



# Press Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
June 29, 2016

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## Lynwood Unified Students Screen Films at New York Tribeca Film Festival

**Lynwood** – Four Lynwood Unified students gained creative inspiration during a recent trek to Robert DeNiro’s acclaimed Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, where they joined professional filmmakers and 200 New York student filmmakers in screening their original works.

Seniors Oscar Dominguez and Christian Cuevas from Lynwood High School and juniors Jasmine Wheatley and Virginia Ortega from the AdvancePath Academy, an alternative school site operated in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Probation Department, watched other student and professional films at the festival while screening two of their own.

All four student filmmakers collaborated on a film about the power of words driven by former South African President Nelson Mandela’s comment, “It always seems impossible until it’s done,” while Cuevas also wrote and directed “Miracle Whiplash,” a parody of the 2014 Oscar-winning film “Whiplash.”

“It felt good to see a film that I worked on up there on the screen,” Dominguez said. “I think it was the best film we produced this year and I’m really proud of what we accomplished.”

The trip was made possible through a partnership between Lynwood Unified and Southern California Crossroads, a nonprofit that holds programs for students to confront social issues through filmmaking.

Up to six Lynwood Unified students from the Crossroads program are invited to screen their works each year at the Tribeca Film Festival, representing the only out-of-state student attendees.

“It is a huge accomplishment for our students to have their work displayed around the nation,” Lynwood Unified Superintendent Paul Gothold said. “Our District prides itself on its visual and performing arts, and seeing our students crafting and showcasing projects like these speaks volumes about our students and these programs.”

The selection of Lynwood Unified students is based on attendance, participation, an essay and family background. The students raised the funds necessary for the trip and also received a donation from St. Francis Medical Center to help cover the costs of the trip.

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The **Lynwood Unified School District** is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support system for students and staff. For more information, visit [www.lynwood.k12.ca.us](http://www.lynwood.k12.ca.us).

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The “Power of Words” film presented an interview with Dr. Tchaka Shepherd, a surgeon at St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, who took viewers behind the scenes while he made his rounds throughout the hospital.

“We thought he was the perfect subject because he’s seen so much of what is happening in Lynwood,” Dominguez said.

Cuevas’ film, “Miracle Whiplash,” parodies a film about a high school drummer and his overbearing, intense band instructor.

“The festival was really inspiring because students on the East Coast have a different perspective than we do when creating films,” Wheatley said. “They really put their personal life stories and struggles into their videos, and that made it really emotional at times.”

Students attended the first of the two Tribeca film screenings the morning they arrived and went to Rikers Island for a second day of screenings held at the female prison complex as part of a screenings program for female inmates.

Dominguez and Cuevas graduated this month from Lynwood High and plan to attend college in the fall. Wheatley hopes to study law and Ortega looks to pursue film production after they graduate from AdvancePath next year.

“It is great to see our students get recognized for their talents at huge events like the Tribeca Film Festival,” Board President Alma-Delia Renteria said. “Very few students get an opportunity like this, and they deserved it for all the hard work they put into making these films.”

#### PHOTO CAPTION

**TRIBECAFILMFEST:** Lynwood Unified School District student filmmakers screened films at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. From left to right: St. Francis Medical Center trauma surgeon Dr. Gracie Dinkins, Southern California Crossroads film instructor Karla Vasquez, student filmmakers Jasmine Wheatley, Oscar Dominguez, Christian Cuevas and Virginia Ortega, and Crossroads film instructor Saul Cervantes.

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The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the cultivator of innovative thinkers, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves his or her highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to the greater society through a unique system distinguished by:

- ★ People of great character who inspire and lead by example
- ★ The instilling of courage to be creative
- ★ The transformative uses of technology
- ★ Safe and clean environments
- ★ The honoring of all voices of our community