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## A Different Point Of View

BY SARAH GARLAND

**F**amily separation, poverty, and cultural conflict are the usual elements of the American immigration story, a well-worn narrative with new details but the same outline each time. Hollywood, novelists and journalists repeat it.

Brenda Campos tells it differently. A visual artist from Mexico City who now lives in Astoria, Campos, 25, uses her camera to capture ordinary moments, hum-drum routines and unexpected beauty in the lives of immigrants in New York. Her lens focuses on the characteristics that set her subjects' stories apart from the generic mold of the immigrant experience, and one of her main projects has involved handing the camera over to the immigrants themselves, allowing them to narrate their own story.

Campos moved to New York in 2002 from Guadalajara, Mexico where she studied Communication Sciences at the University of Iteso. In a cramped office in a rickety Manhattan building that used to be a convent, Campos began Tepeyac Television Service, a program that teaches immigrants how to write, shoot and edit short documentaries. The program was sponsored by Asociacion Tepeyac, a non-profit community organization with a membership made up of Latin American immigrants from the five boroughs.

With topics ranging from love to graffiti, the documentaries aired on Manhattan Neighborhood Network last year. The students learned how to use digital camera equipment and complex editing software, and improved their writing and interviewing skills.

Campos says she has been amazed "to see some of our work get to places we never imagined." Since they began, several of the documentaries produced by her students were shown at film fes-



Photo courtesy of Brenda Campos

**Brenda Campos, who moved to Astoria from Guadalajara, tried to see the beauty in ordinary moments. The photographer has also worked on films that have been shown in festivals, as well as had her work displayed at the Queens Museum of Art for the 2004 Queens International exhibition.**

tivals and on television stations in Mexico, and one student started his own business filming and editing videos.

Campos's own work has won awards. Her own animated short film, "Mexican Link," which explores immigrants' contributions to the economy, won an award at the Hometown Film Festival last year.

In the 2004 Queens International at

the Queens Museum of Art, Campos exhibited a piece with four television screens simultaneously showing interviews with immigrants talking about how they think of and create a sense of home.

Campos has also helped to promote other artists as founder and board member of Local Project, a community art space in Long Island City. Local Project hosts gallery openings and

other events featuring artists from Queens and other parts of the city.

While the Tepeyac Television classes will end this January, Campos hopes to repeat the project at another non-profit community organization.

She added, "I also hope to continue growing as an artist and exploring new media," including expanding her involvement and promotion of a newly flourishing Queens art scene.

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**Brenda Campos**