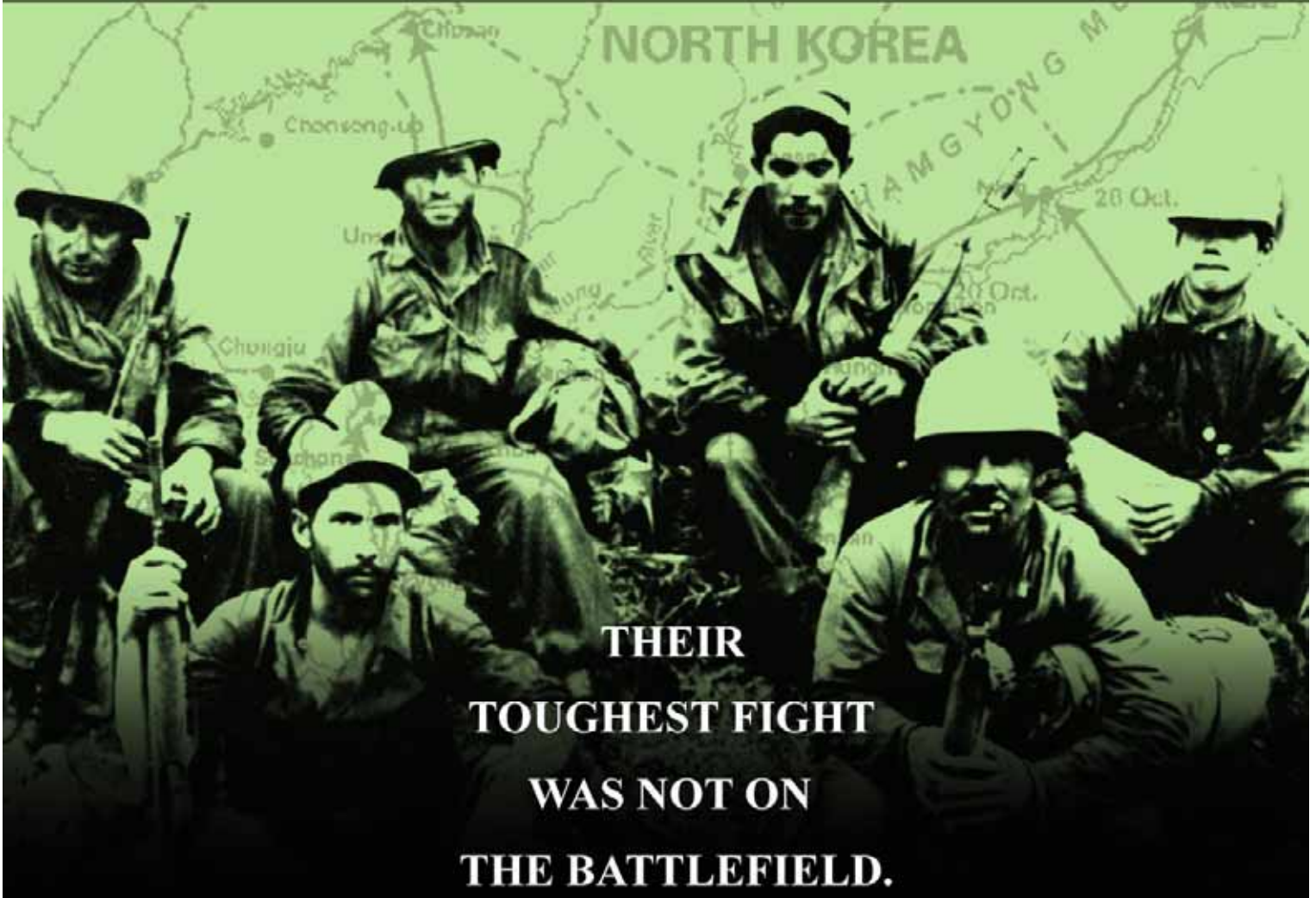


BEST PUERTO RICAN  
DOCUMENTARY  
Rincon International  
Film Festival  
(Puerto Rico)

OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Real To Reel  
International  
Film Festival (NC)

AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE  
2008 Accolade  
Competition

ESTELA AWARD  
2008 FINALIST  
National Association  
of Latino Independent  
Producers (NALIP)



**THEIR  
TOUGHEST FIGHT  
WAS NOT ON  
THE BATTLEFIELD.**

# **THE BORINQUENEERS**

**A DOCUMENTARY ON THE ALL-PUERTO RICAN  
65<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY REGIMENT**

Narrated by **Hector Elizondo**  
Narrado en español por **David Ortiz Angleró**

A FILM BY  
**NOEMI FIGUEROA SOULET**

**PRESS KIT**

# THE BORINQUENEERS

## FILM SYNOPSIS

### Tag Line

Their toughest fight was not on the battlefield.

### 78 Word

*The Borinqueneers* is the first major documentary to chronicle the story of the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic unit in U.S. Army history - exploring stories of courage, triumph and struggle through rare archival materials and compelling interviews with veterans, commanding officers and historians. Narrated by Hector Elizondo, it reveals how the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment served meritoriously in World War I, World War II and the Korean War, even as they faced discrimination within the Army.

### 63 Word - SPANISH VERSION

*Esta conmovedora película relata la historia del Regimiento 65 de Infantería, la única unidad segregada de hispanos del Ejército estadounidense compuesta por puertorriqueños, a través de entrevistas con los veteranos y extraordinarias imágenes de archivo. Los Borinqueños se destacaron durante la Guerra de Corea, pero en el otoño de 1952 su destino cambió repentinamente cuando más de 100 de sus soldados fueron arrestados.*

### 125 Word

*The Borinqueneers* chronicles the untold story of the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic unit in U.S. Army history - exploring stories of courage, triumph and struggle through rare archival materials and compelling interviews with veterans, commanding officers and historians. Narrated by Hector Elizondo, the film reveals how the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment served meritoriously in World War I, World War II and the Korean War, even as they faced discrimination within the Army. Finally given the chance to be full participants in a military conflict, they excelled during the first years of the Korean War, earning praise from General MacArthur. But in the fall of 1952, the 65<sup>th</sup> would face its toughest challenge when dozens of its soldiers were arrested for abandoning their positions.

### 300 Word

*The Borinqueneers* chronicles the never-before told story of the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic unit in U.S. Army history. Narrated by Hector Elizondo, the documentary relies on the vivid testimony of the regiment's veterans and rare archival footage to trace the unique experience of the 65<sup>th</sup>, culminating in the Korean War and the dramatic events that would threaten its very existence.

The 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was nicknamed "The Borinqueneers" after "Borinquen", the word given to Puerto Rico by its original inhabitants, the Taino Indians. Bound by a common language and a strong cultural identity, the men of the 65<sup>th</sup> were determined to prove their mettle against a backdrop of discrimination within the Army and curtailed rights in their own land, where to this day they can be drafted but cannot vote in U.S. elections.

Finally given the chance to be full participants in a military conflict, they excelled during the first years of the Korean War, earning praise from General MacArthur. But in the fall of 1952 the regiment would be at the center of a series of dramatic events, when dozens of its soldiers abandoned their positions and were tried in one of the largest courts martial of the war. "It was the first case in this war in which men from a unit that won international recognition for bravery unexplainedly seemed to have changed their character under fire," said *The New York Times*.

For more than fifty years, the events that led to the regiment's darkest hour have been shrouded in mystery and controversy. Were these men cowards or casualties of discrimination and ill-conceived tactics? The Borinqueneers sheds light on this compelling story, revealing the real story of what happened that fall through the dramatic testimony of the men who were there.

**RUNNING TIME:** 78 minutes

**LANGUAGES AND SUBTITLES**  
English and Spanish

*Written, Produced and Directed by*  
Noemí Figueroa Soulet  
*Co-Producer/Director*  
Raquel Ortiz  
*Editor/Post-Production and Original Score*  
Miguel Picker

*Consulting Producer*  
Patricia Garcia-Rios  
*Narrated by*  
Hector Elizondo  
*Spanish Version Narrated by*  
David Ortiz Angleró



## BIOGRAPHIES

### CREATIVE TEAM

**NOEMI FIGUEROA SOULET**, *PRODUCER / DIRECTOR / WRITER*, began her 9-year journey with the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment when she produced, wrote and directed the short *The Borinqueneers: The 65th Infantry Regiment* which was selected to participate in the 2000 Westchester Film Festival and 1999 New York Latino Film & Video Festival. Before that, she was a freelance advertising consultant and producer to major advertising agencies for the Hispanic commercial market. A former professional actress, she has extensive experience in theater, television, industrial films and commercials for both the English and Spanish markets. Noemi has conducted numerous presentations on the 65th Infantry at various corporations and community organizations and has been honored by the National Guard, Comité Noviembre of New York, NJ Statewide Parade Committee and the Latina Women's Council of Mercer County, New Jersey. Born in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico, she was raised in New York's Spanish Harlem and has a degree in Education from New York University.

