

SÁNCHEZ GARFUNKEL, AURA LUZ (1941–)

"I learned to love my Puerto Rican roots even as I came to understand that I was very much east-coast American with an Irish-Catholic elementary schooling and a baccalaureate from a predominantly Jewish city college."

Aura Sánchez Garfunkel was born in the South Bronx to Puerto Rican parents but moved to Brooklyn during her formative years. Sensitive to issues of marginalization and discrimination, Sánchez Garfunkel studied sociology and anthropology at Brooklyn College. She earned a B.A. degree from that institution, an M.A. from Harvard University and a J.D. from Northeastern University in Boston. Determined to "make a difference" in the lives of poor people and minorities, her first jobs in Boston were in anti-poverty and multi-service agencies. She worked as an organizer in the then-transitional district of the South End, where displacement and gentrification were rapidly altering the neighborhood, and for a Boston University research project, assessing the success of Head Start programs. Advocating for the marginalized, she worked for Greater Boston Legal Services, and later for Chelsea City government where she was largely responsible for the city's selection as an All-American City in 1998. Sánchez Garfunkel accepted a position as country director of the U.S. Peace Corps program in Micronesia, and served for two years overseeing volunteers who were working to improve public health, environmental protection, youth services, and school libraries. Involved as well in creative activities, Sánchez Garfunkel writes poetry, is a published author and a member of Streetfeet, a multicultural women's performance group in Boston.