

## GARIFUNA MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES GRAND OPENING



**Los Angeles, CA (April 27, 2011)** – The Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles (GaMoLA) held its grand opening ceremony on Saturday, April 16, 2011. The Museum was officially opened by Dr. Cadrin Gill, Honorary Consul General of St. Vincent & The Grenadines who cut the black and yellow ribbons draped in front of a Garifuna flag at the entrance to the museum.

Founded by Rubén Reyes, president and founder of The Garifuna Hope Foundation, a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization, the Museum was established in memory of two great pioneering Garifuna men, Don Narciso Reyes and Don Justo Flores. The Museum’s mission is to strive to *“preserve the unique heritage and culture of the Garinagu (Garifuna people) through the collection and preservation of Garifuna historical and present-day artifacts, through educational and performing arts programs, exhibitions, and partnerships with community based organizations in the United States and abroad.”* In addition, it will serve as an educational tool for the community at large to learn about the unique traditions and customs of the Garinagu.

From a humble beginning of a few drums and household items from friends in Garifuna villages of Honduras, the museum’s collections have grown to include: a Garifuna village model; miniature dolls depicting Garifuna dress and adornments; a life size paper maché figure of a Wanaragua dancer; and an impressive collection of books, videos, art, and artifacts depicting *Garifunaduauü* (the Garifuna way of life). Various scholars, historians, authors, musicians, artists, philanthropists and collectors have contributed originals and copies of their prized works to the museum. Other art connoisseurs and collectors have also loaned priceless historical items and collectors’ items to the museum to showcase the unique culture and rich heritage of the Garinagu.

The Museum is housed by the Blazer Learning Center, a non-profit organization founded in 1969 that provides many empowering programs to youths in the community, including a very successful after school program. Located on the ground floor in three rooms, the Museum boasts a main room containing Garifuna artifacts, the Gari Gallery, and a library and multimedia room.

Thanks to the benevolence of several philanthropists and the relentless efforts of volunteers, the museum’s home underwent essential renovations to prepare it for its grand opening by the weekend of April 16 to coincide with Garifuna Memorial Day. Every year, Garinagu commemorate April 12, 1797 as a day of reflection in memory of their ancestors’ exile from their homeland of *Yurumein* (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) to the shore of Roatan in Honduras.

*“The museum belongs to people of all nations and we invite the general public to visit and bring a friend to share and delight in a culturally diverse experience,”* Rubén Reyes, executive director of the museum said. Mr. Reyes adds that volunteers are encouraged to participate in the on-going development of the Museum and in-kind and monetary donations are welcomed, which are tax-deductible and donors will receive an official receipt for tax purposes.

The Garifuna Museum of Los Angeles is located at the Blazer Learning Center, 1517 West 48th Street in Los Angeles near Denker Avenue. Museum tours can be scheduled by calling (424) 218-6212.

For additional information visit the museum’s web site at [www.garifunamuseumla.org](http://www.garifunamuseumla.org) or contact:

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