

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Biographies: Celia Cruz*



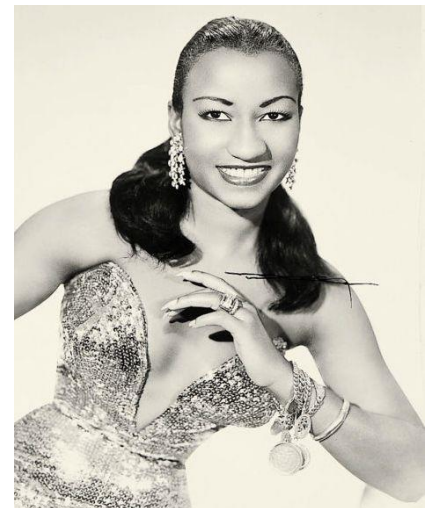
Ursula Hilaria Celia Caridad Cruz Alfonso, better known as Celia Cruz, was born on October 21, 1925, in Santos Suarez, Havana, Cuba. Celia was the most popular Cuban salsa singer in the world. She is called the Queen of Salsa.

Her father, Simon Cruz, was a railway stoker, and her mother, Catalina Alfonso Ramos, was a housewife. Celia had three sisters named: Dolores, Gladys, and Barbara. She used to watch dances and orchestras through the windows of the singing cafes of Havana and dreamed of entering and singing. Only her mother approved of his artistic wishes. Her father

wanted Celia to be a school teacher. So, Celia started studying education, but when she was about to finish her degree, she left to attend the National Conservatory of Music.

While studying, Celia sang in radio programs for amateurs, in which she won small prizes. She later sang in the orchestras Gloria Matancera and Sonora Caracas. Celia was part of the show Las Mulatas de Fuego, which toured Venezuela and Mexico, until being hired as a singer by the radio station Cadena Suaritos.

In 1950, Celia met the businessman, Rafael Sotolongo, who wanted Celia to be the lead singer of a famous group called Sonora Matancera. Celia debuted with the group on August 3, 1950, but initially did not have a good reception from the public, who sent letters to the director and the Radio so that Celia could be changed. However, the conductor of the orchestra, Rogelio Martínez, had faith in the young singer and went to the label SEECO Records, to speak with the manager of the orchestra and owner of the station Sidney Siegel.



Siegel was opposed to recording Celia because he thought that women did not sell records, but Rogelio Martínez convinced him. So, on December 15, 1950, Celia Cruz recorded her first album in 78 rpm format. Celia's first album was so successful that Siegel gave the go-ahead for Celia to record with Sonora Matancera, an orchestra she worked with fifteen years and recorded 188 songs.



The revolution led by Fidel Castro had already taken power in Cuba when Sonora Matancera traveled to Mexico to fulfill a one-month contract on July 15, 1960. Celia did not know that the new Cuban government would prohibit the entire orchestra from stepping on Cuban soil again.

In 1965, after 15 successful years, Celia left Sonora Matancera to become a soloist. Celia's husband, Pedro Knight, a trumpeter with Sonora Matancera, also left the group and became her representative, arranger, and personal director. In 1966, she started performing with Tito Puente, the Mamba King. In 1973, Celia teamed up with Larry Harlow, an accomplished pianist and exclusive artist of the FANIA record label. She headlined an Afro-Cuban music concert at Carnegie Hall in New York. This is where Celia Cruz performed *Grace Divina*, her first salsa song, and opened the door to this new rhythm.

Celia signed a long-term contract with the record company VAYA, which was a subsidiary of FANIA. She released her album, Celia & Johnny, with Johnny Pacheco in 1974, that went gold. Thanks to the success of that album, Celia joined the Fania All Stars orchestra, which was a group of salsa musicians from every orchestra signed by the Fania musical label. She performed in a legendary concert recorded live at Yankee Stadium with the Fania All Stars.

Celia Cruz made famous the expression "SUGAR," which she adopted. It remains in the world's collective memory as her identifying phrase, and she shouted like an announcement of carnival inciting the fun.

Celia Cruz has received many tributes since the year 2002, many of her followers did not know that she had discovered a glioma, very aggressive brain tumor and suffered complications following surgery to remove it. On July 16, 2003, Celia Cruz died at her home in Fort Lee, New Jersey, at the age of 77.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

1. What career did Celia Cruz begin studying to please her father?
  - a. Singing
  - b. Acting
  - c. Education
  - d. Dance



2. How many years did Celia sing with Sonora Matancera?
  - a. 3
  - b. 7
  - c. 10
  - d. 15

3. With what seal did Celia record her first album in 78 rpm format?
  - a. FANIA
  - b. SEECO
  - c. VAYA
  - d. Sonora Matancera



4. Celia Cruz made famous the expression "SALSA" which she adopted and remained in the collective memory as her identifying phrase.
  - a. True
  - b. False

5. What was the name of Celia's husband?
  - a. Pedro Knight
  - b. Rafael Sotolongo
  - c. Rogelio Martínez
  - d. Sidney Siegel

