

## When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio

By Marta Moreno Vega

Download now

Read Online →

### When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega

When rock and roll was transforming American culture in the 1950s and '60s, East Harlem pulsed with the sounds of mambo and merengue. Instead of Elvis and the Beatles, Marta Moreno Vega grew up worshipping Celia Cruz, Mario Bauza, and Arsenio Rodriguez. Their music could be heard on every radio in El Barrio and from the main stage at the legendary Palladium, where every weekend working-class kids dressed in their sharpest suits and highest heels and became mambo kings and queens. Spanish Harlem was a vibrant and dynamic world, but it was also a place of constant change, where the traditions of Puerto Rican parents clashed with their children's American ideals.


A precocious little girl with wildly curly hair, Marta was the baby of the family and the favorite of her elderly abuela, who lived in the apartment down the hall. Abuela Luisa was the spiritual center of the family, an espiritista who smoked cigars and honored the Afro-Caribbean deities who had always protected their family. But it was Marta's brother, Chachito, who taught her the latest dance steps and called her from the pay phone at the Palladium at night so she could listen, huddled beneath the bedcovers, to the seductive rhythms of Tito Puente and his orchestra.

In this luminous and lively memoir, Marta Moreno Vega calls forth the spirit of Puerto Rican New York and the music, mysticism, and traditions of a remarkable and quintessentially American childhood.

“Viva Marta Moreno Vega! With honesty, humor, and love, she relives her coming-of-age in Spanish Harlem—the highs and the lows—eloquently documenting how deeply rooted West African cultural traditions are in her rich Puerto Rican heritage. Marta Vega's memoir makes me want to mambo.”

—Susan Taylor, editorial director of *Essence* and author of *Lessons in Living*

[↓ Download When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican...pdf](#)

# When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio

By Marta Moreno Vega

## When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega

When rock and roll was transforming American culture in the 1950s and '60s, East Harlem pulsed with the sounds of mambo and merengue. Instead of Elvis and the Beatles, Marta Moreno Vega grew up worshipping Celia Cruz, Mario Bauza, and Arsenio Rodriguez. Their music could be heard on every radio in El Barrio and from the main stage at the legendary Palladium, where every weekend working-class kids dressed in their sharpest suits and highest heels and became mambo kings and queens. Spanish Harlem was a vibrant and dynamic world, but it was also a place of constant change, where the traditions of Puerto Rican parents clashed with their children's American ideals.

A precocious little girl with wildly curly hair, Marta was the baby of the family and the favorite of her elderly abuela, who lived in the apartment down the hall. Abuela Luisa was the spiritual center of the family, an espiritista who smoked cigars and honored the Afro-Caribbean deities who had always protected their family. But it was Marta's brother, Chachito, who taught her the latest dance steps and called her from the pay phone at the Palladium at night so she could listen, huddled beneath the bedcovers, to the seductive rhythms of Tito Puente and his orchestra.

In this luminous and lively memoir, Marta Moreno Vega calls forth the spirit of Puerto Rican New York and the music, mysticism, and traditions of a remarkable and quintessentially American childhood.

“Viva Marta Moreno Vega! With honesty, humor, and love, she relives her coming-of-age in Spanish Harlem—the highs and the lows—eloquently documenting how deeply rooted West African cultural traditions are in her rich Puerto Rican heritage. Marta Vega's memoir makes me want to mambo.” —Susan Taylor, editorial director of *Essence* and author of *Lessons in Living*

## When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega Bibliography

- Rank: #1266297 in Books
- Brand: Three Rivers Press
- Published on: 2004-11-16
- Released on: 2004-11-16
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.96" h x .65" w x 5.25" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

 [\*\*Download\*\* When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican ...pdf](#)

 [\*\*Read Online\*\* When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyoric ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega**

