

Viva Panama Organization

PRESENTS

Ambassador Award Gala

Srta. Panama & California 2015



HOLLYWOOD

GOES TO PANAMA

BROADWAY



COMMEMORATING



CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL — AUGUST 21, 2015.



Viva Panama Organization
 525 E. Seaside Way, suite 1801,
 Long Beach, CA 90802.
 562-363-6312 818-915-2121
 www.vivapanama.org
VGrimaldo@vivapanama.org

VPO Committee

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- Vice-President: Marlene Sanchez
- Alvaro Gomez
- Carlos Carrasco
- Jairo Laws
- Mario Melendez
- Maritza Collins
- Marta Hansen
- Mitzy Williams & family
- Modesto Reyes
- Viannette Serrano
- Yhinyer Jackson

Ballet Folklorico Viva Panama

- Geovana Ayala
- Jairo Laws
- Jaime Torres
- Jessica Mares
- Kiana Valenzuela
- Laura Echevers
- Loira Ramos
- Luis Castillo
- Mario Melendez
- Nereida Johnson
- Rosa Reefer
- Spencer Williams
- Steven Dixon
- Vanessa Vasquez
- Viannette Serrano
- Yhinyer Jackson.



Dr. Victor Grimaldo
 CEO, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

As Viva Panama Organization (VPO) commemorates the **Centennial of the Panama Pacific International Exhibition**, we would like to thank all of you who have been involved with us for the last 24 years.

We encourage all our supporters to **help us continue to enrich the image of Panama in California and United States**, by collaborating with the different projects that VPO

has throughout the year. Please consider becoming members, donating your time and funds, and referring potential sponsors. Remember, all your contributions are tax deductible.

During the last year, **VPO shared the Panamanian Culture** with the multicultural population of Southern California by hosting/participating in events such as: **Panama Brass Quintet Los Angeles Tour**, **Panama Canal Traveling Exhibit** and the **2015 Special Olympics World Games Cultural events**.

We are currently working on the **First Panama International Film Festival** (to be held in October 2015), the creation of a **Panamanian Cultural Center** and establishing sisterhood **between the City of Panama and the cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach**. These projects are not be possible without your help, **show your pride of been a Panamanian** by donating, supporting our projects and working with us!

Thank you to our partners, sponsors, emcees, artists and all of you for making this evening a beautiful reality. **Que Viva Panamá!**

Victor Grimaldo

With Gratitude

Your support, kindness and generosity have made this gala possible.

Thanks all of you!!

- Wells Fargo
- Rubio's Studio
- Sylvia Diaz
- Jacinto French, DJ
- League of Us
- Eric Doyle & Geovana Ayala, Emcees
- The Naughty Beats
- Julio Hanson
- Lic. Raquel Alfaro - General Consul in California
- Prof. Juan Francisco Guerrero - INAC Director
- Carlos Carrasco – Dir. of Panamá Film Festival
- Karmen Gharibian – Crowne Plaza Hotel
- M Collins Associates – Events & Branding
- VPO Committee & Ballet Folklorico Viva Panamá



GRACIAS KARLA!

Viva Panama Organization thanks you, Karla Hernández, Srita. Panamá California 2014, for graciously representing us during your reign. Best of luck in your future projects!

M Collins Associates
 Events & Branding
 mcollinsassoc@gmail.com
 818.516.3612
Let us handle the details!

JACINTO FRENCH, DJ
 562-396-6778
JACINTOFRENCHJR@GMAIL.COM

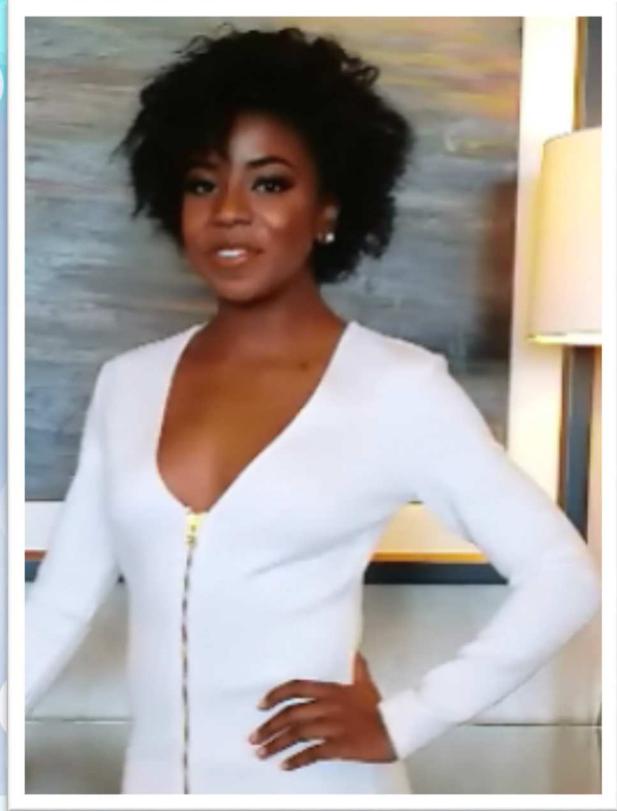
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 562-964-7904

