

BackStreet to the AMERICAN DREAM

FILM FESTIVALS

- 12 in the United States
- 1 in Paris, FR
- 1 GuadaLajara, MX (L.A.)

EDUCATIONAL SCREENINGS

- 12 Universities
- 5 Cultural Centers





LOGLINE

With support from Jarritos and Medal of Freedom recipient Dolores Huerta, this award-winning documentary reframes the American Dream through the intimate portrait of a Mexican immigrant family—juxtaposing the raw hustle of a legacy street vendor with the meteoric rise of a gourmet burger truck, revealing how grit, resilience, and cultural heritage fueled a \$2-billion global phenomenon.

"*Backstreet to the American Dream* is the intersection between immigration, workers' rights, social justice, and the informal economy. It's the kind of film I love to show my students at the beginning of the quarter, so they understand the issues we will cover."

- Prof. Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Dir. of UCLA Center for Mexican Studies & Project Dir. at the UCLA Labor Center



"...the story is about entrepreneurs chasing The American Dream, changing attitudes around cultural differences and social media's role in this modern-day revolution."



"...Patricia Nazario has counted on various university-level news interns to record, edit and organize media."



"Absolutely masterful!"



"A rich and vibrant portrait of the lives of everyday Americans."



"A powerful film"



"Our mission is to share Mexican culture with the world, and this documentary aligns with our core company values."







SYNOPSIS

A modern-day look at the classic American Dream

SHORT

With the 2012 Medal of Freedom recipient and Executive Producer Dolores Huerta, and Jarritos as our promotional partner, this 90-minute bilingual feature takes the audience on a journey and delves into how street food fosters inclusion, all while exploring the deep connection between food, culture and community. Through the quintessential 21st-Century entrepreneurial endeavor, this deep dive into the birthplace of the \$2 billion dollar global phenomenon, profiles two trucks and juxtaposes the experiences of American entrepreneurs and Mexican immigrants in the food truck industry. Indeed, these are very different operations in the same city: the gourmet burger truck, Grill 'Em All, is the first season winner of The Great Food Truck Race TV show on the Food Network in 2010, and El Pescadito, a mariscos lonchera (seafood truck), that has been parking at the same swap meet in an immigrant neighborhood since 1982.

To date, the bilingual feature has screened at 14 film festivals (Including: Dances With Films, Newport Beach Film Festival, Sonoma International Film Festival, as well as in New York and Paris), 16 universities/cultural centers, and has won 14 awards, including Best Documentary (twice) and Best Food Film. Telling the rich and vibrant stories of everyday people won Huerta the coveted Humanitarian Award from the Highland Park Independent Film Festival in 2022.



LONG

This modern-day look at the classic American Dream has won 14 awards, including Best Documentary (twice) and Best Food Film. Done through the quintessential 21st-Century entrepreneurial endeavor - food trucks, this deep dive into the birthplace of the \$2 billion dollar global phenomenon, Los Angeles, profiles two trucks and juxtaposes the experiences of American entrepreneurs and Mexican immigrants in the food truck industry. Indeed, these are very different operations in the same city: the gourmet burger truck, Grill 'Em All, is the first season winner of The Great Food Truck Race on the Food Network in 2010, and El Pescadito, a mariscos lonchera (seafood truck), that has been parking at the same swap meet in an immigrant neighborhood since 1982.

For Cleveland natives Matt Chernus and Chef Ryan Harkins, reality TV popularity quickly becomes overnight rock-star success and social-media stardom. Fans flock to the heavy metal burger truck. Contrarily, Doña Guillermina Villa Rodriguez does not use social media to promote her business. She crossed the U.S. border illegally in 1977 to provide for her baby boy back home. The grandmother, with salt and pepper hair, relies exclusively on blue-collar immigrants to sustain her business, and many have been customers for generations.

Through rich and vibrant stories of everyday Americans, this powerful 90-minute bilingual feature takes the audience on a journey. You'll consider pop culture and family traditions, formal and informal economies, and the unifying quest for the American Dream. Additionally, a four-minute animated open (in English, Spanish and the indigenous Náhuatl language, and scored with native sounds from handmade instruments), traces street food from South L.A. back to Ancient Mexico. Revelation? That many Náhuatl names are still used for food today.



PATRICIA NAZARIO, M.Sc

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / WRITER / EDITOR

An international and Congressional Award distinguished journalist, Patricia Nazario, M.Sc., holds 28 prestigious recognitions. Her career spans from New York during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and hurricane coverage in Florida, to Argentina's severe financial, social, and political crisis of 2001. Her outstanding coverage of Miami's Cuban community won South Florida's NPR affiliate, WLRN 89.3, its first award and statewide recognition.

