

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS

415-356-8383 x 244

voleine_amilcar@itvs.org

Mary Lugo

770-623-8190

lugo@negia.net

Cara White

843-881-1480

cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit <http://pressroom.pbs.org>

***PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE EXPLORES THE HEATED CONTROVERSY
SURROUNDING MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES IN ARIZONA SCHOOLS***

Film to Premiere on Independent Lens on Thursday, May 17, 2012 at 10 PM

(San Francisco, CA) — *Precious Knowledge* reports from the frontlines of one of the most contentious battles in public education in recent memory, the fight over Mexican American studies programs in Arizona public schools. The film interweaves the stories of several students enrolled in the Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson High School with interviews with teachers, parents, school officials, and the lawmakers who wish to outlaw the classes. A film by Tucson-based filmmakers Ari Luis Palos and Eren Isabel McGinnis, *Precious Knowledge* will premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Mary-Louise Parker, on Thursday, May 17, 2012 at 10PM (check local listings).

While 48 percent of Mexican American students currently drop out of high school, Tucson High's Mexican American Studies Program has become a national model of educational success, with 93 percent of enrolled students, on average, graduating from high school, and 85 percent going on to attend college. The filmmakers spent an entire year in the classroom filming this innovative curriculum, documenting the transformative impact on students who became engaged, informed, and active in their communities.

As the nation turns its focus toward a wave of anti-immigration legislation in Arizona, the issue of ethnic chauvinism becomes a double-edged weapon in a simmering battle, making front page news coast to coast. When Arizona lawmakers pass a bill giving unilateral power to the State Superintendent to abolish ethnic studies classes, teachers and student leaders fight to save the program using texts, Facebook, optimism, and a megaphone.



--More--

Be more



Lawmakers and politicians respond with a public relations campaign to discredit the students, claiming that a textbook used in the classes, Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* teaches victimization and sedition. Officials ask that the classroom's Che Guevara posters be replaced with portraits of founding father Benjamin Franklin. Meanwhile, the students answer back by fighting for what they believe is the future of public education for the entire nation, especially as the Latino demographic continues to grow.

To learn more about the film, and the issues involved, visit the companion website for at www.pbs.org/independentlens/precious-knowledge. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmakers

Ari Luis Palos (Director) has directed and shot a number of films including *The Beauty Salon*, *Mas Alla de la Frontera/Beyond the Border*, *Impresario*, *The Kentucky Theatre*, *El Rio de los Perros/The River of the Dogs*, *Al Garete/Adrift*, *Corazon del Plata/Heart of Silver*, and *The Spirituals*. Palos enjoys participating in Tucson's *All Soul's Procession*, a performance art extravaganza where he transforms into a dead vaquero to mourn and celebrate loved ones who have passed. He once rode a Harley Davidson motorcycle from Oaxaca, México to a small factory in Nicaragua, just to smoke the world's finest cigar.

Eren Isabel McGinnis (Producer) has produced nineteen movies including P.O.V.'s *Tobacco Blues*, *The Girl Next Door* (shortlisted for an Oscar), *Beyond the Border*, *The Spirituals*, and *Dos Vatos-México*. She has a degree in cultural anthropology from San Diego State University, and a certificate in film and video theory and production from the University College Dublin, in Ireland. McGinnis, a Fulbright scholar, spent a year of living, writing, and filmmaking in Juchitán, México.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

###