

NHMC to Honor Actor-Comedian John Leguizamo

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February 3, 2009 – Pasadena, CA – Colombian-born actor and comedian John Leguizamo was voted “Most Talkative” in high school and he hasn’t stopped expressing himself since. With boundless energy and creativity, this multi-faceted performer has proven that it is possible to be taken seriously both as a raunchy comic and a serious dramatic actor. As such, the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) will present Leguizamo with an Impact Award for Outstanding Performance in a Motion Picture on February 20th for the actor’s most recent work in the comedy “Nothing Like the Holidays,” directed by Alfredo De Villa and written by Rick Najera and Alison Swan. “Very few Latino personalities have had such a powerful impact on critics and fans alike” said Alex Nogales, NHMC President & CEO. The NHMC, one of the country’s foremost Latino media advocacy and civil rights organizations, will honor John at its upcoming 12th Annual Impact Awards Gala at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, celebrating outstanding theatrical, television and film performances by Latinos both in front and back of camera. Mr. Leguizamo will join past NHMC Impact Award recipients Edward James Olmos, America Ferrera, Eva Longoria and George Lopez in this prestigious honor.

Born in Bogotá, Leguizamo immigrated to the U.S. with his family at the age of four and grew up in Queens, New York. He began writing material for himself in high school, testing it out on his classmates and when he decided to become an actor, enrolled at New York University. He majored in Theater at NYU and was the only Latino in his drama classes. “I see the new Latin artist as a pioneer, opening up doors for others to follow,” explains the 1999 Emmy Winner for “Freak,” a semi-falsified, one-man stand-up performance as himself, “And when they don’t open, we crowbar our way in.”

Leguizamo began a career that defies categorization as a stand-up comedian in New York and debuted on television in 1986 in “Miami Vice.” His film debut followed in 1989 with a small role in Brian De Palma’s “Casualties of War” and in 1995, Leguizamo created and starred in “House of Buggin’,” a TV comedy-variety show in the style of the Fox hit show, “In Living Color.” However, despite a number of positive reviews and two Emmy nominations, the show was canceled after a relatively brief run. The show cancellation did not discourage John’s ambition; he went on to earn a Golden Globe nomination for his portrayal as the flamboyant Chi Chi Rodriguez in “To Wong Foo: Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar.”

“There is no doubt that the extremely talented John Leguizamo has been a breakthrough performer for the Latino community in mainstream Hollywood,” explained Nogales, “Among his many strengths lies his ability to not take his ethnic background too seriously, but also to take pride in where he comes from.”

For more information on the NHMC Impact Awards Gala or for sponsorship opportunities or tickets to the February 20th event, please go to www.nhmc.org or call (626) 792-6462.

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