

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS!

- NYC– Syracuse Inter-city Panel on the Casita Movement. November 10th, 5-7 pm.
- La Liga Housing Fair. November 12th, 8:30-2:00pm.
- Seymourofus Cross-generational Conversation! November 17th, 1:30-3:00 pm.
- Labor Studies Film Screening. November 18th, 5pm.
- *Ford Driving Dreams.* Tutoring and mentoring opportunities in High School Readiness Program. Thursdays, 3-5pm.
- *Vereda Rota* Theater Workshops Applications welcome for workshops starting in January.
- *D.R.E.A.M Freedom Revival.* Upcoming rehearsals every Wednesday 6:00-8pm. All are welcome!

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



# La Casita Cultural Center

109 OTISCO ST. SYRACUSE, NY

ISSUE 1, NOVEMBER 2011

## Fall/ Winter Art: *Las Casitas Revisited*

Over thirty-five years ago, on a burned down lot in his block of the South Bronx, José (Chema) Soto set out to build a wooden structure very similar to the houses that were once popular in rural Puerto Rico, a *casita*. With the help of neighbors, La Casita de Chema (today Centro Cultural Rincón Criollo) was erected and decorated as a bright, lively, and sustainable space where Puerto Rican and other Latino communities could gather, interact, organize celebrations, garden, play music, or simply come together and chat. Since the 1970s, other New York Puerto Ricans have also built little houses (*casitas*) and community gardens in abandoned lots, creating welcoming public spaces for their neighboring communities. The movement was a response to demolition and urban renewal projects in the era of industrial downsizing in the 1970s and 1980s and a reclamation of socially, environmentally and culturally damaged barrio ground.

Here in Syracuse, La Casita Cul-

tural Center's team and friends are continually inspired by the resilience and creativity of our Bronx or East Harlem neighbors and are celebrating our first months of official existence as a center with the display of the photography exhibit *Las Casitas Revisited, An Urban Cultural Alternative*. The collection celebrates New York City's fascinating history of *casitas* and welcomes our diverse community to enjoy a new public space in the city. A space where we can nurture and enrich our relationships, where students of all ages, and residents of all walks of life come together, where cultural memory is celebrated and true exchange resource and knowledge takes place.

Our center is housed in an old brick structure of the Near West Side of the city, a structure that was once derelict, much like

some of the barrios where NYC *casita*'s stand today. By creating an open and common space where all can gather and interact, experience



*Rincon Criollo  
a Casita in the South Bronx, New York  
formerly known as La Casita de Chema.*

culture, engage in the arts, advance their educational and professional dreams, we hope to contribute to generating creative solutions to shared problems in our city and to celebrate Latina/o and Latin American cultures and Heritage.

Our desire is that our programs in the arts, culture and education, shaped by our common interests, will inspire new explorations, enrich and strengthen our communities, and enrich our lives in the city.

## Create, Engage, Participate!

Share your interests and talents... Join/ propose a Casita group!

La Casita welcomes and supports the participation of individuals and groups gathering around common interest. These groups generate ideas and propose programming; they are also sounding boards for all future Casita programming. The groups usually meet at La Casita, at a frequency and times

decided by group/club participants. La Casita provides needed resources to support the group's activities. All are welcome: community members, university students, professors, staff, neighbors, family, friends... Don't waste any time.. join in!

Visual Arts  
Music  
heater!

Reading Club!...  
Writers' Center  
and more...!

*La Casita's mission is to serve as the bridge between the Latina/o communities of Syracuse and Central New York and Syracuse University's faculty, students and staff. By offering the space and resources necessary for the development of collaborative, ongoing projects, we hope to enhance local communities' capacity for social change and civic participation in the region.*



## **Building Bridges through Arts, Culture & Education**

**VISIT US AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CASITA MOVEMENT!!!  
PARTICIPATE IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CULTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE !**

- \* November 10th, 5-7 pm: Syracuse, NYC- Intercity Panel on the Casita Movement.
- \* November 17, 1:30- 3pm: Seymourofus Cross-generational Conversation.

## **La Casita's Space: First Floor of the Lincoln Building**

Located at 109 Otisco St, La Casita is within walking distance to The Warehouse, the Red House Arts Theater, and Armory Square. The Lincoln Supply Building used to be an old coating factory and was renovated last Spring and Summer by the Near Westside Initiative Inc, using the latest standards in green construction. The area is now serviced by the Connective Corridor shuttle bus, which links the Near West Side to downtown and to University area and is free for students and city residents alike. The second floor of the Lincoln Supply Building is home to Say Yes to Education offices, and the third and fourth floors are live/work

lofts for artists.

La Casita's interior (first floor of the building) has been beautifully designed by architect Jon Lott of the PARA Project honoring



**The Lincoln Building at 109 Otisco St., Near West Side of Syracuse**

La Casita's mission and the New York City-

based Casita tradition. Aware of this Caribbean vernacular architecture movement, Mr. Lott drew inspiration from Rincon Criollo, and has developed a model that incorporates the outdoor/indoor aspect of the original Casitas.

The inside of the 5,000 square foot facility has an exposed wooden studded frame and houses an art gallery, a work-in-progress library, an informal meeting room, a kitchen, a classroom, and a performance space. These are separated thematically but not with rigid physical barriers, the space is open, welcoming, and interactive. These different areas of La Casita were decided upon based on extensive conversations with Latina/o and non-Latino residents of the Near

### **A Special Thanks to...**

**Our Board of Advisors:** Geraldine de Berly, Luz Encarnacion, Alejandro Garcia, Bethaida Gonzalez, Antonio Herrera, Jose Perez, Silvio Torres-Saillant, Sylvia Martinez-Daloia, and Theresa Pagano.