

A valiant leader, in business  
and the bullring

Artistic homage to centuries  
of cherished traditions

Keys to success: Classical roots,  
improvisational flair

Chia seeds get the  
healthy respect they deserve



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## A valiant leader, in many arenas



*Carmen Bermudez*

Carmen Bermudez's life has been threaded with themes of abandonment, injury, deprivation, hunger and desperation. But it has also been full of mind-blowing adventures, exceptional resourcefulness, determination, conquest and simple grit.

As a child in Costa Rica, Bermudez's father abandoned her, her two young siblings and their then-pregnant mother. A move to a tiny Costa Rican town without running water or electricity was accompanied by constant hunger, says Bermudez. "I was 5 or 6 when we arrived there. I didn't feel deprived because we all had the same life. We got by, but I was always hungry, and I resented that a lot. I didn't like being hungry.

"One day I told my mother I was sick and tired of being poor. She asked me what I was going to do about it," Bermudez says. "I knew bullfighters made a lot of money. Once a year there was a big gathering in our town, and everyone would come together to watch bullfights. That's where I got the idea it would be nice to be a famous bullfighter.

"So my mother dared me and said if I wanted to be a bullfighter, why not go into the pasture where there was a bull. I jumped the fence, and when the cow lowered its head I got so scared. I turned around and hopped back over the fence. My mother laughed and said, 'Yeah, some kind of bullfighter you're going to be.'"

Although that encounter was scary and left her mother chuckling, Bermudez felt excitement. "I felt alive for the first time. I liked the feeling of fear. It is something I cannot describe in words – my heart pounded, and it was just so exciting. I felt so alive. So, at the age of 7 I knew I was going to be a bullfighter."

True to her word, Bermudez grew up to be an acclaimed bullfighter, in a profession dominated by men.

After several years, Bermudez hung up her cape and moved to the United States where her mother was living.

"I knew I needed to get a stable job," she says. So she joined Trans World Airlines where she worked for 18 years. After meeting the love of her life on a flight, she got married and started learning about the financial world through his company, Marathon Asset Management.

"I decided to start spending time at Marathon to learn about the business. I learned to use a computer, and then took on some projects other employees didn't want to do. I was frustrated with the banks' lack of customer service and said to my husband that I wanted to open a trust company. We could do a better job for our clients. As my mother had dared me years earlier, my husband said: 'Why don't you?'" Bermudez says.

In 1994 Bermudez opened Mission Management & Trust Co. It happened to be the first minority-, woman-owned independent trust company in the country. Ten years later, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson introduced Bermudez – who led the Pledge of Allegiance – at the 2004 Republican Convention.

Entering its 20th year, Bermudez's company has been a standout in the world of asset management, and her work for the company has earned Bermudez awards. However, she says, her primary goal is to do more than win awards.

"I don't ever want to retire. I love my team here so much. We even have amazing interns with so much potential. What I really want to do is be an instrument to help people who come along in the future. My focus now is on giving back," Bermudez says.



*"Here we have the beautiful Carmen Bermudez doing an artistic pass and in addition to being a good bullfighter, she is an excellent horsewoman," reads the caption for this photo of Carmen Bermudez. Taken in Mexico City, the photo was published in a 1966 edition of El Sol de Mexico (The Mexican Sun).*



*Carmen Bermudez at El Cortijo la Morena, a bullring, near Mexico City in 1967.*

# Extemporaneous means of expression



Alfredo Rodriguez

"What most people don't realize," says pianist/composer Alfredo Rodriguez, "is that life is actually improvisation. You can't really know exactly what's coming next."

Enrolled in a selective music academy at age 7 while in Havana, Rodriguez became immersed in a classical-music education that continued through high school and on into college.

"I studied all the classical composers – Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. I learned the music of the European composers, but also Latin American classical music," Rodriguez recalls.

But one CD ended up causing a shift in course.

"My uncle called me when I was 13 or 14 and said he had an album that he wanted to give to me. ... He gave me a Keith Jarrett CD.

"He was obviously just being himself on that CD," Rodriguez says about Jarrett, an acclaimed pianist and master improviser with a classical background. "It was like he was giving a speech without having written it down beforehand. I couldn't do anything like that at the time. I couldn't sit down at the piano and just start playing. I had to know the music beforehand. So that CD changed my life."

