

CELAC STUDENT VOICE

HERITAGE

AND HEROES: THE ECHOES OF OUR ROOTS



**STUDENT VOICES TAKE
CENTER STAGE: READ
FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS OF
CULTURAL TRADITIONS,
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, AND
REFLECTIONS ON ROOTS.**

Heritage and Heroes: The Echoes of Our Roots

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Wayang

By Farhan L. Naufal (Indonesia)



Wayang Golek



Wayang Kulit

In Indonesia, we have an artifact called wayang. There are two types of wayang, that is Wayang Golek and Wayang Kulit. Wayang Golek came from West Java and Wayang Kulit came from Central Java, East Java, and Bali.



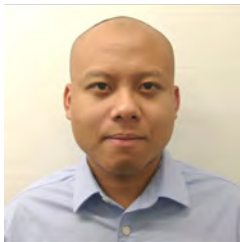
Wayang has been used to tell the tradition understanding, people education, and entertainment. Usually, wayang performance is conducted in night time. The person who plays wayang is called Dalang.



This artifact is an important method in Java Culture to give explanation to people of how to behave in society. The story in wayang is usually teaching about good deeds and bad deeds.

Originally, wayang story is taken from Hindu / India tales. Then, the Dalang modified the story to be more related to Java cultures. Even now, Java and Bali people still love to watch Wayang show

UNESCO decided wayang from Indonesia as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on 7 November 2003.



MEXICAN COSTUMES



Hi, I'm Valeria from Mexico I'm going to talk about typical costumes that every state of Mexico has. Since I can remember, I have always loved the cultural richness of Mexico. Some memories I have about each of these typical Mexican costumes are at school when we would do dances or also at the hotels I went to. They would always do a show about typical Mexican dances; it was all fascinating and full of color. I liked to see how each state of the country had its style, a unique expression of its history and traditions.

For example, the charro suit from Jalisco captivates me. The men, with their large hats and embellished jackets, radiate a pride that fills the air. The women, in their full, ruffled dresses, twirl and dance gracefully in the **Jarabe Tapatío**, a dance that celebrates courtship and the joy of living. Each step they take seems to tell a story of love and tradition.



When I think of Veracruz, I picture the infectious rhythm of the **Son Jarocho** or **la Bamba**. Women wear embroidered white blouses paired with vibrant skirts. The men, in lightweight trousers, join the dance with joy. This music, filled with guitars and jaranas, invites everyone to participate, and I can't help but smile when I see people dancing in circles, celebrating life and their heritage.



In Yucatán, the **huipil** is a wonder. Watching women wear these beautiful garments, adorned with Mayan embroidery, while they dance the **Jarabe Yucateco** makes me feel a deep connection to our roots. The fusion of rhythms and movements resonates in my heart, reminding me of the rich Maya culture that endures to this day.



I can't forget the **Baile de los Viejitos** from Michoacán. When I see the dancers, dressed to mimic the elderly, I realize how important it is to pay tribute to the wisdom of our elders. Their comedic dance, full of laughter and joyful movements, reminds me that, even as time passes, we can always find joy in life.



And what about the **Baile del Venado** in Sonora? This dance has a special magic. The dancers, in costumes that imitate the deer, represent the spiritual connection between humans and nature. The music accompanies every movement, creating a mystical atmosphere that transports me to a world where the earth and humanity exist in perfect harmony.



The Panamanian Pollera

By Luis Felipe Castillo Castillo (Panama)

The Panamanian skirt is one of the most emblematic traditional garments of Panama and, without a doubt, a symbol of cultural pride that reflects the historical and cultural richness of the country. This typical costume, internationally recognized for its beauty and detailed elaboration, represents a cultural legacy that has endured and evolved over the centuries.

The history of the Panamanian skirt dates to the colonial era, when the Spanish influence began to settle in the Isthmus of Panama. Its origin is inspired by the Andalusian costume of the 16th century, which was adapted and modified over time, acquiring its own distinctive characteristics. Although the skirt was initially a garment worn by working-class women, it eventually came to be adopted by different social classes and became a symbol of cultural identity.

The Panamanian pollera is not only a piece of clothing, but also represents the Panamanian cultural identity. Every detail and every element have a symbolic meaning that connects the wearer with Panama's traditions and past. During national celebrations, such as National Pollera Day (July 22), Panamanian women proudly wear this outfit, reaffirming their sense of belonging and showing the world the richness of their cultural heritage.

