

Uncut, Uncensored and Relentless By MARGE ALLEN

When we write, we feel — as poet/novelist Demetria Martinez does — that our ancestors are writing through us. It's a spiritual feeling and an awesome responsibility.

We say this because we come from communities that historically have been voiceless. More precisely, we come from communities where people spoke and shouted about injustices, about their hopes and dreams, yet were rarely given a public forum.

We speak of ancient days, when our ancestors were silenced and put to death for writing books, to the present, when Raza writers and other people of color are subject to what novelist Rudy Anaya calls censorship by commission and censorship by omission.

That's why we consider our writing spiritual — because through us is unleashed a powerful spirit that has been suppressed for generations.

— *From the introduction to Uncut & Uncensored, by Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez*

On March 11, 1998, Patrisia Gonzales, an SGI member for more than 10 years, and her husband, Roberto Rodriguez, received the Human Rights Award from the Albuquerque Human Rights Board in Albuquerque, N.M.

Every week, Patrisia and Roberto write a nationally syndicated column that addresses human rights issues. Their writing often goes beyond their Latino community and becomes a fearless cry for a more humanistic world culture. They write on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. At the awards ceremony, Patrisia and Roberto were introduced as a couple who have “embarked on a noble and relentless campaign against censorship, silence and bigotry.”

Patrisia, the first Latina (Chicana-Kikapu) syndicated columnist in the country, began practicing Buddhism as a member of the young women's division in Philadelphia. Her quest at the time, and the reason she began to practice, was to discover why people suffered. She wanted to understand why some people were poor or why some were unloved. Right away and throughout the next 10 years, her practice provided her with more and more answers to these and other basic human questions.

Commenting on her work, Patrisia says that she tries hard to integrate Buddhist concepts from Nichiren Daishonin and from SGI President Ikeda into her writing to give people a sense of hope and to inspire their courage. She wants the column to encourage people to discover what it means to be happy.

A little less than a year ago, Patrisia received a Kellogg Leadership Fellowship grant to study the self- and community-healing aspects of dialogue, ceremony and alternative medicine in indigenous cultures. She and Roberto have published a book, *Uncut & Uncensored*, that compiles many of their columns, and last November, she and Roberto were inducted into the El Paso Writers Hall of Fame.

Patrisia said that receiving the Human Rights Award was especially meaningful because it wasn't about being recognized for her writing, but rather for her character and for what her life stands.

More important to her than being able to phrase a good sentence is the positive impact her work will have on the world. For that reason, an award in the area of human rights from her community is truly an honor.

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