



Guide to the Papers of Rehabilitation Program Pioneers Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón



From left to right: Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán, Charles LaPorte, Frank "Machito" Grillo and an unknown individual

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Descriptive Summary

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Abstract: The Papers of Rehabilitation Program Pioneers Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón are an important resource that documents the contributions that these three Puerto Rican pioneers made to drug treatment and prevention programs in New York City and throughout the country. The collection consists of awards, correspondence, clippings, flyers, notes, programs, publications, photographs, writings and a CD and DVD.

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Biographical Notes:

Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón pioneered drug rehabilitation programs and services in New York, particularly those geared toward Puerto Rican/Latino substance abusers, beginning in the early 1970s. Individually, as well as collectively, their leadership played a significant role in expanding the availability, range and reach of these programs and services throughout New York State and in New York City in particular.

Each of these three individuals have their own stories about their struggles with drug addiction, their subsequent rehabilitation and their drive to continue to work in that area to support the rehabilitation of others. However, their experiences share many parallels and it is these similarities that caused their lives to intersect. In the end, this crossing of paths resulted in the growth of a movement – a Puerto Rican-led one driven to provide culturally-sensitive drug rehabilitation programs and services.

Julio Martínez was born January 20, 1944 in Gurabo, Puerto Rico. Two years later, he moved to New York City with his family and settled in Spanish Harlem and the South Bronx. By the time he reached his early teens, Martínez was already struggling with a drug addiction. Over the next decade, he was repeatedly convicted of drug-related crimes and was admitted into rehabilitation programs numerous times to no avail. It was not until late 1966, when he entered the Morris J. Bernstein Institute at the Beth Israel Medical Center, that Martínez finally attained sobriety.

Carlos Pagán was born May 28, 1939 in Puerto Rico, but in the mid 1950s, he moved to New York City with his family, joining other Puerto Ricans in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. He became involved with a local gang, began abusing drugs and was arrested for multiple drug-related offenses. His troubles with drugs and the law followed him to Puerto Rico, where he was sent to live by his family after being arrested for selling drugs to an undercover police officer. Upon returning to New York City, Pagán continued to abuse drugs, to commit drug-related crimes and, consequently, to become estranged from his family. Like Martínez, it was his stay at the Morris J. Bernstein Institute beginning in 1966 that ultimately helped him achieve sobriety.

Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico in 1932, Pedro Falcón was one of Inocencio Falcón's and Josefina Figueras' six children. After losing his mother at an early age, Falcón found himself helping to parent the other children, especially after his father left for New York City in search of job opportunities. In 1947 at the age of 15, he moved to Brooklyn, New York and joined the rest of his immediate family. School was difficult for Falcón; he did not speak English and lacked the encouragement and support he needed to overcome such a difficult transition. He began drinking, gambling and abusing and selling drugs, which landed him in jail on multiple occasions. In 1960, as part of bargaining plea to avoid jail time, Falcón entered Daytop Village, a residential substance abuse program. As part of his rehabilitation, he underwent training in alcoholism and substance abuse counseling that allowed him to support the rehabilitation of others, prepared him for his next major step and introduced him to Julio Martínez and Carlos Pagán.

In May 1967, the residents of the drug treatment program at the Morris J. Bernstein Institute at the Beth Israel Medical Center were informed that they would be transferred to Hart Island, a halfway house where the recovering addicts could continue their treatment. Julio Martínez,

Carlos Pagán and four other residents – including Ronnie Williams and Ray Colón -- felt that a stay at Hart Island would be much like the prisons that they hoped to have left behind them. They believed that the next step in their treatment process should involve reentry in their own communities despite the risk of relapsing due to a lack of institutional support and the easy availability of drugs. Over six months sober and determined to rebuild their lives, the six former residents pooled their welfare checks and obtained an apartment on West 85th Street in Manhattan, an area that at the time was riddled with drug activity, signaling the birth of Phoenix House.



Cover of 1967 newsletter from the Morris J. Bernstein Institute, the year in which Martínez and Pagán were residents.

