

2003 Estela and Raúl Mora Award Winner Corvallis-Benton County Public Library



The 2003 Estela and Raúl Mora Award Acceptance Speech
By Ruth H. Mitchel, Youth Services Librarian
January 14, 2004

First, I'd like to give a little background on the Corvallis-Benton Co. Public Library. Our Spanish speaking population has grown tremendously over the last 5-10 years. This is in large part because of the agriculture in our state. For example, 80% of the world's Christmas trees are exported from Oregon's tree farms. In 2001/2002, I spent \$10,000 adding to our Juvenile Spanish language collection. After our El día activities of 2002, usage of our Juvenile Spanish language collection increased 570%.

I'd like to thank first the children of South America I encountered when I was just nine years old. Thank you to Pat Mora, her parents and family & REFORMA for honoring and celebrating bilingual literacy. Thank you to my Youth Services Dept. Manager, Curtis Kiefer for hiring me in 1999 when I hadn't worked as an institutional librarian in 13 years. (While I received my MLS in 1980 and worked in a Modesto, CA library until 1986, my most recent work experience was as an auto detailer, stay at home Mom, and street librarian.) Thank you also to Curtis for inspiring me with his ideas and his commitment to community partnerships. Thank you to the hispanohablantes of my community who never fail to appreciate my efforts and joyfully tolerate my sometimes bumbling Spanish.

El día 2003 was a tremendous amount of work, and I've thought a lot about why I went to all the effort. Of course, I believe Knowledge is Power & literacy is the key to that knowledge, but I submit to you today that Humility is Power. According to Webster's dictionary, humility is the quality or state of being humble in manner or spirit & the freedom from pride or arrogance. Humble means having a low opinion of one's own importance or merits, modest or meek in spirit or appearance, and not haughty. So how is humility powerful?



REFORMA President Linda Chavez Doyle presenting the award.



Accepting the 2003 Estela and Raul Mora Award, Ruth Mitchel from the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library.

The humility of the children of Latin America had the power to inform my heart when I was a girl. The humility of the Virgin Mary & the Moabite Ruth informed my soul. The humility of the workers led by César Chavez had the power to inform my mind when I was teen growing up in California, and the humility of my Irish Catholic father's sudden death informed my adulthood. Lastly, the humility of cleaning out other people's minivans led me to be discovered in 1999 and set me on the professional path that has brought me here today. In closing, I challenge all of you to reflect on and feel the power of humility in your own lives and the lives of those you serve. Humility is power because a Nicola Chiaromonte said, "We all need humility in the face of what we do not understand". With understanding, comes knowledge. On behalf of the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library --- thank you for the 2003 Mora Award.