Deja Allen-Slade

SEÑORITA PANAMÁ CALIFORNIA 2015



Place of Birth: Palmdale, CA.
Eye: Brown - Hair: Black.
High School: Highland High School.
College/University degree: Beauty School.
Occupation: Student.
Language: English and Spanish.
Countries travelled: Panama,
Dominican Republic Bahamas, and Puerto Rico.
Hobbies: Soccer and track, referring soccer games.
Ambition: to become a successful woman.
Talents: Acting.
TV: All of us, 2005.



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Vilma Graciela Romero

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT

The construction of the Panama Canal started in 1904 with a great concern to solve: health problems. To help alleviating this situation, the first woman was hired the same year to work in the Canal as Nursing Superintendent, Mary E. Hibbard. The participation of women in the Canal has evolved a lot since then, when the first employment was one traditionally feminine: nurse. Today, the Executive Vice President of Engineering and Program Management, the highest post occupied by a woman in the Canal, is the engineer Ilya Espino de Marotta, the head of the great project of expansion.

Mrs. Romero is an electromechanical engineer who begins her functions with the Panama Canal Commission in 1981, as a tugboat mate apprentice. She completed the program in 1984 and is promoted to towboat mate trainee in navigation division. A year later, she receives a promotion as tugboat mate and in 1987 is promoted to Captain of tugboat in the Services Division of the Canal. Her position is realigned in 1997 to the Division of Maritime Traffic.

In 1998, she is selected as a Pilot in training, and in 2000, she is promoted to pilot. As a result of the reorganization of 2007, she becomes part of the division of traffic operations, where she works up to the present.

Captain Romero is the second female pilot in the Panama Canal. She has excelled in her career as one of the Panamanian pioneers in occupations on board floating equipment with a level of qualification of CP4 step 9. She was the second female Panamanian tugboat captain and the first Panamanian female Pilot in the canal's history (second female pilot after an American who has already retired). In the last three decades, women have won respect and deserved compensation. They show skill, strength and passion in what they do; their tasks are very well rewarded, similar to their male counterparts who have the same time plying these waters. Capt. Vilma Romero, is the one of the two women who currently pilot ships in the Panama Canal. Mrs. Vilma Romero is from La Chorrera and proud mother of three children: Eric, Rafael and Alejandro.



Angela Maria Ortiz

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT



Born in Colón, Panamá and a resident of Los Angeles for more than forty years, Angela is an accomplished publisher, graphic artist, designer, and photographer, as well as a curator of art and photography and a leader in the non-profit arts arena, including a stint as co-director of the Reel Rasquache Art & Film Festival. Today, her own work has expanded from drawing and painting to include photography and digital art. Her work continues to be recognized; Angela has participated in more than fifty group shows since the late 70s, and is a frequent featured artist in exhibitions and themed events.

In all her work, the rich, almost overwhelming colors that are part of her Latino cultural and personal perspective spill out of the images and fill the surrounding world. Meanwhile, the images themselves, whether in color or black and white, always surprise with their simplicity and strength. Through its continuing evolution, the goal of Angela's work has always remained the same: to recreate the images and inhabitants of our commonplace, real world, investing them with new life and power,

creating "a little space," as Angela calls it, "a window into the world of my imagination."

In recent years, she has worked as a curator of a wide range of art exhibitions, including *Shut Up & Shoot: A Photography Show of Unexpected Moments*, *Cityscapes*, *Landscapes & In Between: A Black & White Photography Show*, for the past seven years her images have been included in the *Latino Heritage Calendar* for the city of Los Angeles. She is also the publisher of *SeFijaOnline.com*, a popular web site on Latino Hollywood. Her photographs and paintings are in many private collections.



Melissa M. Shepherd

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT

Born and raised in Panama and then she moved to California to continue her college years, bringing with her an insatiable interest in cultural exchange and diversity; this enthusiasm learned and fueled by her mother's creativity, teacher who instilled in her students the process of learning about themselves and their classmates' cultural background; Melissa believes that learning promote humility, recognizing how much we have to learn from the world's history.