The making of a Panamanian pollera is a complex artisanal process that can take several months or even years. Each pollera is unique, as the details and embroidery are done by hand by expert artisans who pass on their knowledge from generation to generation. This dedication makes each outfit a valuable work of art, reflecting the creativity, patience and skill of Panamanian artisans.





(from left to right: my sister, my mom, and my niece in Panamanian Pollera)



A New Era for Women in Saudi Arabia

By Aliyah Albaqami (Saudi Arabia)

Today, I will talk about a great person in my country who has brought about many developments that make me proud to belong to this nation. I will discuss Muhammad bin Salman, focusing particularly on the area of women's rights, which is very important to me. This is not to say that he has only made advancements in this field; on the contrary, he has facilitated progress across various aspects of life, including education and the economy on an international scale.

Returning to my main topic, as I mentioned earlier, what matters to me as a woman in this nation is the opening of job opportunities for women, which were previously limited or nonexistent, primarily confined to the field of education. He has also established training centers, opened up new specializations, and provided government support to private companies that hire women.

In terms of education, he has made it easier for women to study abroad, covering all social and financial aspects for female students. In the past, women needed the approval of a male guardian to continue their studies abroad, but now they no longer require that. Additionally, he has implemented a system allowing women to drive, which was previously strictly prohibited for all women.

He has also reinforced the role of women as mothers by introducing a new personal status law that benefits women and their children, thereby strengthening the family's role in contributing to society. I must admit that there is a significant patriarchal culture in Saudi Arabia that has marginalized women, viewing them as unimportant and relegating their roles solely to the home and child-rearing.

However, with Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, the role of women has been enhanced and reinforced, instilling a sense of confidence that allows them to fulfill their responsibilities as employees, mothers, and wives in a healthy and correct manner, ultimately benefiting the nation as a whole.



Symbols of Strength: The Dong Son Bronze Drum in Vietnamese Culture

By Duy Phung Do & Thi Anh Dieu Tran (Vietnam)

In the world, there are two peoples who were colonized and exiled for more than 1000 years but they still keep their land until today: Vietnam and the Jews. The reason they did not lose their country is because they still kept their culture and language. Culture is considered a part of life and is passed down from generation to generation. Today, the Vietnam team would like to introduce to you the Dong Son bronze drum. This is a product of the wisdom of the ancient Vietnamese people, and is a product of the rice-based agricultural civilization that developed brilliantly in the Red River basin.



The bronze drum was born with the function of a musical instrument, as a symbol of power, religion... In religious ceremonies, festivals and in war, the presence of the bronze drum is indispensable. It helps the leader call on people from all over to gather to fight against foreign invaders. Therefore, the Dong Son bronze drum is a symbol of power, an object belonging to the leader. In addition, bronze drums are also valuable assets, used as burial objects when the owner passes away.



The patterns on the surface of bronze drums are extremely diverse and rich, such as stars, Lac birds, musical instrument symbols, ancient costumes, images of ethnic stilt houses, human activities such as dancing, drumming, etc. The patterns on the surface of

bronze drums are not simply decorative images but also have profound meanings about culture, tradition and national pride. The central star (8 to 14 points) is the most beautiful symbol of Dong Son bronze drums: representing the supreme image in nature, which is the sun. The ancients believed that the sun provided them with energy and light, so they worshiped and were grateful. The images of birds represent the worship of nature. With the concept that birds are the ancestors of mankind, the image of the egg in the legend of Lac Long Quan - Au Co or bird motifs express gratitude to ancestors. The motifs of ethnic stilt houses on bronze drums are used a lot, with the architectural style of curved roof houses and round roof houses.



Dong Son bronze drums often have two main musical instruments carved on their faces: trumpets and drums. These two instruments are played by people during Tet and festivals. The motifs depicting people's daily life such as dancing, pounding rice, rowing boats, beating drums, etc. are simple bronze drum motifs with high symbolic value, but clearly depict the peaceful, happy and prosperous life in the early period of the country. This is a priceless and creative artifact of the ancient Vietnamese people.