Partially raised in a blue-collar neighborhood in Los Angeles, Nazario was aware of Mexican-owned



mom-and-pop taco trucks that parked in the same spot every night for years, and that they didn't exist in the more upscale parts of town. When gourmet food trucks became a pop-culture phenomenon in 2008, Nazario noticed a shift: the new fancy trucks were parking where Mexican-owned loncheras had not been welcomed before. That observation provoked Nazario's curiosity about negative stereotypes, social perceptions, and racial injustice. The result is the 90-minute feature documentary, *Backstreet to the American Dream*. The bilingual project shines a light on the evolving notion of the classic American Dream and has screened at 14 prestigious film festivals, including Dances With Films, Newport Beach, Sonoma, and the Ethnografilm Festival in Paris.

Nazario moved to Buenos Aires in 2002 during Argentina's worst-ever social, economic, and political crisis to freelance for NPR, Marketplace and various international magazines. She became bilingual by living and traveling extensively across South America, producing a large body of print and radio work along the way.

Nazario is a UCLA alumna with a B.A. in Political Science. She also holds a Master of Science degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She was in class the morning of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and spent the next year reporting about its devastating effects on families in New York's East Harlem community. More at: www.PatriciaNazario.com



DOLORES HUERTA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Dolores Huerta has devoted her life to correcting economic, social, and civil injustices; first for farmworkers, then immigrants, women, and most recently for the LGBTQ community.

Huerta found her calling as an organizer while serving in the leadership of the Stockton Community Service Organization (CSO). At that time, Huerta founded the Agricultural Workers Association, set up voter registration drives and pressed local governments for barrio improvements.

In 1962, Huerta and César E. Chávez joined forces, and their shared vision of organizing farmworkers, and co-founded the United Farm Workers labor union. In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded this legendary social justice warrior with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. More at: www.DoloresHuerta.org





MITCH LEVINE

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

Mitch Levine is a consultant to filmmakers and festivals around the world. He is also an award-winning film and stage director, a directing member of BAFTA and the Actors Studio, and was a Fellow at AFI and the Juilliard School.

Levine presents filmmaking seminars around the globe, produced the *Refugee Voices in Film* Conference at the Cannes Film Festival and AFI's Great Filmmakers series. He directed the current national tour of *GOD HELP US!*, starring Ed Asner, and is preparing *We Are the Light*, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, commemorating our journey through Covid.

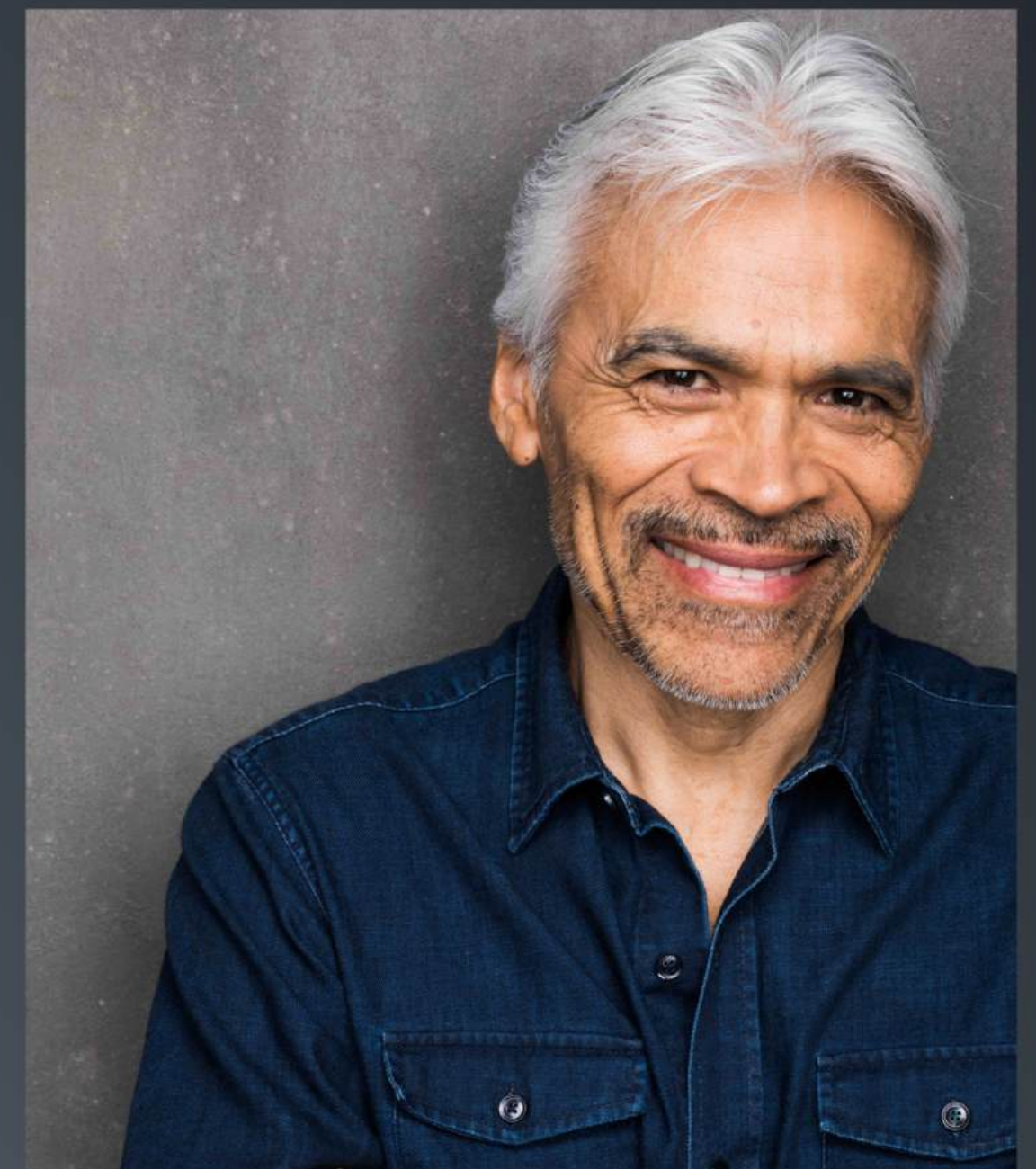
Previously, Levine served as a Special Representative to the United Nations.

