



IN MEMORIAM: CHARLIE HEY-MAESTRE (1955–2017)

MIE's Board of Directors and Staff mourn the passing of our dear colleague and board member Charlie Hey-Maestre, and extend our deep condolences to Charlie's family and his colleagues in Servicios Legales de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Legal Services) and the Fundación Fondo de Acceso a la Justicia (IOLTA Foundation P.R.).

The February 6, 2017 news of Charlie's sudden death from an aggressive kidney cancer was not only a blow to his family, friends and colleagues in Puerto Rico, the terrible news deeply touched the legal aid community across the country. In the days that followed, the outpouring of profound sadness and heartbreak felt from Los Angeles to New York, Seattle to the Virgin Islands, Chicago to Austin, spoke to just how profoundly he had touched so many of us. We join the national legal aid community in expressing our profound sorrow for the loss of our dear colleague and board member.

Clearly, Charlie was more than a dear friend and colleague — he was at once family and his work, his life, an inspiration. In his gentle, warm and unassuming way, he truly brought light to every room, inspiring us with his humanity, his love and his deep commitment to justice and human rights for the Puerto Rican people and for marginalized communities everywhere. Don Saunders, NLADA's Vice President of Civil Legal Services, stated "Charlie was simply a wonderful man, driven by a fierce passion for justice, but also blessed with an amazingly warm and welcoming spirit. You could not meet Charlie without instantly feeling that he truly cared about and wanted to know you better..."

All of us who knew Charlie could attest to the deep connection his passion for justice inspired. Felipe Chavana (Essex-Newark Legal Services, NJ) said, "... it is difficult to accept that he has left this world but his light continues to shine. Remarkable how he became the best of family even to those of us who only saw him on occasion. I can't imagine the sense of loss those who had him in their lives every day must feel." Dan Glazier

(Legal Services of Eastern Missouri) wrote: "My heart is broken. Charlie was such a positive life force. His passion for justice matched his passion for life. Seeing Charlie at NLADA conferences was always such a joy for me. I will miss him as I know we all will. I will carry his indomitable spirit with me."

Charlie's humanity, his genuine love of life, his humor, and deep compassion were ever present and made all of us who had the privilege to know and work with him better human beings. Perhaps Silvia Argueta (Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles) and Wilhelm Joseph (Maryland Legal Aid) best summed up the respect and admiration Charlie inspired in us. Silvia wrote, "Charlie was a beautiful human being who graced us with his thoughtfulness and fierce commitment to our community;" and Wilhelm simply said he was "a true drum major for justice in Puerto Rico and beyond."

Charlie is survived by his mother Dora Maestre, his wife Linda Colon, their three children, Sergio, Rebeca, and Ana, and three grandchildren. He is also survived by his colleagues at Servicios Legales de Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Access to Justice Commission, and the Fundación Fondo de Acceso a la Justicia (IOLTA Foundation) and the Puerto Rico Civil Rights Institute, both of which he helped found.

Charlie joined the MIE Board in 2010 and quickly became a valuable resource in guiding the work of MIE in its mission to promote excellence in management to ensure high quality advocacy on behalf of low-income people. In addition to the many messages already shared on by our colleagues on the MIE Executive Director's listserv,¹ we could think of no better homage than to share with you several unpublished elegies and remembrances offered by his "family" in the states:

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Supreme Court of the United States

Charles Hey-Maestre — Charlie, to me — and I were classmates at Princeton where we developed a close friendship that spanned the years after we

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graduated. Charlie was the sweetest man a person could hope to know. He traveled through life with a smile on his face and kindness and compassion for others in his heart. From his time at Princeton, where he led the Acción Puertorriqueña, through his return to Puerto Rico and his service as the Executive Director of Puerto Rico Legal Services, Charlie led by example and chose to dedicate himself to others.

To share just one example of his many kindnesses towards me, Charlie introduced me to José Cabranes. Now he is Judge Cabranes, but at the time José was the General Counsel of Yale and an acknowledged expert on U.S. citizenship and Puerto Rico. During his senior year at Princeton, Charlie stayed on my couch in New Haven, where I was in my first year at Yale Law School. He was hard at work on his senior thesis and had come to town to pick José's brain. Charlie insisted I come along. After José answered Charlie's questions, the three of us had a lengthy conversation about Puerto Rican relations with the United States. At the end of the conversation, José offered me a summer job, and I gained my first true mentor.

That was Charlie. Where others might have seen a zero sum game and kept the time of a busy, credentialed man to themselves, Charlie saw only a boundless opportunity for two Puerto Rican kids to learn from someone steeped in the issues of our heritage. That day changed the course of my life, and I have Charlie to thank for it.

Ellen Chapnick, Dean for Social Justice Initiatives, Columbia Law School, Frmr. Chair, Board of Directors, Center for Constitutional Rights

I had been looking forward to meeting Charlie for months by the time we both attended our first Center for Constitutional Rights board meeting in 1994. It would be hard for Charlie to live up to what I had heard about his leadership at the Puerto Rican Institute for Civil Rights in the late 80s, where I had been a staff member in 1979, and at the New World Foundation, where I had close friends.

But I never was disappointed. From our first days, it was clear that Charlie brought a much needed clear-headed analysis to the organization. When I became chair of the board a few years later, Charlie was my unofficial co-chair. I depended on his magical ability to develop consensus around practical solutions without sacrificing his principle or his passion for justice.

He was very proud that CCR had advocated on behalf of the Puerto Rican independence movement in cases such as those involving Vieques and Cerro Maravilla and consistently urged us to do more. His articulation of his own experiences with U.S. colonialism, imperialism and racism deepened our discussions and enhanced our work.

