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From: Wolf, Karin
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 10:35 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: 3) Poet Laureate Nomination Oscar Mireles
Attachments: City of Madison Poet Laureate Nomination Oscar Mireles.docx

-----Original Message-----

From: Wolf, Karin
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2015 4:15 PM
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: 3) Poet Laureate Nomination Oscar Mireles

-----Original Message-----

From: Mireles, Oscar
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2015 4:09 PM
To: Madison Arts
Cc: Wolf, Karin
Subject: Oscar Mireles Nomination

Oscar Mireles
Executive Director
Omega School
835 West Badger Road
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<http://www.omegaschool.org>

<http://www.shutterfly.com/lightbox/view.sfly?fid=b4c8d9bc944dc6bec9f3edf1ebadc1fb>

1. Evidence that the candidate has an established presence as a productive public poet in Madison and has a history of advocacy for poetry.

Oscar Mireles has lived in Madison for the past 21 years. During that time he has done poetry readings and performances at the Overture Center for the Arts, University of Wisconsin Madison, Edgewood College, Canterbury Bookstore, Rainbow Bookstore, Madison Area Technical College and many of the schools in the Madison Metropolitan School District.

Mr. Mireles has participated in several Madison based poetry anthologies and featuring Andrea Mushers' Madison Poets Live Cassette Tape, Madison Annual Poetry.

He was also a member of the Mind's Eye Poet Collective (a Madison based poetry group) for five years and his poetry was featured on the Mind's Eye Radio Program on WORT. Oscar Mireles has performed at the Wisconsin Book Festival several times over the past decade.

Mr. Mireles has received numerous awards and recognition for his service to the community including the Dane County Martin Luther King Jr. Award (2009) Literacy Advocate of the Year, Wisconsin Literacy (2011) and Friend of Education Award from Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers (2012) Leadership Award from the Young Professional Group of the Urban League of Greater Madison (2013).

2. Evidence that the candidate possesses a large body of work, whether published, self-published or unpublished.

Oscar Mireles has been the Editor of three anthologies titled "I Didn't Know There Were Latinos in Wisconsin" two of which were published during his time in Madison and featured a dozen Madison based poets and writers.

Oscar Mireles's poetry has been featured in Madison Magazine, Capital City Hues, Wisconsin State Journal, Capital Times and Madison Times.

Oscar Mireles has appeared on radio shows on WORT, Wisconsin Public Radio.

Mr. Mireles has over hundred poems published in anthologies, books and magazines.

3. Selections from the candidate's works. (8-10 pages of poetry)

Lost and Found Language

It started in 1949, when my oldest brother
came home from school
in Racine, Wisconsin
after flunking kindergarten
because he 'spoke no English'
and declared to my parents
that 'the rest of the kids have to learn to speak English
if we planned on staying here in the United States.'

so my parents lined up
the rest of the seven younger children
had us straighten up
tilt our heads back
reached in our mouth with their hands
and took turns
slicing our tongues in half

making a simple, but unspoken contract
that from then on
the parents would speak Spanish
and the children would respond
back only in English

How do you lose a native language?
does it get misplaced
in the recesses of your brain?
or does it never quite stick to the sides
of your mind?

for me it would always start
with the question
from a brown faced stranger
'hables espanol? '
which means
'do you speak Spanish? '

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which meant
if they had to ask me
if I spoke Spanish
this was not going to be a good start for
at having a conversation...

my face would start to get flushed
with redness and before
I had a chance to stammer
the words
'I don't'

I could see it in their eyes
looking at my embarrassed face
searching for an answer
that they already knew

as I walked away
I know they were thinking
'Who is this guy? '
'How can he not speak his mother's tongue? '
'Where did he grow up anyways? '
'Doesn't he have any pride
in knowing who he is? '
or 'Where he came from? '

I tried to reply,
but as the words in Spanish
floated down from my brain
they caught in my teeth,
the rocks of shame.
I spoke in half-tongue.

my future wife
taught me how
to speak Spanish
mainly
by being Colombian
and not speaking English

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and I had already known
the language of hands and love
which got me confident enough
to reach deep inside
myself
to find the beautiful sounds and latin rhythms
that laid deep within me

and although
I still feel my heart jump a beat
when someone asks 'hables espanol? '
now the Spanish resonates within me
and echos back 'si, y usted tambien? '

and today as I talk with the Spanish speaking students
in our school
they can not only feel my words
they can feel my warm heart
splash ancient Spanish sounds off
my native tongue
that has finally grown whole again.

