

The Spirit of the New Rican Village

In those days, the days of the New Rican Village, we were of a mind that was not going to wait for the established, mainstream institutions of art and culture to validate and accept our creative production. We understood the elitist and exclusionary practices of these venues that decided whose work would get seen, played, exhibited, heard, performed and printed. We were of a mind to not wait for yet another response that consistently excluded our voice from the conversation.

Instead, we were of a mind to create our own venues and institutions, to play music in our own clubs for and with each other, to exhibit our artworks in our own galleries, to perform on our own stages and publish our own works whether by xerox, handmade or print. We were determined to survive and cultivate our creativity independent from those who never embraced or welcomed us.

Our artistic creation was, as still is, a revolutionary act from the perspective of a mainstream that chooses to ignore us and would prefer that we remain invisible. We were of a mind to manifest our art by any means necessary, however and wherever we were able, within our homes and out in our communities—alone, with our families or with each other. We realized and believed that it is healthier to be nurtured in the company of empowered brethren who support and embrace our journey, than to be in the company of others filled with self-hatred for their own humanity and only interested in exploiting the best of our possibilities for profit and servitude.

We were of a mind that we were not going to continue the traditions of slavery modeled by our ancestors as factory and migrant workers, but instead, through our art, nurture a culture of liberation, enlightened consciousness and profound humanity. From the establishment of the Puerto Rican Embassy to the emergence of a successful group of dynamic musicians called LIBRE, as in Conjunto Libre, these are the ideals that embodied the Spirit of the New Rican Village.

We were always of a mind to practice our right to be free in body, heart, mind and spirit.

—Sandra María Esteves
November 7, 2015
Lower East Side Girls Club & Loisaida Center