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**"THOUGHT-PROVOKING DOCUMENTARY EXPLORES WAYS TO COMBAT  
GANG VIOLENCE IN NEW JERSEY"**

*\*Winner, Best Social Documentary\**

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New York NY [October 25, 2008] -- Celebrated Police Captain turned multi award-winning filmmaker Donna Roman (D.R.) Hernandez today announced that her latest film "Newark Street Preachers" has been selected by the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival (NYIIFVF) as the "Best Social Documentary" of the Festival.

Written, produced and directed by Hernandez in conjunction with her production company, Blue Force Films, Newark Street Preachers is a powerful film that explores a faith-based community's determination to combat street violence and gang warfare on the streets of Newark. As the City of Newark, New Jersey struggles to curb rising gang activity, four Newark Street Preachers are devoted to keeping alive Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy for non-violence. Together they celebrate Dr. King's memory through preaching, mentoring, marching and successfully mobilizing their multi-cultural congregations onto the front lines of an urban battlefield where gang violence, poverty, and innocent lives are intertwined with deadly results.

The Newark Street Preachers strongly encourage young people not to fall prey to gang violence. Using a hand-held camera, Hernandez followed the preachers as they marched and prayed in the presence of gang members and revisited "street memorials" where young men were gunned down by gang violence.

Hernandez also conducted a range of on-camera interviews with the Preachers about their mission to "Stop the Killings." The Newark Pastors featured in this documentary are Rev. Dr. Steven B. Davis of Calvary Gospel Church; Rev. Dr. Jethro C. James, Jr. of Paradise Baptist Church; Rev. Reginald Osborne of Bethel Worldwide Ministries; and Elder Gregory A. Woods of Revival Temple Center of Deliverance. Other noteworthy subjects include Armando Fontoura, the Sheriff of Essex County, New Jersey and former Homicide Lieutenant Shelia Hobson who both praised the Preachers for their grassroots movement to help the Police in their battle against gang activity; and Evangelist Althea Gravesande who organized and led a street march to take back the streets for Jesus. Audiences can also learn about the urban gang lifestyle from a New Jersey State Police Detective, a former gang member who survived a near

death experience after being shot 5 times and left partially paralyzed, and a former drug addict turned Minister who now mentors parolees and recovering addicts.

Additional components of the documentary include gospel music, archival video and photos of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a compelling rap song composed by D. R. Hernandez. Erwin Kreiner of Aladdin Video Services (AVS) in Caldwell, New Jersey is the film's Editor.

In an interview for **Independent Film Quarterly**, Hernandez explained the catalyst for her film: "I was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey and was appalled after four college-bound teenagers were shot point-blank last August in a Newark school yard, three of them mortally wounded. The following month I participated in a march to « Take Back the Streets for Jesus » and felt spiritually and emotionally reminded of how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the greatest American Preacher, took to the streets forty years ago with a similar mission—to stop the violence in our communities."

Hernandez further states, "I made "Newark Street Preachers" to visually illustrate how Newark's faith-based community and its Preachers are motivated in this millennium to keeping Dr. King's vision and voice alive for non-violence.

According to NYIIFVF's Founder and Executive Producer Stuart Alson "I was very impressed by Newark Street Preachers and we are honored that it is a festival entry. Hernandez is a very driven filmmaker and she tackles a difficult subject very well, proving once again that she is not afraid to take chances in order to educate the public. The touching interviews, the outstanding work of the Preachers and the real deal insights from former gang members and law enforcement officers should definitely capture the attention of our New York audience."

For further information about "Newark Street Preachers" and Blue Force Films visit [www.blueforcefilms.com](http://www.blueforcefilms.com) or contact D.R. Hernandez at (973) 979 9207.

**About D.R. Hernandez:** Donna Roman (D.R) Hernandez is an award-winning Latina filmmaker who was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. D.R became a Police Officer in 1980 and recently retired at the rank of Captain with the Caldwell Police Department after twenty-six years of service. In 2005, Ms. Hernandez founded Blue Force Films, an independent film production company specializing in documentaries and the human psyche. Her propensity for story telling has resulted in 4 impressive films, the multi award-winning documentary "The Ultimate Betrayal: A Survivor's Journey that exposed her family's 40-year history of physical and emotional terrorism at the hands of her father. Her second film "Closure" is an award-winning short drama about the altered life of a police officer who lost her sister, an NYPD cop, in the World Trade Center attacks. In March 2008, Hernandez won "Best New York Director" for her visceral short documentary film "A Call for Valor."

As a veteran Police Captain in 2006, D.R. was named the 1<sup>st</sup> Runner-up for the National Positive Force Award, a prestigious award for exceptional acts of heroism in the community. D.R. is a Domestic Violence Police Specialist and a Police Academy Trainer.