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For Immediate Release

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5th Annual Conference on Latinos, Faith, Culture, HIV and Mental Health is Held to an Over Capacity Audience

Los Angeles, CA - The Wall-Las Memorias Project hosted the 5th Annual Conference on Latinos, Faith, Culture, HIV and Mental Health to an over capacity audience of 220 congregants and religious leaders on Monday at the California Endowment.

Faith leaders and congregants from throughout the nation attended and celebrated a milestone as it reached its 5th year of existence.

Richard L. Zaldivar, Founder and Executive Director of The Wall-Las Memorias Project, opened the program by highlighting the importance of empowering communities of faith to address and help fight social issues and to acknowledge the important role that women have made in spirituality and faith. Zaldivar stated, "Women have made and continue to be the foundation in building, restoring our faith and fighting for social justice in our community."

The conference, which took place Monday, October 24th at the California Endowment in Downtown Los Angeles, provided participants with vital awareness and educational information on topics including HIV, faith, culture and mental health.



Pictured from left to right:
Long time supporter Dean Leavenworth of Time Warner, Sister Catherine Bazar,
Tania Rodriguez - Board Chair, and Richard Zaldivar -Executive Director

Sister Catherine Bazar started the morning session and challenged the audience urging the need to collaboratively address human services and social change as a community. Sister Catherine was honored with a standing ovation for her inspirational words and decades of service. "The speakers and the subject areas that were addressed defined very well a program that dedicates itself to the challenges of the Latino community in dealing with faith, culture, and health. I am especially happy that women have been recognized for their potential to bring healing into such a rich community," stated Sister Catherine Bazar at the end of her presentation.



Dr. John Burnett of City Hope
presenting on HIV Gene Therapy

Dr. John Burnett, a lead researcher from City of Hope provided insight into the current studies being conducted in the area of gene therapy and the quest to cure HIV/AIDS. Conference participants were visibly moved by the scientific progress made in moving a step closer to finding a cure for HIV/AIDS.

Nearing the end of the conference, participants were treated to a first time screening of *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America*, narrated by nationally renowned journalist Cokie Roberts. The film depicts how Sisters played a vital role in shaping American life from before the earliest days of the republic and throughout its history.

Conference Presentations Include:

- Can You Hear Me Now? Bold Awakening for Women in Social Healing, Sister Catherine Marie Bazar, Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose
- Government Under the Influence: How the alcohol industry promotes alcohol harm in our communities, Jorge E. Castillo, MA, Advocacy & Outreach Manager, Alcohol Justice
- Gene Therapy and the Quest to Cure HIV/AIDS, John C. Burnett, PH.D., Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology, The City of Hope
- The Use of La Botanica and HIV/AIDS: How we can orient our community about the benefits and risks. Octavio Vallejo, Treatment Education Specialist, APLA
- Risk Behaviors in Latina Women with HIV/AIDS and HIV Disclosure and Stigma in Latino MSM in Los Angeles County, Dr. Doug Frye, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.P.M., Director, HIV Epidemiology Program, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- DEPRESSION: Discovery and Empowerment to Understand, Empathize and Intervene, Dr. Maria Aguilar, Community Psychiatrist at Northeast Wellness Center, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Entendiendo La Salud y El Bienestar de La Mujer (Understanding Women's Health and Wellness), Silvia Valerio, Educadora de Salud, Bienestar
- Coalition Against Excessive Alcohol Use and Violence at Dodger Stadium
- The Federal Health Law and California: What's New, What's Next and What Do We Need to Do? Anthony Wright, Executive Director, Health Access California
- HIV and STD Syndemic Among Latinos in Los Angeles County, Mike Janson, Division of HIV & STD Programs
- Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America - Screening - 56-minute documentary

Copies of conference presentations will be made available online November 7, 2011.

The Wall-Las Memorias Project would like to thank the following sponsors for their support of this year's conference: The California Endowment, Kaiser Permanente, GlaxoSmithKline, Abbott Virology, PhRMA. The conference is also partially supported by funds received from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS Programs and Policy.

The Wall-Las Memorias Project is dedicated to promoting wellness and preventing illness

among Latino populations affected by HIV/AIDS by using the inspiration of The AIDS Monument as a catalyst for social change.

Visit us at www.thewalllasmemorias.org

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