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El Reconquistador

Comedian Bill Santiago wants to see your salsa moves.

By [Rachel Swan](#)

Wiry, curly-haired, Puerto Rican comedian **Bill Santiago** describes himself as a failed reporter who found his voice in stand-up, though he still has a reporter's curiosity about culture and a writerly love of words. Hence, Santiago's fascination with Spanglish, which he sees as one of the most pervasive signs of Latinization in the United States. He cited several examples in a Comedy Central special that aired in 2006, including new conjugations of the verb "to google" ("*Yo googleo, tu googleas, nosotros googleamos*"), and examples of department store announcements that you might hear in East LA or Miami ("*Atención K-Mart shoppers!*"). Even more exciting is a new addition to the urban dictionary, "chancla," which Santiago defined as "a cheap sandal which doubles as a disciplinary device in Latino households." (He is, in fact, a survivor of such correctional measures.) Santiago champions the unintentionally ironic phrase, "*Como que why? Porque because!*" (Rough translation: "Because I *said* so!") After all, it's a great

day for Spanglish when an expression that literally means "because because" can pass off as a snappy rejoinder.

With his new book *Pardon My Spanglish* projected for fall publication, Santiago decided to tackle another subject within the theme of Latin America's "*reconquista*" of US popular culture: Latin dance. With his lean, rubbery frame, cartoony facial expressions, and Groucho Marx eyebrows, Santiago has no trouble impersonating the histrionic gyrations of Colombian superstar Shakira, and he could easily parody any swishy heel-clacker from *Dancing with the Stars*. Knowing Santiago, he'll likely focus on quotidian examples of cross-pollination, such as the rise of salsa and tango in gringo nightclubs. For any fond fan of Salsa Night at the Shattuck Down Low, it should be topical material. Bill Santiago will workshop parts of his new show "The Funny of (Latin) Dance" this Friday, January 25, at **La Peña Cultural Center** (3105 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley). The show starts at 8 p.m. and costs \$10-\$12. LaPena.org or BillSantiago.com