

"Absolutely masterful!"
"¡Absolutamente magisral!"



"A powerful film."
"Una película poderosa."



FROM STREET FOOD TO STREET FAME:
HOW SURVIVAL AND AMBITION SPARKED A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

DOLORES HUERTA · GUILLERMINA RODRIGUEZ · CHEF ROY CHOI · RYAN HARKINS · BILL ESPARZA · LUIS VALDEZ

BackStreet to the AMERICAN DREAM

PRESENTING PARTNERS

- Jarritos - Promotional Partner
- Dolores Huerta - Executive Producer
- IDA (Intl. Doc Assoc.) - Fiscal Sponsor

FILM FESTIVALS

- 13 Awards/Commendations
- 12 U.S. Film Festivals
- 1 Festival in Paris, FR
- 1 GuadaLajara, MX (L.A.)

EDUCATIONAL SCREENINGS

- 13 Universities
- 5 Cultural Centers





LOGLINE

Backstreet to the American Dream is an award-winning documentary that reframes the American narrative about Latino immigrants through contrasting portraits of old-school *loncheras* and *rock star* gourmet food trucks that ignited 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'll 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

From Street Corner Hustle to Pop-Culture Boom

SHORT

Backstreet to the American Dream — an award-winning documentary championed by Jarritos and Executive Producer Dolores Huerta, a Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree — builds empathy and common ground by reframing the American narrative about Latino immigrants through contrasting portraits within the \$2-billion global food truck phenomenon.

Set against the backdrop of Los Angeles, birthplace of the food truck pop-culture explosion, the bilingual feature explores the grit, resilience, and cultural pride of the immigrant experience fused with American ambition, bridging social divides through street food. Lauded for its rich and vibrant storytelling, the 90-minute story juxtaposes two wildly different food trucks: **Grill 'Em All**, a heavy-metal gourmet burger *rock star* and first-season winner of **The Great Food Truck Race** on the **Food Network**, and **El Pescadito**, an old-school mariscos *lonchera* that has parked at the same blue-collar swap meet since 1982.

Adding historical depth, the film features a stunning four-minute animated sequence — winner of two Special Jury Awards as a standalone short — narrated in English, Spanish, and Náhuatl. It traces the evolution of street food from Ancient Mexico to South L.A.

Winner of 16 awards — including two **Best Documentary** honors, **Best Food Film**, and the **Highland Park Independent Film Festival's Humanitarian Award** — ***Backstreet to the American Dream*** has screened at 14 festivals (including **Dances With Films**, **Newport Beach**, **Sonoma**, **San Antonio**, **Workers Unite – NYC** and **Ethnografilm Paris**), as well as universities and cultural centers across the U.S. and Europe. Topical and urgent, the film explores pop culture and family traditions, formal and informal economies, and the fragility of democracy in the deeply human struggle for equal opportunity, dignity, and freedom.



LONG

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Set against the backdrop of Los Angeles, the birthplace of the food truck revolution, the bilingual feature contrasts the resilience and cultural pride of the immigrant experience with American ambition, bridging social differences through street food. Lauded for its rich and vibrant storytelling, the 90-minute film juxtaposes two wildly different trucks: Cleveland natives Matt Chernus and Chef Ryan Harkins catapulted to reality TV stardom and social media royalty after winning the first season of **The Great Food Truck Race** on the **Food Network** in 2010! The heavy-metal-themed burger truck, **Grill 'Em All**, became an instant magnet for food truck fans. In stark contrast, Doña Guillermina Villa Rodriguez — a grandmother with salt-and-pepper hair — has faithfully parked **El Pescadito**, her old-school mariscos *lonchera* (seafood truck), at the same blue-collar swap meet since 1982. After sneaking across the U.S.-Mexico border in 1977 to provide for her infant son back home, she built her business without social media, relying instead on the immigrant families she's fed for generations.

(Continued on next page)





SYNOPSIS

From Street Corner Hustle to Pop-Culture Boom

LONG CONTINUED

In a world where food trucks symbolize 21st-century entrepreneurial success, the film lays bare the gap between American fame-driven achievement and Mexican immigrant resilience in a cutthroat industry. But ***Backstreet to the American Dream*** doesn't just focus on the trucks themselves — it peels back the gritty layers of L.A.'s less-glamorous neighborhoods for a powerful exploration of immigrant labor, cultural survival, and righteous economic legacy in today's global economy.

