



# DRSEA INFORMER

Volume I, Issue 2: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

**Obama – Ganamos (Obama – We won!)** – The election of Barack Obama last week as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States was big news, even here in the Dominican Republic. I went to a returns party Election Night at the home of Valoree de LeBron, a board member of the DRSEA and met her family, which includes parents, brothers and sisters and grandchildren. We also went to an event given by the US Embassy that was attended by as many Dominicans as US citizens, demonstrating that interest in the election was not just an American thing.

I watched the announcement of Obama going over the top alone at home, knowing I was going to be emotional. Not going to lie, the tears flowed, mostly with joy at the historic nature of what had just taken place, but a profound sadness that my parents, particularly my dad who was a poll watcher for years, was not around to witness what had transpired. I know that somewhere he was smiling, saying, “That’s my man. Obama, that’s my man!” My brother, who just happens to be a Republican, put it into perspective, saying that even though my parents weren’t around, they raised us to appreciate the moment. True that.

Oh, I did visit a Dominican friend of mine, Silvano, after the election. He owns a cigar store in Boca Chica, and I stopped by after a visit to the Mets baseball academy there. Silvano hugged me and exclaimed, “Obama – we won!” His delight was obvious!

**Cambio Es Bueno! (Change is Good)!** Obama rode to victory on a message of change, that reform is necessary, and baseball here in the Dominican Republic is part of an evolution that I have witnessed. Back in 2000, I visited here on a trip paid for by Major League Baseball with a group whose mission was to evaluate several of the camps and develop a proposal for change. Some of the camps were fantastic and reminded me of some of the camps where I spent summers when I was young, but many – most – were decrepit beyond belief, including one that had a dormitory that looked more like a jail. After our report was filed, MLB opened an office in the Dominican Republic for the first time.

I got a chance to visit the Mets camp last week, and have seen other facilities around the DR and much has changed. The \$8 million facility reminds me of a Southern California campus, with dormitories that have suites, recreation areas with flat screen TVs, instruction classrooms, and quality dining rooms. The 37-acre complex also includes two regulation-size playing fields, one of them replicating the asymmetrical dimensions and wall height of Citi Field, the new home of the Mets opening in 2009, and the other featuring the first artificial turf infield installation in the

Dominican Republic. Other features: a half field and two bunting fields; two batting tunnels; four covered pitching mounds; a clubhouse, weight and training rooms; a computer lab; administrative offices; general store, pool, tennis courts, and more.

The Mets academy, and several other similar new facilities built by other teams, gives me a good idea of what the DRSEA can emulate. I sent e-mails to several MLB officials, telling them that MLB should be proud of the changes and improvements that have occurred over the past eight years. The league and the teams here definitely hit a home run!

***Muchas Gracias Guille Esquivel! (Many Thanks Guille Esquivel!)*** – The last issue of the **DRSEA INFORMER** put out a call for assistance and Guille Esquivel has answered. She is an accomplished writer who graduated in 2005 with a Master of Arts degree in Cultural Studies from Claremont Graduate University. Her thesis was on Dominican baseball players and their experiences in American baseball, and she will begin coursework on her doctorate next September.

She volunteered to do some translating for the DRSEA. Understand that translation isn't easy because many English words don't translate easily into Spanish, but she translated a summary on the DRSEA perfectly. Her assistance is a blessing! As always, we ask that if you or someone you know can provide any assistance, it would be welcome. Send me an e-mail; I would love to hear from you. Also, if you have any questions at all, about the DRSEA, the Dominican Republic, or want to offer comments or suggestions about this newsletter, drop me a note.

***Ray Sallay Es Una Persona Especial (Ray Sallay is a special person)*** – Speaking of assistance, Ray Sallay also stepped up to the plate to help the DRSEA. He was actually the first Board of Trustees member who came to us wanting to participate. A graduate of Lincoln University (PA) like myself, Ray has an extensive background in business and accounting and has worked for both profit and non profit organizations. Ray is helping to keep the DRSEA fiscally responsible. One of the things I love about Ray is that he loves to have a good time, but always takes care of business first. He has already made several suggestions that we have incorporated and has become a great asset to our cause. I know we will be looking to him even more in the future and that he will respond accordingly. Thanks Ray!

By the way, Ray is also a licensed ticket broker, so if you need ducats to that sold-out concert, or a major sporting event, Ray may be able to help.

***Nuevos Miembros Del Trustees (New Trustee Members)*** – We welcome two new members to our Board of Trustees, Vienchy Tirado and Cesar Geronimo.

Viency is a very well connected individual in the DR and among other posts, serves as Special Assistant to the Director of CEI-RD (Center for Investment and Exports, Dominican Republic). She is also very involved in baseball in the DR as her son is a top prospect.



Known for his great defense, Cesar Geronimo tracked down fly balls with long "gazelle-like" strides in center field for three pennant-winning Reds' teams. In his nine seasons with Cincinnati, "The Big Red Machine" won five division titles and two World Championships. His surprising homer off Luis Tiant in Game Six of the 1976 World Series tied the game and set

the stage for Carlton Fisk's dramatics later in extra innings. Overshadowed by the others in the Reds "Great Eight" starting lineup of that era, Geronimo won four Gold Glove Awards.

He is also working on a project to bring baseball to public schools in the DR – there are NO sports programs in the public schools – which could work as a great feeder system for the DRSEA.

## ***Otras Noticias De Interés (Other News of Interest)***

### ***Dominicanos Elegidos A La Oficina En Los E.E.U.U (Dominicans Elected To Office In US)***

Dominican doctor Alex Blanco was elected mayor of Passaic, NJ, on Election Day, and is the first Dominican to be elected mayor in US history. Dr. Blanco, a podiatrist, won in a five-man race for the unexpired term of former mayor Samuel "Sammy" Rivera who resigned after he was sentenced for accepting bribes in exchange for approving city contracts. He defeated runner-up Vincent Capuana by 400 votes. Blanco, who is a member of the Passaic Board of Education, won with 3,872 or 28.01% of the vote.

In another election, 36-year old Nelson Castro became the first Dominican elected to the New York State Assembly for the Bronx. This is the first time a Dominican is elected to any major office (city or state) in the history of the Bronx. The Bronx has one of the largest populations of Dominicans in the US and has seen significant population growth of Dominicans over the last ten years.

In Bergenfield, NJ., Carlos Aguasvivas won his election to city council. According to the Dominican American National Roundtable (DANR) in Washington, DC, an estimated 10 Dominicans won elections, three of whom were newly-elected officials. This brings the total number of Dominican elected officials nationwide to about 36, including one mayor, one state senator, six state representatives, 21 county and city council members and seven elected judges.

Cid Wilson, former president of the DANR, is a member of the DRSEA Board of Trustees.

*Charles S. Farrell*

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