

# For the Record

Testimony before the NYC Committee on Parks and Recreation

250 Broadway, 16Th Floor, Hearing Room,

New York, NY 10007

Friday, September 21, 2012 - 1:00 PM

Submitted by the Latin American Cultural Center of Queens, on behalf of Co-naming the corner of 77Th Street and Broadway, in Queens, in memory of Guillermo Vasquez Londoño.

August 5, 1953- February 21, 1996

By Ms. Merly Landis

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Hon. Melissa Mark-Viverito, Committee Chair & Distinguish Members of the NYC Committee on Parks & Recreation.

Good Afternoon, the Latin American Cultural Center of Queens, is pleased to testify before you to request that you vote in favor of co-naming the corner of 77Th Street & Broadway, in Queens in recognition of Guillermo Vásquez.

Guillermo Vásquez Londoño, was born in Buga, Colombia in 1953. He resided in Jackson Heights, from 1972, until his death, in 1996, at age 42. Vasquez was a seminarian for three years, before moving to the United States. He studied international law and political science at Pace and Columbia universities. During his short life, through his volunteer work for a variety of causes, Guillermo touched thousands of lives in New York and in his native Colombia.

Guillermo was an energetic and passionate activist who was dedicated and committed to the causes he loved. He served in several organizations representative, of issues that were close to his heart: Cultural, Political, human rights, immigrant issues and Health matters concerning the Latino community and the Gay and Lesbian communities.

Guillermo was a founding member and Vice President of the Latin American Cultural Center of Queens, founding member and President of the Queens Hispanic Coalition, founder member of the Colombian American National Coalition, founder and Vice President of the U.S. Colombian Sida/Aids Foundation, Member of the Empire State Pride Agenda, Member of Latino Commission on Aids, Member of the Queens Lesbian and Gays United, and the Queens Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. He also coordinated the Community Outreach for the Gay Men's Health Crisis.

In Queens and in the rest of the city, Guillermo was known as a major Latino community activist, who became an American Citizen to have a voice and empower the Latino community. He was a fierce soldier in the battle against AIDS and a staunch supporter of gay and lesbian rights.

Guillermo is survived by his father, Manuel, and two sisters, Angelica Maria and Maria Cristina. In January, 1995 Guillermo traveled to Colombia, shortly after his mother's death, to do volunteer work, honoring his mother's memory. There he funded a recreation room, in an AIDS hospice in Pereira, Colombia, run by a Sister Lucia, who later named it in honor of

Guillermo. Sister Lucia who only knew the former seminary student during the last year of his life declared Guillermo's life was a beautiful one, "But unfortunately only now that he is dead, we are truly beginning to understand his passion and the magnitude of his work."

Guillermo's loss was deeply felt; but he is not forgotten. Co-naming this corner in Guillermo's memory would be appropriate, significant and a motive of pride for Latinos in NY. It would not only recognize Guillermo's pioneering leadership but it would also highlight the contributions of Latinos to the betterment of the quality of life in Queens and it would reflect the diversity of our communities. This corner would become a symbol of pride and Guillermo's name would continue to serve as a role model for the young and for future generations.

Thank you and we are looking forward to celebrate with you this special occasion.

Ms. Merly Landis