It dawned on Rodriguez that while he was capable of playing the works of the great classical composers, but he wasn't fully able to express himself through their music.

"It's not that I wasn't myself when I was playing Mozart, but I wanted to do something that expressed my feelings," Rodriguez explains, "and I couldn't do that while I was playing the work of classical composers. So I started investigating improvisation."

Rodriguez continued his classical education while exploring improvisational music.

Fate led to Rodriguez's introduction to Quincy Jones at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland in 2006. Although Rodriguez and Jones corresponded after meeting, it wasn't until Rodriguez, nearly finished with college, went to Mexico to perform with his father in 2009 and made his way into the United States, that he was able to begin working with Jones.

"I got arrested by the Mexican police when I tried to come into the United States. They wanted money from me, but I didn't have any. When they asked me why I was trying to get into the United States I told them the only thing I wanted to do was ... start a new life and play my music. I told them if they didn't let me into the United States I would keep coming back to the border. They ended up letting me go," Rodriguez says.

After four years, Rodriguez is still trying to get better at communicating.

"Communication is very important for human beings. So if I'm going to live here I need to know as much as I can," Rodriguez says. "Although I don't feel like I speak English very well yet, I am just trying to do my best."

On stage, working with other improvisational musicians, Rodriguez has absolutely no trouble communicating through the sounds and subtle nuances of the music through which he learns about the world around him and expresses his impressions and experiences.

Asked what's next, Rodriguez says he is venturing into composing symphonic works. Worldwide tours, and opportunities to work with various musicians, are on the horizon, as is an album.

"We were just in the studio. I don't know what the album will be called yet, or exactly when it's coming out, but we've been working on it."

Rodriguez embodies his own notion that life is improvisation. "My music comes from different aspects of life. My life is not music. My life is my life. Music is just a complement of who I am."



"I studied all the classical composers – Bach, Mozart, Beethoven," says Alfredo Rodriguez.



Alfredo Rodriguez idolizes musician Keith Jarrett, who sparked his interest in improvisational music. Photos by Anna Webber

# Homage to centuries of tradition

This month's edition of *Unity* celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month and recognizes three gifted artists. These artists' vivid interpretations illustrate their commitment to their heritage and culture. They visually portray century-old traditions and customs that continue to have a positive influence on the contemporary Hispanic family and community.



Left to right:  
 "Bomba Tradition"  
 "Plena Dancer"  
 "The Salsa Dancers" by Elizabeth Baez

## ELIZABETH ERAZO BAEZ

Elizabeth Erazo Baez is a self-described "NewYorican": a person who was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., of Puerto Rican parents. Her parents moved back to Puerto Rico after she was born and it was there that inspiration for her work developed. Baez received an associate's degree in art and advertising design from New York City College of Technology, and worked in marketing on the creative side. She, however, always felt something was missing in her life and eventually pursued her dream of becoming an artist full time.

Baez says she has been in love with art ever since she could hold a crayon, and most of her art is influenced by her Hispanic heritage.

"I am fascinated by our stories, the folklore, music and dance performances," she remarks with obvious fondness. Many of Baez's works depict her love of watching people, especially when they are dancing.

Her love for red is also unmistakable, as shown in "Bomba Tradition," which was inspired by the movement of the dress and the gracefulness of the dancer. "When painting people, I tend to use the color red because red represents passion," says Baez.

The color red is also prominent in Baez's "Plena Dancer" and "The Salsa Dancers." In "Plena Dancer," the fullness of the dancer's dress and her look of pure pleasure speak volumes about her love for the traditional dance. "The Salsa Dancers" illustrates a rhythmic vibe between a man and a woman as they salsa freestyle.

Baez's work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions and is in private collections throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. She is active in the Hispanic

community and committed to the cultural preservation and advancement of Puerto Rican art globally.

## TOMÁS CASTAÑO

Tomas Castaño was born in the port city of Santander, Spain and from a young age showed a penchant for drawing. Yet, he did not use his first paintbrush until the age of 17. Self-taught, Castaño has created his own style of portraying urban architectural facades of historical buildings. His paintings capture the richness of Cuban and Spanish landscape and life.

