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VIDEOS: Excerpts from show performed by Colegio Ponceño, Musical Theater Group - Ponce, Puerto:
<https://vimeo.com/165093380>
Student interview - Julio Cesar Betancourt:
<https://vimeo.com/165621873>

**30 TEENS FROM PUERTO RICO VISIT CHERRY HILL, NJ
AND PERFORM ANDREA GREEN AND SELMA TOLINS-KAUFMAN'S
HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL
FOSTERING ACCEPTANCE AND RESPECT
FROM JUNE 4 TO 9, 2016**



Colegio Ponceño, Musical Theater Group

Cherry Hill, NJ (May 17, 2016) -- It all starts with a dream – then mix in mission, music and passion and it's a great formula for success! These are the ingredients that quickly came together to make it possible for 30 teen actors from Colegio Ponceño Musical Theater Group in Ponce, Puerto Rico to come to Cherry Hill, NJ to perform HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL at Cherry Hill High School West. They arrive on June 4 for a five-day whirlwind of a tour and perform the family musical for the school on Tuesday, June 7 at noon and for the public that evening at 7 p.m. at Cherry Hill High School West. They'll also collaborate on a music video with theater students from Cherry Hill High School West in a song called "Stand Up for Yourself!"

This is happening due to the incredible foresight of long time Cherry Hill resident, award-winning

composer, playwright/director and music therapist, Andrea Green, and her collaborator school psychologist and playwright Selma Tolins-Kaufman, from Elkins Park, PA. They wrote the original in 1989 and the play has been performed all over the country. With messages that are universal – for kids and adults alike -- the musical breaks barriers and brings people together. With school-related themes, they focus on acceptance and respect to help teens in these crucial growing up years. When Green and Tolins-Kaufman visited Puerto Rico this winter to see it performed by the Colegio Ponceño Musical Theater Group perform the play, they decided the kids should perform it here, in the Philadelphia area.

HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL was created to foster empathy, understanding, acceptance and respect between teens. Through the story and music, it services as a model to teach tolerance to teens worldwide. Student performer Aimar Galarza said enthusiastically, “When we presented HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL, I saw people in the audience cry and hold each other and I knew HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL can make this world a better place.”

This pilot project creates a unique musical theater experience for teens that not only entertain others and be fun to perform, but helps teens explore common issues that impact self-esteem, such as peer pressure, bullying and stress. It includes team exercises, facilitated discussions and workshops in addition to the musical theater production for both the kids from Puerto Rico and from Cherry Hill. Dr. Dan Gottlieb, nationally known author and syndicated host of NPR’s “Voices in the Family” heard locally on WHYY-FM, will lead a discussion with both groups of students called *STAND UP FOR YOURSELF: Taking Care of Yourself and Others*.

Green shared her enthusiasm about bringing this talented theater group here. She said, “The biggest part of this is that kids feel better about themselves and more supportive of others. As expressed in the song, ‘I’m a Person, Too,’ they realize that everyone has weaknesses and strengths but we all share our humanity. It’s when they come to that realization, that they stop feeling shame about their insecurities and they feel more empowered to be themselves.”

These kids are so gifted and they connected so much to the musical, that we wanted to share their performance with others. When I told Cherry Hill Mayor Chuck Cahn and his wife Stephanie, they shared my enthusiasm and encouraged us to come to Cherry Hill to bring together the kids from both cultures through the musical.”

Tolins-Kaufman added, “We believe that HOMEROOM should be in every school because it’s a great message and a great vehicle for teens to work together and explore together these issues that are so relevant to kids today. We hope this will create a model – doing a musical, a music workshop, creating a music video and the partnering of kids.”

Andrea Green is an award-winning composer, playwright and director of children's musicals. She brings her work as a music therapist into her entertaining/educational productions. Her work is the subject of the 2015 Emmy-award winning documentary “On the Other Side of the Fence”, produced by Henry Nevison. It received many other awards including the United Nations

Department of Public Information Bronze Award for extraordinary public service. Andrea was honored in 2012 with a Proclamation from the City of Philadelphia for her musicals that “take down fences” and ‘build bridges” between diverse groups of youngsters. She lectures nationwide at conferences and universities sharing her unique insight with educators and therapists.

Selma Tolins-Kaufman, co-writer of HOMEROOM, has been a school psychologist, counselor, playwright, and songwriter. She is in Who’s Who in American Women and Who’s Who in the World. Selma’s collaboration with Andrea for HOMEROOM THE MUSICAL began with interviews and writings of *real students* of an entire school. She said, “HOMEROOM reveals what is in the hearts of teenagers as they experience the world in school. HOMEROOM is a microcosm of life.”

For more information, visit www.andreagreenmusic.com.

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