

(H. B. 2558)

(No. 115)

(Approved June 16, 2006)

AN ACT

To declare May 29 of each year as “Ramón Ortiz del Rivero (Diplo) Day,” eminent Puerto Rican artist, and to establish different activities to commemorate his birthday.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Born in Naguabo on May 29, 1909, he was baptized Arturo Ramón Máximo Ortiz del Rivero; the nickname “Diplo” was added later. This man of Renaissance versatility is considered today, 50 years after his death, as the best actor/comedian in the history of Puerto Rico.

Unfortunately, his successful life was also fleeting and ended tragically on August 24, 1956, when Ramón Ortiz del Rivero was just 47 years old.

With his popular comedy, and through his famous character “Diplo,” Ramón Ortiz del Rivero made Puerto Ricans laugh at a time when Puerto Rico was suffering for lack of resources and was, and was facing great social, economic and industrial changes.

For almost 30 years, Ramón Ortiz del Rivero (Diplo) captured the people’s attention and, with his wholesome comedy, he became their only spiritual balm. At noon, all Puerto Rico laughed with the witticisms of “Calderón” in *El Tamarindo* [sic] *Hotel*. The people of the island listened to this program to replenish their energy and happiness, forgetting for 15 minutes about the existence of the hardships of hunger and illness.

Ramón Ortiz del Rivero frequently demonstrated his qualities as an extraordinary human being and his generous soul by defending all those who were victims of injustice (university students and artists on hunger strikes, among others). Foreign artists stranded in Puerto Rico found in him unconditional support.

Ramón Ortiz del Rivero was the first person in Puerto Rico to promote a radio marathon to help in the fight against the fatal illness of cancer, walking 4 days from San Juan to Ponce, spending the night in tents in the outskirts of towns, while he exhorted the Puerto Rican people to cooperate with the Cancer League.

During the Second World War, the United States Army asked Ramón Ortiz del Rivero to entertain our soldiers stationed outside Puerto Rico. He proudly traveled with his “Farándula Bohemia” wherever our soldiers were risking their lives for our country. On his return to Puerto Rico, he brought messages from the soldiers for their mothers, wives and children, which their Diplo delivered along with his own anonymous financial contributions.

In addition to his successful career on radio and the theater (his plays include classics of the popular Puerto Rican, such as *Mosquilandia*, *El Príncipe Wuele-Wuele*, *A Mi Me Matan Pero Yo Gozo*, *Ese Niño Es Mío*, *Hay Que Defenderse*, *La Familia del Lío*, and *El Tremendo Hotel*), Ramón Ortiz del Rivero produced the first comedy and variety show on Puerto Rican television, *La Taberna India*, winning the highest artistic awards, such as “Rey de la Farándula” (King of Show business) and “Señor Televisión” (Mr. Television).

He wrote more than 3,000 scripts for radio, theater, television and motion pictures, and excelled out as author and historian with *¿Por qué se ríe la gente?* (What Makes People Laugh?), and *El Álbum de la Radio* (The Radio Album), the first chronicle of the radio industry in Puerto Rico, a highly important historical record for the country.

In Cuba, the Puerto Rican artist filmed *Una Gallega en la Habana* with Nini Marshall, known throughout South America as Catita, the best Hispanic comedienne of the time. In Puerto Rico, he played the lead in what is possibly the best motion picture made in the island, *Los Peloteros* (The Baseball Players), for “División de la Comunidad,” an entity created to help Puerto Rico’s artists as a class. Before his death, Ramón Ortiz del Rivero was preparing for his role in the Hollywood motion picture “Wherever You Go,” with his musical score “Dondequiera que tu vayas,” and his screenplay, a film in which he would have starred with the most famous international film star of that time, Rita Hayworth.

Ramón Ortiz del Rivero wrote the lyrics and music of many songs, including the well remembered ‘boleros’ *Dondequiera que tu vayas*, and *Porqué será*, as well as parodies of Mexican ‘corridos,’ Argentinean tangos such as *Silencio en la noche*, and parodies of famous poems, such as *El duelo de la cañada*, and the Julio Sesto poem *Las abandonadas*.

In this fashion, he entertained everyone: children, women, teens and the elderly alike. Everyone in Puerto Rico loved him, the same way he loved his country.

During the days preceding his death, he had been planning to travel with his performing troupe “La Farándula Corona” to the town of Yabucoa, to raise funds to help the town, after it was devastated by hurricane Santa Clara, when death overtook him and in the early morning hours of August 24, 1956, the country was startled by the unexpected news, “¡Murió Diplo!” (“Diplo is dead!”)

In view of the outstanding works and life of the eminent Puerto Rican Ramón Ortiz del Rivero, this Legislature of Puerto Rico deems it essential to declare his birthday as a very important date. To disclose his life and legacy is necessary so that future generations may understand the capability of those who forged our excellent Puerto Rican artistic class.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- May 29 of each year is hereby declared as Ramón Ortiz del Rivero (Diplo) Day,” eminent Puerto Rican artist, and to establish diverse activities to commemorate his birthday.

Section 2.- The Governor of Puerto Rico, through a Proclamation, shall urge the People of Puerto Rico to join the commemoration of this day.

Section 3.- The Department of Education, as well as the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, shall adopt the necessary measures to comply with the purposes of this Act, by organizing and holding activities related to the commemoration of this day.

Section 4.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 115 (H.B. 2558) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to declare May 29 of each year as “Ramón Ortiz del Rivero (Diplo) Day,” eminent Puerto Rican artist, and to establish different activities to commemorate his birthday,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 15th of December of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director