The themes of Castaño's work convey his compassion for old cityscapes and the magic of aesthetics. His "ZARAGOZA-La Flor de Almbiar" represents the façade of an old bakery in Zaragoza, Spain. "I was inspired by the wood décor and vintage posters," says Castaño. The rustic charm gives the structural design its vintage look.

"MOJACAR- Almería" takes the viewer to a peaceful street in Andalusia, Spain. The corner building of crisp white



"ZARAGOZA-La Flor de Almbiar" by Tomás Castaño



"MOJACAR-Almería" by Tomás Castaño



"HABANA Parada Bici-Taxi" by Tomás Castaño

with shades of pale blue contrasts beautifully with the vivid plum-and-fuchsia bougainvilleas and reflect a tranquil sense of community.

Castaño's "HABANA Parada Bici-Taxi" brings a bustling Cuban lifestyle – including the traditional transportation system of bicycle taxis – to life. On full display are the community's weather-worn, Colonial architecture, with its rustic colors of golds and browns, and locals who are trying to make a living.

Castaño's work has been displayed in collective exhibitions in countries including Germany, Holland, Argentina, Japan and Spain.

## GUS AND LINA OCAMPOSILVA

Gus and Lina Ocamposilva are a husband-and-wife team who share a mutual passion for art. Gus drew his first portrait at age 6 and, as a

teenager, won first place in a national dance competition. Gus says that's when he knew he would pursue his "artistic soul." He received most of his formal art training in Spain where he studied murals at Escola Massana in Barcelona and painting at the University of Barcelona.

Upon his return to Colombia, he met Lina, who was a professional dancer and choreographer. Initially, Lina worked with Gus as his model, and then began curating his work. "We moved to the United States and started working as an artist team," says Gus. "It was our goal to make sculptures a part of the North American public art market."

In their artistic collaboration, Lina is the self-taught welder. The medium used for their sculptures is aluminum and powder coating. "We work together on vision, color and movement," Lina remarks. "Everything that comes out of the studio is agreed upon 100 percent."

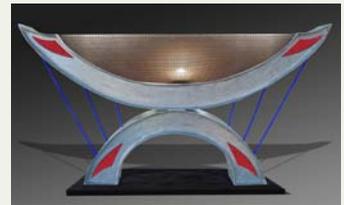
Gus and Lina have created their own style of figurative forms using bright colors and balance. They say life, nature and movement are thematic choices for all of their work. Their piece, "Twin Souls," honors their relationship as a couple, artists and soul mates. The structure intertwines to show tangible balance and connectedness.

Because of their background in dance, movement plays an integral role in the Ocamposilvas' art. "Waves" is their abstract representation of that movement and the importance of water on our planet. Gus and Lina describe their colorful sculptures as an exposé of the Andes and the tropics, where they grew up.

The orange and yellow half-rings of "Sun," featured on the cover of this edition of *Unity*, provide depth and different perspectives. "The sun is the king of nature," says Gus. "Without it, the planet would be lifeless and without color." Inspiration for "Nest" comes from Gus and Lina's love of nature. "When one thinks of a nest, you think of life and awakening in nature," says Lina. "It is the first stage of life and home."

The Ocamposilvas have been

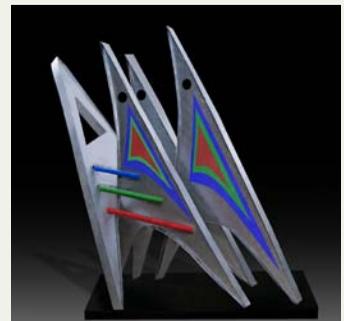
recognized in the United States, Canada and Europe and their commissioned work can be found in public and private collections around the world, including public parks, libraries and hospitals. Gus and Lina have had more than 37 projects installed around the country since 2006, and have an installation on the East River Park Promenade in New York City from June through November in 2013. It is their hope that they will be an inspiration and open opportunities for future generations of Hispanic sculptors.



"Nest" by Gus and Lina Ocamposilva



"Twin Souls" by Gus and Lina Ocamposilva



"Waves" by Gus and Lina Ocamposilva

## Chia seeds gain respect in spite of kitschy claim to fame

“The pottery that grows” has grown into the next big thing in your kitchen since, well, the Chia Pet.

