

Acclaimed Author Luis Rodriguez Visits Campus

By Danielle Virgil
Staff Reporter

The Albermarle Literary Center at Elizabeth City State University and the North Carolina Literary Consortium presented Luis Rodriguez, author of *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Life in L.A.* in Johnson Hall's mini auditorium on March 31, 2000. Rodriguez, a motivational speaker, uses his youth which was filled with gangs, drugs, crime and poverty to help youth find a positive outlet from their environment. At age 12, all he knew was gangs, prison, drugs, crime and poverty. "I was searching for the attention I lacked while growing up," he said.

Rodriguez used his talk, which he gives across the country to tell listeners that using their creativity could be a positive outlet to the negative entities in their life. He began by admitting that he got involved in gangs at age 11, tried drugs at age 12, was arrested at age 13 and went to jail for the first time at age 16. By the time he was 18, Rodriguez had been in and out of youth rehabilitation facilities since age 13; at age 18, he found himself facing a 6-year prison sentence. He called the "turning point in his life" beginning to write while in prison.

"When I got really into writing, I realized that the whole world belonged to me." Rodriguez began his

reading with a poem called "Tia Chucha," a poem about a crazy aunt whom he grew up with. He involved the audience by sharing an anecdote about his aunt, which allowed the audience members to grasp the meaning behind his work. "Everyone has a quirky or crazy relative like my "Tia Chucha."

The next piece he read, *Always Running*, he explained was read because our own Greg Sampson of WRVS reminisced with him about the streets of Watts in L.A. where Sampson also grew up. The excerpt from *Always Running* was about Rodriguez's moth-

er and her decision whether or not to stay in America or to go back to Mexico. His powerful reading received a long sympathetic applause from the audience.

Following the reading, Rodriguez held a question/answer session which turned on the topic of his future. Rodriguez gives an "Empowerment Expression Workshop" at prisons, homeless shelters, universities and centers for youth rehabilitation. He volunteers for a program called Youth Struggling for Survival, a group of adults, mentors and elders working together with youth for the benefit of youth.

Rodriguez also has a group called "Rocamole" that hosts music and art's festivals.

"Doing this helps me give back to the community. There needs to be a distinction between politics and reality. We have to learn how to be a caring, cohesive community with the adults, mentors and elders learning how to work together for the benefit of the youth."

Rodriguez believes that the way to help slow the process of involving young people in destructive behavior is to give them an outlet.

"I believe in showing how everybody's life has value," he said.

ROTC Holds Awards Ceremony

By Stacy Brock
Assistant Editor

Elizabeth City State University's Department of Military Science held its annual spring awards ceremony March 28, 2000 in the Williams Hall Quadrangle.

The Department of Military Science, presented several awards during the ceremony to twenty-one cadets who exhibited merit and military and scholastic excellence during the 1999-2000 academic year. Freshmen Gregory Burgess and John Wise, junior, Jermaine Moses and senior, Joseph Kurtzweil are some of the cadets who were recognized for their outstanding military and academic

achievements. Burgess and Wise were the recipients of the Outstanding Cadet Award, Moses was the recipient of the Association of the United States Army Award and Kurtzweil was the recipient of several awards, one of which was the Distinguished Military Student Award.

Ralph L. Poole, retired Lieutenant Colonel, served as the guest speaker at the ceremony. Poole encouraged the students to continue to exemplify military and leadership excellence, as well as academic excellence. "I was really inspired by Lieutenant Poole's speech," remarked senior cadet, Joseph

Kurtzweil. His message informed us about what's expected of us as officers.

LTC Poole, a native of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, is a 1998 graduate of the Citadel who currently serves as a Rifle Platoon Leader in the 82nd Airborne Division. Poole is also the Senior Army Instructor, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at Northampton County High School in Gaston, NC.

The ceremony concluded with congratulatory remarks from LTC Tommy L. Marks, Professor of Military Science at Elizabeth City State University, and the army song.