



For Immediate Release

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In P.O.V.'s "Made in L.A.," Three Immigrant Women Stand Up To the California Fashion Industry, Tuesday, Sept. 4 on PBS

Who Are America's Immigrant Workers? Documentary Reveals
New Americans and the Human Cost of Fashion

A co-production of the Independent Television Service (ITVS). A Diverse Voices Project Co-production. A co-presentation with Latino Public Broadcasting.

Lupe Hernandez, a five-foot tall dynamo who learned survival skills at an early age, has been working in Los Angeles garment factories for over 15 years since she left Mexico City at age 17. Maura Colorado left her three children in the care of relatives in El Salvador 18 years ago while she sought work in L.A. to support them. She found that the low-paid work came with a high price — wretched conditions in the factories and an “undocumented” status that deprived her of seeing her children. María Pineda came to Southern California from Mexico in hopes of a better life when she was 18, with an equally young husband. After 23 years, substandard working conditions, a meager salary and domestic abuse have left her struggling for her children’s future and for her own human dignity.

These three women, along with other immigrant workers, as movingly portrayed in the new **P.O.V.** documentary **Made in L.A.**, came together in 2001 at L.A.’s Garment Worker Center to take a stand for their rights. Against all odds, these seemingly defenseless workers launched a very public challenge to one of the city’s flagship clothiers, calling attention to the dark side of low-wage labor north of the border. The worker-led boycott of fashionable Forever 21 not only harkened to an earlier era of struggle for immigrant rights, but also revealed the social fault lines of the new globalization. For Lupe, Maura and María, the long campaign to get the company to pay fair wages and accept responsibility for working conditions in the company’s own backyard became a turning point from victimization to empowerment.

Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar’s **Made in L.A.** has its national broadcast premiere the day after Labor Day, on **Tuesday, Sept. 4, 2007** at 10 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 20th anniversary season of public television’s groundbreaking P.O.V. series. (Check local listings.) American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television’s premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

Welcome to Los Angeles — a modern port of entry for immigrants, many of whom come to the United States desperately looking for work, either to send money home, bring other family members here, or try to build better lives for themselves and their children. Lacking English skills and frequently lacking legal immigration status, they find temporary or seasonal work in industries such as agriculture, restaurants,

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construction and janitorial services. But in addition to these more recognizable jobs, many end up working in L.A.'s garment factories. In a throwback to another century, some of these factories are actually modern-day sweatshops, where garment workers — principally female and Latino or Asian — work 10-14-hour days in poorly ventilated, locked facilities at wages well below California's minimum. Often denied eating and bathroom breaks, they must also contend with unpaid wages and overtime.

Even as U.S. manufacturing jobs are shipped to lower-wage countries (Mexico, China and Indonesia), poor workers still risk life and limb to come to this country. And because the chic stores are only a bus ride away, they can see the garments they sew for pennies being sold at retail prices.

Like many other low-wage industries employing immigrant workers, the multi-national garment industry in Los Angeles uses a network of contractors and sub-contractors to manufacture its apparel while insulating itself from the workers' low wages and poor working conditions. **Made in L.A.** lays out a system that makes labor laws nearly impossible to enforce and keeps workers trapped between contractor and law enforcement, while trendy stores and their customers are unaware of the human costs. But **Made in L.A.** is more an account of the remarkable protest mounted by the Center's workers and the revealing stories of three women who join the struggle.

How are poor, illegal immigrants, vulnerable to job loss and deportation, to challenge the status quo? María must support her children with little help from her alcoholic husband. Her resignation is increasingly challenged by her desperate circumstances. Maura suffers from 18 years of being unable to visit her children or to bring them safely to the U.S., and must fear even more the deportation that would leave them all without an economic lifeline. Lupe wasn't able to finish high school in Mexico before she came north; now she laments she knows "only garment work." But she is spirited and ready for change, and quickly learns a good deal more as she helps other workers learn their rights.

Under the aegis of the Garment Worker Center, an advocacy group run, in many instances, by children of Asian immigrants, the three women and other workers decide first to make a forthright approach to the clothing company. There is some hope that the company, with its particular dependence on the L.A. immigrant workforce and vulnerability to local publicity — not to mention its ownership by immigrants — will negotiate with the workers and their attorneys from the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. When this approach is rebuffed, the workers launch a two-pronged attack, seeking to sue for unpaid wages and overtime owed by the company's contractors, while organizing protests and boycotts of the chain's outlets. Their rallies are conducted outside stores and outside the home of Forever 21's president, Do Won Chang.

As seen through the eyes of María, Maura, and Lupe, the workers' struggle for basic economic justice and personal dignity is fraught with disappointments and dangers, but also hope and growth. The company buys time as the lawsuit works its way through the courts. As the campaign drags on through three long years, it looks as if the company is trying to wear the workers down and might be succeeding. Meetings at the Garment Worker Center become more contentious, and a number of workers drop out of the campaign. María stops coming to the Center; Lupe becomes disillusioned.

