



THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL

Lawrenceville Celebrates Caribbean and Latin American Culture

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By Ivy Alphonse-Leja '10

The Lawrenceville School recently celebrated its community's Caribbean and Latin American heritage with an afternoon of traditional dance, music, folklore, cultural cuisine, and more. Students enjoyed everything from Jamaican jerk chicken to Mexican folk dances. Each culture had its place in the program, and each one contributed something unique and special. The celebration was presented by Lawrenceville's Multicultural Parent Committee, Alliance for Black Cultures, and Latino Unidos.

New Jersey State Assemblyman Wilfredo Caraballo (D-29), a native of Puerto Rico, began the day with an inspirational speech about truly celebrating diversity. He talked about the high aspirations his parents had for him and of the sacrifices they made to ensure their children would have a steady, decent life. It was a story familiar to children of all immigrant parents.

"Thanks to them we have unlimited opportunities and can live out their dreams," said Caraballo, the N.J. Assembly speaker pro tempore.

After the speech, Lawrentians held a "Did You Know?" exercise, during which individuals told the audience what country they were representing, then shared an interesting fact about it with them. One particularly surprising item caused a few whistles of appreciation in the audience: "Did you know that Winston Churchill used a Jamaican poem to rally the troops during World War I?"

Ballet-Folklórico de Princeton, a Princeton University student organization dedicated to performing traditional Mexican folk dances, took center stage next. They performed six beautiful dances, including the Mexican Hat Dance. The women twirled their skirts elaborately while the men stamped in rhythm, their sombreros not budging, even with the constant movement. The University's Sesame Street Crew, named not after the home of the Muppets but rather a popular reggae dance move, brought the crowd to its feet. They danced to reggae, hip hop, and reggae ton, with booming bass, techno-esque lyrics, and lots of swiveling hips.

Next up was a celebration of Caribbean and Latin American oral traditions by Maureen Denton (a performer of Jamaican dub and dramatic poetry), Andrene Bonner (a Jamaican singer, folklorist, and teacher), and C. Jama Adams (a psychologist and faculty member of the John Jay College-CUNY Department of African American Studies).

After offering the speakers a rousing round of applause, the crowd swarmed to enjoy the many exquisite delicacies well prepared by Lawrenceville parents and students. The flan was sweet (but not too sweet), the jerked chicken was spicy enough to start a fire, the plantains were cooked to either sweet or semi-sweet perfection (depending on which batch you tried), and the ox tail was carefully seasoned, and went very well with the black beans and rice. Those were just a few of the many dishes and everything tasted great.