(Photo credit: Maria Fernanda Hubeaut)



**RAQUEL ORTIZ**, *CO-PRODUCER / DIRECTOR*, has 30 years of experience with the public broadcasting system in production, program development and management, beginning in 1968 at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. She has worked at 3 public television stations; WNET-13 in New York; WETA-26 in Washington DC; and WGBH-TV, Boston, where she spent 2 years as a producer/host of her own series, *La Plaza*, and a decade as Executive Producer for Community and Cultural Programming. In 1990, she formed Ortiz/Simon Productions focusing on multi-cultural projects, including an outstanding documentary on Puerto Rico/US relations, *Mi Puerto Rico*, which premiered on PBS in 1996. Raquel later became Senior Producer for VPG, Inc., a multi-media production house of educational textbook publishers. She is a graduate of the National Hispana Leadership Institute and is currently working as a free-lance creative director, producer and multi-media consultant. She has been honored with numerous awards, including regional and national Emmys, Silver and Golden Apples and CPB Programming citations.

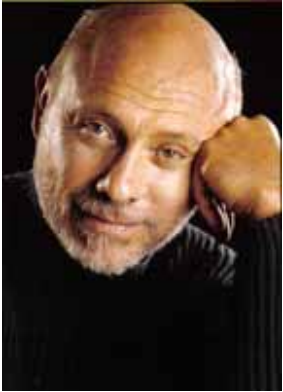
**MIGUEL PICKER**, *EDITOR AND ORIGINAL SCORE*, founder of ArtMedia, is a director, composer and award-winning editor. His projects have been showcased in dances, concerts, multimedia productions, films, documentaries and several PBS programs. His credits among others include *Frontline*, *La Plaza* and *Greater Boston Arts*, as well as a 52 part educational series entitled *Destinos* which was broadcast nationally. He has composed the music for *Español en Vivo*, a bilingual children's project published by Simon and Shuster and *Lenguaje* and *Alfamigos* published by Houghton Mifflin. Most recently he produced, directed and edited *Mickey Mouse Monopoly: Disney, Childhood and Corporate Power* and *Beyond Good & Evil: Children, Media and Violent Times*, both distributed by Media Education Foundation. He is Chilean.



**PATRICIA GARCIA-RIOS**, *CONSULTING PRODUCER*, is a documentary filmmaker with fifteen years experience in national public television programs. Recently she wrote and co-produced *The Latino Paradox*, a documentary on Latino health for a new series on health disparities in the U.S. As a producer and co-producer at WGBH-Boston she has worked on the historical documentary series *They Made America* (PBS, 2004), *Reconstruction: The Second Civil War* (PBS, 2004) and *Chicago: City of the Century* (PBS, 2003). She was nominated for a Writers Guild award in 2005 and in 1999 received an Emmy for research. Her work has also been recognized by the Organization of American Historians (Erik Barnouw award for outstanding historical program). Recently, Patricia has acted as writing and story consultant on several documentaries for film and television, among them *Traces of the Trade* (2007), *Buddy* (2005), and *Damrell's Fire* (2005). She is a native of Spain.



## NARRATORS



**HECTOR ELIZONDO**, *NARRATOR*, is an accomplished film, theater and television actor, as well as a director and producer with a career spanning 40 years. He is a five-time Emmy Award nominee and won the award in 1997 for his portrayal of Dr. Phillip Watters in "Chicago Hope," on CBS. He also received three Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for the role. He was nominated for both a Golden Globe and an American Comedy Award for his portrayal of a hotel manager in "Pretty Woman." Elizondo has been nominated and won multiple other awards for his work on small and big screens, including seven ALMA Award nominations and two wins ("Chicago Hope," 1994, and "Borrowed Hearts," 1997). He recently received the Diversity Awards' Integrity Award as well as Nosotros' Lifetime Achievement Award for the quality of roles he has chosen during his career.

Elizondo's film credits include "Pretty Woman," "Runaway Bride," "American Gigolo," "The Flamingo Kid," "Nothing in Common," "Young Doctors in Love," "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three," "Tortilla Soup," "Georgia Rule," "The Princess Diaries," "The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement" and the upcoming "Love in the Time of Cholera."

**DAVID ORTIZ ANGLERÓ**, *NARRATOR FOR SPANISH VERSION*, is an accomplished actor, director, poet, author and radio personality of renown in Puerto Rico. During his long and respected career, he has performed to sold-out poetry recitals throughout Puerto Rico, recorded 8 poetry records and published 3 books of poetry. For the past six years, he has been heard on the radio stations, *La Cadena Radio Reloj*, and on *Radio Isla 1320* where every Friday at 7:00 PM he hosts a music and poetry program called *Tiempo de amar* (A Time to Love). He has directed several films and televisión specials, amongst them: *Un abajito y queriendo* with the group *Haciendo Punto en Otro Son*, *La juguetería encantada* and *La sombra de una huella*, a filmic poem about Old San Juan. He is the voice-over announcer in many commercials of several important large corporations.



## PRESS REVIEWS

"A passionate rejoinder to Ken Burns, whose World War II documentary drew sharp criticism from Latino and American Indian groups for initially ignoring their contributions during that war.... *The Borinqueneers* gives a once-storied Puerto Rican regiment its due." – *The New York Times*

"*The Borinqueneers*, is both informative and heartbreaking. The film is a necessary step in revealing the complex history of these Puerto Rican soldiers — brave, proud men — and their contributions should be celebrated, especially given how they're glaringly absent from history books... the film is dense and well-researched, and it does its best to remain objective, instead largely allowing viewers to interpret these historical events according to their own belief systems." - *Si TV*

"An excellent choice for libraries.... The strength of the film is the commentary provided by former members; they are exceptionally candid about their military experiences, reasons for serving, and relationships formed under fire. Historians' and former military officers' commentary provide an outside view of the regiment, praising their heroism and bravery... A number of relevant topics are covered: racism in the military, America's relationship with Puerto Rico, and the Korean conflict. But what makes the film most compelling is its examination of friendship and camaraderie under fire." - *School Library Journal*



## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The history of the all-Puerto Rican 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment is a fascinating and little-known chapter in American military history, one that has never been tackled in a documentary film. Our goal was to tell the story of these unique soldiers from their previously unheard point of view.

After 9 years of historical research into military records, personal collections and dozens of oral histories, we identified our interview subjects and went to work. The production of THE BORINQUENEERS began in the early 2000. The film was shot with various local crews in New York City, Washington, DC, Orlando, Florida, Little Rock, Arkansas and in several towns in Puerto Rico. We shot on digital video and BETA SP. Our equipment included a SONY 150 digital camcorder and a SONY DX-30 Betacam. Additional re-shoots were necessary and the last interviews were filmed in the summer of 2005.



PRODUCER RAQUEL ORTIZ WITH PUERTO RICO CREW.  
*Credit: El Pozo Productions*

Meantime, we located extensive archival footage and photographs pertaining to the history of the regiment. Editing finally began in January 2006. By the end of March, we had an almost 2-hour long fine cut. A break from the editing process allowed us to have screenings, get feedback from advisors and make some changes and cuts. In the fall of 2006 and winter of 2007, we returned to the editing suite to finalize the 60-minute and 90-minute versions of the film. During this time, our editor/composer worked on the original score and we traveled to California to record the narration with Hector Elizondo. The Spanish voiceover was recorded by David Ortiz Angleró in April, 2007.

A one-hour version of THE BORINQUENEERS premiered on June 7<sup>th</sup> on WMFE, PBS' Orlando, Florida station, with a nationwide broadcast release in August, 2007 during pledge drives. The expanded version premiered in October, 2007 on the Armed Forces Network to more than 850,000 U.S. troops overseas. And in November, 2007, the feature length Spanish version premiered on TU TV, Puerto Rico's public broadcasting station. Beginning with a well-attended world premiere at the Newark Museum in New Jersey, numerous screenings took place in major cities throughout the country and in Puerto Rico.



CREW SETTING UP IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS  
*Credit: El Pozo Productions*



**PRODUCTION STILLS**

available by request



THE BORINQUENEERS IN KOREA  
*Credit: SFC Ramon Villafañe Torres (Ret.)*



DIRECTOR NOEMI FIGUEROA SOULET (right) PREPARING TO INTERVIEW COL. DUKE WOLF (RET.)



