

NEW GROUP OFFERS AID TO LATIN PUERTO RICANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE PLANS FREE SEMINAR. IMMIGRATION SEMINAR PLANNED SATURDAY AT ALBIZU UNIVERSITY

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Puerto Ricans who move to south Florida don't have to jump immigration hoops because they are already American citizens. However, along with other Latin American immigrants, they have adjustments to make and must understand some of the differences involved in living here.

To help out all Latin American immigrants, a group of Puerto Rican leaders have formed an organization designed to give advice and provide support.

"We just formed *Puerto Ricans Making the Difference* in late September," explained Manuel Benitez, the Regional Director for the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration in Miami. "We want to help our Latin American brothers and sisters who have recently arrived."

Benitez said that his organization counts around 50 members and is gearing up to present its first workshop for area residents. The group is composed of professional leaders, organizations and institutions that are voluntarily offering their knowledge and services to help newly arrived Latin Americans adjust to the community.

"We want to provide professional help to Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans in the area of law, banking, insurance issues and investment opportunities," he said.

The group will offer a free seminar on immigration issues at 9 a.m., Saturday, October 18 at the Carlos Albizu University, 2173 NW 99th Avenue in Miami. Four Puerto Rican attorneys will present workshops and answer questions from participants.

The attorneys are Hans Burgos, Alex Solomay, Maria de los Angeles Torres and Andrés Rivas.

"We will be providing information on investment visas and other types of immigration visas," explained Burgos who worked as a prosecutor for the Immigration and Naturalization Service before entering private immigration legal practice.

"Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, so we don't have the same immigration issues. But, we can help others to find jobs, open a new business and not feel lost here," Benitez said. "We can help them to network with professional people who can help them."

Benitez said that his organization will not only provide seminars, but wants to serve as a mentor to newly-arrived Latin Americans who are struggling to get settled here.

"The idea is to have a bank of people who can give advice and help to guide people so they won't fail," he explained.

Benitez said that many Puerto Ricans think that their adjustment here will be easy because Spanish is widely spoken and they are only two hours from home. “But, the reality is that there are not enough jobs here for everybody, and some come without job offers. After a year of living here, you can see many professional Puerto Ricans working in restaurants.”

For information about *Puerto Ricans Making a Difference*, or to register for the seminar, call 305-448-5145.

NEW GROUP OFFERS AID TO LATIN PUERTO RICANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, Oct 12, 2003