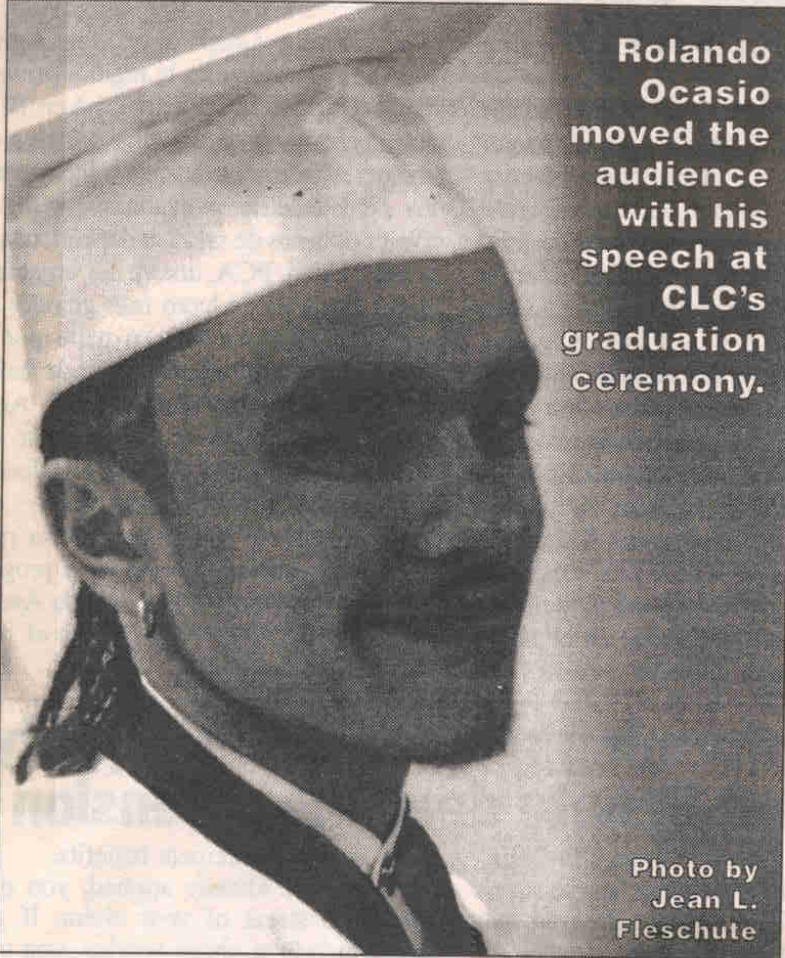


Community Learning Center holds Annual Graduation Ceremony



Rolando Ocasio moved the audience with his speech at CLC's graduation ceremony.

Photo by
Jean L.
Fleschute

On Wednesday, June 11, 2003, staff, students, and families of Community Learning Center (CLC), an adult literacy program serving Northern Philadelphia and Kensington neighborhoods, celebrated the accomplishments of students who had earned their GED diploma during the past school year.

Every year CLC holds a cap and gown graduation ceremony to honor the hard work and dedication of its students. This year the graduating students were Eric Carlton, Jackie Colon, John Conlin, Julio Flores, Carmelita Gonzalez; Alisha McGowen, Rolando Ocasio, Allen Peurifoy, Dorothy Rimkunas, and Carol Whitworth. As part of the ceremony, graduates Julio Flores, Alisha McGowen, and Rolando Ocasio gave speeches, explaining the obstacles they faced in earning their diplomas. Students described the difficulties of working and raising children

while returning school, struggles with drug addiction, and the circumstances that had led them to leave school in the first place. Each speaker's story was unique and all were equally moving and inspiring.

Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Tanya Barrientos was the guest speaker at the ceremony. She read from her recently published novel, Frontera Street, and congratulated graduates on their accomplishments and encouraged them to continue their studies. Jean L. Fleschute, executive director of CLC, and Terry Banford, former student and current director of CLC's Student Support Services Department, both also encouraged students to take pride in their successes. Storyteller Tahira ended the ceremony by telling a story using a drum and encouraging audience members and their families to sing along. Many graduates have plans to continue their studies by taking

classes at Community College of Philadelphia or by entering other vocational or training programs. Others have already started working for SEPTA, banks, trucking companies, and other professional organizations.

All are proud of their hard work and accomplishments. CLC would like to thank PNC Bank for their generous donation of children's books that were given to the youngsters that attended, as well as the Philadelphia Zoo and Moegerle Paints, Inc. for their donations of door prizes. Further, CLC would like to thank FMC Corporation for donating gifts to the graduates.

CLC offers morning, afternoon, and evening classes in GED preparation/Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Classes will begin in September. Call 215-426-7940 for a complete schedule.