Due to the strong influence of her mother, her home life was filled with Panamanian traditions and inherited from the Caribbean; whether it was food, music, or documentaries which influenced her curiosity and a sense of world citizenship. In her college life, she participated events organized by UCLA's Office of International Students and Scholars and as one of the founding members of the Latin American Students Association at UCLA, promoting awareness about cultural exchange.

Mrs. Shepherd is a psychotherapist graduated from Antioch University in Los Angeles, serving for over 18 years and dedicated herself to design and present programs on how to live with GUSTO by taking charge of one's health in body, mind, and spirit.

Her clinical practice includes speaking engagements to audiences like the Los Angeles Police Department psychologists, Writers' Guild of America, UCLA Human Resources students, Association of Los Angeles County African-American Employees, Latino Behavioral Health Institute Conference, California State University Los Angeles faculty; and Community Parenting Program in the City of Santa Clarita.

Besides her private clinical practice, she is a psychotherapist at the California Institute of the Arts and Adjunct Faculty in the School of Cultural and Family Psychology at Pacific Oaks College and Children's School. Her book "Living Deliciously: Recipes to Welcome Joy into Our Lives" is a compilation of her newsletters including exercises and reflections on how to "squeeze the juice" out of life. Melissa's forthcoming book, "From Burnout to Bliss", will another tool for preventing and emerging from a sense of being stuck professionally and personally. Melissa collaborates with the community as Vice-President of the International Society of Black Latinos, an organization that endeavors to expand knowledge about Latinos in the African Diaspora through workshops and special events.



Dr. Erika Podest

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT



Panamanian scientific, works for NASA for more than ten years, in research and studies of terrestrial phenomena using satellite images of advanced technology, from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) located in Pasadena, California, one of the twelve NASA centers in the United States, that specializes in the robotic exploration of the universe, including the study of our planet. In the section where she works with the lens toward the Earth, is where with great enthusiasm and professionalism she conducts research related to global processes, climatic changes and their effects.

Of the various projects in which she participates, she is part of the team of scientists that on January 31, 2015 placed in Earth orbit the NASA satellite called SMAP (Soil Moisture Active Passive), which has the purpose of getting comprehensive information about the cycles of water and carbon of our planet. Frequently, she participates in scientific conferences in different parts of the world; in December of 2011, she was part of the delegation of four scientists from the NASA before the United Nations Summit on Climate Change (COP17) held in Durban, South Africa.

She obtained her degree in Electrical Engineering from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona, and then her master's degrees and doctorate in Applied Physics on the Environment, at the University of Dundee in the UK.

Erika is involved with a great deal of interest in activities related to the overpowering of young people, to whom she encourages to study with perseverance and discipline, to take advantage of the opportunities in the field of science and technology. Annually, she participates in the Adelante Mujer Latina conference in Los Angeles, to encourage young Latino students in science-related careers. Also in Panama, she supports activities in schools and organizations interested in promoting science and technology.

For her career as a scientist and her interest inspiring future generations, she was selected by the Los Angeles Weekly magazine in its annual edition of personalities of May 2011, as one of the seventy most outstanding people in the city of Los Angeles.



Laffit Pincay Jr.

AMBASSADOR AWARD RECIPIENT

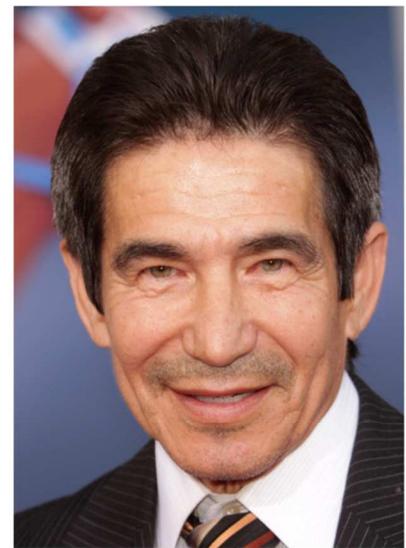
Laffit Alejandro Pincay, Jr., born in Panama City, Panama, was flat racing's all-time winningest jockey, still holding second place many years after his retirement. He competed primarily in the United States.

Pincay learned to ride by watching his father who was a jockey at many tracks in Panama and Venezuela. He began his riding career in Panama and in 1966 prominent horseman Fred W. Hooper and agent Camilo Marin sponsored him to come to the United States and ride under contract. He started his American career at Arlington Park in Chicago and won eight of his first eleven races. During his career, Pincay was voted the prestigious George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award in 1970; he was voted the Mike Venezia Memorial Award in 1996 for "extraordinary sportsmanship and citizenship"; and also the Eclipse Award for Outstanding Jockey on five occasions & the United States' leading jockey seven times.