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

she makes daily visits
checks her charts
and shares small talk with the patients
as she brightens up their rooms

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

she is always the first one at the scene
just like the television doctors
whether in the birthing room
at my niece Amanda's arrival
or at the operating table
medicines trap door

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

my mother translates for the Spanish patients
especially after surgery
she touches their fear
with words that can heal

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

Surprisingly there is little blood
on her pink uniform
just a day's sweat and dirt
you wouldn't know
she was a cleaning lady
if you looked in her eyes

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

Smells Just Like yesterday.

My older brother Jesus said
the smell of ripe onions
always reminded him of summer

we'd start working early
in the six a.m. dark
on the Horner farm in Southern Wisconsin
while the dirt was still wet
from the sprinkled dew

rows of the bald white onions rested
beneath the soft soil
by the neck
the way a cat

we were told to pick them up
carries her litter

shake the dirt off their round backs
being careful not to tear
their long green ribbons

at fifteen cents a bushel
we thought we were smart
until we were caught trying to hide
large clumps of soil
near the bottom of the bushel basket
to make it fill easier.

around eleven o'clock
my father would say
so we would try to hurry and finish

we became tired,
"this row here, will be the last one today"
only to find...

his story would change as we neared the row's end
it doesn't pay to work half a day

when I was twelve, my father told me
"this summer will be the last"
with a quarter squeezed in my hand
and a dirt-crusted smile on my face
I knew he was right

years later we drove on Highway 31, past the Horner farm
my father took a long glance out the car window
and said back there.... back there... near the corn bin is where I stayed
when I didn't know better

My family drives together to school everyday

The almost daily car ride takes about nine minutes
from the Wheeler Road address
where my almost fifteen year old son
usually wipes his eyes when he gets in the front seat of the car.

About a half hour earlier, I gave him his wake up call
he answered his cell phone after only about 8 rings
said he would be ready and would wake up his sister too

Sometimes he will say good morning...well actually
He never says good morning, he just gets in the car
and grunts "hey"

and the other time when he forgets to grunt
he just sits down and avoids looking at me
and we both sit and listen to the car idle.

Every once in a while he gives me a warning notice
"Mom and Lorena got into to it last night
or this morning
or yesterday.
As if I am going to solve another problem today
Or maybe he is trying to protect me from getting into more trouble
Or maybe he wants me to just shut up
Before I make things worse.

Lorena always comes out about three to five minutes later
If she is in a hurry it is always five minutes
If she still needs to do her make up
We have to all switch seats, so she can use the front mirror
On a good day that is only a little hassle
which involves only one punch between siblings

Silence is different with my daughter
The radio is always something to put in between us
you can tell her mood if she sings along
With the songs, singing with emphasis and her sweet voice
But sometimes the louder she sings

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Sometimes it can mean she is mad too...
So one has to listen carefully.

Once both children are safely in the car,
I did back up once without one of the kids fully inside
the back seat of the car and it was almost a painful accident,
but I am not supposed to bring that up

As we race by and wave at the crossing guard
I am reminded my children are no longer at middle school and
Jackie the crossing guard who could read my children's moods
better than I could...

we turn on Sherman Avenue where we race up two hills
and try to avoid the intersections of Highway CV and Northport
where we had an accident.

But it does place the McDonalds restaurant
On our path and if I have enough money left over
I offer breakfast (usually a Bacon Egg and Cheese Bagel for her, and Two
sausage breakfast burritos for him and both want medium hot chocolates with a
straw) .