RECORDING THE SPANISH NARRATION WITH DAVID ORTIZ ANGLERÓ  
*Credit: El Pozo Productions*



BATTLE WEARY SOLDIERS OF THE 65<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY NORTH OF THE HAN RIVER. JUNE 1951, KOREA.  
*Credit: U.S. Army Photo.*



SOLDIERS OF THE 65TH INFANTRY REGIMENT ON MANEUVERS TESTING GAS MASKS. 1935, PUERTO RICO.  
*Credit: National Park Service, San Juan Military Archive*



TWO NORTH KOREAN GUERRILLAS CAPTURED BY MEN OF THE 65TH INFANTRY NEAR YONGHUNG, KOREA. 1950



## FILM CREDITS

*Written, Produced and Directed by*  
Noemí Figueroa Soulet

*Co-Producer/Director*  
Raquel Ortiz

*Editor / Original Music*  
Miguel Picker

*Motion Graphics/Post Production*  
Miguel Picker

*Consulting Producer*  
Patricia García-Ríos

*Narrator*  
Héctor Elizondo

*Spanish Narrator*  
David Ortiz Angleró

*Associate Producer*  
William Cruz

*Script Consultants*  
Patricia García-Ríos  
Raquel Ortiz  
Mort Silverstein

*Story Consultant*  
Fernanda Rossi

*Assistant Directors*  
Doris Eugenio  
Frank Borres

*Camera*  
Eric Breitbart  
Branan Edgens  
Jorge Garrido  
Bryan Hobbs  
Ericq La Salle  
Timothy A. Lyter  
Seth D. Stein  
Rick Suddeth  
Arte Tedesco  
Dennis Ward

*Field Audio*  
Siiri Thompson  
Andrew Brennan  
Heriberto Rosas Rossy  
Dan Hampton

*Sound Editor*  
Pablo Picker  
Alejandro Peralta

*Grip*  
Neal Damiano

*Video Technical Support*  
Juan A. Soulet

*Researchers*  
Noemí Figueroa Soulet  
Ernest Acosta  
LTC Bart Soto (Ret.), USA Reserve  
Col. Gilberto Villahermosa, USA

*Archival Research*  
Bonnie Rowan

*Production Assistants*  
Joseph Hernández  
Brenda Barat  
Lydia Serrano  
Sonia González  
Welby R. Alcantara  
Arlene Rodríguez

*Advisors*  
SFC Ángel Cordero (Ret.) USA Reserve  
Maj. Sam Delgado (Ret.), US Marines  
Willis "Tripper" Cronkhite, III, Esq.  
Col. George MacGarrigle (Ret.)  
Dr. Felix Matos Rodríguez  
Dr. Luis González Vales

*Spanish Translation*  
Doris Eugenio  
Patricia García-Ríos  
CW4 Mario Gabriel, Jr. (Ret.), USA

*Graphic Designer*  
Jesús García

*Illustrator*  
Jeffrey Rodríguez

*Funding Provided By*  
Citizens Educational Foundation  
Latino Public Broadcasting  
Puerto Rico Humanities Council  
American Veterans' Committee for  
Puerto Rico Self-Determination  
Lucius & Eva Eastman Foundation  
Baxter Sales & Distrib., Puerto Rico  
Westchester Arts Council  
Aetna Foundation  
North Fork Bank  
Verizon Hispanic Support Group  
Metrovest Equities, Inc.  
Carlos del Salto  
William Cruz  
Mariano Vega, Jr.  
and  
donations from hundreds of individuals,  
organizations and corporations  
*Thank you for your support!*

*Fiscal Sponsor*  
Women Make Movies

*65th Infantry Veterans Interviewed*  
LTC Carlos Betánces (Ret.)  
SFC Germán Bravo (Ret.)

LTC Rick Bucknell (Ret.)  
SFC Modesto Cartagena (Ret.)  
Raúl E. Reyes Castañeira  
COL Willis Cronkhite, Jr. (Ret.)  
MSG Ramón Figueroa (Ret.)  
LTC William A. Friedman (Ret.)  
LTC Tomás Guffain (Ret.)  
LTC George Jackson (Ret.)  
Elpidio Jiménez  
Leonardo Justiniano  
Eugenio Martínez  
MAJ Luis R. Rodríguez (Ret.)  
Carlos Ruíz Gaudín  
Pedro Santana  
Sixto Sepúlveda  
Ángel L. Soler Flores  
SSG Gabriel Soto (Ret.)  
Wendell Vega  
COL Duquesne Wolf (Ret.)

*Historians Interviewed*  
COL Gilberto Villahermosa, USA  
Silvia Álvarez Curbelo

*Music*  
"Tema #4" and "Tema #12"  
Composed by Nicanor Zayas  
Performed by Nicanor Zayas, Nicanor  
Zayas Serrano and Otoniel Zayas Serrano

"Sara"  
Composed by Ángel Mislán  
Performed by Miguel Picker

"Despedida"  
Composed by Pedro Flores  
Performed by Daniel Santos  
Courtesy of SONY BMG Music  
Entertainment, (México), S.A. de C.V.  
By arrangement with  
SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

"Mi Despedida"  
Composed by Plácido Acevedo  
Performed by Cuarteto Mayarí  
Interstate Music, Ltd.  
"Campanas que vais repicando"  
Unknown Composer  
Performed by Elpidio Jiménez

"Nuestro Regimiento"  
Composed by Alexis Brau  
Performed by Bobby Capó

**CONTACT INFO**  
NOEMI FIGUEROA SOULET  
El Pozo Productions  
P.O. Box 302  
Crompond, NY 10517  
(914) 739-3989  
[www.borinqueneers.com](http://www.borinqueneers.com)



## ARTISTIC STATEMENT

This project has been the greatest challenge of my life.

In a way, the story of the Borinqueneers found me rather than me finding it. As a Puerto Rican I've always been troubled by the lack of Latino stories and Latino heroes in the media, but it wasn't until about a decade ago that I felt the impulse to do something about it. *Saving Private Ryan*, one of the most powerful and realistic depictions of war ever made, had just come out... and, as usual, Latino soldiers were "missing in action". Around the same time, I met a relative of my husband's who was a veteran of World War II. As I listened to his dramatic story I was reminded of the many other Puerto Rican veterans I had known and heard about. Why weren't their experiences being honored and shared?

Growing up in New York I never heard about the 65<sup>th</sup>. Like so many Puerto Ricans, even those living on the island, I didn't know we had heroes of our own. The relationship of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. Army is unlike that of other Latinos in the country. We are U.S. citizens, and yet - because of Puerto Rico's commonwealth status - we can't vote in U.S. elections. As a result, Puerto Ricans can be drafted but they can't vote for the commander-in-chief who sends them to war.

It was only after I began to research the Puerto Rican experience in the different wars that I learned about the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The so-called Borinqueneers were an elite unit that made its mark particularly in the Korean War and came to represent the pride and fighting spirit of Puerto Ricans - a spirit that to this day drives thousands of them to volunteer, despite their unequal rights. In a military culture that often discriminated against them, the men of the 65<sup>th</sup> drew strength from their common roots, determined to prove their mettle.

As a Latina actress with 17 years of experience I knew a lot about obstacles, but nothing had prepared me for the challenge of bringing a project like this to fruition. Gathering the funding for it was a true labor of love. I knocked on every door and learned to do just about everything to keep moving the project forward. More than that, though, the process of making this film showed me the power of community. Once word got out I was doing this, the outpouring of stories, support and good will was overwhelming. I began contacting and being contacted by veterans of the 65<sup>th</sup> and their families. They were eager to share their stories and bring recognition to the regiment. Some of them were talking about it for the first time in 50 years. No one had ever asked them about their experience before. Their own sons and daughters knew nothing about it. I was touched, honored, and deeply moved by their honesty and generosity.

It took about nine years to finish the film. Whenever I wavered, I'd get a \$10 check from one of the veterans and that gave me the strength to keep going. Unfortunately, many of the veterans passed away before the film was completed. Watching their heartwarming interviews over and over again in the edit room, I took comfort in knowing that people would fall in love with these dignified, brave and humble men.

I've just been a medium for their stories. And now, at long last, my work is done.



## AWARDS & FESTIVALS

*Award of Excellence* - 2008 Accolade Competition

Nominee for *Best Documentary for Television* - 2008 Imagen Awards

*Honorable Mention* - 2008 Chris Awards

Finalist for *Outstanding Made-for-Television Documentary* - 2008 ALMA Awards

*Estela Award - 2008 Finalist* - National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP)

*Best Puerto Rican Documentary* at the 2008 Rincon International Film Festival (Puerto Rico)

*Best Documentary* - 2008 Real to Reel International Film Festival (NC)

*Official Selection* - 2008 Cinesol Film Festival (TX)

*Official Selection* - 2008 Orlando Latin American Film & Heritage Festival (FL)

*Official Selection* - 2007 Puerto Rican Film Series, Puerto Rico Institute of Arts & Culture (Chicago, IL)





## NOTES OF INTEREST

The production of THE BORINQUENEERS took about 9 years to be completed as the producers struggled to raise the necessary funds. Sadly, during that time, many of the 65<sup>th</sup> veterans interviewed in the film passed away. Although these veterans were not able to see the completed film before they died, their words and experiences will live forever through this film.



Our production company, El Pozo Productions was named after “El Pozo de la Virgen” (The Virgin’s Well) which is a chapel located in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico, the hometown of Producer Noemi Figueroa Soulet. In 1953, the Virgin of the Rosary was said to have appeared to three school children near a natural spring well for 33 consecutive days. Thousands of people came from around the world to see this miracle. And many healing miracles took place for those who drank from the well. Today there remains a chapel and a museum containing the crutches, wheelchairs and “promesas” (religious promises) which were discarded after the cures. Aware of the challenges and obstacles that would be encountered in trying to film and document the complicated and century-old history of THE BORINQUENEERS, Noemi figured she could use a miracle so she named the production company El Pozo Productions.



65<sup>th</sup> Infantry veteran, LTC Carlos Betances Ramírez (Ret.), who appears in the film passed away on October 28, 2001 - forty-nine years later and on the exact day as the Jackson Heights incident which took place on October 28, 1952.



Both historians interviewed in the film have family members who served in the 65th Infantry Regiment. Col Gilberto Villahermosa’s father, CW2 Jesús María Villahermosa (Ret). fought with the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea from 1951 to 1952. And Silvia Alvarez Curbelo’s grandfather, Eduardo Curbelo, served with the 65th Infantry Regiment during World War I.