Months later, the story takes a turn when the workers' lawsuit finally moves forward. The boycott campaign is an odyssey for everyone involved, and the three women find the strength and resources to continue their struggle. Each woman is transformed by the journey. The shy María makes life-changing decisions that she never could have envisioned three years ago, and Maura, who could only see her children on a worn 1987 videotape, struggles for her rights and tries to reunite with her kids, now grown.

Lupe can hardly believe it as she gradually becomes a spokeswoman for the Garment Worker Center and is eventually hired as an organizer, traveling to such far-flung places as New York and

Hong Kong. The United States has been here before, she sees when she visits New York's Ellis Island and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and learns of the struggles of Jewish and other European immigrant garment workers of another era, tragically galvanized by the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. "It's just like today!" she exclaims.

Compelling, humorous and deeply human, **Made in L.A.** is a story about immigration, the power of unity and the courage it takes to find one's voice.

"Like many recent immigrants, I came to this country from my native Spain thinking I'd just be here 'for a while,'" says director Carracedo. "Like many recent immigrants, I ended up staying."

"When we started this film, we did not anticipate that the garment workers' campaign would take three years and that the story would take a deeper turn," she continues. "Struggles cause people to change, and we were amazed to observe each woman's growing sense of self-confidence and self-worth. It became clear to us that this was the story that needed to be told and that the women's struggle mattered not just for its own sake, but because it served as a catalyst for each of them, in her own way, to stand up, to say, 'I exist. And I have rights'."

Made in L.A. is a co-production of Semilla Verde Productions, Inc., the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* (made possible through major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting). It is a co-presentation with Latino Public Broadcasting.

About the filmmakers:

Almudena Carracedo

Director/Producer/Cinematographer/Co-editor

Trained in film production in Madrid and Paris, Almudena worked as a television director in Spain, directing programs for broadcast on Canal+. In 2000, she came to the U.S. as an international scholar to work on her doctoral dissertation on U.S./Mexico border documentaries at the University of California Los Angeles. Her documentary on Tijuana as a border town, "Welcome, A Docu-Journey of Impressions," received the Sterling Award for Best Short Documentary at SILVERDOCS and screened in numerous national and international festivals. Five years in the making, **Made in L.A.** is her first feature documentary. Almudena is a recent fellow of the National Association of Latino Independent Producers' Latino Producers Academy. She lives in Los Angeles.

Robert Bahar

Producer

Robert is director and co-founder of Doculink, a grassroots organization for documentary filmmakers, and sits on the Board of Directors of the International Documentary Association. He produced and directed the award-winning documentary "Laid to Waste," which aired on Philadelphia PBS stations, and has line-produced and associate-produced several independent films including ITVS's "Diary of a City Priest," which premiered at Sundance, and "Pittsburgh," which premiered at Tribeca. He holds an M.F.A. from The Peter Stark Program at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television. He lives in Los Angeles.

Credits:

Director:	Almudena Carracedo
Producers:	Robert Bahar, Almudena Carracedo
Cinematographer:	Almudena Carracedo
Writers:	Almudena Carracedo, Robert Bahar, Lisa Leeman
Editors:	Lisa Leeman, Kim Roberts, Almudena Carracedo
Original Music:	Joseph Julian Gonzalez
Running Time:	70:00 (airing with two short films for a total running time of 86:46)

Awards & Festivals:

- SILVERDOCS Documentary Festival, June 2007, Silver Spring, Md.
- Los Angeles Film Festival, June 2007
- New York International Latino Film Festival, July 2007



ITVS funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the PBS series *Independent Lens*. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences.

Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. For more information, please visit www.itvs.org.



Created in 1998 by Edward James Olmos and Marlene Dermer, Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB) is a non-profit organization funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. LPB's mission is to support the development, production, post-production, acquisition and distribution of non-commercial educational and cultural television that is representative of or addresses issues of particular interest to U.S. Latinos. These programs are produced for dissemination to public broadcasting stations and other public telecommunications entities. Mr. Olmos is LPB's Chairman of the Board of Directors.



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, 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 September, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought nearly 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now 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 is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces special features for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video and community-based and educational content. P.O.V. Interactive produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. P.O.V.'s Web site houses *Talking Back*, where viewers comment, engage in dialogue and link to resources. The P.O.V. Web site and archives, including special sites from previous broadcasts, form a unique online resource for documentary storytelling.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these original materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences. P.O.V. works closely with local PBS stations to partner with museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* expands these efforts by working with youth-service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with additional support from JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the official sponsor of P.O.V.'s 20th Anniversary Campaign. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York.

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