Frida Kahlo: An Icon of Resilience and Art

By Reyna Serrato (Mexico)

Frida Kahlo is a cultural figure whose life and art have deeply resonated with me. Known for her captivating self-portraits and vibrant use of symbolism, Kahlo's work is not just about aesthetics—it reflects themes of identity, pain, and strength. Born in Mexico, she overcame immense personal hardships, from a near-fatal bus accident to numerous surgeries that left her with lasting physical challenges. Yet, she transformed her pain into art, becoming a powerful voice for Mexican heritage, feminism, and self-expression.

I chose to introduce Frida Kahlo because she exemplifies the kind of strength and authenticity I admire. Her refusal to conform to societal expectations, especially during a time when women had limited agency, is inspiring. Kahlo's art isn't just something you observe; it's something you feel. It reminds me that hardship doesn't have to define us—what matters is how we choose to respond. In my own life, I strive to carry that sense of resilience, embracing challenges while staying true to who I am.

It is also important for me to introduce Frida Kahlo because of the connection we share through culture. Both of us are Mexican women, and her art celebrates the beauty and complexity of our heritage. Kahlo embraced her Mexican identity, using traditional motifs, bright colors, and elements from indigenous art to express her cultural pride. This sense of pride resonates with me and motivates me to embrace my roots, even in spaces where it may not always be easy to do so. Through her work, Kahlo showed that it is possible to be both vulnerable and powerful, and that staying connected to one's culture is a form of strength.

Key Elements of Frida Kahlo's Work

- Intense

Kahlo's paintings are intense, and the experience of seeing them in person can be transformative. The bold colors, intricate details, and raw emotion in her work can be profoundly moving.

- Healing

Kahlo's art can be a reminder of art's healing and transformational potential. Her paintings can help viewers understand that suffering can be transformed into beauty through creativity.

- Pain

Kahlo's paintings express her emotional and physical traumas. For example, in her 1944 painting 'The Broken Column,' Kahlo shows the complexity of her injuries, including a broken spine and a leather and metal back brace.



- Solitude

Kahlo's paintings are full of solitude because she spent much of her life in bed. The main character in her paintings is often placed in the middle, alone, and with sad eyes.

- Identity

Kahlo explored her identity by depicting her ancestry as binary opposites: the colonial European side and the indigenous Mexican side.

- Inspiration

Kahlo's work continues to inspire people worldwide, showing that art can capture both personal and universal experiences.



Cartagena's Legacy of Strength and Culture

By Camilo Andres Betancourt (Colombia)

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, is a beautiful coastal city that was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984. It was founded by the Spanish conqueror Pedro Heredia on June 1, 1533. Cartagena quickly became an important port for Spain, helping to move gold and other treasures.

The city is well-known for its strong walls, which were built to protect it from pirates and attacks. Today, you can stroll through its charming cobblestone streets, lined with colorful buildings and blooming flowers. The lively atmosphere is filled with tasty food and exciting festivals that celebrate the city's rich culture.

Cartagena has a complex history, including its involvement in the slave trade. Now, it stands as a symbol of strength and cultural mixing, attracting visitors from around the world who want to enjoy its history and beautiful views.

The walls of Cartagena are a great example of military architecture from colonial times. Construction started in the 16th century to defend against pirates and rival nations. The first walls were small, but as threats grew, they were greatly expanded in the late 1500s and early 1600s. Engineers like Giovanni Battista Antonelli helped design the complex system of fortifications, which included bastions, towers, and gates. These walls not only protected the city but also showed how important Cartagena was as a major port for the Spanish Empire.

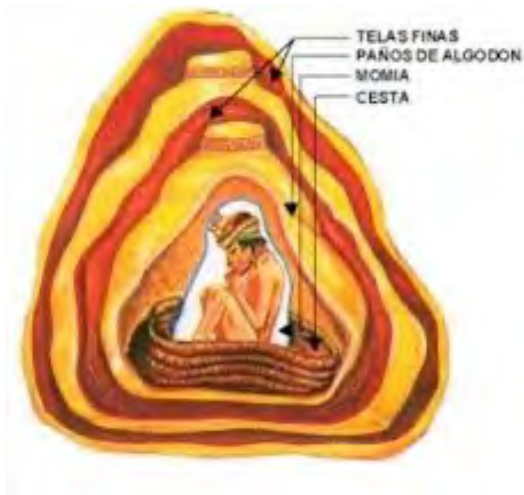
One important event in Cartagena's history was the British attack in 1741. Led by Admiral Edward Vernon, the British aimed to capture the city, which was a key Spanish stronghold in the Caribbean. Vernon gathered a large fleet of about 186 ships and 27,000 soldiers, one of the biggest military forces of that time. The attack started in March 1741, and the British bombarded the city for weeks. Even though they were heavily outnumbered, the defenders, led by Spanish governor Blas de Lezo, fought bravely. Lezo's smart use of the city's walls and the determination of the soldiers and local fighters helped push back the invasion. After months of fierce fighting, the British had to withdraw in May 1741, suffering heavy losses. This victory not only saved Cartagena but also changed the power balance in the Caribbean, boosting the city's reputation as a stronghold against foreign threats.