Three of the musical compositions used in the film were composed by members of the 65th Infantry Regiment. *Sara*, was composed by Angel Mislán, a famous composer of Puerto Rican danzas. In 1886, when Mislán was 24 years old, he joined the Military Band of the Third Battalion of Volunteers (the precursor to the 65th); eventually, he became the director of that band. During this period he wrote one of his best known danza compositions, *Sara*. Another well-known composer and cuatro player (a guitar-like instrument native to Puerto Rico) is SFC Nicanor Zayas Berrios (Ret.) who composed two of the Puerto Rican danzas used in the film, *Track #4* and *Track #12*. Retired from the Army, Zayas Berrios served in the Anti-Tank Company of the 65th Infantry Regiment during the Korean War.



## VIEWER RESPONSES

*I was touched by this incredible documentary and went through a whirlwind of emotions... I left that day a changed person. Today, I feel I've learned more about my identity as a Puerto Rican and as a Latino in the U.S. This film is an excellent learning tool for teachers and professors who want to teach about the U.S. history and Puerto Rican history. It is awesome, a historical gem, and a MUST HAVE for your personal library.*

William Cruz, President  
TCB Consulting

*My children watched the program with us. They knew he was a Veteran but they too were impacted by your documentary. To my surprise, my young sons, his grandchildren, who are 9 and 8, stood in front of him, saluted their Papi and hugged him. This is a moment I will carry with me forever. Thank you.*

Ivey Arce Wolfe  
Daughter of 65th veteran Luciano Arce Diaz

*As a Vietnam veteran of Puerto Rican descent, I was deeply moved... THE BORINQUENEERS is a work to be proud of – not only because it tells the untold story of the United States Army's only all-Puerto Rican regiment, the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, but because it tells it with admirable and unflinching honesty.*

Félix López, Former Director  
Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration

*In these times of renewed patriotism where our nation seeks to redefine its own essence, we consider it extremely valuable to expose the untold stories of sacrifice and heroism of our servicemembers, both of which the Puerto Rican Borinqueneers were widely recognized for.*

Raúl Duany, Former Chairman  
Puerto Rican Professionals of South Florida

*As a teacher, I know the importance of sophisticated and accurate documentaries, such as the one you have proposed, as a classroom tool. As a historian, I know how powerful telling a good story can be. In the history of the Puerto Rican men who fought in the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, you will be able to capture many of the elements that have defined the Island's character throughout the century.*

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Ph.D., Former Director  
Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College

*The documentary was superb... It was a true representation with what really happened during the Korean War, with the 65th Infantry.*

Mrs. Esther Betances  
Widow of LTC Carlos Betances who appears in the film

*Your work will very quickly become a classic and a mainstay in the remembrance of these brave soldiers. Every time I view the DVD, I am reaffirmed in the conviction that the court-martial segment is an essential part of the fabric of this history, without which the story is fatally flawed and incomplete. The serious, accurate, and respectful treatment you gave it puts the entire episode into its correct perspective in a caring way that avoids clichés and banality. Thank you for giving expression to the sentiments of so many who carry the memory of an incident that is burdened with so much misunderstanding.*

David W. Roman, Esq.  
Brown & Ubarri



## THE BORINQUENEERS

The forgotten men of THE BORINQUENEERS share their stories and their memories.



SFC MODESTO CARTAGENA (RET.), the most decorated soldier of the 65<sup>th</sup>.

*I would catch their grenades in the air and throw them back... And I blew up their 5 automatic rifles. When they discovered me, they threw so many grenades that 3 hit me. I took the hill from them. I took 16 wounded, 1 dead, and me, 17. But when we arrived there, the one in worst shape was me because I had lost all my blood.*

COL. WILLIS "BUD" CRONKHITE (RET.), "F" Company Commander. A continental officer who believed in his men.

*The 65<sup>th</sup> had an excellent reputation with the Chinese. They did not like to fight the 65<sup>th</sup>. They were too mean. I was glad that the Puerto Ricans were on my side. (Laughs!!) I would not want them to come after me with a bayonet.*

MAJ. LUIS RAUL RODRIGUEZ (RET.), awarded a Silver Star for his bravery, but not without a price.

*Almost 95% casualties. Everybody was wounded once or twice... We soldiers of the 65<sup>th</sup>, we fought for... freedom. And people died for the same reason.*

LTC CARLOS BETANCES RAMIREZ (RET.). A 65<sup>th</sup> battalion commander described by the continental West Point officers under his command as "brilliant", Betances would be the only officer relieved of command as a result of the courts martial. Some believe he was scapegoated.

*I tried to convince them to return to Jackson Heights, and I used all kinds of arguments, among them their pride as Puerto Ricans soldiers. Because Puerto Ricans are very proud as soldiers, that's why they excel as soldiers. But they were in a state of shock.*

PROF. SILVIA ALVAREZ CURBELO, Author and Professor of Humanities from the University of Puerto Rico. Her grandfather, Eduardo Curbelo, served with the 65th Infantry Regiment during World War I.

*At Kelly there had been a massacre. Rivers of blood flowed through Kelly Hill. The great tragedy of Kelly was the Puerto Ricans helplessly seeing their buddies die. Surrounded by relentless enemy fire.*

COL. GILBERTO VILLAHERMOSA, a former Senior Military Historian from the Center of Military History, has written the unit history of the 65th which is yet to be published. A West Point graduate, Col. Villahermosa's father, CW2 Jesús María Villahermosa (Ret.), fought with the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea from 1951 to 1952.

*This regiment is a cultural icon. And whether Puerto Rico remains a commonwealth, whether it becomes a state, whether Puerto Rico becomes independent, the history of this regiment is closely intertwined with that of Puerto Ricans.*



**THE BORINQUEENERS**

## **SCREENINGS**

July 13, 2007	Newark Museum World Premiere (Newark, NJ)
July 28, 2007	Institute of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture's – The Puerto Rican Outdoor Film Festival (Chicago, IL)
August 1, 2007	Clark University and the Committee of the Korean War Memorial of Central Massachusetts (Worcester, MA)
August 3, 2007	Hispanic Professional Network and the Hispanic Veterans Association of CT (Hartford, CT)
August 11, 2007	Club Damas de Puerto Rico (San Antonio, TX)
August 24, 2007	H.O.G.A.R., Inc. at Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture Main Theater (Bronx, NY)
August 28, 2007	Sociedad Cultural Borincana and Passaic County Community College (Paterson, NJ)
October 4, 2007	Fordham University (Bronx, NY)
October 11, 2007	Trinity College (Hartford, CT)
October 12, 2007	Veterans Administration Medical Center (Castle Point, NY)
September 13, 2007	Army National Guard Readiness Center (Arlington, VA)
September 22, 2007	Asociacion Boricua de Dallas, Inc. and the Hispanic American Students of the Southern Methodist University (SMU) (Dallas, TX)
November 7, 2007	El Museo del Barrio - Heckscher Theater (New York, NY)
November 11, 2007	The Borinqueneers Motorcycle Club of Florida and the Asociacion Borinqueña (Orlando, FL)
November 13, 2007	Veterans Administration – Houston St. (New York, NY)
November 15-16, 2007	Killeen LULAC Council 4535 Foundation and Gladys Casteleiro (sponsors) at Central Texas College Planetarium (Killeen, TX) Fort Hood and III Corps HQS, Remagen (Fort Hood, TX) Vive Les Arts Theater (Killeen, TX)
November 17, 2007	Sociedad de Puertorriqueños en Houston, Inc. in conjunction with Rice University – Hispanic Studies Department and The Institute of Hispanic Culture in Houston (Houston, TX)
<u>Puerto Rico screenings from Nov. 27-Dec 2, 2007 were co-sponsored by the P.R. Veterans Public Advocate Office:</u>	
November 27	Puerto Rico National Guard at Museo de Arte (San Juan, PR) Universidad Interamericana – Metro Campus (San Juan, PR)
November 28	The Municipality of Caguas at Luis M. Arcelay Theater (Caguas, PR) Universidad Interamericana – Fajardo Campus (Fajardo, PR)
December 2	El Herald Publications at Adalberto Rodriguez Theater (Sabana Grande, PR)



**Print Articles - English:**

- New York Times ( New York , NY ) – October 2, 2007
- Si TV Entertainment – “Home of the Brave” - September 10, 2007
- Latina.com – “Latina Filmmaker Sheds Light on All-Hispanic Army Unit” - Jan. 2008
- Poder Magazine – November 2007
- Freedom Team Salute Newsletter – September, 2007
- New York Daily News ( New York , NY ) – August 8, 2007
- Worcester Telegram Gazette ( Worcester , MA ) – August 2, 2007
- The Day ( New London , CT ) – October 9, 2005
- The Morning Calm Weekly ( U.S. military publication in Korea ) – October 17, 2003
- MIG Alley Flyer ( U.S. military publication in Korea ) – September 26, 2003
- New Britain News & Hartford Courant (CT) – November 22, 2002
- Reading Eagle ( Reading , PA ) – August 4, 2002
- The Miami Herald ( Miami , FL ) – May 10, 2002
- Orlando Sentinel ( Florida ) – January 26 – Feb. 1, 2002 and November 12, 2007
- New York Post ( New York , NY ) – November 9, 2001
- San Juan Star (Puerto Rico) – April 23, 2000
- New Jersey Record – May 25, 2000
- The Journal News ( Westchester County , NY ) – February 23, 2000

