



## Documentary Showcases Public Schools

### Hartford Public High Alumna Seeks Help With Editing Costs

**I**t all began in the summer of 1997. While working for the Aetna Foundation, I found a wealth of information about the state of Hartford's public school system.



IRENE MELO

I was interested because I attended Hartford schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, graduating from "the Pub," Hartford Public High School.

The more I read, the more interested I became in the struggle to overcome the plight of our system. I became inspired by people — parents, students, teachers, community leaders.

I enjoyed Hartford Public High School, mostly for its diversity. It possesses something most businesses are trying to achieve today — diversity in the workplace. This richness of culture taught me how to interact with all kinds of people. It

prepared me for the real world.

Looking back, I realize Hartford did not have the funds to purchase state-of-the-art teaching tools. But as a student in certain classrooms, I never knew the difference. Teachers went beyond the books to teach us, finding other ways and means (often at their own expense). Community programs offered new ideas and enriched my experience. These teachers and adults let us know they cared, and that pushed me to become a better student.

I especially remember one teacher, Roseanne Shea. Using *The Courant*, she would read and discuss current events with the class each day. One day she turned to me and said, "Irene, I can see you one day writing to the newspaper."

Being shy, I responded "No, not me. That's not my cup of tea."

Now, as I write this, I think of her. Her confidence in me helped me look at myself in a different way — she helped me reach for the stars.

I wanted to become involved, because I empathized with the students. Because of negative publicity, people not involved in Hartford schools do not realize the system is filled with intelligent, bright and creative students. I thought it was time to show the positive.

So I decided to use my skills as a film major at Emerson College to create a documentary that would provide a positive forum for people to share ideas and feelings about

our school system.

It would help the Greater Hartford community discover what is right with our system — inspirational teachers, dynamic educational enrichment programs, active parents and community leaders. It seemed the best way for me to help Hartford students shine — to help them show how exciting and motivated they truly are.

The documentary includes comments from Mayor Michael P. Peters, lawyer Allan Taylor of Day Berry & Howard, Richard Weaver-Bey of Greater Hartford Realty Mangement, Ana-Maria Garcia of the YWCA, Leslie Mara of Lawyers for Children, Superintendent of Schools Patricia Daniel, parents, students and many others.

The taping has been completed for some time, but now I am working hard to raise \$5,000 to cover the cost of the editing so that it can be shown. I am seeking information on grants, and of course, I welcome donations.

If you would like more information on my project, please call my voice mail at (917) 953-1088. Donations may be made payable to Melo Productions and sent Attn. Irene Melo, Melo Productions, P.O. Box 331494, Elmwood, CT 06133-1494.

*Irene Melo, a graduate of Hartford Public High School and Emerson College, now works in New York City.*