



Dave Heineman
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Latino American Commission
Jasel Cantu
Public Information Officer
State Capitol Building
P.O. Box 94965
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4965
Phone: (402) 471-2791
Fax: (402) 471-4381

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Media Contact: Jasel Cantu
Phone: (402) 471-2791

LATINO AMERICAN COMMISSION ANNOUNCED AS WINNER IN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST NLAC photograph wins national contest among NCLR Affiliates

LINCOLN – A photograph submitted by the Nebraska Latino American Commission (NLAC) in Lincoln has been chosen as the winner in the 2013 Affiliate Photo Contest presented by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR).

NLCR is the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States with a network of nearly 300 affiliated organizations, of which NLAC is one of two affiliates in Nebraska. The Annual Affiliate Photo Contest provides NCLR with an opportunity to showcase the efforts and impact the affiliates bring to the community.

“NCLR is proud of the work of our Affiliates. Your story has helped inspire many others, and even us, to continue our work to improve the lives of Latinos. We commend your tireless work to create opportunities for Latinos in Nebraska and we look forward to strengthening our partnership,” said Daniel Rico, Senior Coordinator of Affiliate Member Services with NCLR.

The open call among the NCLR affiliates received a record number of entries for this year’s contest and NLAC’s photo was chosen as a top 10 finalist. The 10 photos were available for public voting on NCLR’s website and, after having received thousands of votes, NCLR staff chose the NLAC photo from the four photos with the most votes.

“We are proud to represent the hard work of NCLR’s affiliates and to have Nebraska represented in such a positive way, nationally,” said NLAC Executive Director Dr. Arturo Spindola.

The photograph is of Emily Hernandez, 16, a junior attending Lincoln East High School, proudly singing the national anthem at the 2013 Hispanic Heritage Month State Commemoration held at the Capitol Building on October 4, 2013. Hernandez is an enrolled member of the Ioway Tribe of Nebraska and is of Mexican descent. She was representing three nations at the Commemoration: the Ioway nation, the United States of America and the nation of Mexico.



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Hernandez is no stranger to the spotlight and representing her community, she is currently Miss Nebraska National Teenager and sung in Ireland in 2012 when she was a student ambassador to England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. She has also met President Barack Obama and was present at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony on Dec. 10, 2013 in Sweden after receiving the invitation from attending the National Society of High School Scholars.

“I will hold my head up high with dignity, pride and respect and represent my many cultures for this is truly what America is today,” said Hernandez of her win.

The photographer who took the photo for NLAC is excited for her work being nationally recognized.

Bethany Schmidt, 21, is a Political Science and Journalism student attending the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL). She currently works as a designer for the *Daily Nebraskan*, the UNL student newspaper, and as a page layout designer for the *Clear Water Express Evening News* newspaper. She volunteered to take photographs for the Commemoration while working as an intern at the Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission, which is located next door to NLAC. Schmidt expects to graduate in May 2014 and will use the prestigious honor for her portfolio and resume.

“I really liked that photo and I’m glad Emily is recognized as well,” said Schmidt. “It was a lot of fun, when I cover events it’s really standard but this one was lively. Emily was singing so beautifully and she’s so passionate about her heritage.”

“Our photo was different; it shows cross-cultural bridging and multiculturalism. We have a young Nebraska student who is giving back to her community by singing the national anthem. We believe that this image is an accurate and positive reflection of the United States of America and Nebraska. It is also a very patriotic image,” said Dr. Spindola.

The photo will be featured on the NCLR website and events, and will be printed in promotional materials and reports throughout the year.

NLAC has been serving as a link between the Nebraska State Government and the Latino community while empowering Latino families through education, social, political and economic opportunities since 1971 in Lincoln.

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NOTE: Photo Available.