Chia seeds, the “miracle” behind the Chia Pet – which was a different kind of kitchen staple 30 years ago – have found their way back into the spotlight. The seeds are high in protein and other nutrients. They can be added to just about any food and most drinks and are sold online in their natural form as well as in snack bars, drinks and packaged foods.

You might remember these seeds when they were marketed as the miracle growing plant. However, the roots of the chia plant (*Salvia Hispanica*) can be traced much farther back.

The Mayans and the Aztecs used the seeds as a staple part of their diet to provide energy and nutrition. The plant was even used at one time as currency to pay taxes. Still grown and harvested primarily in Mexico and Bolivia, the plant’s popularity continues to stimulate and grow those countries’ agricultural economy.

What else does the chia seed offer in terms of nutrition? It boasts an incredibly high amount of omega 3-fatty acids, rivaling that of most fish, but it’s perfect for vegetarian diets. The seeds have overtaken blueberries as the food with the most amount of antioxidants pound.

Unlike flaxseeds, chia seeds do not have to be ground or processed to be useful to the body. Chia seeds, which can hold up to seven times their weight in water, form a gel-like substance in the body that generates a slow distribution of carbohydrates. Translation: They produce a lasting form of energy.

Incorporating the seeds into your diet is easy. Small and mostly flavorless, they can be sprinkled on oatmeal, or added to smoothies, bread or salads.

That doyenne of domesticity, Martha Stewart, has even taken notice of the seeds’ merits. She included them in a recipe in the January 2013 issue of *Martha Stewart Living*. Now, Stewart probably wouldn’t advise you to soak the fur of your retro Chia Pet, but it’s worth noting that steeping the leaves of the chia plant in water creates a therapeutic tea.

You might have looked at the Chia Pet versions of Garfield, Scooby-Doo or even President Obama and thought, “That’s so adorable. I could just eat it up!” Well, now you have a healthier option: Eat the chia seeds instead.



### Hearty Chia Breakfast Eggs

- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons milk
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds – preferably white
- ¼ teaspoon butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons chopped onion
- ½ cup baby spinach
- Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk the egg and milk. Add the chia seeds and soak for 15 minutes.

Melt the butter in a nonstick pan on low/medium heat; add the onions and fry until soft and slightly brown.

Add the egg mixture to the pan and stir until set. Add the baby spinach leaves and stir the mixture until leaves are slightly wilted.

Season with salt and pepper.

**Yield:** 1 serving

# In paradise, a top chef covets fragrant fruit and pungent peppers



Jackie Lau

Amidst the breathtaking beauty of the Hawaiian islands, foods and flavors seem to take on new life. For Jackie Lau, corporate executive chef for Roy's Restaurants of Hawaii, living in paradise provides daily inspiration.

"Farmers, ranchers and fisherman bring in daily products that are unbelievable," she says. "When you have such great products to work with, it is hard not to want to create a dish from them."

It's also hard not to want to create when one is working with Roy Yamaguchi, celebrity chef and proprietor of the worldwide chain of Roy's Restaurants, known for its Hawaiian fusion cuisine. Lau finds the way he blends flavors and textures to be awe inspiring. Under Yamaguchi's tutelage, which began soon after he opened his original Roy's Restaurant in 1988, Lau worked her way up from pastry chef to the restaurant's first chef de cuisine to opening chef for some of Roy's international restaurants. As corporate executive chef, she now spends her days hopping on planes from Oahu to visit the neighbor islands, where she works on menus, dishes and upcoming events with the chefs and their staffs.

The impetus for Lau's jet-setting career in the culinary arts was a childhood spent in a small farm town in California's San Joaquin Valley, surrounded by a family who loved food and loved to cook. Lau found that her mother wielded the greatest influence, always including her in the kitchen.

"Growing up in a multicultural family and community allowed me to learn from my family and others about different foods and traditions," she explains. "My family always encouraged me to cook."

Today that cooking includes such staples as curry spices – "I love what it adds to all dishes, savory and sweet," she says – and salsa and cheese. Her favorite ingredient is Buddha's Hand, a fragrant citrus fruit. "I have a tree that we planted at our Tavern Garden in Kauai," she says, "and I think that I have more pictures of that tree and the fruit than I do of my family!"