This pioneering effort soon attracted the attention of the recently formed Addiction Services Agency that had been established by Mayor John Lindsay in 1966. Dr. Efrén Ramírez, a Puerto Rican psychiatrist who served as the first Commissioner for Addiction Services and developed the therapeutic community program prototype to treat heroin addiction that the six recovering addicts brought with them to Phoenix House, assigned Pedro Falcón to direct the growing agency. The pioneers, along with Falcón and other newly assigned program administrators such as Mitchell S. Rosenthal (now the President of the agency), ultimately occupied the entire building and set up a formal structure that included daily meetings, in-house duties and responsibilities and education programs for the burgeoning Phoenix House resident community. Today, over 40 years since it was founded, Phoenix House stands as the largest drug and alcohol abuse treatment organization in the United States with over 100 facilities throughout the country.

However, Julio Martínez and Carlos Pagán left Phoenix House in the late 1960s to work for the Addiction Services Agency that had supported their initial efforts at Phoenix House. Both were feeling disappointed with the direction Phoenix House had taken under the management of professional drug treatment staff, many of whom were not recovering addicts themselves and therefore were perceived to lack an understanding of what it took to become sober and were advocates of highly punitive measures for treating addiction. While employed at the Addiction Services Agency, Martínez served as Director of the Longwood Community Orientation Center

and Pagán as the Assistant Director. In 1970, the two left the New York City Agency to establish a new drug treatment program that was attuned to the specific needs of the Puerto Rican and Latino communities and that would incorporate the lessons they had learned in their treatment and prevention work thus far, namely the effectiveness of the therapeutic community model and the importance of job training and education. They named the organization Project RETURN which stood for Rehabilitation and Education Through Unity and Reentry Now. They squatted a practically abandoned municipal building on East 34th and built a treatment facility – which the city government soon legalized – that included programs for gays and lesbians as well as seniors, communities that had remained largely invisible and ignored by other substance abuse treatment programs, in addition to their larger, culturally sensitive, Spanish-language treatment model.

The two pioneers worked side by side at Project RETURN for almost 10 years, building the agency into a leading service provider New York City and using their leadership and experience to advocate for increased funding. In 1976, the drug treatment community camped outside of the Capitol Building in Albany, New York to protest the lack of funding available for drug treatment programs. The camp, known as “The City of the Forgotten,” consisted of over 200 hundred advocates from across the state with Julio Martínez serving as its leader. On a daily basis, he lobbied state senators and other politicians, urging them to allocate more funds for substance abuse treatment programs and services and held himself up, as well as his other protestors, as a success story, an example of how a drug addict can turn their life around to become a productive member of society. Two months into the demonstration, the advocates accomplished their goal and received a boost in funding for their programs.

Martínez’s work at “The City of the Forgotten,” both in terms of the success achieved and the contacts that were made, resulted in increased recognition at the state level as a leader in the drug rehabilitation movement so much so that in 1979, Governor Hugh Carey appointed him Commissioner of the New York State Department of Substance Abuse Services, essentially the drug czar for the state. Martínez was the first Puerto Rican to hold the position, and ultimately, held it for the longest period of time – a decade that spanned two administrations.

Once Martínez moved up to work in Albany, Pagán was left to run Project RETURN on his own. The pressure proved to be too much for him; he was not prepared to run an organization with over 200 employees and multiple treatment facilities. Pagán took a leave of absence from the organization, and upon his return, discovered he had been demoted by the Board of Directors and was now the Director of one of the agency’s men’s facilities. He stayed on at Project RETURN for a few more years but left in 1985 to establish his own drug rehabilitation program, El Regreso, Inc. Pagán chose to establish the organization in the neighborhood he grew up in, the place that first introduced him to drugs and petty crime, the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, New York. El Regreso’s mission consisted of providing bilingual and bicultural drug-free (non-methadone) treatment and rehabilitation programs and services to the Latino and African-American community in Williamsburg and surrounding neighborhoods of Bushwick and Greenpoint. After more than 20 years in existence, El Regreso, Inc. has matured into a multi-facility agency that includes a Men’s Treatment Program, a Women’s Treatment Program and an Ambulatory Treatment program. The organization has had such an impact on the community

that a street was renamed in their honor. The intersection of Bedford Avenue and South 3rd Street in Williamsburg is now known as El Regreso Way.