**Print Articles - Spanish:**

- El Heraldo (Sabana Grande, PR) – February, 2008
- Freedom Team Salute Newsletter – September, 2007
- El Nuevo Día (San Juan, PR) – August 12, 2007
- La Raza (Chicago, IL) – July 27, 2007
- Vocero Hispano (Worcester, MA) July 27, 2007
- HOY Nueva York (New York , NY) – June 29, 2007
- El Sentinel (Orlando, FL) June 2, 2007
- El Diario La Prensa (New York , NY) – June 5, 2003
- El Diario La Prensa (New York , NY) – Sept. 28, 2001

**On-Camera Interviews:**

- Telemundo (WNJU – Ft. Lee, NJ) – July 12, 2007
- Images/Imágenes (NJN - Trenton , NJ) – August 5, 2007
- Visiones (NBC – New York , NY) – September 1, 2007
- Boston Latino TV - Interview with Producer Raquel Ortiz - September 13, 2007
- One on One with Steve Adubato (Comcast – East Coast) – March 2008
- Comcast Newsmakers (NJ & PA) – September 20, 2007
- CNN en Español (national)– October 4, 2007
- Univision “Aquí y Ahora” (national) – October 11, 2007
- CFNEWS 13 (Orlando, FL) Article and Video – November 11, 2007
- V-me Viva Voz – “Honor Hispano” honoring Latino veterans – November, 2007
- Urban Latino TV (CBS-TV National broadcast - May 8, 2004)
- Cablevision Neighborhood Journal (Newark, So. Orange & Elizabeth , NJ) – Sept. 2003
- Cablevision Channel 12 (Westchester County, NY) March 21, 2000

**Radio**

- National Public Radio interview – Weekend Edition – August 4, 2007
- WNYC – News Public Radio (New York, NY) - August 24, 2007
- 93.1 AMOR Spanish Radio (New York, NY) July 13, 2007
- Let's Get Real With Reuben Torres at [www.blogtalkradio.com](http://www.blogtalkradio.com) – March 4, 2007
- The Latin Jubilee Radio Show with Judy Battista (FM 99.1 & on AM 1110 In The Hudson Valley, NY) - April 19, 2008



## Bloodied in Battle, Now Getting Their Due



Ángel Franco/The New York Times

Virginia Quevedo adjusts the cap her husband, Eugenio, 81, wore in Korea. Mr. Quevedo served in the 65th Infantry Regiment, a mostly Puerto Rican unit.

By [DAVID GONZALEZ](#)

Published: October 2, 2007

Among the lamps, the religious cards and the knickknacks in Eugenio Quevedo's Upper West Side apartment is a worn and creased Banco Popular envelope. Tucked neatly inside, tiny black-and-white photos taken more than half a century ago show a rifle-toting soldier against a backdrop of hills and mountains.

"Korea was an ocean of mountains," Mr. Quevedo said. "We'd push forward and the enemy pushed us back. It was that kind of war."

He sounded tranquil, which in many ways he is at 81, though his eyes betrayed his emotions. In one corner of his living room, a poster shows the Puerto Rican flag, a nod to where he was born.

"We lost so many," he said. "The American people don't know the sacrifices of so many Puerto Ricans who died in Korea. It was the bloodiest war for Puerto Rico."

It is also a forgotten war for many Americans. Yet in recent months, veterans of a once-storied Puerto Rican regiment, the 65th Infantry Regiment — including Mr. Quevedo — have gotten their due in a documentary called "The Borinqueneers," which was first televised in New York over the summer and continues to be broadcast on public television nationally.

In a way, it is a passionate rejoinder to [Ken Burns](#), whose World War II documentary drew sharp criticism from Latino and American Indian groups for initially ignoring their contributions during that war.

Noemi Figueroa Soulet, a New York actress who produced "The Borinqueneers," understands why people were upset with Mr. Burns. But she set her sights on a different battle, in more ways than one.

"Why should we be begging Ken Burns for a few minutes in his series?" she said. "We have other guys we can cover ourselves. I really felt there was enough there to tell our story in a full program."

The idea came to Ms. Figueroa Soulet in the late 1990s, after she saw the film "Saving Private Ryan" and around the time she learned that her husband's uncle had been wounded in Korea.

"I started thinking, what about the Puerto Rican experience?" she said. "I would see a war movie or documentary and I would look for the Latino faces. I always want to see how we are represented. Historically, I knew we served in the military, but you wouldn't know it."

Though she had never made a documentary before, she set out to chronicle the Puerto Rican military experience. In time, she zeroed in on the 65th Infantry's campaigns in Korea.

The regiment, she said, was founded in 1899 as an essentially Puerto Rican unit, including a fair share of island-born officers, led by mainland, or “continental,” officers. The group also served in both world wars, though it was in Korea where it was hardest hit.

The regiment’s bravery earned the admiration of no less than Gen. Douglas MacArthur, as well as a disproportionate share of casualties when compared with mainland regiments. One of its continental officers said the unit “got every dirty job that came up,” while another said it was so feared by the enemy that “I was very glad the Puerto Ricans were on my side.”

But in 1952, scores of soldiers in the regiment were arrested and court-martialed after refusing to fight in battles where untested and poorly led replacement troops were sent to take hills without artillery or medical support. The refusals came after a battle that left hundreds wounded or dead. In another case, they would not follow an officer they knew had no clue where he was trying to lead them.

Some of the men were sentenced to 10 or more years in prison. Outcry over the trials eventually resulted in the Army pardoning them and commuting sentences.

Ms. Figueroa Soulet set out to tell a story that placed the regiment’s history in context, rather than let it either be forgotten or reduced to the ignominy of the trials. She said that some Latino organizations that she had thought would be natural allies in her quest to finance and make the film were turned off by the inclusion of the trials and did not support her, while some veterans groups declined to back a project about Puerto Ricans.

She persisted, and was joined by Raquel Ortiz, a producer with many years working in public broadcasting who had produced “Mi Puerto Rico,” a well-received documentary on Puerto Rican cultural and political identity.

“Not very many people would have given a first-time producer the amount of time I gave her,” Ms. Ortiz said. “I did it because the subject was important to me. She was so committed, too. When I saw the interviews, stock footage and photos, I said ‘Wow!’”

The film took nine years to complete and involved interviewing 275 veterans. Ms. Figueroa Soulet has had special showings in various cities, often sponsored by local Puerto Rican and veterans organizations, which have helped spread the word despite the lack of an advertising budget.

It has struck a deep chord in men like Jose Cintron, a retired longshoreman and a Vietnam veteran, who was moved to tears when saw it. “I was so proud,” he said. “For the first time, I did not have to hear about [John Wayne](#). My people took part in this. For once, we get recognized.”



Ángel Franco/The New York Times  
Jaime Lopez, 77, left, and Eugenio Quevedo  
at Mr. Quevedo’s Upper West Side apartment.  
“Korea was not easy,” Mr. Lopez said.

Members of the regiment hold on to vivid memories of those who served with them on freezing hillsides, dodging bullets and mortars. Mr. Quevedo still talks about Master Sgt. Angel Ocasio. At the start of an enemy offensive, the sergeant was killed after he had gone around distributing ammunition to Mr. Quevedo and his comrades. Another sergeant — Iglesias was all he could recall — was shot dead when he went searching for Sergeant Ocasio.

“Those two were sent by God,” Mr. Quevedo said. “You think of him and the others. They died young. They never had the chance to get married. To be grandfathers. To get to my age. We are the ones who are left.”

His friend, Jaime Lopez, sat with him in the living room. He, too, served in the regiment, though they became friends stateside. Mr. Lopez is trim at 77, with a swagger to his step and an unfiltered cigarette in his hand. Mr. Quevedo jokingly calls him “[Lee Marvin](#),” which only fuels Mr. Lopez’s eagerness to banter.

Mr. Lopez enlisted after high school, saying the military was one of the few options he had as a small-town boy with no money. In Korea, he earned two Bronze Stars, including one for risking his life to wade into a river and rescue wounded comrades while under fire.

He recalled one fierce encounter, when they took a hill, only to find themselves under attack for 12 hours.

“There were dead and wounded everywhere,” he said. “Everything was destroyed. Everything. Boy.”

He bolted up from his chair, turned away and sobbed. He steadied himself against the dinner table. The only other sound was a clock chiming “Twinkle, Twinkle” at the hour.

“Korea was not easy,” was all he said, slowly composing himself.

Since the documentary’s completion, the two men have made public appearances together, talking to audiences about their experiences. After years of being footnotes to a forgotten war, they are glad to let others know they were there when they were needed.

“This documentary is something historic,” Mr. Lopez said. “You see it from beginning to end and learn that Puerto Ricans fought in World War I, World War II and Korea. The truth is there.”

The support of the old veterans, men who came home and settled into uneventful, but blessed, lives is what helped Ms. Figueroa Soulet stick with her project when others would not even return her calls.

“Those guys are my troops,” she said. “I look at the long list of organizations who protested the Ken Burns thing and say, ‘Gee, none of them contributed to my project.’ Some of them would not give me the time of day.”