Lau's Hispanic upbringing might have something to do with the fact that she also finds pleasure in using chillies; she claims she cannot cook if she doesn't have some form of the pungent peppers at the ready.

Ultimately, she says, being in the restaurant business is "translating that feeling of cooking for family to our guests and taking care of them with food."



## Roy's Misoyaki Butterfish

### Misoyaki Marinade

8 ounces miso  
8 ounces sugar  
1/2 cup sake  
1/2 cup mirin  
7 ounces black cod or butterfish  
In a pot, mix miso, sugar, sake and mirin. Cook the mixture on medium-high heat until the marinade has a slightly light brown color. When it starts to boil, reduce heat for awhile and bring the heat back up. Once the marinade has reached the correct color, take off heat and cool it in the refrigerator.

### Butterfish

Once the marinade is cooled, pour over the fish until it is covered, and let it marinate overnight. Reserve some of the marinade for later. Flat-top sear until dark brown (sugar must caramelize). Butterfish must be cooked to medium-well.

Combine wine, vinegar, lemon juice and shallots in saucepan and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce until liquid becomes syrupy but not too dark. Add cream and reduce by half. Turn heat down to low and gradually add butter, 1 or 2 pieces at a time, stirring constantly until it is all incorporated. Take off of heat immediately. Do not boil. Season with salt and white pepper to taste. Strain through chinois. Hold in warm double broiler.  
**Yield:** 1 serving

# Programmer at 8, college junior at 15



At 15 years of age, Santiago Gonzalez plans to earn his master's degree by 2015.  
Photo by Vanessa Gonzalez

It isn't every day that you come across a 15-year-old college student who's been referred to as the next Steve Jobs, featured on HuffingtonPost.com and written about in Rolling Stone magazine. Santiago Gonzalez, a junior at Colorado School of Mines, is a rare intellect whose talents, skills and interests have been nurtured by his incredibly supportive and loving family.

"When Santiago was 8 years old, he got interested in programming. After that, the iPhone came out," says Santiago's mother, Vanessa. "He wanted to write a program for the iPhone, so we hunted for a book on computer programming for him. He was so excited." The family eventually moved from the mountains to the Denver area so Santiago could attend a school for gifted kids.

"He was in the school for awhile, and we tried hard to make it work, but after a few years, we realized he wasn't happy, so we started taking him to classes at a community college. It was very hard for the longest time," says Vanessa. "The best thing that happened to us, and to Santiago, was realizing he was very different from other kids and that he needed different things. We noticed that when he spent

more time in college he became happier and more patient."

Skipping middle school and high school, and going directly into college has put Santiago squarely in his element.

"I don't find myself missing anything from high school from what my friends who are in high school have told me," Santiago says.

While he could complete his undergraduate work at School of Mines in December 2014, Santiago plans to continue through 2015 in order to receive a master's degree.

"After that, I'm thinking about getting a Ph.D. in computer engineering at Stanford. I feel Stanford is a very good match for me – I've seen the types of research they do. Also, it's in Silicon Valley so I could have a part-time job at Apple or something like that."

Right now, Santiago works as a research assistant at the college.

"What we're working on is developing a wireless

internet network for one of the buildings at the school. It will estimate how many people are in a building and how many are in different parts of the building, and whether they are moving. The goal of the project is to optimize energy usage.

"The grad student I'm working with is developing a forecasting algorithm to predict when people are going to be in specific parts of the building at particular times," Santiago explains.

Earlier in 2013, Santiago was gearing up for a summer internship at Deloitte Digital, a business-and-technology consulting firm in Denver.

When he's not working or studying, he still likes to tinker.

"I like to program and I like electronics. They suit each other. I build embedded devices," Santiago says. "One thing I made is a little USB flash drive with a screen on it that allows you to navigate the files without connecting the drive to a computer."

"Our biggest hope for him," says mom Vanessa, "is just for him to be happy. We want him to develop the gift he has and do something good with them. We want him to have a rich life. In academics, we hope he is able to do something that he can eventually look back at and say, 'Wow – I did what I wanted to do and did it well.' We tell him the sky's the limit."

