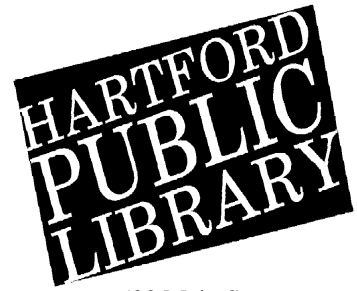


IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact

Brenda Miller, coordinator, One Book for Greater Hartford
860-695-6342

bmiller@hartfordpl.lib.ct.us



500 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06103-3075

One Book for Greater Hartford Announces 2004 Title

June 9, 2004.... *When I Was Puerto Rican*, the triumphant coming-of-age memoir by Esmeralda Santiago, is the 2004 One Book for Greater Hartford selection, announced Louise Blalock, chief librarian of Hartford Public Library.

“We look forward to the conversation initiated by a memoir as poignant as Santiago’s,” said Blalock.

Now in its third year, One Book for Greater Hartford is a program aimed at unifying the regional community around the shared experience of people reading and talking about a book. Similar One Book projects have resonated around the country. From Seattle to New York, in large cities and rural centers, people are talking about books they might not have picked up otherwise. Last year, more than 700 people in Hartford gathered to hear 2003 One Book author James McBride discuss his book, *The Color of Water*. In 2002, Edwidge Danticat charmed audiences when she shared her best selling memoir *Breath, Eyes and Memory*.

The One Book is chosen to provide a challenging yet satisfying read with characters and themes the community can identify with and one that provides cultural understanding. Member organizations on the One Book selection committee include Hartford Public Library, Greater Hartford Literacy Council, The Hartford Advocate, Preview Connecticut, Barnes and Noble booksellers and the Greater Hartford Arts Council.

When I Was Puerto Rican, published by Vintage Books in 1994, is a narrative of a young girl growing up in the 1950’s in Puerto Rico and of her subsequent move to New York City. Santiago’s story of her childhood and of her family’s move is a unique chronicle of the survival of a strong individual, but it also gives insight into the lives of thousands of our country’s new arrivals. While remaining very much a part of the world they left behind, these immigrants are faced with a new language, a new culture, and new expectations and codes of conduct.

One Book will officially kickoff Thursday, September 9 at Hartford Public Library, 500 Main Street, with a bilingual workshop on how to lead a book discussion and activities

that you can build around the One Book project. The morning session will be followed by lunch featuring Puerto Rican cuisine. After lunch, workshop participants will take part in a bilingual community conversation on *When I Was Puerto Rican*. The free workshop will begin at 9:45 a.m. and end at 2:00 p.m. Registration is required and can be made by calling (860) 695-6342. The training session is geared toward individuals interested in leading a One Book discussion for their organization or community group.

The library's One Book resource guides (a tool to further enhance community involvement), buttons, bookmarks, and, book discussion schedule will be available at the September 9 workshop. Hartford Public Library will hold book discussions in both English and Spanish on *When I Was Puerto Rican* at its Central Library and branches throughout September and October.

Esmeralda Santiago will be in Hartford Saturday, October 16, for the One Book culminating author event. She will speak and answer questions at Hartford Public Library's Central Library from 7:00-8:00 p.m. and sign books at the following reception from 8:00-9:00 p.m. To make a reservation for the free author event and reception, please call (860) 695-6342.

Santiago was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She came to the United States when she was thirteen years old, the eldest in a family that would eventually include eleven children. Santiago attended New York City's Performing Arts High School, where she majored in drama and dance. After eight years of part-time study at community colleges, she transferred to Harvard University with a full scholarship. She studied film production and graduated in 1976 magna cum laude. Shortly after graduation, she and her husband, Frank Cantor, founded Cantomedia, a film and media production company, which has won numerous awards for excellence in documentary filmmaking.

Her writing career evolved from her work as a producer/writer of documentary and educational films. Her essays and opinion pieces have appeared in national newspapers including *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, and in *House & Garden*, *Metropolitan Home*, and *Good Housekeeping* magazines.

She is also author of the novel, *America's Dream*, published in six languages, and the Alternate Selection of the Literary Guild. Her second memoir, *Almost a Woman*, received numerous "Best of Year" mentions, in addition to an Alex Award from the American Library Association. It was adapted into a film for ExxonMobil Masterpiece Theatre, which aired nationally on PBS in 2002. She will release her third memoir, *The Turkish Lover* (Da Capo Press) September 1, 2004.

With Joie Davidow, Santiago is coeditor of the anthologies, *Las Christmas: Favorite Latino Authors Share Their Holiday Memories* and *Las Mamis: Favorite Latino Authors Remember their Mothers* both published by Knopf.

In addition to her literary endeavors, she is a spokesperson for public libraries. Santiago has designed and developed community-based programs for adolescents, and was a

founder of a shelter for battered women and their children. She serves on the boards of organizations devoted to the arts and to literature, and speaks vehemently about the need to encourage and support the artistic development of young people.

Everyone is encouraged to read *When I Was Puerto Rican* and to either initiate or join in a One Book discussion at their library, school, bookstore or in their home. To list a One Book discussion or an activity built around this year's One Book for Greater Hartford project, you can log onto www.onebookforgreaterhartford.org. An online form is available for you to submit your event for the online One Book community calendar.

For more information on the One Book project, call the library at 860/695-6342 or visit online at www.onebookforgreaterhartford.org.

The Hartford Public Library, 2002 recipient of the National Award for Library Service by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, has over 500,000 volumes and 700 periodicals in its collection. The library offers a number of programs that respond to citizens real interests and needs – programs for parenting, literacy and competency; and programs for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Additionally, Hartford Public Library provides a cultural and artistic forum that reflects the diverse and vibrant community of Connecticut's capital city.