SAL LOPEZ

ANIMATED OPEN VOICEOVER ARTIST

Sal Lopez is a veteran actor, who started his career after landing a key role in the hit play *Zoot Suit*. He was born in Mexico and grew up in South Central Los Angeles. Lopez is a founding member of The Latino Theater Company with numerous plays to his credit. Now, IMDB lists 137 actor credits for Lopez.

He's known for roles in *Full Metal Jacket*, *American Me*, *Batman v Superman*, *Selena*, and TV shows such as *Westworld*, *Queen Of The South*, and *Too Old To Die Young*. Some of his voice credits include: *Grand Theft Auto*, *L.A. Noir*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Dark Void*, *Call Of Juarez: The Cartel*, and *Grim Fandango*.



BILL ESPARZA

STREET FOOD EXPERT

Bill Esparza is a professional musician, writer, and foodie whose travels across Latin America have made him a leading expert on Latin American cuisine. He fell in love with Mexican cooking at his grandmother's table and was introduced to street food on childhood trips back home to Aguascalientes, Mexico.

His original style of writing and passion for culture have made Bill a go-to goldmine for magazines, newspapers, and food travel shows. Esparza acquired his knowledge the old-fashioned way, firsthand experience on the streets and at market stands in Los Angeles, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, and writing about those experiences in his blog, @streetgourmetla.

Esparza won a James Beard award in 2016, and in 2017 authored the book, *L.A. Mexicano: Recipes, People & Places*.





MARTIN ESPINO

ANIMATED OPEN MUSIC COMPOSER

Martin Espino's heritage reaches back to Sonora and Durango, Mexico, as part of the indigenous Yaqui and Tepehuáno people. He is a Sound Worker (using principles of Neuroscience for beneficial well-being or healing), and the creator of "Ancient Mexico Vibration Experience" for the hearing impaired.

Espino is based in Los Angeles. In the tradition of his ancestors, he hand-carves his musical instruments, and he performs locally, nationally and internationally as a soloist and with his acclaimed ensemble. Espino is also a Master Outreach Teaching Artist and facilitates Sound Bath Meditation events.

GEOFFREY BEATTY

LEAD ANIMATOR

An animator, designer, artist, and educator, Beatty began his career at the MIT Media Lab, creating animation for research into artificial intelligence and robotics. Through his animation practice, Germantown Studios, Beatty has worked on a wide variety of projects for clients as diverse as Google, Target, Hermès, Hasbro, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Beatty is currently Assistant Professor of Digital Arts at La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



JULES RIVERA

LEAD ILLUSTRATOR



Jules Rivera is an illustrator, graphic novelist, colorist, animator and writer. This degreed engineer and former defense contractor is the creative genius behind the four-minute animated open, which she drew from scratch.

