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Borinqueneers: the only all-Hispanic unit in U. S. Army history



Soldiers of the 65th, North of the Han River, Korea, June 1951. (U. S. Army photo)

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11/19/2007 - **MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE, CALIF.** -- Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment was the only all-Hispanic unit in the history of the United States Army. In *The Borinqueneers*, filmmaker Noemi Figueroa Soulet tells the story of how this decorated unit faced over whelming odds not only on the battlefield during the Korean War, but also in a court of law.

Their story is unique because since the Spanish-American War in 1898, this unit was decorated for bravery midway through the Korean War in 1952 but encountered a bizarre turn of events that led to the court-martial of a battalion commander, officers, noncommissioned officers and enlisted servicemen.

Figueroa Soulet brings to life the pain and emotion these soldiers endured at that time. File footage, archived documents and interviews by the Puerto Rican soldiers of the 65th tell a moving story.

In the documentary, there are interviews both prior to the court-martials as well as after. All ranks tell their story on camera -- many of whom had not spoken about what took place until this project.

Filmmaker Figueroa Soulet said that while she researched and produced the film, she found that many Puerto Ricans during the Korean War (June 1950 - July 1953) had some family member involved. After the loss of so many returning soldiers, the plight of being called a coward was a humility that the documentary addresses.

Another aspect that still makes the unit unique is the lack of Medal of Honor recipients.

During the Civil War, the Union Army had the all-Black combat regiment known as the Buffalo Soldiers. There were Medal of Honor recipients within the units.

During World War I and World War II, the United States joint military services created an all-Native American cryptographic unit known as the Navajo Code Talkers. There were Medal of Honor recipients within the units.

During World War II, the United States Army Corps commissioned an all-Black combat fighter squadron known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Non-Black bomber pilots refused to fly without the Tuskegee Airmen protecting them. There were Medal of Honor recipients within the unit.

And during World War II, the United States Army created an all-Asian combat regiment team known as Nisei Soldiers, or Buddha-heads. They were instrumental in protecting Pearl Harbor from further attack in 1941. There were Medal of Honor recipients within the unit.

The all-Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment was a decorated combat regiment known for their for bravery and praised by General Douglas MacArthur during the early years of the Korean War. Many had given the ultimate sacrifice yet one fact that remains -- no member of the 65th Infantry Regiment received the Medal of Honor.

The film *The Borinqueneers* debuted in the continental United States during the month of August during the Public Broadcasting Service's fund drive and it had its international broadcast debut in early October, on the American Forces Network. It was part of the programming that military personnel, Department of Defense civilians and family members viewed in observance of the Hispanic Heritage Month 2007.

To find more on the Borinqueneers, go to www.borinqueneers.com.