She paused. Being an actress, she knows a thing or two about timing. “Now,” she said, “they’re all calling.”



# Unknown soldiers

## Film vindicates forgotten World War II Boricua fighters

BY ELISSA STRAUSS

[elissaavery@gmail.com](mailto:elissaavery@gmail.com)

During the summer of 1998, filmmaker Noemí Figueroa went to visit an uncle of her husband's who was a World War II veteran.

She had recently seen Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" and, after noticing the absence of Latinos in the popular film, decided to ask him a few questions about Latinos in the military.

Figueroa's curiosity was sparked and she quickly realized she had found a story that had to be told.

Eight years later, Figueroa's documentary, "The Borinqueneers," airs locally tomorrow at 8 p.m. on Ch. 13 (WNET) and Sunday on Ch. 21 (WLIW) also at 8 p.m. The film tells the little-known story of the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic unit in the history of the U.S. Army.

Created in 1899 by the U.S. Congress, the 65th was a segregated unit made up of mostly Puerto Rican officers, and served in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Due to Puerto Rico's unique status as a U.S. commonwealth, the soldiers could serve and be drafted although the island is not a state of the union. "I was born in Puerto Rico, raised in New York, and I had never heard of the 65th," Figueroa, 50, said.

"Latinos are absent in war films," she said. "So I figured, if they are not going to tell our stories we have to step up to the plate."

Relying on testimony from vets and rare archival footage, the film covers the history of the 65th with a focus on their dramatic experience during the Korean War.

After two years of outstanding conduct in Korea, the Borinqueneers — as the members of the 65th were nicknamed — were caught up in a military scandal when approximately 150 soldiers abandoned their posts and were eventually arrested and tried in the largest court-martial of the war. The movie explores how discrimination played a role in this case, as well as others.

Figueroa said that many soldiers she interviewed on camera were speaking about these events for the first time in more than 50 years.

"They got so emotional," she said. "But they all had such a great sense of pride for having represented not only the United States, but also Puerto Rico." Many of the vets would even send in checks to help her finish the film.

Eugenio Quevedo, 81, a member of the 65th, believes the film is a saving grace for the legacy of the Borinqueneers.

"The new generation of Puerto Ricans doesn't know anything about it. They don't know about the sacrifice we made," said Quevedo, who lives in Manhattan. "It was about time someone did something about that."

The film ([www.borinqueneers.com](http://www.borinqueneers.com)), which is narrated by New York actor Héctor Elizondo, will be shown on PBS stations throughout the country this month and released on DVD Aug. 15. There will also be a screening at Hostos Community College on Friday, Aug. 24, at 7 p.m.

But the film has already had an impact on one man in Florida.

Figueroa said she got a call recently from a vet in Orlando. He had been out to dinner at a Red Lobster with his family and happened to be wearing his 65th Regiment baseball cap. When he went to pay for the meal he was told that one of the employees had recently seen the documentary and everything would be on the house. "They are finally getting the recognition they deserve," Figueroa said. "They are heroes."



A scene from "The Borinqueneers."  
Photo: Marcelino Cruz





ED COLLIER

Retired Sgt. 1st Class Luis A. Colon, from left, a member of the 65th Infantry Regiment, talks with filmmaker Noemi Figueroa Soulet and Col. Gilberto Villahermosa, inspector general of the Massachusetts National Guard, during a showing of the documentary, "The Borinqueneers," at Clark University last night.

# Documentary honors soldiers

## Pride swells at premiere at Clark

By Kelly Glista  
SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

WORCESTER — As the first words of their anthem rang through the auditorium, the audience began to sing.

Not "The Star-Spangled Banner" — that had already been sung and the room had listened with quiet respect. Now, they were singing proudly to "La Borinqueña," the anthem of Puerto Rico.

The songs were part of the opening ceremonies last night for the premiere of the documentary, "The Borinqueneers" about the U.S. Army's 65th Infantry Regiment. Held at Clark University, the premiere was the only showing of the film in Massachusetts.

The regiment, nicknamed

### WORCESTER

The Borinqueneers, began as the Puerto Rico Battalion of Volunteer Infantry in 1899. It 1908, the unit became part of the U.S. Army. Its soldiers, who made up one of very few ethnically based regiments in the Army, have fought in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. For their service in Korea, soldiers in the regiment received four Distinguished Service crosses, 125 Silver Stars, Presidential and Meritorious Unit commendations, two Korean Presidential Unit Citations and the Greek Gold Medal for Bravery.

The film documents the story of this regiment through interviews with soldiers and archived footage, with narration by the award-winning actor Hector Elizondo. The DVD also features Spanish narration.

Film writer, director and producer Noemi Figueroa Soulet said that the film is an

important legacy.

"These men are dying," she said. "And as they die, so do their stories."

Six of the 24 men interviewed in the documentary have since died, said Ms. Figueroa Soulet, and there are still many people that have never even heard of the 65th regiment.

Col. Gilberto Villahermosa, inspector general of the Massachusetts National Guard, was the guest speaker last night. He said it is important to pass along the Borinqueneers' story.

"I still think there are aspects of some historical truth that aren't known," he said.

The story of the soldiers is more than just their service in war; it is also the story of a unit facing an era of segregation and prejudice. Ms. Figueroa Soulet said people don't realize the long history of Puerto Rican service in the military, and how much it affects the entire country.

"This is bigger than me, and

it's bigger than them," she said.

The most important part of the film was the visuals, said Ms. Figueroa Soulet, describing a scene in which a Puerto Rican soldier quickly and skillfully climbs a palm tree.

"Now that's a Caribbean soldier," she said with a smile.

Co-producer and director Raquel Ortiz said the pictures of the young soldiers were the most touching.

"They were all so full of pride, and so handsome, and so ready," she said.

Before the premiere, a brief reception was held, attended by Ms. Figueroa Soulet and Ms. Ortiz as well as the members of the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea Commemoration Group in Worcester and political figures from all over Massachusetts, including Worcester Mayor Konstantina B. Lukes. The ceremonies were conducted in both English and Spanish.

The documentary will be shown on PBS in September.



CINE

# Documental en tributo al Batallón 65

Será transmitido el 9  
de agosto en Nueva York

Por Maricarmen Amado  
Diario HOY • 917.339.0823  
mcamado@hoyllc.com

NUEVA YORK

La lucha de los soldados puer-  
torriqueños que defendieron  
a Estados Unidos en varias  
guerras, pero que fueron mante-  
nidos por años en la sombra, será  
reconocida a través de un docu-  
mental a ser transmitido en Nue-  
va York el 9 de agosto próximo, por  
Canal 13 WNET.

“Los Borinqueños”, el filme sob-  
re el Regimiento 65 de Infantería,  
conformado íntegramente por  
boricuas hasta el fin de la guerra  
con Corea, se hace realidad lue-  
go de ocho años.

“Es un logro grande documen-  
tar la historia de un regimiento tan  
famoso en Puerto Rico, y siento que  
los años de sacrificio han valido la  
pena. He tenido obstáculos pero me  
motivaban los veteranos al llamar-  
me para apoyar el proyecto”, dijo  
Noemí Figueroa Soulet, productora  
y directora del filme. El regimien-  
to fue creado a principios de 1899  
cuando Estados Unidos invadió  
Puerto Rico y su primera función



► Los Borinqueños en Corea.

fue “defender a la isla”, agregó la  
cineasta. La cinta cuyo título viene  
de ‘borinquen’, que significa ‘tierra  
de dioses bravos’, es un legado no  
sólo para los puertorriqueños sino  
para todos los soldados latinos, di-  
jo. La narración corre a cargo del  
actor Héctor Elizondo.

En el filme, los veteranos com-  
parten experiencias dramáticas  
sobre sus intervenciones en la pri-  
mera y segunda guerra mundial y  
en la de Corea, en donde corrieron  
peligro de morir.

La cinta detalla cómo los puer-

torriqueños que jugaron un rol im-  
portante en la historia del ejercito  
de Estados Unidos, en ese entonces  
no podían votar en las elecciones  
presidenciales de Estados Unidos,  
debido al estatus de la isla.

En la Primera Y Segunda Gue-  
rra, sus misiones sólo eran de segu-  
ridad, y fue en la guerra de Corea  
cuando Estados Unidos decide  
asignarlos a la línea de batalla,  
tanto porque este regimiento es-  
taba bien preparado como porque  
los soldados americanos no esta-  
ban listos. ■



**Capta. Envía. Informa.**  
Si eres testigo de un evento noticioso:

**Caza Noticias**



EL DOCUMENTAL narra las hazañas y conflictos del primer regimiento hispano de Estados Unidos. Arriba, el monumento al 65 de Infantería, en Río Piedras

# Al aire el 65 de Infantería

## Canales de Estados Unidos presentan un documental sobre la historia del regimiento

POR JOSÉ A. DELGADO  
jdelgado@elnuevodia.com

WASHINGTON – La historia del Regimiento 65 de Infantería, incluidas sus míticas batallas y las controversias que aún genera, ha comenzado a presentarse en canales públicos de Estados Unidos a través del documental "The Borinqueneers".

El filme, realizado por Producciones El Pozo, narra por voz de veteranos de guerra e historiadores las hazañas y conflictos del primer regimiento hispano, inicialmente formado casi en su totalidad por puertorriqueños, de las Fuerzas Armadas de Estados Unidos.