Despite the successes that Martínez and Pagán achieved in developing and expanding substance abuse rehabilitation programs and services, they also encountered numerous obstacles and problems. The most public and problematic example, which incidentally stemmed, in part, from the very relationship that existed between Martínez and Pagán, ultimately cost Martínez his government post. In the mid 1980's, nearly ten years into Martínez's appointment as Commissioner of the New York State Department of Substance Abuse Services (DSAS), investigations were launched after allegations of contract and funding improprieties surfaced. The accusations alleged that Martínez bypassed state contracting regulations and funded drug treatment programs run by his friends, including Carlos Pagán's El Regreso, Inc. Further, claims were made that millions of dollars had been awarded to programs, including El Regreso, Inc., that had yet to provide drug treatment services.

The allegations resulted in a formal investigation by New York State's Commission on Government Integrity (CGI). A 90-page report issued by the CGI concluded that Martínez had failed to follow agency guidelines for the distribution of state funds by awarding contracts to drug treatment agencies headed by his friends without the proper review and oversight. The CGI, however, did not claim that any criminal activity had taken place and did not recommend that further action be taken against Martínez. It is important to note that most Latino/a elected and public officials in New York stood by Martínez and even praised his work thus far. Nonetheless, the media coverage revolving the scandal, and its impact on public opinion, had already tainted Martínez's name and made it difficult for him to effectively lead the DSAS. Governor Mario Cuomo accepted his resignation in December 1989.

Martínez continued to work in the drug treatment arena in various capacities. Immediately after leaving the DSAS, he created a consulting firm, JAMART Associates, Inc. that focused on the design, implementation and management of substance abuse treatment programs. Interestingly, he also began operating a hot dog vending stand outside of the state's Capitol Building. In 1994, he accepted Governor Cuomo's offer to become the Deputy Commissioner for Treatment Services for the New York Department of Corrections and in 1998 became the Executive Director of BASICS, Inc., a substance abuse treatment center in the Bronx whose Board members have included Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón.

In October 1999, at the early age of 55, Julio Martínez died of cancer. His contributions to the development and expansion of drug treatment programs and services continue to bear fruit today with New York standing as the state with one of the largest and strongest networks of drug rehabilitation programs in the country. Undoubtedly, Julio Martínez and his fellow pioneers – Puerto Ricans who were rehabilitated from a life of drug addiction and committed themselves to helping other Puerto Ricans achieve the same goal – contributed greatly to the proliferation of drug treatment programs in New York State and in New York City in particular. Carlos Pagán is entering his 24th year as Executive Director of El Regreso, Inc. and continues to serve as a leader to the Latino drug treatment community in New York City. Martínez's legacy lives on in the organizations he helped establish, in the commitment to public funding of drug rehabilitation programs that he spearheaded and in the many lives positively affected by his efforts and

experiences. In honor of his leadership in the drug treatment community, El Regreso, Inc. named one of their facilities after him; their outpatient facility is now called the Julio Martínez Ambulatory Care Program.

Scope and Content:

The Papers of Rehabilitation Program Pioneers Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón inform researchers about the contributions that Puerto Ricans, particularly these three individuals, made to the establishment and expansion of drug abuse treatment and prevention services in New York City as well as throughout New York State and beyond. Further, this collection traces their leadership in the drug treatment field from the early 1970s until, as in the case of Carlos Pagán, the present.

Although small, the collection documents the personal lives and professional accomplishments of the rehabilitation program pioneers through biographical profiles, personal writings, newspaper clippings and organizational documents. Other highlights of the collection include records from the New York State Division of Substance Abuse, and the accompanying materials from the Committee on Government Integrity, which lend insight into the growth of substance abuse programs and services in New York, the role of Puerto Rican leaders in this process and the government investigations into allegations of funding improprieties. Also of note is a Storycorp recording by Pagán which traces the development of drug rehabilitation programs and services in New York City and the numerous Puerto Ricans who were a part of these efforts.

