

# English Section

Your Community Newspaper

# LUSOAMERICANO

Portuguese-American Newspaper

## ART AS ACTIVISM

### Luso-American artist Lilly Ribeiro

Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "Art for art's sake is a philosophy of the well-fed". Many Newark artists share Wright's sentiment, believing that art is not just created for personal or aesthetic purpose, but to incite change, offer healing, and ultimately, celebrate

humanity and culture. Luso-Americana Lilly Ribeiro is a local artist who lives this philosophy of art as activism. As a triple threat: arts educator, theater director/actress, and visual artist, Lilly's art works towards a myriad of goals: as a form of therapy to the populations she works with, as a means of cul-

tural exploration, and to provoke change both growth locally and nationally. A resident of Brick City all her life, Lilly Ribeiro's parents are from northern Portugal and emigrated to the Ironbound in 1969. A child who attended Wilson Avenue and East Side

other Luso community activities. Still, Ribeiro knew her future held more than a small Portuguese community could foster, stating, "I had to look outside my Portuguese identity in order to explore my interests."

The Ironbound's lack of art

and figure skating in Roselle Park to nurture her daughter's creative spirit.

It was then professors like Debbie Saivetz from Rutgers-Newark, and Helen White and Chris Vine at City University of New York (CUNY) that "pushed [Ribeiro] to go further". Her dream of working in the arts field found support systems in both these institutions, and allowed Ribeiro to make her passion into a profession, in whatever form that took. "Art is a continuum. Mediums blend. Light, sound, set, movement... even though I do different kinds of work, they are all connected. It's all about how I choose to perform my art," stated Ribeiro.

True to what she names a "Luso-American hustler spirit", Ribeiro dedicated herself to visual and performing arts, becoming trained as an applied theatre practitioner through her studies at CUNY's Applied Theatre Studies program and the North American Drama Therapy Association (with a focus on social change and drama therapy) and for more than 15 years now, has been a co-founding member of *\_gaia*, a collective of women artists (for more info visit [www.gaiastudio.org](http://www.gaiastudio.org)). Ribeiro has worked as an activist, curator, theater, film, and community events organizer and producer. "What we learned as Portuguese kids, this constructive, DIY identity, manifests in the work I do now. I had to honor myself, this gift. I told myself, performing [art] is what I am going to do." And she continues to, in a mission to have her art mean—and do—something.

As a performance arts educator, Lilly works in numerous places across New Jersey and New York. Nevertheless, her main areas of work are in drama therapy at the YWCA Union County's P.A.L.S.' program, working with survivors of domestic abuse. At the YWCA Union County, Ribeiro uses theatre arts to help children and families process trauma. Ribeiro also works as a program facilitator for the Montclair Art Museum's intergenerational arts program called "Bridges", bringing



▶ Lilly Ribeiro

**"Lilly Ribeiro is still collecting photographs for "Black Widow's Daughter" to showcase in a future exhibit. She is asking that Portuguese and Luso-Americans interested in contributing to this series email photos of widows dressed in black in their family to her via Facebook."**

together elders with Alzheimer's and dementia in nursing homes and middle school age children .

High School, Ribeiro always had an eye for performance art, and her mother encouraged her to be as bold and different as she wanted to. Like a typical Luso-American kid, Ribeiro sat and ate with her family at dinner, went to feast day festivals and religious events, and participated in Girls Scouts and

programs or resources forced Ribeiro to look outside her city to participate in artistic extracurriculars: "I wanted more always but there weren't any programs or art opportunities in the Ironbound." Ribeiro's mother, a young widow, then drove her to dance classes in Westfield and Kearny

does it mean when you break from culture?" Her creative process lurks in that murky space between redefining the American Dream and holding on to Luso heritage, always taking a second look at our customs and traditions, especially those female-centered.

When asked how visual and performing arts can change Ironbound, and Newark in general, Ribeiro stated, "People who live here have a lot to say. Art [as a form of activism] should capture what the community cares about and translate that through an art medium that always connects back to the people." Ribeiro's performance work, artwork, and installations—exhibited in several galleries, theaters, and festivals—work to educate and assist, unify and celebrate, challenge and change.

According to Ribeiro, the prominent arts community that she is a part of in Newark seeks to continue doing all these things.

Ribeiro's current work will be exhibited at Gallery Afferro as part of the *\_gaia* "Superfood" exhibition this Saturday, April 11th at 7pm. "Superfood" explore[s] possibilities with women at the center of food cultivation, cooking, feeding, and nurturing." *\_gaia* is also launching a fundraiser in efforts to take the "Superfood" artists to exhibit their work in Porto this summer and seeking an arts space in the famous Portuguese city.

Gallery Afferro is located in Newark at 73 Market Street. For more information on Lilly Ribeiro, visit [www.facebook.com/lillylips](http://www.facebook.com/lillylips).

## Pope Francis' call for peace at Easter Mass



▶ Pope Francis

At the annual Easter mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis mourned the suffering of people affected by the many conflicts making headlines worldwide, and called for an end to violence everywhere.

The Pontiff asked for bloodshed in Syria and Iraq to cease, and that those in desperate need of humanitarian aid and relief in these countries receive it. Francis then expressed his desire for the current peace between Israel and Palestine to continue.

In his appeal for peace,

the Pope also mentioned Libya, Yemen, Nigeria, South Sudan, the Ukraine, as well as discussed the nuclear talks with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland and the Garissa University College shooting in Kenya. In the "urbi et orbi" address, Pope Francis stated, "May the international community not stand by before the immense humanitarian tragedy unfolding in these countries and the drama of the numerous refugees."

Francis also addressed the devastating issues of global economic oppression, including corrupt officials, drug and arms dealers, calling for peace in these realms as well. He ended his speech by reassuring the poor, sick, marginalized and suffering of hope and wished everyone a happy Easter.