

FROM ELA TO THE BOARDROOM AND BEYOND

BY AL CARLOS HERNANDEZ ON MAY 30, 2009



SAN FRANCISCO (Herald de Paris) - Robert J. Renteria, Jr. can be considered a modern day Hispanic Horatio Alger. His raza rags-to-riches story is one that legends are made of. He has indeed transcended socio-economic class through hard work, word, deed, and life example. He has taken himself from the barrio to the boardroom. For him this media platform is only the beginning. He intends to take his message of hope to break the cycle of hopelessness for those young people like him, bound with a tradition of failure.

Renteria is from East L.A. where he was abandoned by his substance abusing father. As a young man he became involved with the social Darwinism of street life: he gang banged, dealt and used drugs, dropped out of high school, and went from one money hustle, dead end job to another. Many Latinos have been plagued with this cycle of hopelessness and used despair as an excuse. But not Robert.

Robert said, "I wrote the book From The Barrio to the Boardroom, I realized that we have children, teenagers, and adults alike walking around in a culture of darkness so I decided to do something about it, and so I wrote the book".

The book chronicles Robert's sometimes one-step-forward-two-steps-back unrelenting quest for business success. "The barrio book is a message of hope and dreams. There are no victims, only those who refuse to make a choice. If we believe we can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles, we can. My objective is to show young people how it is done. My book has and will help people understand that there are no shortcuts and the secret to success has been and always will be hard work."



Everything became different for Renteria as a young man upon learning that his estranged father had died in a half-way house on skid row. Robert resolved not to go out like his dad did. He decided right then and there to start making better choices in his life. The best choice for him at that time was to join the Army and learn discipline. He said, "The Army helps build character and helps you learn about honor and dedication for yourself, your peers, and your country. The word 'commitment' sticks with me when I think about the military. I learned a lot about standing tall, facing my fears and giving my all unconditionally, not just for myself, but also for the men and women that served with me."

After honorably serving seven years in the United States Army as a Special Forces Green Beret, he returned home from serving his country and found himself back at square one. The old homeboys he had left behind were in the same place doing the same things, no doubt spinning their wheels in the mire of desperation and incarceration. Robert recalled, "I remember my grandfather used to say to me, 'Dime quien son tus amigos, y te digo quien eres.' This means, 'Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are.' I knew then that I needed to leave LA and start my life all over again."

Robert moved to Chicago slept on the floor of an acquaintance. He talked his way into a job at a laundry management and sales company. This eventually led to a position as vice president of a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange. His trajectory is aimed at success and he has never looked back until now. Through his new book he has dedicated his life to sharing his story with thousands of other people around the world so that they, too, can help break the cycle of poverty through hard work and determination.

He said, "I would like to come back home to LA. I miss my family. I want to inspire kids so they can spread their wings and fly. The book has been very well received; a miracle in action. It has been embraced by everyone regardless of age, race, religion or economic background. I am planning to release a Spanish language version in September and a follow up book is on the drawing board."

Several groups are using his barrio book as a teaching tool in conjunction with a curriculum written by the Chicago Public School District.

"We are also in discussions currently to release a From The Barrio To the Boardroom play in February of 2010 that will be co-Produced and performed by yours truly."

For those of you who have young adults in your arena of influence, get them to read "From The Barrio To the Boardroom." It could be all the inspiration they need.

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