

[CLOSE WINDOW](#)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****PR- 283-07****August 8, 2007****MAYOR BLOOMBERG HONORS MILLIE QUEZADA, JOSE ALBERTO 'EL CANARIO,' MICHEL CAMILO, MARCOS DIAZ AND RAFAEL ALVAREZ AT ANNUAL DOMINICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION**

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today hosted a reception in honor of the rich cultural heritage and contributions of the Dominican community in New York City. This year's celebration at Gracie Mansion included five honorees: Queen of Merengue Millie Quezada, Salsa legend Jose Alberto "el Canario," Jazz musician Michel Camilo, Swimmer Marcos Diaz and Dominican Parade Grand Marshall and founder of Alvarez Tax Franchise Rafael Alvarez. The Mayor presented each honoree with a crystal apple in recognition of their exemplary achievements in music, sports and business. Joining the Mayor in this celebration were Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Guillermo Linares, Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Jeanne Mullgrav, Mayor of the City of Villa Monte Llano Graciela Fermin Nuesi, actor Manny Perez, Council General of the Dominican Republic Eduardo Selman and Dominican Parade President Nelson Peña.

"New York is full of great Dominican talent and tonight's celebration is one small way of saying 'gracias' to the Dominican community for helping us to show the world that New York is el centro cultural de la vida latina," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Together, we're building better schools, a stronger economy, and a brighter future. And together we celebrate the diversity that makes New York such an exciting City where people from all over the world can pursue their dreams."

"The Dominican Heritage celebration gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and applaud the economic, cultural and social contributions Dominican Americans have made to this great City," said Commissioner Linares. "As the City's largest immigrant community, Dominicans embody the strength and vibrancy of all of New York City's foreign-born residents. I am proud to honor them this evening."

"Tonight we not only celebrate the countless contributions made by generations of Dominican New Yorkers, we also pledge to support those who will build upon the City's reputation as a bastion of opportunity," said Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav.

New York is home to more than 400,000 Dominican immigrants, many of whom have settled in Washington Heights/Inwood, Corona, Cypress Hill and other parts of the City. The Manhattan Dominican Parade commemorates the anniversary of the beginning of the war for the restoration of Dominican independence from Spain on August 16, 1863. Mayor Bloomberg will march in this year's parade, which will take place on Sunday, August 12 and travel up Sixth Avenue from 36th Street to 64th Street and Central Park West.

At the reception, guests enjoyed the music of Dominican artist Fulanito. In addition, The Merengue Trio performed as guests entered Gracie Mansion. "Diablos Cajuelos" from Juan Pablo Duarte Foundation also entertained the crowd in their costumes. The festivities were generously sponsored by Banco Popular Dominicano, Interboro Institute, MoneyGram and Presidente USA. Dominican cuisine and refreshments were provided by El Malecon Restaurant, La Cabana Antojitos Dominicanos, Breezes Café, Mamajuana Cafe, Rubio Café, National Supermarket Association, El Viejo Yayo Restaurant, 809 Sangria Bar & Grill and DTM Magazine.

This year there are five distinguished honorees:

Rafael Alvarez is the founder of Alvarez Tax Franchise, the only Latino tax service franchise in the nation that he founded in 2006. Prior to this he served as the Site Director of Interboro Institute in Washington Heights where he led an effort to acquire campus facilities and increase student enrollment. He also served as the Chief of Staff to the office of former New York City Councilman Guillermo Linares. Rafael has been recognized for his philanthropic commitment to his community, is a graduate of City College, New York and has been in business as an independent accountant for 20 years.

Marcos Diaz began swimming at the age of six in the Dominican Republic. After participating in a few triathlons, Marcos became very interested in swimming in open water and he started competing in short open water races. In 1999 he made his first ultra distance non-stop swim (52 kilometers) in a 25 meter pool. Since that day, Marcos has participated in many long distance swimming competitions in open waters around the world. In 2006, he won first place at the "81 Kms World Longest National Swimming Competition" at the Bhagirathi River in India. On August 18th he plans to swim solo around Manhattan.

Michel Camilo is a Latin jazz composer and pianist. He composed his first song at the age of 5 and at 16 he became a member of the National Symphony Orchestra. He moved to New York in 1979 where he continued his studies at the Mannes School of Music and Juilliard. He won a Grammy Award in 1983 for his composition "Why Not?" and made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1985. Since then, he has performed around the world, was a conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in the Dominican Republic and has recorded musical scores for Spanish films. In 2000 he won Best Latin Jazz Album in the first-ever Latin Grammy Awards and won again in the same category in 2004. The Berklee College of Music in Boston awarded Michel an honorary Doctorate in Music and also created the "Michel Camilo Scholarship," which helps Dominican students come to the United States and study Jazz.

Jose Alberto "El Canario" is a master improviser with a unique voice and exceptional salsa style. Born in the Dominican Republic, he pursued his musical studies in Puerto Rico and moved to New York City where he formed the "Jose Alberto, El Canario y Su Orquesta" in 1983. He has performed around the world and is internationally recognized as a master of the salsa and tropical rhythm genre.

Milly Quezada is known internationally as "Queen of Merengue". Born in the Dominican Republic, Milly's musical style manifested in the streets of Washington Heights where she, her four siblings and soon-to-be husband Rafael Vasquez, formed the group "Milly Jocelyn & Los Vecinos" in 1975. Their unique musical style earned them a place in the Dominican Republic's musical history. The death of her husband in 1996 led to her solo career and in 2006 she won a Latin Grammy Award for her CD "MQ" in the Best Merengue Album category. She also played a supporting role in a major motion picture produced in the Dominican Republic entitled "Yuniol" which was released this summer.

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