

Who was?

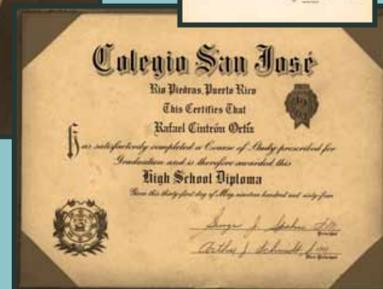
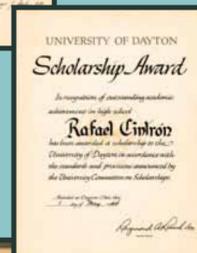
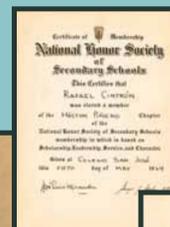
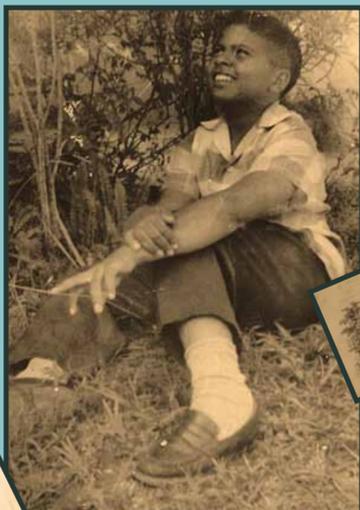
Rafael Cintrón Ortiz

Childhood in Arroyo

Rafael Cintrón Ortiz was born in the Caribbean coastal town of Arroyo, Puerto Rico on October 26, 1946. He was the fifth child of Rafael Cintrón and Emelia Ortiz, both distinguished professors who worked as school principals in the City of San Juan in their later years. Rafael completed the first six years of primary education at the Colegio San Antonio in the small town of Guayama, Puerto Rico. His older sister, Nilda Cintrón, remembers that from the beginning he demonstrated an extraordinary intelligence for his age and impressed his teachers with his wit and questions.



Childhood photos of 'Caquito' in his hometown of Arroyo, 1956.



A Bright and Promising Future

When he turned eleven, his parents moved to the metropolitan capital of Puerto Rico where Rafael was enrolled in the sixth grade at Colegio San José, a Catholic School administered by the Redemptorist Fathers at the university town of Rio Piedras. He excelled in his studies, graduated valedictorian in 1964, and was awarded many medals and certificates of honor for his academic achievements.

Throughout Rafael's education, he continually distinguished himself as an academic and in his everyday activities. This is noted in the section 'Who is Who?' of the 'El Mundo' newspaper published on Wednesday, May 27, 1964. The article states that Rafael's spiritual life was integrated in his many scholastic endeavors through active membership in the Congregation of Mary which he represented at the general Sodality Council. He was a part of the student council, holding various positions of leadership including class representative, secretary and vice-president.

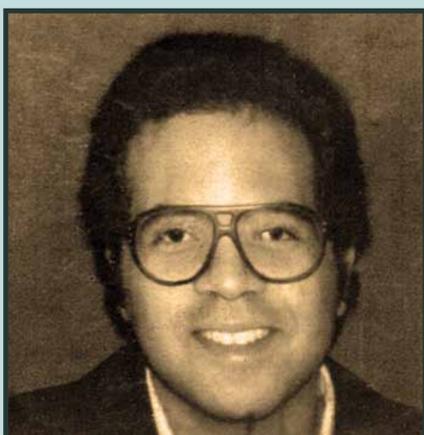
Recognized for his academic excellence and leadership qualities, Rafael became a member of the National Honor Society and soon after became its vice-president. He enthusiastically participated in oratory competitions in the cities of Ponce, Caguas and San Juan, Puerto Rico as a member of the Oratory Club and was editor of the literary section of the school newspaper 'La Lanza'. He also directed the work of 'El Conquistador', the academic journal of the graduating class at Colegio San José.

Contextualizing Research and Academia

Because of his academic excellence and his civic leadership, Rafael was awarded honor scholarships at two academic institutions: the University of Puerto Rico and at the University of Dayton in Ohio. Rafael accepted the University of Dayton offer and left Puerto Rico for Ohio to complete his bachelor degree in arts and education.

