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The Voice of the **Taino People**®

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Taino Observe Winter Solstice in Miami

Miami, Florida (UCTP Taino News) - Astronomically marking the beginning of shortening nights and lengthening days, many cultures link the Winter Solstice with the concept of rebirth. Honoring the significance of the occasion, over 40 **Taino** community members and friends gathered on December 27th at Women's Park in Miami, Florida for ceremonial "celebration of life."

The Miami ceremony called "Taino Winter Solstice celebration" is a tradition of the *Caney Indigenous Spiritual Circle*, organized and facilitated by the Circle's founder **Miguel Sobaoko Koromo Sague**. A Taino from the island of Cuba, Sobaoko Koromo stated "like our ancestors we recognize the [solar] cycle as a powerful spiritual element of our belief system." He continued noting that this particular social ceremony honored a "return to the divine womb" which heralds rebirth.

Taino community members representing *Cuba, Kiskeia*, and *Boriken* were in attendance as well as members of other indigenous Nations including the **Apache, Cree, and Mayan**. Among the Mayan community of Guatemala the winter solstice is known as *Wayeb'* or *Uayeb* and it

represents the days leading up to the end of their solar calendar cycle.



Miguel Sobaoko Koromo Sague, Mildred Karaira Gandia, and Edgar Konuk Ceiba Rodriguez honor the winter solstice at a ceremonial gathering in Miami.

Mildred Karaira Gandia, a *Boriken Taino* representative of the **United Confederation of Taino People** in Florida also attended the ceremony with her son **Justin** and community elders **Santos** and **Annette Irizarry**. Karaira was honored to take a role in the ceremony as the representation of *Attabey*, the Earth Mother.

Remarking on the importance of the gathering Karaira stated "I am honored to be representing the UCTP at this ceremony in Miami as it is an opportunity to bring our people together as family as well as to honor this land area, which is a part of our ancestral homelands. Our ancestors -

be they Taino from Cuba, Kiskeia, or Boriken - knew Florida as **Bimini** and many settled here. As descendants of those peoples we are not immigrants, this is also our home."



Youth and elders of the Taino and other Native Nations gather in Miami for the solstice ceremony.

The ceremony culminated with *guaitiao* (friendship) dance led by **Edgar Konuk Ceiba Rodriguez** and a feast featuring traditional Taino staples such as Yuka and Casabe bread.

The winter solstice occurs annually some time between December 20 and December 23 in the northern hemisphere, and between June 20 and June 23 in the southern hemisphere, during either the "shortest day" or "longest night of the year." ●



Taino Spiritual Leader Crosses Over to Koalbei



Boriken Taino Spiritual Leader , Manuel Galagarza passed into the Spirit World on December 13, 2008.

Vega Baja, Boriken (UCTP Taino News) - Boriken Taino community elder and spiritual leader, **Ángel Manuel Galagarza**, 84, crossed into *Koalbei* (the Spirit World) on Sunday, December 13 at 5:00am. A resident of the Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, elder Galagarza was a respected activist, husband, father, and grandfather. He was a founding member of the **Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos**.

“He was and remains so very special to so many Taino as his home was always open to his people whether they lived on or off the island” stated **Roberto Borrero**, Chairman of the **United Confederation of Taino People**. “Aracoel Manuel was the kind of person you don’t meet often these days - like Albizu Campos and Gandhi put together. He was always a gentleman and his council will be deeply missed.” continued Borrero.

“He was a humble but strong

advocate for our sacred sites and a spiritual caretaker for the *Caguana Ceremonial Center* in Utuado” stated **Carmen Rodriguez Bracero** of Vega Baja. Rodriguez Bracero was a long time friend, student, and caregiver to Galagarza after the passing of his beloved wife Monsita.

She also noted “Visitors to Caguana come to the batei and see that each one is dedicated to a kasike from historic times. Abuelo Manuel was the person who initiated and made those signs.” ●

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Pasteles are Taino

By Roberto Borrero

With the Holidays upon us, families across the Caribbean and beyond will soon be serving up all manner of traditional meals. On the island of Boriken (Puerto Rico) for example, no traditional holiday feast would be complete without a particular savory TAINO delight known as PASTELES.

To begin, it should be understood that Pasteles are indeed of indigenous origin. In fact, a type of pasteles – the “Mexican” tamale or tamalli in Nahuatl – can be traced back as early as 5000 BC.



Cooking up the Masa for Pasteles.

Pasteles are a food consisting of boiled or steam-cooked “masa” (dough) with or without a filling. Pasteles can be filled with meats,

vegetables or really any preparation according to taste. Today, pastels are generally wrapped in plantain leaves and parchment paper before cooking.

In any case, as food is a particularly favorite subject of mine I thought I would share a little of what I know about pasteles from my family oral tradition as well as what I have learned from other elders I have shared meals with over the years.

Making pasteles is a family affair. It has always been a special time to strengthen family ties, renew friendships, and share life lessons with the younger generations.

Even today, making pasteles is still a family affair, for example, your Mom might grate the yucca or guineo, while an aunt will prepare the masa, grandma could be seasoning the meat to perfection, and a cousin can literally wrap the whole process up nicely.

