

Media Contact: Alejandrina Drew
214-671-0050
Alejandrina.drew@dallascityhall.com

THE LATINO CULTURAL CENTER PRESENTS A BIG READ CELEBRATION OF *BLESS ME, ULTIMA* BY RUDOLFO ANAYA

May 15, 2008—Dallas, TX—The Latino Cultural Center, in partnership with the Dallas Public Library and the Writer's Garret received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to host during June 2008 a Big Read celebration of *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, one of the 16 classic novels selected. The different events will take place in various locations in Dallas. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

On Saturday June 7, 2008 at 6:00pm, The Latino Cultural Center kicks off The Big Read with guest speaker Dr. Spencer R. Herrera from New Mexico State University. Closing the kick-off will be a theatrical solo performance in Spanish of the character Ultima from a passage of *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya adapted and performed by actress and director Patricia Urbina. All of the events are free to the public. For a complete schedule of events and locations throughout June 2008 please visit http://www.dallasculture.org/latinoCC_Big_Read.cfm or www.NEABigRead.org or call 214-671-0051.

All of the events will not be possible without our special partners: Dallas Public Library, Writer's Garrett, The Museum of Geometric and MADI Art, Flor Candela Teatro, Bath House Cultural Center, Texas HIPPY, Claudia Torrescano, Catherine Cuellar, Ana Cristina Reymundo, American Airlines, The Axis Agency and the Mighty Fine Arts Gallery.

Bless Me, Ultima is a coming-of-age novel about a young boy's loss of innocence and approach to maturity. But it also deals with tradition and education, faith and doubt, and good and evil. And if Antonio doesn't find an absolute truth in his search, he still comes to believe with his father that "sometimes it takes a lifetime to acquire understanding, because in the end understanding simply means having sympathy for people." Since its publication in 1972, the novel has become part of high school English and university Chicano literature classes. Writer Tony Hillerman has praised Anaya as the "godfather and guru of Chicano literature."

Rudolfo Anaya was born in the small village of Pastura, near Santa Rosa, New Mexico, to a farm girl mother and a cowboy father. The *curandera* who presided at his birth set out tools of both family trades near the newborn—only to see him reach for a paper and pencil instead.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

The Latino Cultural Center is a division of the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs. The mission of the Latino Cultural Center is to serve as a catalyst for the preservation, development and promotion of Latino arts and culture in Dallas. The Center is located at 2600 Live Oak, Dallas, Texas 75204 and is open Tuesday – Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For additional information please call 214-671-0045 or visit our web site at, www.dallasculture.org/latinocc.

The *National Endowment for the Arts* (NEA) today continued its drive toward making the Big Read the largest federal reading program in U.S. history. The NEA announced that The Latino Cultural Center is one of 127 libraries, municipalities, and arts, culture, higher education, and science organizations to receive a grant to host a Big Read celebration of one of 16 classic novels from January-June 2008. The NEA launched the Big Read nationally in 2007 in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The latest Big Read grantees represent 38 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The NEA inaugurated the Big Read as a pilot project with ten communities in 2006. By 2009, approximately 400 communities in the U.S. will have hosted a Big Read since the program's launch.

-more-

The **National Endowment for the Arts** is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts—both new and established—bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the nation’s largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.

The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. For more information, please visit www.ims.gov.

Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit www.artsmidwest.org.

###

