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Alexandria
COMMUNITY MEDIA

Julio Duran and the role of Impacto

Julio Duran lived in northern Virginia for 44 years and published the monthly Spanish-language newspaper *Impacto* here in Alexandria for 15 years. In 2015, he returned to his homeland of Bolivia.

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month – a term he would probably object to – Out of the Attic profiles this influential journalist and publisher.

A native of Tarija, Bolivia, Duran started his career in journalism before his move to the United States. After studying journalism at the University of La Plata in Argentina, he founded the *La Tablada* newspaper in La Paz, Bolivia, and co-directed the magazine *Mundo*.

He moved to the United States in 1971 and began as a freelance contributor to *El Diario*, the Spanish-language daily newspaper based in New York in 1979. After becoming that publication's Washington correspondent in 1985, Duran started *Impacto* on the side in 1986.

A primary motivation for his publication of *Impacto* was a desire to change the portrayal of Latin America in the United States. In a Dec. 11, 1986, article on the start of *Impacto* in *The Washington Post*, he complained that American coverage of its southern neighbors was reduced to drugs and disasters and that it failed to bring the Latin American community to life.

The newspaper sought to bring its readers a broader idea of events in Latin America. At the time, Duran claimed he wanted to steer clear of events in El Salvador and Nicaragua, which were involved in civil wars. As Duran put it, "We don't want to take a political stance. We will not take sides."

Looking back on the life of *Impacto*, Duran pointed to two main impacts. The first was an editorial that helped bring about a name change for the Hispanic Festival to the Latin American Festival of Washington. The second was encouraging the George H.W. Bush

administration to aid Peruvian and Bolivian farmers in finding alternative crops to the coca leaf. He estimated that \$600 million in aid was sent to those countries for that purpose.

In 2015, after 44 years in the United States and after publishing *Impacto* for 15 years, Duran announced his return to his hometown in Bolivia. He noted in an article in *El Tiempo Latino*, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the area, that "those of us who come to this land of opportunities bring dreams that rarely come true." At the same time, publishing *Impacto* fulfilled his desire to "serve the community for 15 years ... and straighten some concepts about our identity."

Alexandria, and the Washington area in general, was strengthened by having a voice like Julio Duran in its midst.

Each year, the City of Alexandria observes National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions



PHOTO/EL TIEMPO LATINO

Julio Duran published the monthly Spanish-language newspaper *Impacto* in Alexandria for 15 years.

of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. For more information on City of Alexandria Hispanic Heritage Month events, please visit: alexandriava.gov/HispanicHeritage.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.