

## PLAYBACK THEATER IN PATCHOGUE.

Dear friends and supporters...

The Saturday, January 31 Playback Theater show at the Congregational Church of Patchogue was a great success! Your support and advice really paid off. Here's a report on the workshop and performance.

**THE PLAYERS ARRIVE...**The day started very early as Matteo and Sarah Urech from Hudson River Playback Theatre drove all the way down from New Paltz. Ann Belmont from Big Apple lugged her instruments on the train from Penn Station with Marguerite, Una, Dawn, Baba from Playback NYC. Paul, also from PT NYC, who organized this show meet the whole crew for lunch in Patchogue with our local translator Gilda Ramos.

**BACKGROUND...**Ever since Marcelo Lucero was murdered last November we've been following the story. Now that we were here all together Gilda and Paul shared as much as we could about the background and the context of the bias and violence directed at Latinos in this community and what might be some of the unheard voices and stories.

Even though Latinos make up more than a third of Patchogue and there are many non-Latinos that are openly outraged at all forms of anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions...it must be said the highest ranking politician in the county, Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, ran and won on what many called an anti-immigrant platform.

But now after Marcelo's killing everyone has to face the fact that this hate crime was just the worst of a series of attacks on Latinos, men and women, by "gangs" of local teens. While the anti-immigrant voices on Long Island are silenced for the moment the larger community seems sad, confused and angry. So many questions have surfaced about how the local police have responded to these crimes that the Justice Department's civil rights division, the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District have all launched investigations. [WEB-NEWS REPORT](#)

Most of the local press, TV and radio did not respond to our press releases, not even Newsday the major newspaper on Long Island. There were only two exceptions; Bonnie Grice on "In the Morning" WLIU 88.3 FM interviewed Mayor Pontieri and Paul McIsaac and the NY Times did send a reporter to the show and her piece we hope will be in the upcoming Saturday Long Island edition.

So we wondered would anyone show up? What kind of playback show should we do? What forms, what questions, what about safeguards?

**PLAYBACK WORKSHOP...**In the afternoon rehearsal our three companies working together quickly designed our rituals and forms for the show. Sarah and Matteo from Hudson River PT helped us by sharing their experiences of doing many shows with immigrants. We also had a dozen local actors observing and joining us to do some short forms. We think there is definite interest in building a local PT group.

**THE FILM CREW...**We were also joined by a film crew from The Working Group. In 1995 they produced Not In Our Town a PBS documentary that told the story of how people in Billings, Montana joined together to respond to a series of hate crimes in their town. They are now producing "a new public television special that will, in part look at how communities are grappling with anti-immigrant violence. We are seeking stories of people in Suffolk County who are trying to repair the fabric of their community after the recent killing of Marcelo Lucero and other crimes against Latino residents." We were very

impressed with their professionalism and sensitivity in the way they to shot...and their politics and goals. We look forward to working with them more. [WEB-NOT IN OUR TOWN](#)

Our rehearsal and performance space was in the beautiful outer room of The Congregational Church of Patchogue right on Main St. The Reverend Dwight E. Wolter has welcomed the whole community to his church since Marcelo's death. He and his staff treated us really well... a big thanks to them. [WEB-CHURCH](#)

**THE PLAYBACK SHOW...**We were really pleased to have over 100 people come for the show...perhaps 20% or more Latino. The audience was open and quick to respond. Here's some of the offerings...

- The first person had mixed feelings because of the excitement of the presidential election on the one hand and "the horrible tragedy here in Patchogue, only four days later" on the other.
- "Uncertainty of the future for undocumented immigrants under the new Obama administration."
- "Where are all the Latinos? / Wanting more communication."
- "Hope (esperanza) that there will be ONE America - North and South united."
- "Looking up for answers (faith)."
- "Opening doors, opening hearts."
- "Change IS happening here in Patchogue."

**We had three long stories...**

- "The moment I stopped saying I was from Spain and became a Puerto Rican to the world,"
- " How my son and I from Ecuador became a REAL part of a family I worked for here," -
- " In Ecuador our fiestas (parties) are really open and go on all night...but not here. Neighbors say hello but don't welcome each other the way they do at home in my country. I thought Americans were boring. Then I worked for a woman that finally went to a Latino fiesta and loved it so much she wants to be invited to my son's party when he graduates from the Patchogue-Medford High School."

No stories about being attacked or living without papers. We would not encourage that...those stories are for a different time and place. Trials and investigations must go on and people held accountable, while immigration policies need to be debated and changed. This was a night for communities that don't often get to hear each others stories. People lingered afterworlds and all agreed it was a success.

**MORE PLAYBACK IN PATCHOGUE...**Next steps include an invitation for us to perform at the Patchogue-Medford High School for the 3rd annual Cultural Awareness Day on March 6. Plans are also underway for more shows in schools and other locations in the area and to take steps to build a local playback company. Stayed tuned.

**A SPECIAL THANKS** to the Playback community and our funders of this show.

Mayor Paul V. Pontieri, Jr. Village of Patchogue  
Rev. Dwight Lee Wolter, Congregational Church of Patchogue  
Tom Bissinger Erica Eigenberg Nancy Lenz Stephan Van Dam Gail Pellet Jonathan  
Fox Christopher Capobianco Ricki Roer Kenneth Walker

Finally our appreciation to Gilda Ramos for her excellent interpreting, her infectious enthusiasm and her commitment to creating an integrated community in Patchogue.

Muchas gracias, Gilda...gracias todos.

For the Patchogue Playback group (Ad Hoc),

Paul McIsaac  
631-537-7889