



NEXT CHAPTER
CULTURAL FOUNDATION
PRESENTS



Celebración Cultural:
INDEPENDENCIA
DOMINICANA 2026

SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 21

*¡Una noche llena de
Cultura y Tradición!*

MICHELLA'S BANQUET HALL
5215 W. IRVING PARK RD.
CHICAGO, IL

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MERCEDES
EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT





ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Next Chapter Cultural Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting arts, culture, and community engagement. Our mission is rooted in uplifting Latino and multicultural heritage through education, cultural programming, and meaningful community collaborations.

We believe culture is a powerful force for connection, pride, and transformation. Through our programs and events, we create spaces where traditions are honored, stories are shared, and communities come together to celebrate identity, history, and collective strength.

OUR MISSION

To promote arts, culture, and community engagement through educational initiatives, cultural programming, and community-centered events that uplift Latino and multicultural heritage.

OUR VISION

To cultivate a culturally vibrant community where people of all ages can celebrate, learn, and engage with the artistic and cultural expressions of the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and the broader Latino diaspora.

WHAT WE DO

The Next Chapter Cultural Foundation develops and supports programs that strengthen cultural identity, celebrate diversity, and expand access to arts and education. Our work includes educational workshops, cultural celebrations, artistic showcases, and community partnerships that foster cultural pride, unity, and intergenerational connection.

Tonight's celebration represents more than a single event. It marks a new chapter, one rooted in legacy, community, and the continued commitment to honoring our culture while creating opportunities for future generations.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the first cultural celebration of the Independence of the Dominican Republic 2026, presented by Next Chapter Cultural Foundation. It is an honor to welcome you to this event, created with the purpose of celebrating our culture, our history,

and the power of community.

I am a proud Dominican who deeply loves her culture and her roots, with an international heart and a multicultural mindset. This perspective has allowed me to connect with, value, and learn from diverse cultures with respect and openness. When celebrating the traditions of others, I feel a deep sense of connection to their cultures and, at the same time, empathize with their struggles and challenges, recognizing that celebration and solidarity go hand in hand.

My journey began in education, and for more than three decades, I have worked in service to the community, first as an educator and later through collaboration with nonprofit organizations and community committees. This commitment has gone beyond events; it has been sustained work focused on people, families, and community well-being.

Over time, that commitment led me to create Mercedes Events & Entertainment, with the purpose of producing meaningful cultural events, spaces where culture educates, unites, and strengthens. Today, that same purpose gives rise to Next Chapter Cultural Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization born from the need to create a deeper and more lasting impact. Through educational programs, cultural events, and community collaborations, the foundation seeks to uplift Latino and multicultural heritage while fostering cultural pride, unity, and a deeper sense of belonging. A portion of the funds raised by the foundation supports artisans, the guardians of our traditions, helps develop educational workshops for children, youth, and families, provides scholarships, and makes possible the creation of additional cultural events. All of this contributes to the preservation of our traditions and the strengthening of our community.

Today, I extend a sincere invitation to support this initiative and to become part of this multicultural family. Beyond our nationalities, we share values, stories, and a common desire for unity. May this space inspire us to support one another, celebrate our differences, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as a community.

Thank you for joining us and for being part of this collective effort.

Mercedes Feliz-Matos

Founder and President
Next Chapter Cultural Foundation



**DOMINICAN INDEPENDENCE
CULTURAL CELEBRATION 2026
Official Program**

Milly Santiago
Master of Ceremonies

8:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Doors Open
Guest Reception
Dominican music and appetizers

9:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Official Welcome
National Anthem of the Dominican Republic
President's Message

9:30 PM – 10:30 PM

Cultural Presentation
Lecture: The Dominican Carnival
Dr. Wilson José Inoa Gómez
Carnival Parade Performance
Musical experience and photo session

10:30 PM – 12:30 AM

Live Performance by
Kanela Dance Company Chicago



12:30 AM – 3:00 AM

DJ Set
Raffles
Celebration and Closing

In honor of a life that lives on



Juan Roberto Guzmán

February 19, 1965 – April 11, 2025

This celebration is dedicated in loving memory of our beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and dear friend, whose love and legacy continue to guide us.

His legacy is one of service, generosity, and purpose, always willing to help, uplift, and contribute wherever he was needed. That legacy continues through this foundation and through all of us who carry his values forward.

**He remains forever in our hearts, guiding us, inspiring us,
and reminding us that love and service never end.**



SPECIAL GUEST

Dr. Wilson José Inoa Gómez

Direct from the Dominican Republic

Dr Wilson holds a Doctorate in Educational Sciences, with prior academic training in Clinical Psychology (UASD) and Industrial Psychology (UAPA). He serves as a university lecturer in the areas of Psychology, Business, and Tourism, and as a cultural manager with the Provincial Directorate of Santiago of the Ministry of Culture.

His academic, research, and cultural work focuses on Dominican identity, folklore, education, and the impact of artificial intelligence in educational and workforce contexts. He actively participates in research projects, publications, and cultural outreach initiatives.



Thank You!

When family and community walk together, dreams become legacy..

None of this work would be possible without the unconditional support of my family. I feel deeply blessed to have been born into a family where unity, service, and solidarity are essential values passed down by my parents, my uncles and aunts, and our ancestors.

I especially thank my sister Raysa, who worked tirelessly day and night on the décor and every behind-the-scenes detail, from coordinating and adjusting costumes to sourcing materials and supporting logistics. Her constant support has been a source of strength and motivation. I also thank my children, nieces, nephews, and sisters, who contribute their time, energy, and commitment with love and dedication.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family in the Dominican Republic, especially my cousins Mimi and Arsenio, for their guidance, coordination, and key support in helping bring this vision to life.

Although I stand at the front of this project, this foundation is, at its heart, a family effort, built on love and a shared desire to serve others.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our partner organizations and allied businesses, to our sponsors and collaborators, each one essential to this project, as well as to the volunteers and friends who have contributed their time, resources, and talent. Every contribution, regardless of its magnitude, has been key in making this celebration possible and in continuing to create meaningful impact in our community.

A very special thank you to Rocío Díaz for believing in this project and offering her unconditional support.

Thank you as well to my designer, Elena Magdaleno, for her creativity, flexibility, and for working hand in hand with me to bring every detail to life.

My sincere gratitude to Milly Santiago, our Master of CeremoniesMilly, for her generosity, dedication, and for embracing this role with enthusiasm, actively supporting the promotion and growth of this initiative.

Thank you for being part of the story we continue to build together.

Esto es solo el comienzo de lo que juntos podemos lograr.

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Be Part of the Next Chapter

Support culture. Strengthen community. Inspire future generations.

The Next Chapter Cultural Foundation invites businesses, community leaders, and individuals who believe in the power of arts, cultural heritage, and unity to become part of our mission.

Sponsorship

Advance our cultural events and educational programs through strategic partnerships.

Volunteering

Share your time, talent, and energy to help us create meaningful cultural experiences for our community.

To learn more about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities for future events, please contact:

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Together, we continue the legacy.

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