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**THE 2017 NATIONAL PUERTO RICAN DAY PARADE WILL CELEBRATE 60
YEARS OF CULTURAL LEGACY WITH LEGENDARY HONOREES AND
LEGENDS-IN-THE-MAKING**

**THE ICONIC NEW YORK INSTITUTION PAYS SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO
PROMINENT FIGURES AND RECOGNIZES 100 YEARS OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP
FOR PUERTO RICANS DURING THIS MILESTONE YEAR**

New York, May 2, 2017 — In a press conference held today at the **One World Observatory** at the top of One World Trade Center (the Freedom Tower), **Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez**, Chairperson of the **National Puerto Rican Day Parade** (NPRDP), alongside members of the Parade's Board of Directors, announced plans for the 2017 Parade, its **60th Anniversary celebration on Sunday, June 11**. Under the theme, **"Un Pueblo, Muchas Voces"** (One Nation, Many Voices), the 2017 Parade and associated events will advance the Parade's mission of promoting culture, art and education in the Puerto Rican community, both on the Island and the mainland U.S.

"The Parade has become one of New York City's iconic institutions, and what better way to kick off our 60th Anniversary celebration than at the top of the historic Freedom Tower, with New York City as our backdrop," said Board Chair, Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez. "In this monumental year, we are showcasing our collective achievement and the legacy we have built by working in solidarity, and we will discuss key challenges that Puerto Rico is facing to help inform and engage our community. We also honor legendary figures and the next generation of stars that are already accomplished in their own right."

JetBlue Airways, the Official Airline of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade and sponsor of One World Observatory, hosted today's press conference and treated those in attendance to spectacular views of New York City. "JetBlue congratulates the National Puerto Rican Day Parade on its 60th year of bringing the community together to celebrate Puerto Rican culture," said **Giselle Cortes**, Director of International cities, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands for JetBlue. "It's a point of pride for JetBlue to be the largest airline connecting families and friends between Puerto Rico and the mainland U.S., and our ongoing sponsorship as Official Airline of the parade is one important way in which we honor the community. Just as in years past, we look forward to celebrating with the community both leading up to and on the day of the Parade."

In attendance at the Press Conference was **2016 Summer Olympic Gold**



Medalist in Gymnastics and *Dancing With the Stars* champion, Laurie Hernández, who will join the star-studded line-up of honorees, as an **Athlete of the year**. Born in New Jersey from Puerto Rican parents, Hernández has an impressive resume that goes beyond elite, competitive gymnastics and includes being a **New York Times best-selling author**, with her book “*I got this: To Gold and Beyond*”, as well as the recognition of being the **youngest champion on ABC’s *Dancing with the Stars***.

“I am very honored to be chosen as one of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade’s Athletes of the Year,” said Laurie Hernández. “I am so excited to be part of this special event and to celebrate my Puerto Rican heritage.”

Other 2017 honorees will include a host of illustrious figures in music, entertainment, sports, theater and film, **led by 6-time GRAMMY® Award-winning singer Gilberto Santa Rosa, as Grand Marshal. The Parade’s Queen title goes to** the talented actress from TV and film, **Lana Parrilla**, who plays the role of the Evil Queen/Regina Mills in the ABC fantasy drama series ***Once Upon a Time***. Parrilla also starred in several hit television series, including *Spin City*, *24* and *Boomtown*.

The prolific baseball catcher, **Iván Rodríguez**, a **14-time MLB All-Star and 13-time Gold Glove winner** who was **elected into the National Baseball Hall of Fame** in January 2017, will be honored as **Padrino** (Godfather) of the Parade. The internationally renowned singer/actress, **Iris Chacón**, **will be honored as Madrina** (Godmother) of the Parade. Best known for her hit TV variety show, *El Show de Iris Chacón*, which aired for fifteen years in Puerto Rico and major markets across the U.S., Chacón most recently starred in the stage play ***Malas***, at the Santurce Performing Arts Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in early 2017.

