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Latino film series goes on

'Cultural Identities' is part of 'The Giving Voice Project'

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The penultimate film in UW's inaugural Latino film series, "Cultural Identities Across Generations" premiered Thursday, in room 105 of the Classroom building, fueling what Director of Latino Studies Dr. Cecilia Aragon, calls "A mesh of intercultural exchanges between divergent views."

The film is a production of the Wyoming Humanities Council. The council conceived "The Giving Voice Project" in 2012, a project with a spotlight on interaction and the spread of ideas from minority groups. The group College Bound Latinas decided to participate, giving young Latinas in Jackson Hole, Wyo. cameras and allowed to tell their stories regarding their Hispanic roots.

The documentary, titled "Voces Latinas de Wyoming/ Latina Voices in Wyoming" follows this group of Latina girls. Utilizing both the girls' videos and interviews recorded by the documenters, the young women are shown discussing a number of topics including difficulties in school, their personal relationships with Mexico and even the popularity of one of the girls who has amassed an international following on Twitter.

The film culminates with its subjects aiding their mentors in a presentation at TEDxJacksonHole. The presentation finds its apex with a provocative thought provided by one of the girls: "When you look at me," she says, "you need to see possibilities."

Several of the young females and one of their mentors, Isabel Zumel, were present for the viewing of the documentary. The group welcomed questions from the audience after the viewing was finished.

Despite their cinematic debut, the Latinas said movies are not a part of the future they have planned for themselves. However, they explained they would like to be part of projects similar to "College Bound Latinas," and said they are planning on mentoring middle-school girls this summer and look forward to other



Photo: Kevin Johnson

Assistant Professor Aurora Chang of the UW department of educational studies and faculty affiliate of Latina/o Studies (pictured far right) moderates a question/answer round with the creators of "Voces Latinas de Wyoming/Latina Voices of Wyoming" (left). The final documentary of the Latino Film Series, "The Narrative Pathway of UW students", will be presented on Wednesday, April 30, at 7 p.m. in Room 105 of the Classroom Building.

opportunities like it.

Zumel discussed the importance of communication in forms like mentoring, saying it is a gift everybody should consider giving.

"It's a big commitment," she said, "but it's doable."

Each of the girls present at the event expressed her continued intention to become a college graduate.

The Latino film series, "Cultural Identities Across Generations," is the brainchild of the UW Latino Studies Program, with its faculty finding the films and putting together the event. They intend to make the series an annual venture,

said Dr. Cecilia Aragon, director of Latino Studies. The program will continue to host the series, but a different group will pick the films each year. She hopes they will be able to work with the Spanish Language Department next year, and many other groups in the years to come.

Aragon has great aspirations for the social change to come from the Latino film series.

"We're hoping to invite people to bring to the table issues that can be addressed in the state of Wyoming, so a better understanding of Latinos - a better understanding of how Latinos have always been a part of the cultural fabric

of the U.S. - can be found," she said.

This year's Latino film series will close with its third film, premiering on April 30th in room 105 of the Classroom building. This film will be a collection of short, filmed autobiographies from UW students. The autobiographies are assigned to the students in the Mexican American Literature: Chicana/o Autobiography class.

During the discussion that occurred after the film, one of the class' students asked for some advice on filming himself. In response, one of the documentary subjects announced, "Be sure to wear makeup!"