domingo. When I would return to the house I loved to read and write.

My first dream was to become lawyer. Eventually, I learned the work of being a waiter and I served food and cleaned tables in restaurants and hotels. I became the administrator and that led to a better position. When I worked in New York City I sold fruit and there it was so cold, but I would put on a shirt, sweater, scarf, heavy coat, two-layers of pants and the cold would be gone. It is easier to escape the cold than the heat.

I have planted many trees in my life. My wife and I had twelve children. There is nothing like carrying a child in your arms that calls you ‘papa.’ I think life’s purpose is to plant trees- have children and maybe write a book. I am in the process of writing my book, I have a huge notebook, and I continue to write. I would like to teach the world all that life has revealed to me.

I would have liked to have gone to university and I could never go because people before did not understand or appreciate intellectual development. It is the obligation of parents to send their kids to college, and almost all of my children are professionals. I have seven children, four are professionals already and the others are studying professional careers.

I love the colors red and black. I like to play dominoes and practice. Practically no one can beat me! My favorite seasons are the spring and the fall. In the spring, the earth awakens, the trees, the flowers, and in the fall, the earth becomes bare only to dress her anew in blankets of snow. Watching the snow is like poetry. I love the autumn, especially in the United States, as the mountains are covered by gardens of an infinite number of colors. All of the seasons have their advantages. I admire nature, and I write about nature, because nature is never wrong.

Now I live for my family, to write, to continue enjoying all the beauty there is in life. I do not fear death, death is only a transition. Death is not a bad if you have lived righteously. There is no reason to fear, God only judges, he does not condemn. In life we must always appreciate all that He has given us.