Special Tributes and Recognitions:

This year’s Parade themes and major tributes will be particularly poignant, as the **60th Anniversary coincides with 100 years of U.S. citizenship for Puerto Ricans**. U.S. citizenship for all Puerto Ricans was one provision of the **Jones Act of 1917**, signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson. A source of great and ongoing debate, the Jones Act has had considerable impact on Puerto Rico and its people, and the NPRDP will include this topic in its programming in order to foster a dialogue and help inform the youth of the community of its historical significance. This milestone will have particular significance given the impact the Jones Act has had on the financial situation in Puerto Rico.

The NPRDP will honor political prisoner **Oscar López Rivera**, with a unique honoree title, **Prócer de la Libertad** (National Freedom Hero). Born in San Sebastián, Puerto Rico, López Rivera was a community activist in Chicago who became a lead figure in the Puerto Rico Independence Movement. **Commuted by President Barack Obama in January 2017**, López Rivera was incarcerated in 1981 for charges of seditious conspiracy but without having been convicted of injuring or killing anyone. His appearance in the 2017 Parade will mark López Rivera’s first visit to New York City after his May 17 release from prison.

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The honored Puerto Rican *pueblo* (town) will be *Hormigueros*, a rural municipality in Southwest Puerto Rico. Additionally, **Lorain and Cleveland, Ohio will be the **honored stateside community**, in recognition of the robust Puerto Rican population that represents more than half (55%) of the Ohio's Puerto Rican population, the tenth largest among all States.**

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In recognition of the NPRDP 60th Anniversary, the Parade's Board of Directors announced special tributes to **Gilberto Gerena Valentín** (1918-2016) and **Ramón S. Veléz** (1933-2008), individuals who played critical roles in the formation and evolution of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, now one of New York City's iconic institutions. Both were born in Puerto Rico and migrated to New York City, where their life's work was dedicated to helping build a strong legacy of Puerto Rican culture and sense of community in New York City. Of note, Ramón S. Veléz was born in ***Hormigueros***, the 2017 honored *pueblo* in Puerto Rico.

A Banner Year for the NPRDP Scholarship Program:

This year, the NPRDP fulfills its goal of awarding 100 scholarships, the largest number of scholarships in its history and a 20-fold increase since 2013, when the organization awarded 5 scholarships. Each scholarship is in the amount of \$2,000 and will be awarded to exceptional students of Puerto Rican descent who are making a difference in their communities. **The number of applications received in 2017 was more than triple the number submitted last year**, with students representing 17 states and Puerto Rico. **Winners will be announced at the NPRDP Education Leadership Awards on May 25th at Time Warner Center in New York City.** In addition to the scholarship monies, winners will have the opportunity to attend the **NPRDP Cultural Boot Camp and Professional Enrichment days**, which the Board of Directors designed to help increase the students' command of Puerto Rican culture and history and to promote their personal and professional development.

Announcement of 2017 Honorees:

In addition to the announcements of Lana Parrilla as *Queen*, Ivan Rodríguez as *Padrino* (Godfather), and Laurie Hernández as *Athlete of the Year*, the NPRDP Board announced additional 2017 honorees:

- **Nuestro Orgullo:** J.W. Cortés – actor in *Gotham*, U.S. Marine combat veteran
- **Rising Star:** Ozuna (Juan Carlos Ozuna Rosado) – singer, songwriter and producer
- **Rising Star:** Rolando Alejandro – classical pianist
- **Ambassador:** Shalím Ortiz – television and stage actor and singer
- **Ambassador:** Ismael Rivera, Jr. – salsa singer and son of the late Ismael Rivera
- **Ambassador:** Ektor Rivera – singer and actor, star of Broadway's "*On Your Feet*"
- **Ambassador:** Allan Villafaña – co-anchor, *Primera Edición* on Telemundo 47/WNJU
- **Ambassador:** Ricardo Luis Villarini – reporter for Telemundo 47/WNJU
- **Boricuas Destacados:** BuscaBulla (Raquel Berrios and Luis Alfredo del Valle) musical duo highlighted by Rolling Stone Magazine in February 2017 as "10

artists you need to know”

