



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Serrano Congratulates Chita Rivera for Receiving Highest Honor

JOSÉ M. SERRANO August 13, 2009

| ISSUE: **ARTS AND CULTURE**

Senator José M. Serrano (D- Manhattan/Bronx) today congratulated Puerto Rican-American Broadway icon Chita Rivera, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama in the White House yesterday. The Medal of Freedom is the highest medal that can be awarded to a civilian in the United States.

“As someone with a deep appreciation for the arts, I am overjoyed that this honor has been bestowed upon someone as deserving as Chita Rivera,” said Senator Serrano. “She has accomplished great feats in the world of arts and culture, and has opened the doors for Latino performers in America.”

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is awarded to individuals who have made significant contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, or who have made great cultural achievements.

Born Dolores Conchita Figueroa del Rivero, Chita Rivera has received two Tony Awards for Best Leading Actress in a Musical, and has had 6 additional Tony Award nominations. She was catapulted into stardom after her highly acclaimed performance in the original Broadway production of West Side Story in 1957. In 2002, she became the first Latina to

receive the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors award.

Senator Serrano, who serves as the Chair of the New York State Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, has been an avid supporter of the arts and a champion for arts education in New York.

"It is truly rare to find an entertainer who can sing, dance, and act with such talent and grace," said Serrano. "She has and will continue to inspire countless performers to pursue their dreams, regardless of the circumstances, and for that I applaud her."