Rivera's passion is indie comics. She's the creator of *Love, Joolz*, a webcomic about weaponized femininity. Rivera contributed to the Eisner Award-winning *Puerto Rico Strong* (Lion Forge) and Ringo Award-winning *Where We Live, A Benefit for the Survivors in Las Vegas* (Image Comics). She is the co-creator of sci-fi graphic novels *Spectre Deep 6*, and *200*.

A prolific creator, Rivera reimagines sci-fi designs for TV and film and teaches storyboarding at California Lutheran University. She lives and works in LA and enjoys surfing on the weekends.





Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions of Patricia Nazario

1) What made you want to direct a documentary about food trucks?

I was born in New York and partially raised in Los Angeles. I went to Paramount High School, which is on the southeast side of town. It's a blue-collar neighborhood that's about 80% Hispanic. So, we had that classic mom-and-pop Mexican family operating a taco truck on the same corner, night after night, for years. Back then, food trucks were commonly called a "roach coach." Fast-forward to 2010, and I'm a daily news reporter at the National Public Radio affiliate, KPCC. One day, I was sent to cover a turf war over parking involving gourmet food trucks on the Miracle Mile near the L.A. County Museum of Art. The Miracle Mile is the proverbial "other side of the tracks" from where I grew up. It occurred to me that the fight might not be against hipsters serving fusion food to office workers, but about the legacy of "roach coaches," and what that represented: immigrants, the working poor, and the disenfranchised struggling to make ends meet. The more I dug, the more injustice I found.

2) When did you start, and how long did it take to finish the documentary?

I started shooting in mid-August 2010. At first, I worked full time and would hire photographers to shoot footage at hot spots around town. After about six months, I realized I would have to jump in with both feet if I ever wanted to finish, so I bought my own videographer gear and resigned from my full-time job as a daily news reporter at KPCC. From working in radio, I knew how to mix sound. I had been a one-man-band TV news reporter before that, so I also knew how to shoot video. Being my first documentary, actual post-production probably took longer because I had to watch a lot of YouTube tutorials to figure out my editing software and long-form storytelling. I finally finished in June 2021.

3) Ten years is a long time to focus on a single project. What kept you interested?

The characters were so compelling that with each interview, I felt a deeper obligation to tell their story. I speak Spanish, so I was able to connect with the immigrant side of the industry. Plus, I was genuinely curious about their struggles, and the more I asked, the more willing they were to share. I gained their respect. They trusted me, so over time there was no way I could walk away from that. I also lived by a few rules that kept me sane: I did the best I could every day, I worked on it every day (even if only for a few minutes), and I never looked for validation in other people's opinions. When I heard someone say something sarcastic about the story idea, the amount of time it was taking to finish, or my part-time job, I just ignored it. Steady encouragement from family, and a few close friends were my real secret weapon.

4) Documentaries are expensive and take time. How did you get your funding?

I mainly self-funded the whole thing. Early on, I applied for a grant, but I didn't get it. The application process was long, tedious, and it distracted me from making my movie. So, I never applied for another one. I tried a crowdsourcing campaign, too, which was also tons of work, and it didn't get funded. To focus on this project full time, I had to get creative with my finances after resigning from KPCC. So, I moved in with my sister. A few years later, I started working part-time gigs to pay my freelancers. Fortunately, my family supported the process, and my sister never charged me rent!

5) What other type of support helped you get through post project?

The Mexican Consulate in L.A. has always been very supportive. They worked with their colleagues in Oaxaca, Ensenada, Guadalajara, and Acapulco to sponsor hotel accommodations and ground travel for all of our production trips to Mexico. Interacting with street vendors in Mexico was literally like stepping back in time, and that's how we connected street food culture from the old world to the new.

In 2011, I approached the La Raza Foods Commissary with the idea of corporate sponsorship via incubator office space. We struck a deal, and for more than five years La Raza Foods hosted us with three dedicated cubicles. We had meeting-room access, Wi-Fi connection, a photocopier, and storage space for production gear. Having actual office amenities is the reason why college interns were able to participate in the post-production process.





Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions of Patricia Nazario

6) Why was it important to you to include college students in the post-production process?

