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**Past and Present Collide in El Paso at Dedication of World's Largest
Equestrian Statue in P.O.V.'s "The Last Conquistador"
Tuesday, July 15 on PBS**

Sculptor John Houser's Monumental Bronze of Juan de Oñate Exposes
Raw Feelings and Sharp Divisions in the Southwest — and the Perils
Of Public Art in a Multicultural Society

*A Co-production of Independent Television Service (ITVS); A Co-presentation
With Latino Public Broadcasting, Native American Public Telecommunications
And KERA Dallas/Fort Worth*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

Summary: The **P.O.V.** series (a cinema term for "point of view") begins its 21st year on PBS in **June 2008**. American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films. **The Last Conquistador** by John Valadez and Cristina Ibarra airs **Tuesday, July 15** at 10 p.m. (Check local listings.)

P.O.V. is broadcast **Tuesdays at 10 p.m.** June through October on PBS, with primetime specials in the fall and winter. P.O.V. works with PBS stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in our films. Find events at:
www.pbs.org/pov/utills/povnews.html#events.

Description: John Houser is a man with monumental sculpture in his blood. He can remember his father working as an assistant carver on Mt. Rushmore. Enthralled with the power of art, he has dedicated himself to making history come alive in large-scale public sculptures. So when the El Paso City Council commissioned a larger-than-life statue of the Spanish Conquistador Juan de Oñate, Houser conceived his grandest project yet: the largest bronze equestrian statue in the world. He envisioned a magnificent and long-overdue tribute to the contributions of Hispanic culture and history to the United States.

But as recounted in the new documentary **The Last Conquistador**, all was not well as the statue's dedication approached. The area's Native Americans had their own very personal memories concerning Oñate. They recalled massacres, slavery and terror. They remembered that Oñate's foray into New Mexico in 1598 would eventually lead to the deaths of two out of every three Indians there and nearly caused the extermination of Native culture across the region.

As the film shows, the prospect that a murderer's image would be looming over El Paso, Texas, drew increasing anger and protest. One artist proposed a companion sculpture of a giant severed foot, commemorating Oñate's method of cutting off feet to terrorize the native inhabitants. Houser saw his grand conception transformed in a way he had not intended, caught up in a whirlwind of unresolved conflicts between races, classes and historical memories.

Filmmakers'
Statement:

“When we first saw the statue of Juan de Oñate, it seemed to be calling us home to face our roots, making us both think back to what it was like growing up Mexican-American,” say filmmakers John J. Valadez and Cristina Ibarra. “We grew up like cultural contortionists, awkwardly straddling the literal and psychological borders around us, and in the process we somehow came to be ashamed of our Indian roots.

“When we first saw how seductive and intoxicating the Oñate monument is, we were both inspired and heartbroken. Inspired by its majesty and raw power, and saddened because the statue overlooks an important part of our legacy: the madness and horror of what we have done to one another and how that trauma continues to affect our lives today. Why our community can’t respectfully acknowledge the dark edifice of our past and extend a somber embrace to our Indian brothers and sisters is perplexing to us. After all, as Mexican-Americans we do share in their history, their culture; and it is their blood that runs through our veins.

“We can easily imagine that for the next thousand years, people will look upon this statue and they will believe that it depicts a great man whose deeds, values and exploits represent the best of who we are; that our culture and our civilization believed that he was worthy of being enshrined and idolized for all time in magnificent bronze. They may study his life and believe that his values, his actions, his determination and his vision are worthy of their aspiration. They may see him as a hero, a founding father to be emulated, and his world-view to be propagated. We think there are many in El Paso, in the American Southwest, and across our great land who already believe this deep in their hearts.”

Bios:

John J. Valadez Executive Producer/Writer/Producer/Director

John Valadez has been producing and directing award-winning documentaries for PBS and CNN for the past 14 years. His credits include the critically acclaimed “Passin’ It On,” which aired on P.O.V in 1994. He also was a producer for three PBS series: *Making Peace*, *Matters of Race*, and *Visiones: Latino Arts & Culture*. He was a producer of “Beyond Brown” for PBS, and produced “High Stakes Testing” for *CNN Presents*. Valadez is currently working on two PBS projects: writing and directing the third hour of the four-hour series *Latin Music USA* and producing “The Head of Joaquin Murrieta.” Valadez is a founding member of the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP). He is a Rockefeller Fellow and a PBS/CPB Producers Academy Fellow, and currently sits on the Board of Trustees of the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar. He has twice been a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow and is a graduate of the film program at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts; Valadez lives in Warwick, N.Y.

Cristina Ibarra Producer/Director

This is Cristina Ibarra’s first feature documentary. For the past eight years, she has been making short films that have been seen on public television and in galleries, museums, schools and film festivals across the United States including the Guggenheim Museum, Exit Art Gallery and the Queens Museum. Her award-winning directorial debut, “Dirty Laundry: A Homemade Telenovela,” aired on the PBS series *ColorVision*. She has also produced interstitials for Latino Public Broadcasting, the New York International Latino Film Festival and *fulana*, a Latina multimedia collaborative. Some of her credits include “Grandma’s Hip Hop,” “Amnezac” and “Wheels of Change.” Ibarra is a Rockefeller Fellow, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow and a CPB/PBS Producers Academy Fellow. She is a founding member of NALIP; *fulana*; and SubCine, the first Latino self-distribution collective. Ibarra, who lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., is currently developing two projects: a documentary entitled “Another Martha” and a feature film entitled “Love & Monster Trucks.”

Length:

56:46

Festivals: Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, April 2008

Credits: Executive Producer: John J. Valadez
Producer/Director: John J. Valadez, Cristina Ibarra
Writer: John J. Valadez
Director of Photography: Elia Lyssy
Editor: Keiko Deguchi, Jean-Phillipe Boucicaut
Original Music: Richard Martinez

The Last Conquistador is a production of the Kitchen Sync Group, Inc./Valadez Media in association with Independent Television Service (ITVS), Latino Public Broadcasting, Native American Public Telecommunications, and KERA Dallas/Fort Worth. Funding provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Sundance Documentary Fund, Humanities Texas and the New York State Council on the Arts.

P.O.V. Web: Original Online Content on P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)
The Last Conquistador companion website (www.pbs.org/pov/lastconquistador) offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an extended interview with filmmakers John Valadez and Cristina Ibarra (video and text); a list of related Web sites, organizations and books; a downloadable discussion guide and classroom activity; and more about the issues.

Outreach: P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in **The Last Conquistador**. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events, go to: http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. The American Library Association and P.O.V. have created a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: www.amdoc.org/outreach.

Pressroom: Visit P.O.V.'s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with FCC regulations.

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