The collection spans from 1967 to 2008 with the bulk of the materials dating between 1976 and 1989. They consist of awards, correspondence, clippings, flyers, notes, programs, publications, photographs, writings and a CD and DVD. The folders within each series are arranged alphabetically while the documents within each folder are organized chronologically. Documents in English and in Spanish are found throughout the collection.

The collection is comprised of the following series:

- I. Biographical and Personal Information**
- II. Subject Files**
- III. New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services**
- IV. Audiovisuals**

Access Points/ Términos clave:

Subject Names:

Cruz, Angelo
Falcón, Pedro
Martínez, Julio
Pagán, Carlos
Rivera, Luis
Ramírez, Efrén
Rosenthal, Mitchell S.

Subject Topics:

City of the Forgotten
Community organizing
Drug abuse --Treatment --New York (State)-- New YorkDrug addicts -- Rehabilitation -- New York (State)-- New York
Drugs and youth -- New York (State) -- New York
Drug treatment -- New York
Puerto Ricans -- Health & Welfare
Puerto Ricans -- New York (State) -- New York
Puerto Ricans in New York (City)
Substance abuse -- New York (State)
Substance abuse -- New York (City)

Subject Organizations:

BASICS, Inc.
Daytop Lodge/Village
Phoenix House
Project Return
El Regreso, Inc.
State of New York, Committee on Government Integrity
State of New York, Division of Substance Abuse Services

Document Types:

Audio and Video Discs
Awards
Correspondence
Clippings
Flyers
Letters
Memoranda
Notes
Programs

Publications
Photographs
Writings

Series I: Biographical and Personal Information (1967-2008)

This series documents aspects of the lives of Julio Martínez, Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón, pioneers of substance abuse rehabilitation programs in New York City.

After meeting at Phoenix House, a drug rehabilitation program started by Julio Martínez and Carlos Pagán in the late 1960s and directed by Pedro Falcón, the three went on to establish various substance abuse treatment centers including Project Return and El Regreso, Inc. and to provide leadership for countless other programs. Indeed, Julio Martínez served as Commissioner of the Division of Substance Abuse Services for the State of New York from 1979-1989 and succeeded in increasing funding for rehabilitation programs. In 1989, however, he was forced to resign amidst accusations of improprieties in awarding funding contracts to organizations including El Regreso, Inc., the program directed by Carlos Pagán. The scandal can be traced in the Clippings folder as well as in the Committee on Government Integrity subseries of the Division of Substance Abuse Services series. The folders on Martínez also include biographies and profiles, drafts of his memoirs and a manual he created for the consulting firm, JAMART Associates, Inc., that he created after leaving his government post.

The folders on Falcón and Pagán primarily consist of biographical sketches and/or resumes, clippings, letters of support and appreciation, and award certificates. Of particular note are the autobiographies describing their youth and the numerous recognitions each of them received for their leadership in substance abuse services especially in the Puerto Rican/Latino community.

Box	Folder	
1	1	Falcón, Pedro, undated, 1967-1977
		Martínez, Julio
	2	Biographies and Correspondence, undated, 1979-1999
	3	Clippings, undated, 1978-1999
	4	Consulting Services, undated, 1991-1994
	5	Memoirs, Drafts, undated
	6	Pagán, Carlos, undated, 1970-2008

Series II: Subject Files (1967-2008)

An assortment of materials are featured in this series including newspaper clippings and articles on drug abuse and prevention as well as documents pertaining to the various substance abuse treatment organizations that Martínez, Pagán and Falcón were affiliated with throughout their professional lives. Highlights include Phoenix House newsletters dating to when Martínez and Pagán were beginning their drug rehabilitation treatment and a 1976 article written by Martínez

that is critical of the lack of cultural competency in therapeutic communities in New York City despite the fact that Puerto Ricans at the time accounted for over 25% of the city's registered drug abusers. The series also includes documents about BASICS, Inc., a drug treatment program in the Bronx that at one time counted on the leadership of all three pioneers, and Luis Rivera, a former professional boxer who served as Director of Physical Education at Project Return, the drug treatment program founded by Martínez and Pagán in 1970.