Adding historical depth, the film features a stunning four-minute animated sequence — narrated in English, Spanish, and Náhuatl — tracing the evolution of street food from Ancient Mexico to South L.A. Winner of two Special Jury Awards as a standalone short, the animation reveals how many beloved street foods still carry their Náhuatl names, connecting today's fusion culinary landscape to its indigenous roots.

Winner of 16 awards — including **Best Documentary** twice, **Best Food Film**, and the **Highland Park Independent Film Festival's Humanitarian Award** — ***Backstreet to the American Dream*** has screened at 14 festivals (including ***Dances With Films***, ***Newport Beach***, ***Sonoma***, ***San Antonio***, ***Workers Unite - NYC***, and ***Ethnografilm Paris***), as well as universities and cultural centers across the U.S. and Europe. Topical and urgent, the film explores pop culture and family traditions, formal and informal economies, and the fragility of democracy in the deeply human struggle for equal opportunity, dignity, and freedom.



PATRICIA NAZARIO, M.S.

Award-Winning Director | Producer | Journalist

Patricia Nazario is an international, bilingual journalist and filmmaker whose work captures the grit, resilience, and tenacity at the heart of the American Dream. A graduate of UCLA and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Nazario has earned 31 prestigious awards and distinctions, including five Golden Mikes, two Certificates of Special Recognition from the U.S. Congress, honors from the Associated Press, and multiple accolades from national journalism organizations.

Nazario's distinguished career spans frontline reporting during the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, hurricane coverage across Florida, and Argentina's devastating financial and political crisis in 2001. Her outstanding

reporting on Miami's Cuban-American community won South Florida's NPR affiliate, WLRN 89.3, its first-ever award and statewide recognition.

Partially raised in a blue-collar Los Angeles neighborhood, Nazario recognized early the disparity between immigrant-run *loncheras* (taco trucks) and their later gentrified counterparts. This lived experience — combined with her journalistic instincts — inspired her to create the bilingual feature documentary *Backstreet to the American Dream*, a searing exploration of entrepreneurship, cultural survival, and systemic inequities through the lens of the \$2 billion food truck industry.

A self-funded, independently produced project more than a decade in the making, *Backstreet to the American Dream* has screened at 14 film festivals — including Dances With Films, Newport Beach, Sonoma, and the Ethnografilm Festival in Paris — winning 16 top awards, among them Best Documentary (twice), Best Food Film, and a Humanitarian Award. Nazario not only directed and produced the film but also spearheaded its path to distribution, forging strategic partnerships — including collaborations with Jarritos and civil rights icon Dolores Huerta — and leading educational outreach efforts. The film is topical, timely and solidly relevant to today's national conversations about Latinos immigration, equal opportunity, and economic justice.

Fluent in Spanish, Nazario lived and traveled extensively across South America, building an expansive portfolio of international work for NPR, Marketplace, and major global news outlets. Her storytelling fuses a reporter's discipline with a filmmaker's vision, connecting pop culture, politics, and human rights in compelling, emotionally resonant narratives.

Patricia Nazario continues to bridge worlds and spark dialogue with projects that challenge stereotypes and reimagine what the American Dream can mean for a new generation – Americans and immigrants alike.



Explore → www.PatriciaNazario.com



DOLORES HUERTA

Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient

Executive Producer | Labor Leader | Civil Rights Activist

Dolores Huerta is one of the most influential civil rights leaders in American history. For more than six decades, she has fought to correct economic, social, and civil injustices — first for farmworkers, and later for immigrants, women, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Huerta discovered her calling as a community organizer with the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO), where she founded the Agricultural Workers Association, led voter registration drives, and successfully lobbied for improvements in barrios — marginalized neighborhoods of working families across California.

In 1962, Huerta and César E. Chávez co-founded the United Farm Workers (UFW), forever changing the labor movement in America. As the union's fearless chief negotiator and national strategist, Huerta secured historic victories for farmworkers' rights, including groundbreaking labor contracts that improved wages, working conditions, and dignity for a long-overlooked workforce.

In recognition of her lifetime commitment to social justice, President Barack Obama awarded Huerta the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, the nation's highest civilian honor. She continues her activism today through the Dolores Huerta Foundation, building grassroots leadership, driving policy reform, and empowering disenfranchised communities nationwide.

Backstreet to the American Dream proudly aligns with the legacy of Dolores Huerta — labor leader, civil rights activist, and Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree. Her lifelong advocacy for economic equity, immigrant rights, and social justice resonates deeply with the film's exploration of entrepreneurship, cultural survival, and systemic inequity. Huerta's enduring influence amplifies the documentary's call to reimagine the American Dream — and to reframe how Latino immigrants are seen, heard, and valued in America today.

