

March 31, 2010

Folk Art Apprenticeship Grant Panel
New Jersey State Council on the Arts
225 West State Street, 4th floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08608

Dear Members of the Folk Art Apprenticeship Grant Panel:

I am writing to add my enthusiastic support for the application of Nelson Báez to work in the Folk Arts Apprenticeship grant program to further develop Bomba and Plena music in our communities and to be granted the opportunity to teach at a Master's Level. My affiliation with Mr. Baez has developed over the past six years where he has served as a Community Artist with the Community Artist Residency Training Series which I was fortunate enough to lead. The program enabled artists to use their teaching skills to lead community members in collaborative art-making. In addition, Mr. Baez has taught Bomba and Plena music to over 150 at-risk youths in New Brunswick for the past three years in the Artist Mentoring Against Racism, Drugs, and Violence summer camp. The AMARDV summer camp is a partnership between my office, Rutgers' Center for Latino Arts and Culture, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital—Community Health Promotions Program, and the Puerto Rican Action Board.

What is most significant about Mr. Baez's talent is his ability to connect children and adults to their cultural heritage and to inspire non-Latino/as to also appreciate and participate in Bomba. He captures the universal meanings of this art form and how it transcends borders. In addition, his commitment to the children of the summer camp extends beyond throughout the year with him volunteering to continue leading a group of children entitled *AMARDV La Bomba*. This group performs in the community promoting Afro-Puerto Rican music and dance throughout New Jersey. He has also tapped into the talents of the youths to mentor them in assisting him in the teaching of the next generation of youths. His ability to transmit this cultural knowledge is a testament to his mastery of this art form.

It is also significant that Mr. Baez is interested in devoting time to the development of the arts in central New Jersey – an area of the state that is underserved especially when it comes to the music and arts of Puerto Rico.

I trust that you will give the application of Mr. Baez due consideration and I am sure that upon review you will agree that it merits your support.

Sincerely,

Isabel Nazario
Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic &
Public Partnerships in the Arts and Humanities