The Paracas culture

By Wuilmer Garcia Quispe (Peru)

An ancient pre-Incan civilization, thrived along the southern coast of Peru between approximately 800 BCE and 100 BCE. Known for their remarkable contributions to textiles, ceramics, and medical practices, the Paracas people left a significant mark on the region's history and cultural heritage. Their elaborate textiles, crafted with vibrant colors and intricate patterns, are considered some of the finest in ancient Peru and reveal much about their religious beliefs, social structure, and artistry. Additionally, the Paracas culture is famous for its advances in cranial surgery, particularly in trepanation, a procedure where holes were made in the skull to treat head injuries or possibly release spiritual forces. These contributions highlight the innovative and skilled nature of the Paracas people, underscoring their importance in the history of pre-Columbian South America.



I wanted to introduce the Paracas culture because their achievements and way of life showcase a rich and lesser-known part of ancient civilization that deserves greater recognition. Their artistry in textiles, for example, reveals their profound understanding of design, color, and symbolism, which they used to communicate their beliefs and identity. Learning about their textiles gives us insight into how they expressed their spirituality, depicting figures of animals, deities, and mythical creatures that were important in their religious beliefs. This artistry remains relevant today, as it highlights the timeless human desire to create beauty and meaning.



Reflecting on the Paracas culture's contributions also encourages us to appreciate ancient ingenuity in science and medicine. Their medical practices, especially in cranial surgery, are astonishing examples of their scientific understanding and courage. Learning about the Paracas people allows us to honor these early achievements, inspiring us to remember and celebrate ancient cultures for their wisdom, artistry, and contributions to the world.



César Vallejo: Voice of Pain, Loneliness, and Justice

By Erickson Palacios (Peru)

César Abraham Vallejo Mendoza was born on March 16, 1892, in Santiago de Chuco, Perú. He is one of the most important figures in poetry during the twentieth century. The youngest of eleven siblings and rooted in the clergy, Vallejo developed a peculiar sensitivity that combined poetry, politics, and religion. Works that transcend borders, studied at universities all over the world, and consecrating him as an icon of Peruvian literature. With his avant-garde style, Vallejo had managed to break with the literary conventions of his time with books like *Los Heraldos Negros* and *Trilce*, where he dealt with pain and loneliness among other very human feelings. In *Poemas Humanos*, his vision about justice and the love of mankind is unveiled; it cemented him as a dedicated poet to the existential and social dilemmas of his time.

En *Los Heraldos Negros*, 1919, Vallejo writes about pain and human suffering in universal terms, in an accessible style and emotionally charged. With *Trilce* in 1922, he moves away from conventions into the creation of an experimental work that reflects his innovative vision regarding loneliness and existentialism. Finally, in *Poemas Humanos*, one finds the treatment of issues regarding social justice and solidarity, showing that he was concerned about the problems of humanity. These works represent not only the evolution of Vallejo but also his deep commitment to the complexities of life.

César Vallejo is essential in poetry to express pain, loneliness and justice in society, all human experiences. His avant-garde style proposes a significant challenge to literary conventions that allowed the expression of new voices. Through his poems, we can understand his wisdom and learn to reflect on the distance between the realities of others and our own. In his verses there is empathy and struggle for a much better future. That is why his legacy is a constant basis of knowledge and contemplation in modern literature.