Earlier this year, the Parade’s Board of Directors announced its first installment of 2017 honorees:



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- **Grand Marshal:** Gilberto Santa Rosa – *GRAMMY*® Award-winning singer, actor and producer
- **Madrina (Godmother):** Iris Chacón – TV and stage entertainer
- **Lifetime Achievement in TV & Entertainment:** Walter Mercado – iconic TV actor and personality
- **Lifetime Achievement in Music:** Bobby Cruz – salsa singer from *Hormigueros* and recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences
- **Lifetime Achievement in Performing Arts:** Julio Monge – choreographer, actor and director
- **Special Recognition:** the Puerto Rican National Baseball Team (“Team *Rubio*”) – finalists at the 2017 World Baseball Classic
- **Trailblazer in Music & Arts:** Yandel (Llandel Veguilla Malavé) – *GRAMMY*® Award-winning singer/songwriter and producer
- **Athlete of the Year:** Mónica Puig – tennis champion at 2016 Rio Olympics and first Olympic Gold Medalist for Puerto Rico
- **Ambassador:** Ana Isabelle – singer and actress in theater, television and film
- **Ambassador:** Modesto Lacen – actor in television, film and stage

Posthumous Recognitions to Puerto Rican Luminaries:

Posthumous recognitions 2017 will be held at the Parade’s Catholic Mass, **Saint Patrick’s Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, on Sunday June 4 at 4:00 pm.** Luminaries to be honored include:

- **Ramón Luis “Papo” Brenes (1953-2017):** Pioneering entertainment journalist and former director of Puerto Rico’s “*Teve-Guia*” magazine
- **Miriam Colón (1936-2017):** Legendary actress, co-founder of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater.
- **Ismael Fernández Reyes (1960-2016):** Founder of the *Taller de Fotoperiodismo* (The Photojournalist Workshop) of Puerto Rico and the Association of Photojournalists of Puerto Rico
- **Miguel Ferrer (1955-2017):** Actor of television and Hollywood films
- **Robert Garcia (1933-2017):** U.S. Congressman from New York and co-founder of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
- **Gilberto Gerena Valentín (1918-2016):** Community activist and co-founder of the Puerto Rican Day Parade of New York
- **Iris Martínez (1924-2017):** Actress and former president of the Puerto Rico Actors’ Association (Colegio de Actores de Puerto Rico)
- **Dave Valentín (1952-2017):** World-famous flutist, pianist and music director
- **Rafael Ramos (1974-2014):** New York City Police officer killed while on duty in Brooklyn
- **Elín Ortiz (1934-2016):** Actor, comedian, producer and father of 2017 Ambassador, Shalím Ortiz

The NPRDP Board of Directors thanks its 2017 sponsors and media partners for their support of NPRDP to achieve its mission, including **JetBlue Airways**, Official Airline of the NPRDP; and **WABC-TV Channel 7**, English-language broadcast television partner. Other esteemed sponsors and media partners



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include **GOYA Foods, the McDonald's Corporation, the Coca-Cola Company, Acacia Network, City University of New York, Bronx Lebanon Hospital, the United Federation of Teachers, Monster Energy, Univision Communications, NBC, Telemundo, the Spanish Broadcasting System, the New York Daily News, People *En Español*, El Diario/La Prensa and iHeartMedia.**

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The 60th Annual National Puerto Rican Day Parade will be held on New York City's **Fifth Avenue from 44th Street to 79th Street, on Sunday, June 11, starting at 11:00 am (EST)**. The event will be aired live via WABC-TV, Channel 7 in New York, as well as through its affiliates in Orlando, Florida on WFTV/WRDQ, and in Puerto Rico ABC5 (WORA-TV 5.2), from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm (EST). Live streaming on the Internet will be available at **www.abc7ny.com**.

Applications for participating in the in the 2017 National Puerto Rican Day Parade are **due on May 12**. For participant applications, more information about the Parade and a calendar of events, visit **www.nprdpinc.org**.

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