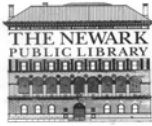


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Friday, August 14, 2009

Please Contact: Ingrid Betancourt 973-733-7772

Pam Goldstein 973-377-0300 xt 14

**Newark's Public Library and Museum Host Documentary on Founder of
One of Nation's Leading Latino Advocacy Group**

One of the center piece movies that debuted at the New York International Latino Film Festival last month will be jumping the river to the Newark Museum on Monday, August 31 where the public will be able to enjoy a special viewing sponsored by the New Jersey Hispanic Research and Information Center at the Newark Public Library.

The film "Antonia Pantoja: ¡Presente!" explores the life of the founder of Aspira, the New-York based Latino advocacy group created to challenged the accepted educational and cultural mores of the 1950s and 1960s.

The movie, created by Lillian Jimenez, executive director of the Latino Educational Media Center, and a voice of advocacy in her own right, will be shown at 7 p.m. preceded by a 6 p.m.reception. It is being presented by the NJHRIC Support Network in partnership with The Newark Museum, and sponsored by Aspira-NJ, New Jersey City University, Verizon, the Matos Group and Rutgers University. The Museum is located at 49 Washington Street, Newark.

Jimenez, who has worked as a producer; media arts center manager, media activist and educator, will attend the screening and field questions about the work and the topic of the film. She was instrumental in producing "What Could You Do with a Nickel?" and "SisterSong."

Her current work explores the life of Pantoja and the Puerto Rican community's struggle for educational and civil rights. Pantoja, who was born in 1922 in Puerto Rico and moved to New York City in 1944, started work in the mainland as a welder in a wartime factory.

The civil rights leader later studied at Hunter College in Manhattan, earning a BA in sociology and later an MA in Social Work from Columbia University. Always concerned about the cultural stereotypes ascribed to Puerto Ricans, she created *Aspira* to counter those preconceptions, change perceptions and to inspire youth to achieve success no matter the field.

This hour-long documentary reveals Pantoja's voice as she advocated for her community. It incorporates passionate personal testimony, archival footage and even home movies, along with images created by visual artists Juan Sanchez. In the movie, Pantoja carries the viewer through the struggles and triumphs of the Puerto Rican community.

Famous "Aspirantes" include: Anthony Romero, former Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union; Jimmy Smits, Puerto Rican actor; Fernando Ferrer; former Bronx Boro president, who ran unsuccessfully for NYC Mayor in 2001 and 2005; Angelo Falcón, prominent political scientist and president of the National Institute for Latino Policy (formerly the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy), and Ninfa Segarra, former president of the Board of Education of New York. Former Deputy Mayor under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Segarra is currently a lobbyist with Toño Burgos & Associates and former president of the National Puerto Rican Coalition in Washington, D.C.

Others include Aida Alvarez, former director of the Small Business Administration under President Bill Clinton; Nelson A. Diaz, first Puerto Rican Solicitor General in Philadelphia, and Dr. Isaura Santiago Santiago (Ph.D., Fordham University), first tenured Puerto Rican woman at Columbia University and first Puerto Rican woman president of Hostos Community College of the City University of New York.

Admission is free and open to the public. For more information or for sponsorship opportunities, please call José Acevedo, chairman of the Support Network for the Newark Public Library's New Jersey Hispanic Research and Information Center at 973-557-1957, or email mayaguezano@optonline.net.