Macondo and Beyond: The Legacy of Gabriel García Márquez

By Jose Omar Serna Acevedo (Colombia)

Colombia had have people that have achieved huge awards across the time from Olympic awards, Grammys and even Oscar for best documentary short-film. However, in my opinion, the best was in 1982 the Nobel Prize in Literature granted to Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Gabo, as many affectively call him, was a journalist, screenwriter, short-story writer, and novelist and was award-winning for his novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude". This incredible story about Buendia's family and their life during one century was written between 1965-1966 and then published in 1967, reflecting the mixed between realism and magic realism so characteristic of his writing. My favorite book since more than 20 years ago allows me to enjoy it in many ways each time that I read it, knowing something new about the different members of this story, their personalities, their decisions, their successes and failures across the book. Gabo allow us enjoy about great story that occur in a small town called Macondo, that today serves as inspiration for many others people, from restaurants to stream platform such as Netflix who will premiere this year the serie on December, I hopeful that be a big successful and this incite to many people to read the book and visit Colombia and the beautiful towns where you can finding others stories, or if you prefer towns with Macondo's inspiration and the book.

Personally, I recommended Mompox or Mompós, officially Santa Cruz de Mompox, is a town and municipality in Northern Colombia, in the Bolívar Department. The town initially grew from its proximity to the Magdalena river and has preserved much of its colonial character. Also Mompox is the setting that represents Macondo in Gabo's literature. The writer was inspired by the island of Mompox, in the middle of the Magdalena River, to create Macondo and other works.



Oswaldo Cruz: Shaping Public Health in Brazil and Beyond

By Ohanna Diniz Thomaz (Brazil)

I have chosen to speak about Oswaldo Cruz due to his importance to the global health scenario. Do you know how his actions affected the world?

Back in the 1900s, Rio de Janeiro was facing epidemics of yellow fever and smallpox. The government, under Oswaldo Cruz's leadership, implemented several public health measures to combat them, even though they were quite controversial at the time. One of these measures was to make vaccination mandatory, which led to public discontent and cultural beliefs that created a public uprising known as the Revolta da Vacina. This revolt was one of the most important events in Brazilian history, as it significantly changed the public health landscape in Brazil, including the strengthening of public health institutions, increasing awareness of public health, and implementing health reforms, among others.

One of Oswaldo's key public health measures while combating those diseases was the implementation of quarantine. Cruz enforced quarantine measures to isolate individuals who were infected or suspected of being infected to prevent the diseases from spreading within communities. Later on, the vaccination campaigns, alongside all his efforts and those of his colleagues, had an effect on the future, as they laid the groundwork for smallpox eradication. His strategies were internationally recognized, and his methods became models for other countries dealing with similar public health challenges.

Recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, his strategies were used worldwide and indeed helped in controlling the disease and even preventing some people from being infected. Due to his humanitarian values and impactful legacy, Oswaldo Cruz is a role model for aspiring public health professionals around the world. His work and efforts are definitely inspiring not only for healthcare professionals but for everyone.



THE CONGO A COUNTRY OF DIVERSITY

By Israel Muamba Nzambi (Congo)

The Congo is a country that holds a special place in my heart because of its rich culture and family atmosphere. I love the Congo for the warm welcome of families and friendly gatherings. Visiting the Virunga National Park is an unforgettable experience, where one can admire the majestic gorillas. Just in front of the park, the powerful Nyiragongo volcano offers an impressive spectacle with its glowing lava.

The Congo is also famous for its unique wildlife, such as okapis and bonobos that can be seen in sanctuaries. The Zongo Falls, where water flows powerfully over the rocks, are another beautiful place where one can swim in the middle. Congolese cuisine, like fufu and smoked fish, is delicious and fresh.

Listening to energetic Congolese music, like the rumba of Koffi Olomidé, Fally Ipupa, Ferré Gola, and JB Mpiana, as well as the dobolo, is an integral part of our culture. The Congo River, where one can find many fish and hippos, is also a fascinating place to visit. The mining sites, where one can see raw materials like gold, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, etc., are really numerous. For example, coltan is essential for the manufacture of phones and computers, everything related to technology.

Attending a football match of the Léopards or TP Mazembe at the Stade des Martyrs is an incredible experience. Seeing people dance, shout, and cheer for their team with such passion is truly impressive. Dancing the mutwachi, listening to afro-Congo and seben, and eating dishes like chicken mayo with chikwangue add to the vibrant energy of our culture. National and international debates with family and friends, whether about music or politics, are precious moments of sharing and laughter.

The Congo is truly a special place, where nature, culture, and human relationships blend harmoniously. It is this richness and diversity that deeply connect me to my country, and that is why I wanted to share this part of my culture with you.