"Es la historia del regimiento desde sus comienzos en 1899, un recorrido a través de la Primera y Segunda Guerra Mundial, y en especial de la guerra de Corea", explicó Noemí Figueroa Soulet, productora, directora y escritora del documental, que espera pueda exhibirse pronto en Puerto Rico a través de la Corporación para la Difusión Pública (WIPR).

Para el documental fueron entrevis-

tados cerca de 275 soldados y dos docenas de ellos son protagonistas del mismo. El documental, coproducido por Raquel Ortiz, es narrado en inglés por el actor de origen boricua Héctor Elizondo y, en español, por el locutor puertorriqueño David Ortiz Angleró.

En entrevista telefónica desde Nueva York, Figueroa Soulet afirmó que su producción trata también, sin llegar a conclusiones, las denuncias de que el consejo de guerra en Corea en contra de 93 soldados del 65 de Infantería estuvo salpicado de un ambiente de prejuicios étnicos. El consejo de guerra fue ordenado después de que soldados del regimiento, en el otoño de 1952, se negaron a ejecutar nuevas misiones en las colinas Kelly y Jackson Heights, en momentos en que las unidades chinas, numéricamente más grandes, atormentaban a las tropas estadounidenses.

En Kelly y Jackson Heights cayó casi la mitad de los 743 soldados boricuas que perdieron la vida en la guerra de Corea.

Un grupo de los soldados sometidos a consejos de guerra obtuvo clemencia,

pero una organización cívica, Puerto Rican American Research Institute, ha intentado sin éxito, a pesar del apoyo de las autoridades de la Isla, que el gobierno de George W. Bush les otorgue una exoneración total. "Tratamos de ser neutral, cada persona decide qué hubiese hecho en la posición en que se encontraron esos soldados", indicó Figueroa Soulet.

Ya se han efectuado o programado presentaciones especiales del documental en algunas comunidades boricuas. Pero, este mes comenzó a difundirse con fuerza en canales públicos de televisión de Florida, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, California, Texas y New Hampshire. Figueroa Soulet espera que WIPR lo difunda en la Isla.

Además de haberse realizado en español e inglés, el documental tiene dos versiones. La versión larga es de 78 minutos, la corta, que suele ser preferida por los canales de televisión, es de 60 minutos.

La reacción de la comunidad boricua al documental ha sido extraordinaria, según la productora. "Nunca me imaginé las emociones que genera (el 65 de Infantería) en muchas personas que recuerdan a sus familiares que formaron parte del regimiento", indicó Figueroa.

**N**unca me imaginé las emociones que genera (el 65 de Infantería) en muchas personas que recuerdan a sus familiares que formaron parte del regimiento"

**NOEMI FIGUEROA SOULET**  
productora



# Hell froze over in Korea for Puerto Rican troops

Sunday is Nov. 11, Veterans Day. Americans will salute everyone who has served in our armed forces, including the 1 million soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who gave their lives to help preserve our freedom.

To honor our veterans, the New York Post will profile local heroes who served our nation during its times of need in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm.

By NEIL GRAVES

No war has ever been fought in Antarctica. The closest we've come so far is Korea.

Temperatures there routinely plunged to 20 and 30 degrees below zero. Among those shedding blood in that war was the 65th Infantry Regiment, an all-Puerto Rican unit.

"Every morning, they cut legs and hands because of the frostbite," said Israel Montalvo, 73, a former machine-gunner who recalled his spit turning to ice before it would hit the ground. You had to keep moving. If you don't, you're dead."

About 99 percent of the soldiers in the 65th came from Puerto Rico and their home base, Camp Tortuguero, just outside San Juan. Which is why one New Yorker had an awakening.

"I'd never heard of the 65th," admitted Eugene Quevedo, 75, who was drafted upon graduating high school here, handed a rifle and assigned to the Puerto Rican regiment. "But I'm glad I served. It was a good outfit."

President Harry Truman's executive order of 1948 desegregated the military. This led to the 65th having one of the rarest footnotes in all of America's 225 years worth of battalions, regiments and



**FIGHTING 65th:** Veterans of the 65th Regiment — proudly calling themselves the "Borinqueneers" — include (from left) Jaime Lopez, Eugenio Quevedo, Israel Montalvo and José Antonio de la Rosa-Melendez.

N.Y. Post: Tamara Beckwith

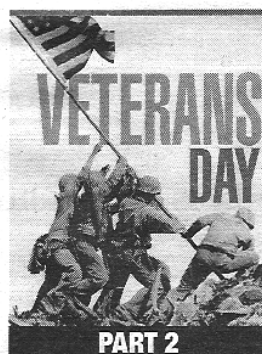
divisions.

"By May 1952, most of the African-American units had been integrated — but not the 65th," said Westchester filmmaker Noemi Figueroa Soulet, who is shooting a documentary on the unit.

"It was possibly the last unit to be integrated. They began slowly around January 1953, but over the next three months, they began assigning 'continental' soldiers and transferring out Puerto Ricans."

Korea was the first war in which the armed forces began using a rotation system — placing one year as a ceiling on combat duty and shipping men out. As the war dragged on, the unit's Hispanic influence waned: Spanish-speaking officers were transferred out and mainland officers and enlisted men filled the ranks.

"It eventually ended up about 10 percent Puerto



Rican," Figueroa Soulet said. "There were more 'continental' officers at the end of the war than the beginning."

Although the African-Americans, Japanese-Americans and Native Americans have been belatedly getting their just military due, the Puerto Rican soldiers' legacy has been strictly low-profile, the vets complain.

"I watch the History

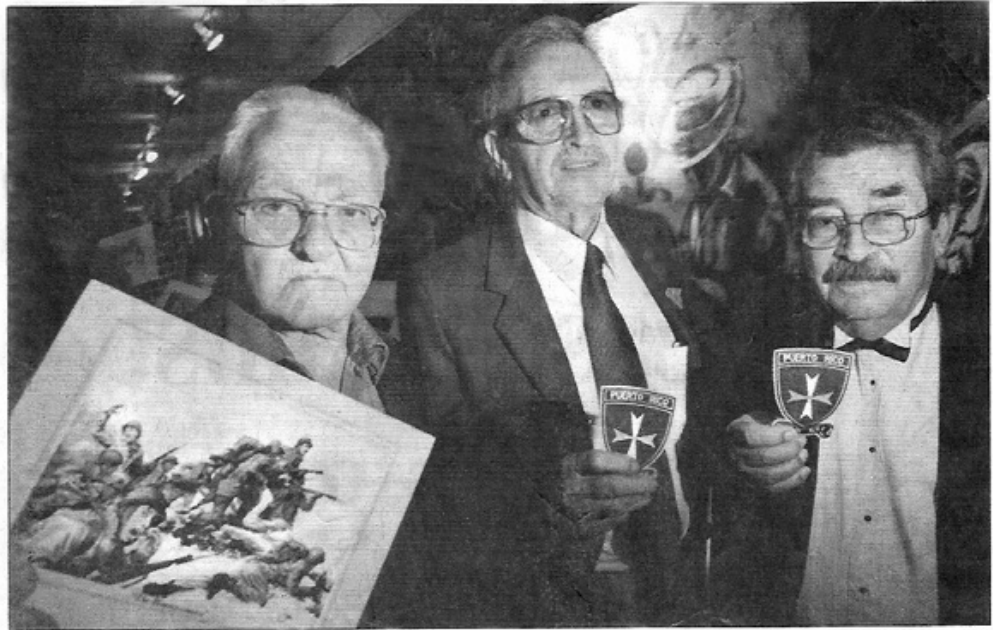
Channel and I see the Nisei and I see Buffalo Soldiers, but nothing about the 65th," Quevedo said.

"The American people must learn about a regiment that sacrificed their lives."

Today, the next generation of "Borinqueneers" — as the Puerto Rican soldiers called themselves — are itching to get some trigger time in Afghanistan and make their own history.

"My son [Staff Sgt. Jaime Lopez Jr.] — we call him Jimmy — is stationed at Fort Bragg, he's a Ranger," said Jaime Lopez, 70, a rifleman who fought in Korea from 1951 to 1952.

"He wants to be where the action is. He phoned me and I told him, 'You're so lucky you are not there.' He got so mad. He said, 'No, Popi, I want to fight, I want to fight, I want to fight!'"



AL DIAZ/HERALD STAFF

**VETERANS:** Former members of the 65th Infantry Regiment, from left, Ramon Torres of Tampa, Pedro Santana of Miami and Jose Mercado of Kissimmee were honored at Friday's reception.

## Filmmaker offers preview of upcoming documentary

BY ADRIANA CORDOVI  
acordovi@herald.com

Through the power of film, Noemí Figueroa Soulet hopes to tell the story of a group of soldiers from her native land — Puerto Rico.

For three years she has been documenting soldiers' lives from the 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic unit in U.S. military history. It was made up of Puerto Rican soldiers and fought in World Wars I and II and the Korean War before the squadron was integrated.

Although the documentary, *The Puerto Rican Soldier: The Borinqueneers of the 65th Infantry Regiment*, is still in the works, she gave a 12-minute sneak preview Friday during a

**LAST NIGHT**

### Film examines group of Puerto Rican soldiers.

reception at the Hyatt Regency Miami. Hosted by the Puerto Rican Professional Association of South Florida, the event honored the regiment's soldiers and raised money to produce her film.