Internships are where the magic happens. I remember going to orientation for the Dances With Films Festival in July 2021 at the Sunset Glower Studios. That's where I had my first internship during my senior year at UCLA in the '90s. Back then, I worked on the docudrama TV series, *Rescue 911* which was hosted by William Shatner. For Latinos from blue-collar neighborhoods, wishing for a studio or newsroom job can feel like a pipe dream. I saw *Backstreet to the American Dream* as a viable way for students with families or jobs, and less free time, to access the competitive world of content creation.

7) How did you gain access to gourmet and traditional food trucks, and to food truck commissaries?

In 2010, gourmet food truck events were popping up all over L.A. I was living in Echo Park at the time, and one weekend about six food trucks were lined up in front of my house. I walked over and introduced myself to Mong Skillman (Mandoline Grill Food Truck). She let me tag along for a lunch service in Santa Monica the following week. I realized the trucks serving on the Westside would have never parked in Paramount, where I grew up, and the trucks that did park in Paramount would have never been welcomed on the Westside before the pop-culture boom. Skillman parked at the La Raza Foods Commissary next to the Grill 'Em All truck. That's how I met Ryan Harkins, and the commissary management.

Before starting this project, I was the health beat reporter at KPCC for about four years. So, L.A. County Health Department officials were already familiar with my work. Earning the trust of traditional truck operators came after years of shooting private membership meetings of the Association of Loncheros and documenting their ongoing struggle for social justice.

8) Food trucks seem so claustrophobic. How did you manage to move around and shoot video inside?

Because of my one-man-band TV news reporting experience, I knew how to shoot quickly and work with bare-bones gear. My equipment generally consisted of a professional HDV Camcorder, a wide-angle lens, a monopod, and a mountable Electronic News Gathering (ENG) light that I could screw into an attachable mount on top of the camera when needed. That streamlined approach minimized my presence inside food trucks because I could squeeze myself, and my monopod, against a wall and just focus on the action before me.

9) What's unique about the 4:00 animated open?

The four-minute animation (in English, Spanish, and the indigenous Náhuatl language), traces street food from the El Pescadito mariscos (seafood) truck near South Los Angeles to open-air markets in Ancient Mexico. To write the script, I researched Mesoamerican Codices under the tutelage of Cal State University, Northridge Chicano Studies Professor Fermin Herrera. To create authentic voices, we brought together Chicano Studies students from CSU Northridge and Ricardo Garcia, PhD, Santa Monica College Adjunct Instructor, for a Náhuatl-language practice session. Then, we built the animation around those scenarios. Martin Espino relied mostly on his hand-crafted instruments to create music in the Aztec tradition. The animation, itself, took two years to produce and cost about \$6,000.00.

10) How does *Backstreet to the American Dream* compare to the 2014 feature film, *Chef*?

Chef is a make-believe story that had a \$11 million dollar budget. *Backstreet to the American Dream* was grassroots from day one. It's a true story about the everyday lives of real people on their own journeys. One commonality that both projects share is Chef Roy Choi. In *Chef*, Jon Favreau's character is loosely based on Chef Choi and Choi's phenomenal success with his Kogi Korean BBQ Truck. Chef Choi also makes an appearance in *Backstreet to the American Dream*, and he's acknowledged as the inspiration for the global food truck revolution. From mom-and-pop operations run mostly by Mexican immigrants on the backstreets of L.A., food trucks are now a billion-dollar global industry.





TECHNICAL INFORMATION

GENRE DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

MPAA RATING NOT YET RATED

COUNTRY UNITED STATES / MEXICO

LANGUAGE ENGLISH / SPANISH

RUNTIME 90 MINUTES

FORMAT HD (1920 x 1080)



CAST

DOLORES HUERTA	MEDAL OF FREEDOM AWARD, 2011
SAL LOPEZ	ANIMATION NARRATOR
GUILLERMINA VILLA RODRIGUEZ	EL PESCADITO MARISCOS LONCHERA OWNER / OPERATOR
CHEF ROY CHOI	KOGI KOREAN BBQ TRUCK, 2008
CHEF RYAN HARKINS	GRILL 'EM ALL, CO-FOUNDER, 2009
BILL ESPARZA	STREET FOOD EXPERT
LUIS VALDEZ	ZOOT SUIT PLAYWRIGHT, 1981

CREW

PATRICIA NAZARIO	DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / WRITER / EDITOR
MARTIN ESPINO	ANIMATED OPEN ORIGINAL MUSIC
OCTAVIO PADILLA	ANIMATED OPEN AUDIO ENGINEER
JULES RIVERA	LEAD ILLUSTRATOR
GEOFFREY BEATTY	LEAD ANIMATOR
HIGH FIVE AUDIO	RE-RECORDING MIXER
JAMES KNOTT	COLORIST



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