---

**Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

In this vivid work, which shares its title with a 2002 documentary Vega produced, two tales flawlessly merge: one recalls an Afro–Puerto Rican girl's upbringing in 1950s Spanish Harlem; the other explains the background for the author's eventual status as a priestess of the Santeria/Lucumi religion. What could have been a familiar coming-of-age story is made fresh with Vega's painterly detail and use of background music (Celia Cruz, Machito and Tito Puente's sounds are present throughout). The sorrows of early school ("the classroom was a joyless cell") give way to double-dutch jumping, puberty, Vega's first crush and her emerging interest in preserving her family's traditions. "Music," her grandmother Abuela, an *espiritista* (a sort of spiritual psychic), tells her, "is the food of the soul, and the right music calls the spirits." At Abuela's apartment, Vega learns of the *orishas* (gods and goddesses) and observes Abuela's *bóveda* (altar); together, they visit the *botánica* for healing oils. Lovelorn at 14, Vega confides in Abuela, who summons a spirit named Juango to command her body. "Trying to understand Juango was difficult enough, but talking about sex with a spirit possessing my grandmother's body was startling." And thus the author's future path begins. The spiritual and musical journey Vega takes readers on is informative and inspiring, even for the uninitiated.

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—"Cotito" was the favorite of her grandmother, a high priestess of the Yoruba religion, whom she helped tend her altar. She accompanied Abuela to the botanica in East Harlem and witnessed the occasional possession by spirits. As she grew older, Vega found that these traditions could suffocate as well as nurture. Her parents' acceptance of machismo led to a double standard in the treatment of brother Chachito and his sisters. Mami, a trained nurse, was not to work outside the home because such women "get ideas" and cheat on their husbands. When she disobeyed, Papi's anger and violence were said to be the result of his love. Cotito silently decided that she didn't want such a love, just as she refused to lie to cover for her brother's philandering. Racism was found in the outside world (school, police) and at home: the children were expected to marry lighter-skinned Latinos, and Chachito jokingly called Cotito a "real African." Smart and perceptive, she became a strong young woman, and worked steadily toward her goal of becoming a teacher. At the mostly white arts high school, she and an African-American friend demanded that music from their cultures be included in music appreciation class. While rejecting the negative, she embraced the many positive aspects of her heritage and the love of her family. Cotito is as frank about her own shortcomings as she is about those of others. A vibrant, honest coming-of-age memoir that celebrates culture and community.—*Sandy Freund, Richard Byrd Library, Fairfax County, VA*

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

As fluidly as a Latin dance band shifts from a swaying ballad into a hip-twitching mambo, so Vega's passionate memoir of growing up in 1950s Spanish Harlem expresses both the burdens and joys of her Puerto Rican heritage. Although despising the machismo that keeps her mother prim and servile, forces girls to contain their sexuality, and ultimately condemns her sister to a loveless marriage, Vega is energized by the tropical rhythms heating up Harlem's legendary dance halls and comforted by her grandmother's mystical connection to Afro-Caribbean spirits. Coming-of-age stories chronicling the struggles of first-generation Latinas are not in short supply, and some clunky phrasings ("Memories are the musical notes that form the composition of our souls") suggest that Vega's training in writing has been secondary to her work as a

scholar and priestess of Santeria. Still, readers who enjoyed Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* (1984) and Esmerelda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993) will find the experiences limned here affecting; her recollections will also be of interest to researchers in gender and Latin American and Caribbean studies. *Jennifer Mattson*  
*Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **James Reveles:**

In this 21st hundred years, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive right now, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of the actual crowded place and notice by simply surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yes, by reading a publication your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stay than other is high. To suit your needs who want to start reading any book, we give you this specific *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* book as starter and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

#### **Delores Nault:**

As people who live in often the modest era should be revise about what going on or information even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era and that is always change and progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which one you should start with. This *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

#### **Kimberly Franks:**

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources inside can be true or not need people to be aware of each facts they get. How people have to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Examining a book can help persons out of this uncertainty Information especially this *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* book since this book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it everybody knows.

#### **Camille Wolfe:**

Do you have something that that suits you such as book? The book lovers usually prefer to choose book like comic, small story and the biggest you are novel. Now, why not hoping *When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio* that give your enjoyment preference will be satisfied by simply reading this book. Reading behavior all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world much better then how they react toward the world. It can't be stated constantly that reading behavior only for the

geeky man or woman but for all of you who wants to possibly be success person. So , for all you who want to start looking at as your good habit, you can pick When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio become your own personal starter.

**Download and Read Online When the Spirits Dance Mambo:  
Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega  
#CKDOMVN5S7A**

## **Read When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega for online ebook**

When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega books to read online.

### **Online When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega ebook PDF download**

**When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega Doc**

**When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega Mobipocket**

**When the Spirits Dance Mambo: Growing Up Nuyorican in El Barrio By Marta Moreno Vega EPub**