"I'm very excited that I have been able to help," said former soldier Ramon Torres of Tampa. His father, also named Ramon, had also been one of the group's first soldiers.

Torres was one of three soldiers at the reception, which featured an art exhibit by six Puerto Rican artists, a concert by the Puerto Rico Handbells Choir, and the documentary's preview.

"I appreciate the initiative to pay homage to our regiment," said former soldier Pedro Santana of Miami. "It brings back many memories for us."

Luia A. Torres, vice chairman of PROFESA, says it hosted the event because the soldiers needed to be honored for their bravery and their contributions. "We feel it's an untold story, and it's necessary to bring out," he said.

Soulet, who is based in New York and is co-producing the film with Raquel Ortiz, has interviewed 175 war veterans from the regiment. "I think it's important for the Puerto Rican community to know about its heroes," she said. Catalina Rullan, who attended Friday's reception, called it "a family affair." She took her 8-year-old daughter, Gabriela, with her. "It's a way for her to get in touch with her roots," she said.



# Puerto Rican veterans gain respect with film

By WALTER PACHECO  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

A Puerto Rican regiment is being recognized in a documentary for its heroic efforts during the Korean War after more than a half-century of near obscurity.

Noemi Figueroa Soulet, who is producing the film in New York, is in the Orlando area to interview veterans of the 65th Infantry, which is well-known on the island but not in the States.

She came to Orlando because the

region is known for its burgeoning Puerto Rican population.

"The unique experience of the only all-Hispanic unit in [U.S.] military history was my inspiration for this film. These men were second-class citizens who could not vote but still had to go to war. Many did not even speak English," Soulet said. "They were thrust to serve a country they knew little about, yet fought to the end to defend it."

Islanders, although U.S. citizens

PLEASE SEE VETERANS, B2

## Soldiers faced courts-martial during Korean War

VETERANS FROM B1

cannot vote for the president.

Carlos Ruiz Gaudin, 70, a Company B rifleman with the 65th Infantry, tells stories of bone-chilling weather and "chinitis" — a word the troops coined to describe their fear of the Chinese division in Korea.

"There were moments when you were just too scared to raise your head for fear you'd be killed by the Chinese," Gaudin said. "Only our families know these stories, and they are the ones that keep them alive for us."

The U.S. Army organized the 65th Infantry Regiment in 1899, a year after Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States.

In the 1950s it was dubbed "Borinqueneers" after the Indian tribe of Puerto Rico. The military brass also referred to the unit as the "rum and Coke" outfit.

Although the soldiers initially were drafted solely for the defense of the island, they later would serve in World War I and II.

However, it was during the Korean War that the soldiers of the 65th Infantry proved that they were no fizzy cocktail, but a heroic and worthy regiment.

Gaudin remembers suffering a nasty spell of frostbite that nearly killed him while defending his post.

"I had lost my glove while I was standing guard at my post. Suddenly, I couldn't feel my hand, arms and, later, my entire body. All I could do was move my eyes — I was frozen," Gaudin said.

He remained in a makeshift hospital recovering for two

### On the Web

For more information on the 65th Infantry Regiment, visit [www.prsoldier.com](http://www.prsoldier.com).

weeks before he was sent back to the battlefield.

Other soldiers faced deadlier enemies than frostbite.

In one battle in Seoul, the soldiers fought for three days, then charged into the fray with fixed bayonets and forced out a Chinese division.

They also were instrumental in protecting the U.S. Marines after a failed attack in North Korea.

That battle was captured in a 1992 painting commissioned by the National Guard Founda-

tion. A lesser-known and controversial incident resulted in the courts-martial of several men of the regiment after they were accused of abandoning their posts.

"These men considered this battle a suicide mission and refused to fight. After the court-martial, all the sentences were remitted, and they were honorably discharged," Figueroa Soulet said.

### 'Amazing stories'

However, much of this history remains unrecorded.

"Many of these veterans have amazing stories about how they survived before and



U.S. ARMY

**Untold story.** The 65th Infantry Regiment, the only all-Hispanic company in U.S. military history, has been rarely studied in the United States. Many in the regiment were recognized for bravery.

after the war, yet you can't find any of that in our history books," said Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, an assistant journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin who is researching the social and cultural impact of Hispanic military men from the 1920s to post-Korean War America.

"The lack of Latino scholars accounts for the little research done on Hispanics in the military," Rivas-Rodriguez added. "There is a real urgency to capture the history of these veterans."

Many of the surviving

veterans from the regiment are in advancing years, and few remain to tell their stories.

Gaudin himself is ailing from diabetes and cirrhosis of the liver.

"I may not be in the best of health, but I get around. It is very important to me that other people will know what happened to us during the Korean War," Gaudin said. "We have much to tell."

### Honor at Arlington

A few years ago, the regiment was honored with a plaque at Arlington National

Cemetery.

"Many of the members of the 65th Infantry Regiment received Silver Stars and Purple Hearts for their bravery and service in the U.S. military," said Rep. Jose Serrano, D-N.Y., during the Arlington ceremony. "It is so important that we recognize their contributions and include them in the history that is taught in our schools so that young people can learn about their accomplishments."

Walter Pacheco can be reached at [wpacheco@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:wpacheco@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-6262.



# el diario *vivir*

## 'El Soldado Puertorriqueño'

Noemí Figueroa Soulet lucha por terminar este documental que relata la historia de la única unidad hispana segregada en la historia militar de los Estados Unidos.

MARÍA VEGA

**¿**Cuándo estará listo el documental de Noemí Figueroa Soulet sobre el regimiento 65 de Infantería?

"Eso es lo que todo el mundo me pregunta", responde Figueroa Soulet. "Yo mantengo una lista de gente que me manda notas por correo electrónico, y cartas, preguntando".

"Ya he trabajado en esto por cuatro años, y me gustaría terminarlo mañana mismo", agrega. "Pero si no consigo el dinero para terminarlo, no va a ver nunca la luz del día. Esa es la triste realidad".

Es la triste realidad de mucha de la gente que trabaja en documentales. Las emisoras comerciales usualmente no muestran interés, y en el mundo de las emisoras no-comerciales hay mucha competencia y poco dinero.

Figueroa Soulet dice que el 90 por ciento de las personas que comienzan proyectos documentales no llegan a terminarlos, por los innumerables obstáculos.

Pero ella está resuelta a terminar el suyo.

El documental, 'El Soldado Puertorriqueño', relatará la historia de la única unidad hispana segregada en la historia militar de los Estados Unidos.

El regimiento 65 de Infantería comenzó como una unidad voluntaria en 1899.

Relata Figueroa Soulet que a pesar de las barreras del discriminación racial y el idioma, los

miembros del regimiento se ganaron el respeto de autoridades militares, como el general Douglas MacArthur. Combatieron en el frente brutal de la Guerra de Corea, y recibieron numerosas condecoraciones.

Pero en los Estados Unidos, indica la creadora del documental, el 65 de Infantería ha sido un regimiento olvidado.

Figueroa Soulet ha rescatado historias como la del sargento José A. Negrón, recomendado en 1951 para una Estrella de Plata que nunca recibió.

Figueroa Soulet busca corregir ese tipo de injusticias de la historia con su documental.

Ya todo el documental ha sido filmado, con entrevistas a numerosos veteranos. Pero hace falta editar el material y prepararlo profesionalmente. Figueroa Soulet calcula que todavía le falta recaudar \$70 mil para completar el proceso.

Para recaudar fondos, Figueroa Soulet presenta porciones de su documental en actividades públicas, en las que frecuentemente también participan veteranos del 65 de Infantería.

Este sábado se realizará una de esas presentaciones en la Biblioteca Pública de Newark, en una actividad co-espiciada por el Centro Hispano de Investigación e Información de Nueva Jersey (NJHRIIC).

Este otoño, bajo el auspicio de las fuerzas armadas, porciones del documental también



Foto: U.S. ARMY PHOTOS

**AL FRAGOR DE LA BATALLA** - El tercer batallón protegiendo un valle al norte de Chorwan, Korea, el 15 de junio de 1951. Abajo, los soldados fatigados regresan a la seguridad después de dos días atrapados en un sitio al norte del río Han, junio de 1951, Korea.



serán mostradas a miembros del ejército estadounidense en Corea del Sur.

Figueroa Soulet espera que al continuar mostrando parte del proyecto, consiga eventualmente el resto de los fondos que necesita para completar el documental.

Señaló que siente la pre-

sión del paso del tiempo. "Tres de los veteranos, de las entrevistas principales, han muerto en los últimos años", dijo. "Murieron sin ver el documental terminado, y eso me rompe el corazón".

Presentación de 'El Soldado Puertorriqueño', charla con Figueroa Soulet y vetera-

nos del 65 de Infantería, este sábado a las 2 p.m. en la Biblioteca de Newark, 5 de Washington Street, Newark, Nueva Jersey. Entrada gratuita. Datos: (973) 733-7772 o [www.npl.org](http://www.npl.org) Más información sobre 'El Soldado Puertorriqueño' en [www.prsoldier.com](http://www.prsoldier.com)