After graduating from the University of Dayton in 1968, Rafael returned to Puerto Rico and immediately began teaching English language at a high school in the rural town of Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico. In 1970 he was admitted and headed to New York to work on his master's degree to the New School for Social Research of New York. While there, Rafael once again, made his mark as editor of the Newsletter of the American Anthropological Association. In June 1972, he obtained a Master of Arts in Social Anthropology from the faculty of Political and Social Science of the New School for Social Research. Rafael's commitment to education was reflected in his graduate research "A Colonial Experience: The School in Puerto Rico as an Agent of Domination" in which he studied the effects of public educational policies in Puerto Rico.

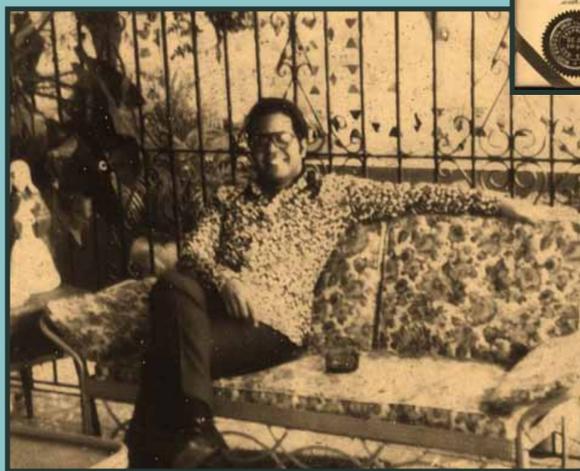
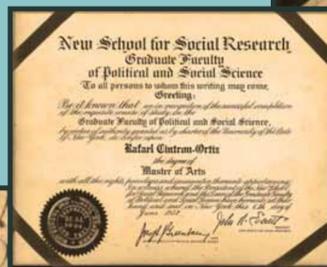
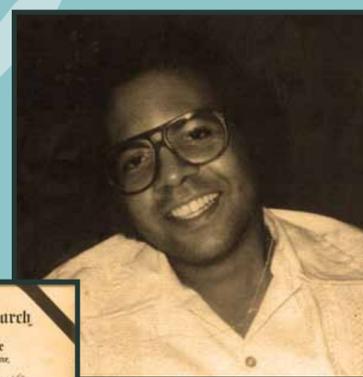
After New York he accepted a teaching position at the University of Puerto Rico as a Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Social Sciences. While there, he received a Ford Fellowship to continue his research in a doctoral thesis on the subject of 'the Puerto Rican family structure' using Marxist analysis. During that time the University of Puerto Rico was feeling the effects of a petroleum shortage that spurred a big economic crisis that affected the entire country. At the university, the island's economic crisis translated into cuts and the denial of tenured faculty positions. Rafael's yearly contract, like many other professors, was not renewed in 1975.



Rafael in Chicago

The quality of Rafael's research gained him recognition and attention by leaders in the international academic community. Among them was Dr. Otto Pikaza, first Director and intellectual architect of the Latin American Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus (today known as the University of Illinois at Chicago). Like others before him, Dr. Pikaza recognized Rafael's exceptional intelligence. Equally impressive was the seriousness in which this young scholar approached his academic work, his love for the arts, and his integrity. Rafael, who had never before visited Chicago, at first expressed no interest in accepting Pikaza's offer to join the faculty at the university. Soon, Rafael saw Chicago as the opportunity to find a quiet place to complete his doctoral thesis away from distractions.

During the year he spent at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus, Rafael focused on completing his doctoral thesis and quickly became an admired professor. At 29 years old, they saw a friendly and accomplished Latino scholar who, in spite of his humble beginnings, was able to become a successful professional. Professor Stanley Diamond, world renowned ethnographer and founder of the first department of critical anthropology in the United States at the New School for Social Research in New York, was Rafael's doctoral thesis advisor. During his career, Professor Diamond had met many intellectual and bright individuals around the world, yet stated that Rafael was the closest to a genius that he had ever known. Through tragic circumstances, Rafael died without completing his doctoral thesis on February 7, 1976.



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