Charlie also brought a contagious warmth and humanity to the CCR board — and to me personally. When another CCR board member called me Commandante as a critique of my leadership style, Charlie created the nickname Commandante Mom, which many board members adopted and Charlie continued to call me long after we both left the board.

I am not [able to attend] because I am in Cuba for a work project and some travel with my husband. We have discussed happy memories of brunches and dinners with Charlie on his visits to New York many times over the past few days. And we have toasted him with excellent Cuban rum in each city we visit. I'd like to think that Charlie would approve.

Don Saunders, Vice President, Civil Legal Services National Legal Aid and Defenders Association

So many things stand out to me when I reflect on Charlie. On a personal level, he had such a unique way of caring about everyone around him. As a friend, I loved the chances to discuss the world with Charlie — over a solo beer at the end of a long day... He amazed with his grasp of the issues of the day, whether stateside or at home. His laugh and sense of humor were always barely beneath the surface of any conversation, no matter how serious. That just made Charlie all the more effective as an advocate.

He was the island's unofficial ambassador. For over a decade, I tried to convince him that bringing either the NLADA or Equal Justice Conference to San Juan was a nonstarter, given the inevitable politics that would surround such a move. He would never, ever accept that answer. Charlie was so proud of the work of his program, and committed to shining a spotlight on such an economically distressed part of the United States, that he would always think of new reasons as to why I was wrong. And you know, with that quiet, persistent way of his, damned if he didn't convince me that I was.

In a 2012 interview, Charlie spoke from the heart about his work for the 45% of the people of Puerto Rico eligible for legal assistance: "In legal services we are married to the principle of equality to achieve justice, but we are so far from a more complete equality that what we get are small victories. Sometimes it gives courage but,

more than anything, it serves as motivation to continue working.”

That motivation drove Charlie every day of his remarkable career. He has left a legacy and a standard that speaks to us all. And a host of colleagues and friends who will always recall him with love and a smile.

Betty Balli Torres, Executive Director, Texas Access to Justice Foundation; MIE Board

Oddly, I don’t remember meeting Charlie. Somehow, when he entered my life, it was as if he had always been there, an old friend with a warm smile from days gone by. Not only was he your friend, but he made you feel that you were part of his wonderful family and his circle of friends.

At the heart of our friendship was justice, justice for all. We worked together with the Latino Section of NLADA and on the board of MIE. Over the last few years, most of our conversations were centered on his vision to create an IOLTA Program in Puerto Rico. He and his fellow justice travelers were determined to increase justice in Puerto Rico through a new funding stream. He would often say that Bev Groudine at the American Bar Association and I were the “madrinas” of the Puerto Rico IOLTA Program because of how often we talked about implementation. He had a way of making you feel as if you were teaching him, when in fact you were learning from him.

Charlie’s lifelong commitment to justice lives on through his colleagues, his work and his latest accomplishment against all odds—Fondo Acceso a la Justicia, Inc. When Charlie became the Executive Director of the Puerto Rico IOLTA Program, we would often laugh about the fact that he had doubled the membership of the Latino Section of Executive Directors of IOLTA Programs; sadly, Charlie, it now stands at one again. But, as I learned from Charlie, one is enough to change the world around you.

Andrew Scherer, Policy Director, Impact Center for Public Interest Law, New York Law School, Frmr. Director, Legal Services-NYC

What a terrible loss! Charlie was, as we say in New York City, a true “*mensch*.” He was warm, caring, and a great friend. You knew when Charlie asked you how you were, that he wanted a real answer. He was smart, strategic, politically astute and always a strong voice and force for progressive change.

Charlie and I had somewhat parallel lives. He graduated NYU Law School a few years after me,

About Charlie Hey-Maestre

After attending a public high school in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, Charlie earned a bachelor’s degree in economics and politics from Princeton University in 1977. He earned his law degree from New York University in 1980, immediately following which he joined Servicios Legales de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Legal Services – SLPR) as a Reginald Heber Smith Community Law Fellow. In 1983 he helped found the Puerto Rican Civil Rights Institute in Rio Piedras, following which he went into private practice in San Juan focusing on civil rights and employment discrimination cases. While in private practice, from 1990 through 2008, Charlie was the lead attorney for plaintiffs in the historic “subversives list” cases brought on behalf of more than 135,000 Puerto Rican citizens targeted for their pro-independence views and other positions disfavored by the government. Charlie was also a powerful voice for the rights of women and the LGBT community. In early 2006, with strong staff support, Charlie was hired as director of SLPR serving until 2015 when he left to found the Fundación Fondo de Acceso a la Justicia, finally achieving a long standing goal — the creation of an IOLTA program in Puerto Rico. Charlie’s vision of justice was expansive, having served, among other roles, as chair of the Funding Exchange from 1994 to 1996; as member of the New World Foundation’s Board in New York City (which he chaired from 1994 to 2000); on the Board of Directors of the Center for Constitutional Rights from 1994 to 2008; and on the MIE Board of Directors beginning in 2010.

and became the ED of Servicios Legales de Puerto Rico several years after I had become the ED of Legal Services NYC. We were introduced by a mutual friend when he became ED because she thought he could benefit from my experience. Truth is, I learned from the friendship at least as much as he did. Charlie and I would see each other at national meetings and when he would visit NYC for a meeting of one of the numerous boards he sat on. But there was a *vínculo* that we had that went far beyond what we had in common. It felt unique, but my hunch is that everyone who related to Charlie felt that same *vínculo*, because that was so much who he was.

Charlie, *amigo*, you will be greatly, greatly missed.

Contributed by César Torres, Executive Director, Northwest Justice Project, and Chair, MIE Board of Directors