Driving down Packers Avenue becomes a race
of avoiding the slow lanes
staying away from the stopping Metro buses
and not looking at people in cars talking on their cell phone
drinking coffee, reading the paper or putting on make-up
while pretending to be driving to work

As we get closer to the high school
I see some of their friends and classmates getting out of cars
They drove to school in.
Thinking that my kids love riding with their dad
or more dislike riding the bus to school
which I have counted each of my kids did less then five or six times

As we turned past the high school tennis courts
The metro bus lets out a mass of teens
Some with backpacks ready for school to start

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Some without backpacks, ready to get into more trouble
Then they could possibly need.
I think sometimes they think people don't notice they don't have backpacks
I do...and I know not having one means something
But I haven't quite figured out what.

I usually park on the right hand side of the road
With a yellow curb marking indicated not a parking spot
and it gives them a chance to get out of the car
and onto the cross walk and onto the school grounds

sometimes my kids do not walk together
on the way into the school grounds
they each get into their own minds
and keep walking

sometimes they do walk together
when they do
they are talking to each other
if I did not know better

and if I were too busy
to waste nine minutes of my morning
I would have missed this moment
I realize they will be more than family for life
they will be friends too..

4. Three Personal and professional references for the candidate.

Dr. Armando Ibarra Ph.D. School for Workers UWEX, 610 Langdon St Room 422,
Madison WI 53703 Mandos.ibarra@gmail.com

Mark Fraire, Dane Arts, 210 N. Martin Luther King Blvd, City County Building,
Madison, Wisconsin 53713 608-266-2643 fraire@countyofdane.com

Sharon Kilfoy, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

5. Evidence of the candidate's current residency in Madison.

Mr. Mireles was a homeowner at 1301 Wheeler Road for 9 years and lived in several apartments in Madison after selling his home in Deforest Wisconsin. Oscar Mireles currently lives at [REDACTED] and works at Omega School at 835 West Badger Road, Madison Wisconsin 53713.

6. Evidence that the candidate will be available for the two-year term in Madison.

Mr. Mireles has worked for the past 21 years in the City of Madison and plans on being in the area for the next two years.

7. Evidence of established relationships that will enable the poet laureate to further develop the community partnerships necessary for effective service.

Oscar Mireles has established long standing partnerships with local universities, libraries, schools and local literary organizations.

Mr. Mireles has done reading and worked with MATC, Edgewood College and University of Wisconsin.

Mr. Mireles has worked with several of the libraries in the City of Madison, including Lakeview Branch, Goodman South Madison Branch and done story telling with the Downtown Library, as well as the Madison School District.

Mr. Mireles has read poetry at the following schools, Madison East, O'Keefe Middle School, Blackhawk Middle School, Midvale and Gompers Elementary.

8. A 500 word statement of intent from the poet nominated. Include ideas of what you would like to focus on as poet laureate

First of all, I would build upon the efforts and vision of the previous City of Madison Poet Laureates, John Tuschen, Andrea Musher, Fabu, Sarah Busse and Wendy Vardaman. Each of these poets looked at their role as Poet Laureate a little differently, either serving as an poetry ambassador to the larger community, creating poetry tapes and anthologies to capture the voice and energy of other Madison area poets, working in diverse communities and nurturing new poets and spreading their reach into every neighborhood in the city.

To build on their legacy, I will host quarterly readings at the City Council Meeting, work with the Madison Metro Bus staff and continue to have poems featured inside the bus. I would also commit to build the poetry endowment, so funds could be used to support poetry throughout the City of Madison. I would again host the annual poetry reading at Olbrich Gardens to give as many poets a chance to share their works..

Secondly, I would explore ways to incorporate more poetry in the public school and have a city wide youth poetry anthology that would capture the voices, aspirations and hopes of young people from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods.

Thirdly, I would like to have a community discussion on "what poetry really is" and begin to influence changes on how people view on poetry. I would like the community to focus on seeing poetry as "finding one's voice" and helping everyone begin that journey to find their voice.

Finally, I would like to incorporate ways to include poetry in many of the arts event already happening in the city. It could be just one poem being read at the community festivals already happening in the city like the Willy Street Fair and Central Park Session or events at the Overture Center, starting the event out with a band ..."a poem."