In 1973, Pincay rode Sham, they won the Santa Anita Derby and placed second in the Wood Memorial. Sham was considered the best horse in the west, and they were second choice in the Kentucky Derby, behind Secretariat. Pincay was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in 1975.

He won the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes in 1984 aboard Swale. Pincay's win with Swale was his third consecutive Belmont victory, having ridden Conquistador Cielo and Caveat to victory in the previous two years. The four victories in the Triple Crown were the only times Pincay visited the winner's circle in those races; he never won the Preakness Stakes and failed to win another Triple Crown race after he rode Swale.

He retired in 2003, he remained horse racing's winningest jockey, with 9,530 career victories. In 2006, Russell Baze passed Pincay on the all-time win list. With his 8,834th win, on December 10, 1999 at Hollywood Park Racetrack in California aboard Irish Nip, he broke the career victory record previously held by Bill Shoemaker. In 2004, Hollywood Park Racetrack announced the creation of the Laffit Pincay Jr. Award to be presented annually on Hollywood Gold Cup Day that features the race he won a record nine times. Pincay is father of Linda and Laffit III from his first marriage, and Jean Laffit Pincay, from wife, Jeanine. He currently resides in Arcadia, CA.



Ballet Folklórico Viva Panamá



Cultural Ambassadors of Panama in California, directed by Victor Grimaldo, this dance company has toured by more than fifty cities in California, three states and three countries representing the Culture of Panama in its 24 years of life! They share their culture through music and dance striving for giving their audiences with a high quality sample of the spirit and flavor of Panama.



Eric Doyle

MASTER OF CEREMONY

Comedian, actor and writer, appeared in film *Divergent*, *The Crosses* and *The Exquisite Pain*; performs standup comedy all around Los Angeles. Theatre credits: *Goose and Tomtom*, *The Dreamer Examines His Pillow*,

A Hatful of Rain, *Pvt. Wars*, *West Side Story*, and others. He connected with Panama while working for Peace Corps in Coclé for three years. Visit doylebrand.com



Geovana Ayala

MISTRESS OF CEREMONY

Member of the Ballet Folklorico Viva Panamá since 2010. She has been in the financial field with 13 years of experience, and currently is the Vice President of a Wells Fargo Bank Branch. Mother of two beautiful daughters: Demi & Andrea



Julio Hanson

GUEST SINGER

Singer, songwriter, actor and dancer, his second year in our Gala. Toured with major artists as Toni Braxton, Keith Washington. Recorded with La Ley and American Singer and writer Kelis & Latvian artist Little Gunnar. He

has appeared in the films "American Carol" and as a Portuguese reporter in the film *Angels and Demons*.



Raúl Araúz

CHOREOGRAPHER

Panamanian Civil Engineer, spends his spare time dancing and teaching hip hop and dance fitness classes around LA. Danced for the most renowned dance companies in Panama: Physical Ballet and Ballet D'Triana, performing for Miss Panama Miss Universe and Miss Hawaiian Tropic. Trained by the

best in Panama: Melina Samaniego, Ricardo Moreno, Maria Cecilia Triana and Mario Guerrero. Artistic Director & Choreographer of The Naughty Beats.



Sylvia Díaz

FASHION DESIGNER

Graduated with honors at the California Design College with a B.A. in Fashion Designer and Illustration, who noticed at young age, her love for art and design; her grandmother is her biggest mentor and inspiration. She has participated

in numerous Fashion events exhibiting her designs.



Laura Echevers

FLAMENCO DANCER

Member of Amaral Studio Dancers, performing Alegrias, a type of Flamenco dance. Also member of Ballet Folklorico Viva Panama.

The Naughty Beats DANCE COMPANY



Born from the love of dance, it has developed into a semi-professional dance team and had opened numerous comedy club and entertainment shows. Composed by professionals of different backgrounds: Michael Marinola, Jennifer Stern, Laura Meshel, Shauen Tokayama, Claudia Zurek, Matthew Mannix and Raul Arauz. Their Cellblock Tango Remix is inspired by the musicals *Chicago* and *Cabaret*, combining 5 rhythms: Broadway, Hip Hop, Dance Hall, Rumba & Funk, presented at LA's Gym Crew Challenge 2015.



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OCT. 24, 2015: AT&T CENTER, LOS ANGELES.
OCT. 25, 2015: SAN DIEGO.
OCT. 26, 2015: LAS VEGAS.

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