As I understand it, in Boriken, there were at least three and possibly more original “pasteles” - one made from mais (corn), one from *yuka*, and another from *yautia*. If you thought you were the only Boricuas making pasteles from yuka, my sisters and brothers, – we Tainos taught you that hundreds of years ago.

In fact, yuka and yautia are Taino words. “Mais” derives from the Taino word *maisi*. And the Taino word for pasteles made from corn is *guanime*.

So while your family is enjoying what I call an original Taino comfort food, please keep in mind and share that by eating pasteles you are actually continuing an indigenous tradition thousands of years in the making.

If seen in this light, sayings like “you are what you eat” may take on a whole new meaning. ●

Roberto Borrero is on staff at the American Museum of Natural History in its Department of Education and currently serves as President and Chairman of the UCTP Office of International Relations.

***“Pasteles are Taino” originally appeared in La Diva Latina Magazine.**

UCTP Community Forum

Keeping Them in Our Prayers: UCTP rep. Tati Conley has requested community prayers for her daughter "Little Enid" whose Unite (810 MO) will soon be deployed to Afghanistan. Enid Conley is serving in the US Marine Corps...

On behalf of the UCTP, we ask the Creator to watch over all our young warriors in the armed forces and return them safely to their families and our community.

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS: Our January, February, and March birthday wishes go out to "Voice" staff member **Roger Atihuibancex Hernandez** as well as **Joseph Borrero** ; **Sylvia Karayaturey Rosario** ; **Hailey and Calista Conde**, and **Sylvia Guarixcoa Santiago**...

Taino Communications: Keep updated on Caribbean Indigenous Issues via our "**Taino News and Information Email List**" at Yahoo.com as well as at our new and improved web portal at <http://www.uctp.org>

UCTP Joint Taino Report on Racism Against the Taino Now Available Online

UCTP Public Notice: The 23 January 2008 Joint Taino Report to the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** is now available for review at www.uctp.org. To access this historic report at www.uctp.org, please visit the "Documents in English" section, and click on the heading "Taino Advocacy at the United Nations."

The Taino submission to the CERD was a joint effort of the **United Confederation of Taino People - Office of International Relations and Regional Coordination**, the **Consejo General de Tainos Borincanos**; and the **Caney Quinto Mundo** in response to periodic reports of the United States of America, which were reviewed at the Committee's Seventy-second session held in Geneva, 18 February - 7 March 2008.

The **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the **Convention on the Elimination of Alls Forms of Racial Discrimination** by its State parties. The report is 30 pgs in English only. ●

Taino Re-Elected Chair of UN NGO Decade Committee



Tainos at the UN - Roberto Mukaro Borrero and Yoanny Lora serve on the UN NGO Committee (Photo: Habitat Pro)

United Nations (UCTP Taino News) – Taino community activist **Roberto Borrero** was re-elected Chairperson of the NGO Committee on the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples this past December. The Committee is a Special Committee of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the United Nations (CONGO).

The Committee assists, wherever possible, in the education of the international community about the concerns and issues facing Indigenous Peoples.

Borrero, who represents the **United Confederation of Taino People** and the **Wittenberg Center for Alternative Resources**, has actively participated on the Committee since its establishment in 1991. ●



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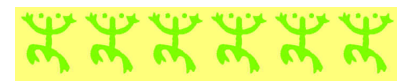
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Are you a registered and enrolled member of the Taino Tribal Nation? Get more information on the UCTP Taino Population Census and Inter-Tribal Registration Project at the UCTP Web Portal www.uctp.org



ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CALENDER OF EVENTS

- **Presencia Taina TV**

Date: Saturday nights through 2009 • Place: <http://www.MNN.org>

Presencia Taina.TV is televised weekly throughout the worldwide web this season on Saturday night at 9 PM (EST) by viewing it locally on Channel 67 (cableTV) in the New York City area or you can listen in online at <http://www.MNN.org>

- **8000 Drums Ceremony**

Date: 20-22 March 2009 • Place: Old Cherokee Ball Field, Cohutta Wilderness, Ellijay, GA

Indigenous Keepers of the Ancestral, Ceremonial and Medicinal Sound of the Sacred Drums; Councils of Elders, Sages and Leaders of all Indigenous Nations, Peoples and Organizations; Indigenous Guides, Guardians and Spiritual Leaders, and All Traditions of Humankind and Elders of Georgia, There will be a central fire on March 21, 2009 at 11:00am to ? Drumming in Prayer and Song. Camping available. For information contact drums8000@yahoo.com or contact 706-636-4919 and leave message and your call will be returned.

- **Fifth Session of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

Date: 18 – 29 May 2009 • Place: United Nations Headquarters, NY

Registration now open. For information visit the UNPFII website at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>

Editor's Note: *The staff at 'the Voice' looks forward to hearing from all of you, and we thank you for your comments, suggestions, and inquires. To submit items to the **Community Bulletin Board**, please email your request to mukaro@uctp.org*

Public Notice: The Voice of the Taíno People reserves the right to reprint in full or in part, any and all correspondence sent to the editors, the United Confederation of Taino People, Inc., and or its officers.

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