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Latino Author Robert Renteria Selected as Finalist for 5th Annual Chicago Latino Network Awards

Renteria's nomination results from his impact in the community, helping Latino youth make better choices, avoiding gangs, drugs and violence.

CHICAGO, Ill. (July 20, 2010) -Becoming a role model in the Chicagoland community took Robert Renteria by surprise. Even as he wrote his autobiography, "[From the Barrio to the Board Room](#)," he simply wanted to share his story with today's youth as a cautionary tale. Little did he realize how his book would resonate with both youth and adults, Latino and non-Latino, and in areas far beyond the Windy City.

In his book, Renteria describes how he made the transition from a seventeen-year-old, struggling with drugs and violence in East Los Angeles, to becoming Vice-President of a publicly traded company on the NYSE. He tells of growing up poor, with a single mother, and seeing how his father's path of drugs and alcohol led to an early death. Renteria soon realized that he needed to change his own path to alter his future.

Although he did not graduate from high school, Renteria understood that education was the key. After receiving his G.E.D. and serving honorably in the military for more than 7 years, he came to Chicago with a mission to improve his life. Through hard work, he found success, and as he did, he wanted to share that story of success with others.

"This was my effort to help our youth make better choices," Renteria says. "Bright futures are built on a strong education."

His book, "From the Barrio to the Board Room", is now used as part of the curriculum in Chicago Public Schools and around the country. Students read the book and use the accompanying exercises and discussion questions to analyze their own lives and learn how to make better choices.

To continue fueling the impact of this book, the non-profit organization, [From the Barrio Foundation](#), was formed, with Renteria as chairman. This organization uses Renteria's story as a springboard to reach youth. It's mission: to address conditions that help youth avoid choices which may lead to violence, delinquency, drugs and gangs, and to promote education, valuing a sense of pride and accomplishment, and advocating social values which foster improved self-esteem.

Although Renteria's community leadership has sprung from his story, he confesses: "this book is not even about me. It's about hope and dreams."

Cheryl Maraffio, Executive Vice President of From the Barrio agrees. What makes the book so special, she says, is that it resonates in some way with all who read it. "They find a piece of themselves in the book," she says.

Now, The Chicago Latino Network is recognizing Renteria's work. Each year, the organization of 46,000 U.S. born Latinos, seeks out people who have provided outstanding service to the community-not just in the past year, but also as a cumulative effort over several years. Renteria, and three others, were selected from a field of thirty-two candidates for Latino Professional of the Year.

Winners will be announced at the 2010 Chicago Latino Network Awards dinner on Friday, September 24, 2010 at the Drake Hotel in Chicago.

While he is honored to be considered for the award, Renteria knows that whether he wins or not, his dedication to give youths hope and a road map for success will continue.

Although "From the Barrio to the Boardroom" is currently available in Spanish and English, Renteria wants his story to reach even more people. Working with Round Table Companies, his publisher Corey Michael Blake, and SmarterComics™ the book has been transformed into a comic book version, called "Mi Barrio". This illustrated version provides another lens through which readers can view Robert's story.

"This is going to be controversial," Blake says. "When you see Robert's stories brought to life visually, it hits home differently than words on a page. We've been careful not to glamorize drug use or violence in the comic, but we keep it real. The kids will respond because we're telling it like it is."

Renteria proudly and honorably embraces his role as a civic leader. "We need strong Latino role models," he says.

His military experience helped him as well, he says. "In the military, it's lead, follow, or get out of the way," he says. "I chose to lead."

About the From the Barrio Foundation

From the Barrio Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation committed to using Renteria's life, business experience and role as a civic leader to help eliminate conditions that foster violence, delinquency, drugs, and gangs. The book From the Barrio to the Board Room is a tool and Renteria is a resource who promotes education, a sense of pride and accomplishment, and self-esteem within the youth of area communities. The From the Barrio Foundation will continue to expand upon Renteria's work to inspire and motivate teens and at-risk youth, as well as anyone chasing the American Dream, so they can make the choices necessary to realize their personal goals and accept the obligation and responsibility of effectively mentoring others. For more information, visit www.fromthebarrio.com or Google [Robert Renteria](#).

About Chicago Latino Online

Chicago Latino Network is in its 10th year of providing online information and networking opportunities for acculturated Latinos in the Chicagoland area. With its pulse on the Latino lifestyle, issues and culture, the Chicago Latino Network targets entrepreneurs and professionals who are influential in their community.

To learn more, please contact Robert's publisher Corey Michael Blake at corey@roundtablecompanies.com or call him at 224.475.0392.

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