A Heroine of Hope: How Zhang Guimei Transformed Lives Through Education

By Li Lu (China)

Zhang Guimei has changed the lives of many girls. She is a hero to me. As a teacher in Yunnan Province, Zhang Guimei opened the door to education for many poor girls. Her work has truly changed their lives. She founded the first free girls' high school in China, showing how powerful education can be.

I admire Zhang Guimei's story deeply. She came from a regular family and faced many challenges when she was young, but she always believed that education could change lives. She spent all her money to help her students. She cares not only about their grades but also about their lives and mental health. Her goal is not just to teach, but also to give students hope and courage.

I chose to talk about Zhang Guimei because of her dedication and selfless love. In some areas, many girls cannot go to school because their families are poor or their parents do not understand the importance of education. Zhang Guimei fights for these girls to have equal opportunities. She walks long distances to visit each girl's home, understands their situations, and persuades their parents to let them go to school. She is kind, brave, determined, and hardworking, bringing hope for their futures.

Zhang Guimei inspires me to pay attention to those in need around me and to speak up for them. She is my hero because her determination shows that real heroes are not just those with special powers, but those who work quietly and selflessly in everyday life. She has shown me the power of education and that everyone can help make a difference in society.

In the future, I hope to help others like she does, so that more people can find hope. In short, Zhang Guimei is not only a great educator but also a hero in my heart. I love her school motto: "I was born to be a mountain, not a stream. I want to stand on the top of the peaks and look down on the mediocre valleys. I was born to be a hero, not a blade of grass. I stand among great people, looking down on the humble cowards." This inspires me to believe in myself. Everyone is unique and has special talents. We should be proud of who we are and keep exploring our potential.



Amelia Vega: Dominican Beauty, Talent, and Heart

By Lorena Alejandra Cabrera (Dominican Republic)

Amelia Vega Polanco is a Dominican model, composer, singer and actress. She is known for having won the Miss Universe 2003 beauty pageant, thus becoming the first and so far only Dominican to win the crown.



She was born on November 7 1984 in Santiago de los Caballeros, Republica Dominicana. She is married with Al Horford, a famous person of basketball. She has five children and she said that the family is the most important thing in the world. She is known for be strong, humble and likes to help poor people. She is very good person with a big heart.



Munib Masri: From Humble Beginnings to Philanthropic Success in Palestine

By Mohammed Alzeer (Palestine)

I want to talk about Munib Masri, he is a famous person in Palestine and his story is famous that he did not own anything and was the youngest of his brothers and his father worked in construction and his mother was a housewife. He studied business administration and was responsible for the expenses alone from his work and he got an excellent grade in his studies and started personal projects and building companies and became one of the richest people in Palestine. He also helped everyone and his idea was based on providing work for the unemployed and he helped people in need. I loved him when I knew his story because he made himself and no one else made him and also because he is generous and loves helping people and his projects are successful because they depend on bringing in the unemployed and helping them.



Lessons in Strength and Duty: The Timeless Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita

By Sunita Rani (India)

I want to introduce the Bhagavad Gita, a very important book in Indian culture and religion. The Bhagavad Gita is part of a larger story called the Mahabharata. It is a conversation between a prince named Arjuna and a god named Krishna. Arjuna is scared and unsure about fighting in a battle because he has to face people he knows and loves. He asks Krishna for advice, and Krishna teaches him about life, duty, and staying strong.

To me, the Bhagavad Gita is special because it teaches me how to be strong when life is difficult. Growing up in India, I saw many people use the Gita for comfort and guidance in hard times. When I feel stressed or unsure, I remember Krishna's advice to Arjuna: do your best and don't worry too much about the results. This lesson helps me keep going in my life and my studies, even when things get tough.



Omar Torrijos: Champion of Panamanian Sovereignty and Social Reform

By Kaleb Saez (Panama)

For the October "Student Voice" newsletter, I want to introduce Omar Torrijos, a significant historical character in the history of Panama. Torrijos was a military and political leader who ruled Panama from 1968 until his death in 1981. He is known for being a defender of Panamanian sovereignty and for his role in the negotiation of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, which led to the return of the Panama Canal to Panama in 1999.



Torrijos was a charismatic leader who implemented various social and economic reforms in the country, seeking to improve the living conditions of Panamanians. His focus on education, health and housing helped raise the well-being of many people at a time of great challenges. In addition, his struggle for Panamanian sovereignty around the Canal was an important milestone in the country's history, since it allowed Panama to regain control of a vital resource that had been under US administration since the construction of the canal.

