

La Bloga



Chicana, Chicano, Latina, Latino, & more. Literature, Writers, Children's Literature, News, Views & Reviews.

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[THE WALL LAS MEMORIAS
PROJECT--AIDS
Monument](#)

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[Guest Columnist: Jesse
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[New Books by Pat Mora](#)

[Saturday Morning, Latino
Book Fest](#)

[CAPTURING THE MOMENT
AT TÍA CHUCHA'S CAFÉ
CULTURAL...](#)

[To My Kidneys](#)

[Latinos & Books!, the
Perfect Xmas gift for that
D...](#)

[Fiestas and Festivals](#)

[Latino Heritage Month
Events in Denver & L.A.](#)



la bloga.



MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

My parents died due to lack of quality health care



By guest essayist Álvaro Huerta

The American government, in my opinion, contributed to the deaths of my parents by not providing universal health care.

In every other advanced industrial nation, they would have received quality health care as a right.

Here they did not.

My father first came to this country as an agricultural worker from Mexico during the Bracero Program, and he and my mother settled in the



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United States legally, with work permits, in the late 1960s.

He later worked dead-end jobs in different factories while my mother labored as a domestic worker — cleaning the homes of countless middle-class Americans — for more than 40 years.

Neither of them accumulated enough wealth to afford a home of their own for my siblings and me, much less afford private health care.

My father died in 1996 after a prolonged battle with prostate cancer. My mother died earlier this year after a major stroke left her bedridden for many months.

If only my father and mother had access to government-supported health care before the symptoms of prostate cancer and heart problems reached a critical stage, they might have lived many years longer.

Most doctors will tell a patient, for example, that with regular checkups, proper diet, medications and exercise, severe medical conditions such as prostate cancer and heart complications can be treatable. But they couldn't afford the regular checkups that could have extended their lives.

We need universal health care in this country, or at the very least a public option that will cover the 47 million Americans without coverage today.

Isn't it hypocritical that the conservatives in Congress who ferociously attack the public option themselves benefit from a public option. As taxpayers, we not only pay their salaries but we also provide them with a health care insurance plan they can access. And if they are seniors or veterans, they're already covered by a public option that works well: Medicare or Veterans Affairs.

It makes no sense for President Obama and Democrats in Congress to reach a bipartisan agreement with a conservative party that is beholden to special interests — the existing private health care industry — and that is diametrically opposed to domestic government programs that benefit the public.

At the end of the day, any bill that excludes a public option would represent just another case of corporate power prevailing over the public interest, of Wall Street conquering Main Street.

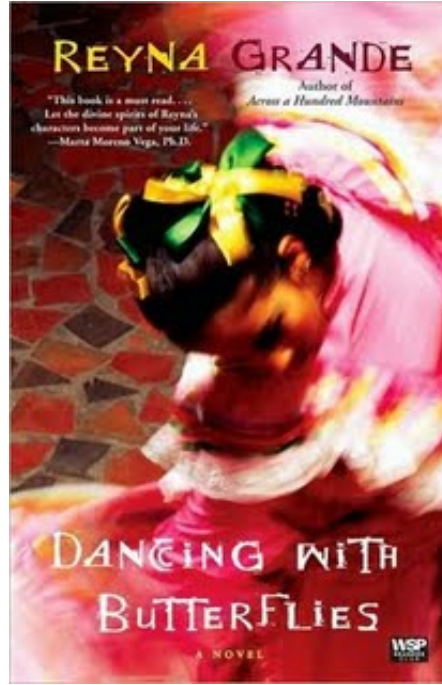
Once again, the less fortunate would lose out to people of privilege, who could afford the skyrocketing costs of premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

It was just these costs that my parents couldn't cover — and they paid with their lives.

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Now, my 10-year-old son, Joaquin, has no paternal grandparents. He misses them. So does my wife, Antonia. And so do I.

[Álvaro Huerta is a Ph.D. student in the department of city and regional planning at the University of California, Berkeley, and a visiting scholar at the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA. This essay first appeared in *The Progressive*.]



As you must know by now, [Reyna Grande](#) has a new novel out, [Dancing with Butterflies](#) (Simon & Schuster), which is garnering rave reviews, including here on La Bloga. In any event, Reyna is on a book tour so do not miss her! Here's a listing of upcoming events:

Thursday, October 22, 2009/7:00 pm
Barnes & Noble, 4001 California Avenue Bakersfield, CA; (661) 631-2575

Friday, October 23, 2009/6:30 pm
[Grupo Sabor de Mexico](#) dance studio, 22111 South Vermont

Avenue, Torrance , California 90502

Saturday, October 24, 2009/3:30 pm
[Borders Bookstore](#) 7000 Marketplace Ave, Goleta, CA 93117; (805) 968-1370

Sunday, November 01, 2009/3:00pm
[Gallery ChimMaya](#), Commerce, CA

Thursday, November 05, 2009/6:00 pm
[Barnes & Noble](#), 1805 Walnut Street, Philadelphia , PA 19103; (215) 665-0716

Saturday, November 07, 2009/2:00 pm
[El Museo Del Barrio](#) (at the Cafe). 1230 Fifth Avenue (at 104th St) New York, NY 10029

Monday, November 09, 2009/6:30 pm
[Barnes & Noble](#), San Pedro Crossing 321 NW Loop 410, #104 San Antonio , TX 78216; (210) 342-2386

Sunday, November 15, 2009/5:30 pm

[Emma Perez](#)
[Emmy Pérez](#)
[Severo Perez](#)
[Salvador Plascencia](#)
[Sam Quinones](#)
[Manuel Ramos](#)
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[Latino Poetry Review](#)
[Latino Stories](#)
[Los Bloquitos](#)
[Moorishgirl](#)
[Readraza Chicano Literature & Arts](#)
[Tonque & Groove](#)

[Capitola Book Cafe](#), Capitola CA

Wednesday, November 19, 2009/6:30 pm

Echo Park Branch Library, 1410 W. Temple St. Los Angeles, CA 90026

Saturday, November 21, 2009/2:00 pm

[National Hispanic Cultural Center](#), Albuquerque, NM

Saturday, December 05, 2009

[Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural](#), Symar, CA (check website for time)

■ [Melinda Palacio](#) has three poems in Poets & Artists which you may view [online](#) (she's on pages 29-31).

■ I don't think I mentioned this but my short story, "Diplopia," appeared recently in [The Hummingbird Review](#). The story (which you may read [here](#)) is featured in my soon-to-be-released collection, [Anywhere But L.A.](#) (Bilingual Press). You may learn more about the November 13 book launch by visiting my humble (yet functional) [website](#). And...I just learned that I will be in another Norton anthology! This one is called *Hint Fiction*, edited by Robert Swartwood. You may read more [here](#).

■ That's all for now. I do hope to post some photos soon of the Latino Book & Family Festival but I need to sit down and figure out the layout (to be honest with you). So, in the meantime, enjoy the intervening posts from mis compadres y comadres here on La Bloga. And remember: ¡Lea un libro!

posted by Daniel Olivas | [12:01 AM](#) 

2 Comments:

 **Anonymous said...**

Again, congrats, Dan, on getting another of your great stories into print!

RudyChG

[October 19, 2009 6:14:00 AM MDT](#)

 **Daniel Olivas said...**

Thank you, Rudy!

[October 19, 2009 6:53:00 AM MDT](#)

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