

Businessman steers youth to right path

BY MELISSA RENTERÍA

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A high school dropout by the 11th grade, Robert Renteria seemed destined for a life filled with gangs and drugs.

The streetwise son of a single mother, Renteria barely knew his father. Dealing drugs and running with a violent street gang in his East Los Angeles neighborhood was his chosen path.

"I was looking for a shortcut to success," Renteria says in a phone interview with Conexión. "I didn't know that hard work is the only way to achieve that."

Learning of his drug-ad-

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More about 'From the Barrio'

■ From the Barrio Foundation is a nonprofit corporation headed by Robert Renteria that uses his autobiography, "From the Barrio to the Board Room," and its follow-up comic book, "Mi Barrio," as tools to reach at-risk children and teens.

■ To learn more about foundation and resources, visit fromthebarrio.com or call (312) 933-5619.

dicted father's death, Renteria got the wake-up call he needed.

He earned his GED and joined the military, serving seven years in the U.S. Army. A job at a laundry



COURTESY PHOTOS

Robert Renteria was on the streets once.

management and sales business led to better, higher-paying jobs with the company, and Renteria ultimately started his own business in the Chicago area.

Having the financial and personal success he'd sought since his teens wasn't enough for Renteria, who wanted to share his story with others dealing with the same struggles he experienced as a child.

His autobiography, "From the Barrio to the Board Room," was published in 2006. It's been used in prison ministries, schools, churches and social service groups. The book, which led to Renteria forming the From the Barrio Foundation, conveys the message that hard work and education are the paths to success.

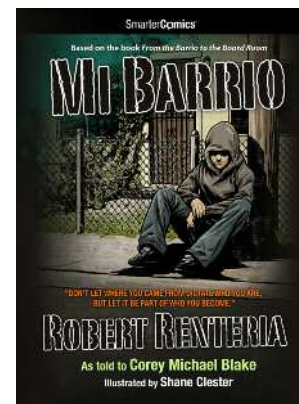
"I think there are so many young people who

are looking for a quick, easy way, and they're making bad choices as a result. Bright futures are built on a strong education," says Renteria, who wants to reach a younger audience with a new comic book based on his message of education.

"Mi Barrio," a comic book based on his autobiography, was published this month. A coloring book with the same message is in the works.

"This is my effort to help our youth make better choices," Renteria says.

Editor's Note: Staff writer Melissa Renteria and businessman and author Robert Renteria are of no relation.



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