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## **Robert Renteria Brings Personal Touch to “From the Barrio to the Board Room” for South Chicago High School Students**

*June 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to George Washington High School to jumpstart program helping youth overcome at-risk behavior and personal obstacles.*

**CHICAGO, Ill. (May 25, 2010)** – On the south side of Chicago, where many high school students face daily challenges from poverty, violence and drugs, it might be difficult to envision a bright future. But at George Washington High School, administrators are trying a new approach to help students break the cycle of poverty and take charge of their own paths.

Using Robert Renteria’s inspiring memoir, [“From the Barrio to the Board Room,”](#) 180 freshmen and sophomores in the school’s Honors program are reading about Renteria’s humble beginnings in the barrio of East Los Angeles, his struggles with drugs, and gangs and violence, followed by a successful corporate career and owner of several start-up businesses.

“The students are reading this book because we feel it is a great way to inspire young teens to be motivated to work hard, despite negative outside influences in their community,” said Kelly McFarlane, coordinator of the school’s International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB/MYP). “This book is a great example that success is possible for everyone, no matter where they come from.”

That is a theme that Renteria himself stresses. His motto, “Don’t let where you came from dictate who you are but let it be part of who you become,” emphasizes that very concept.

Washington High School principal, Ms. Florence Gonzales, and her administrative team hope students will take note that Renteria’s background may be similar to theirs and find inspiration in his success. Although students have just begun to delve into his book, teachers are already seeing its impact.

“The teachers have stated that even those students who are reluctant to read books have become interested based on the content,” McFarlane said.

No doubt they will be even more interested after Renteria talks with Washington High School students and community leaders on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. In order to help the program come alive for students, Renteria visits the schools that use his book and the From the Barrio to the Classroom curriculum so he can talk with the students about his experiences, answer questions, and mentor and motivate students, teachers and community leaders.

The Barrio curriculum includes chapter-by-chapter discussion questions that dig into the problems and difficult situations that teenagers and at-risk youth face everyday. It provides teachers and school administration tools that enhance language arts, social sciences and fine arts curriculum, while supporting the mandated state requirement to teach social emotional standards. Students engage in exercises that develop their ability to overcome antisocial behaviors and social emotional issues that increase risk factors in students. The curriculum, developed by teachers, community leaders and advisors, is currently free to schools, teachers, youth prisons, and programs that work with youth.

“School districts around the country are spending millions of dollars to reach the students who are living the life I was once living. Our grass roots approach is not only saving them money, but it’s working!” says Renteria himself.

Recently published in Spanish under the title, “Desde el Barrio Al Exito,” Renteria’s memoir has been highly sought after by educators, law enforcement, government and political officials, social workers, and others who work together to change the lives of at-risk youth.

#### **About George Washington High School**

Washington is a public high school that offers a traditional college preparatory education including IB, honors and Advanced Placement classes. With an enrollment of 1450, the school also offers two college and career academies for culinary education and information technology.

#### **About the From the Barrio Foundation**

The *From the Barrio* Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation committed to using Renteria’s life, business experience and role as a civic leader to help eliminate conditions that foster violence, delinquency, drugs, and gangs. The book *From the Barrio to the Board Room* is a tool and Renteria is a resource who promotes education, a sense of pride and accomplishment, and self-esteem within the youth of area communities. The *From the Barrio* Foundation will continue and expand upon Renteria’s work to inspire and motivate teens and at-risk youth, as well as anyone chasing the American Dream, so they can make the choices necessary to realize their personal goals and accept the obligation and responsibility of effectively mentoring others. For more information, visit [www.fromthebarrio.com](http://www.fromthebarrio.com).

To learn how to sponsor a classroom, donate to the [From The Barrio Foundation](http://From The Barrio Foundation), or for more information about [the book and its curriculum](http://the book and its curriculum), please contact Renteria at 312.933.5619 or visit [www.fromthebarrio.com](http://www.fromthebarrio.com). To find out more about Renteria, Google [Robert Renteria](http://Robert Renteria).

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