Box Folder

2 1 BASICS, Inc., undated, 2003

Clippings

- 2 Drugs, Drug Abuse and Drug Prevention, undated, 1979-1989
- 3 General, undated, 1988-1994
- 4 Ramírez, Efrén, Dr. and Therapeutic Communities, undated, 1976
- 5 New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc., 2001
- 6 Notes, undated, 2002
- 7 Phoenix House, undated, 1967-2006
- 8 Project Return, undated, 1970-1985
- 9 El Regreso, Inc., undated, 1986-2008
- 10 Rivera, Luis, undated, 1976-1994

Series III: New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services (1980-1989)

During his ten years as Commissioner of the Division of Substance Abuse Services (DSAS) of the State of New York, Julio Martínez supported an unprecedented expansion of drug treatment and rehabilitation programs. Initially appointed by Governor Carey, his success was validated by his reappointment during the Cuomo Administration. However, for the last few years of his tenure, he was under investigation by the Committee on Government Integrity for bypassing contracting regulations and for financially supporting organizations headed by friends. Although the investigations never produced definitive proof of any improprieties or corruption, Martínez resigned in 1989.

This series contains some general documents from Martínez's time at the DSAS including letters, memoranda, budgets and a briefing book on crack created by his office. The subseries on the Committee on Government Integrity (CGI) consists mainly of extensive depositions of Martínez and Carlos Pagán by CGI attorneys that provide information about the scandal and their responses to it as well as insight into their own personal history with addiction and substance abuse program development.

Box	Folder	
2	11	Budgets and Contract, 1980-1987
	12	Contract Management Investigations, undated, 1985-1989
	13	Correspondence, undated, 1986-1989
	14	Crack Briefing Book, 1986
Committee on Government Integrity		
3	1	Expanding Drug Treatment: The Need for Fair Contracting Practices, 1989
	2-5	Martínez, Julio, Deposition, 1989
	6	Pagán, Carlos, Deposition, 1989

Series IV: Audiovisuals (1979-2008)

Most of the photographs in this series are of Julio Martínez, from an early mug shot to his years as Commissioner of the Division of Substance Abuse Services, although images of Carlos Pagán and Pedro Falcón can also be found. A highlight of this series consists of Pagán's StoryCorps CD recording. Started in 2003, StoryCorps is the largest oral history project ever undertaken and records individual stories shared in an interview format as a means of expanding notions of the American experience. Pagan's StoryCorp recording, which also features Angelo Cruz, a fellow Phoenix House graduate and pioneer, traces the contributions of Puerto Ricans, including his own and Martínez's, to the expansion of drug treatment and rehabilitation programs, especially those geared towards Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking communities, in New York City. Pagán's speech at the 2002 Phoenix House Graduation, which begins 35 minutes and 45 seconds into the ceremony, specifically describes his and Julio Martínez's founding roles in that organization. For a history of El Regreso, Inc., researchers can refer to the Street Naming Party DVD for said organization (in English and Spanish).

Box	Folder	
3	7	CD, Storycorps, Pagán, Carlos and Cruz, Angelo, 2007
DVD		
	8	Interview, Pagán, Carlos, Despierta America, 2008
	9	Phoenix House Graduation and Tribute to Mitchell S. Rosenthal, 2002, 2008
	10	El Regreso, Inc., Boricua College, 2008
	11	El Regreso, Inc., Street Naming Party, undated
	12	El Regreso, Inc., Women's Treatment Program, Grand Opening, 2005
Photographs		
	13	Falcón, Pedro, undated
	14	Laporte, Charles, undated
	15	Martínez, Julio, undated, 1979-ca. early 1990s

- 16 Pagán, Carlos, undated
- 17 Pioneers, Group Shots, undated
- 18 Project Return, undated, 1981