Explore → 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.

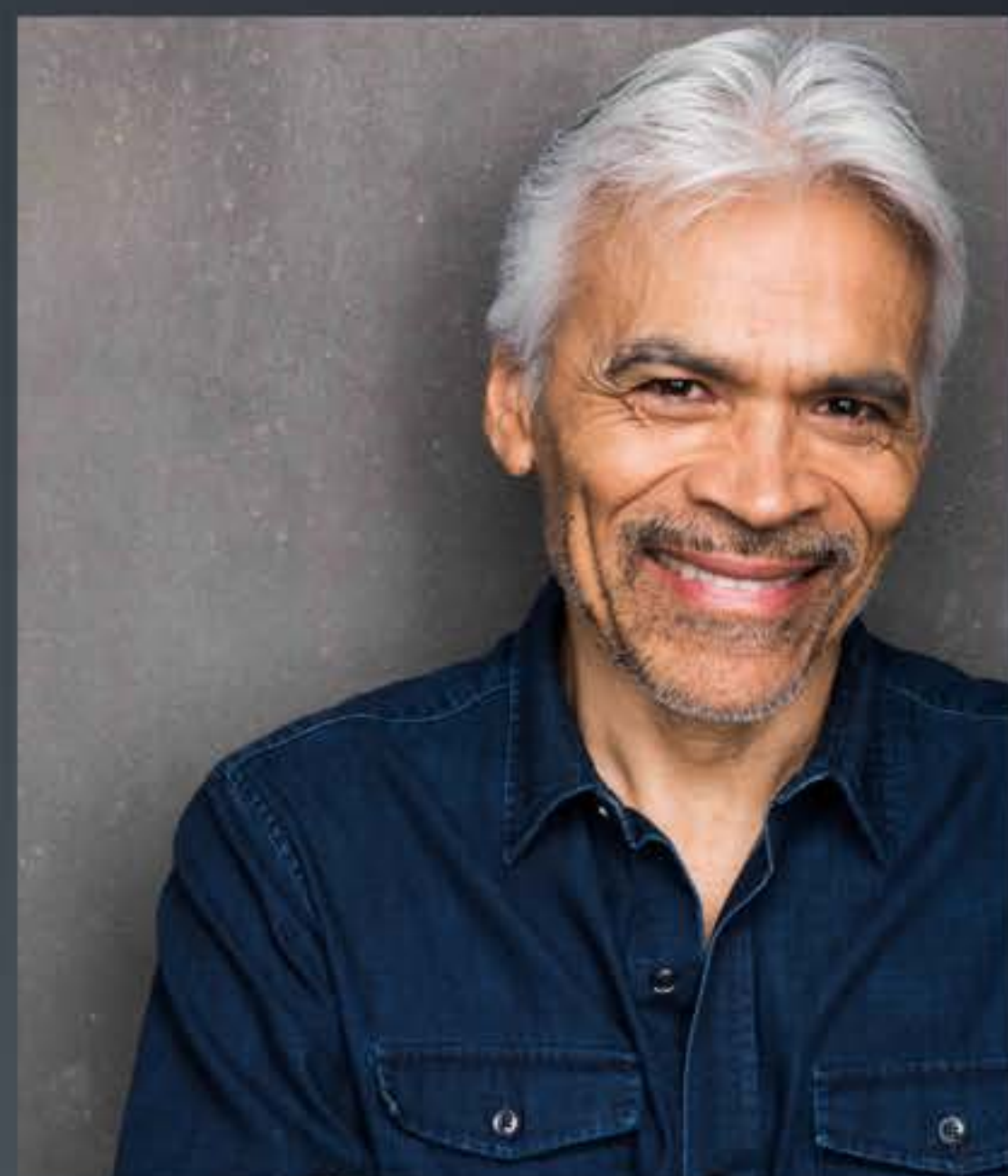
Previously, Levine served as a Special Representative to the United Nations.

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*.



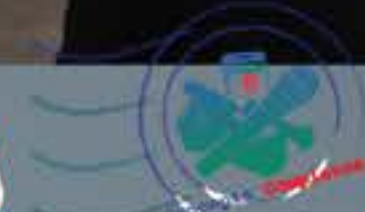
BILL ESPARZA

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 Tepehuáño 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

DONACIONES LIBRES DE IMPUESTOS A TRAVÉS DE LA IDA

✉ documentary.org/project/backstreet-american-dream

PARA RESERVAR EL DOCUMENTAL Y TODAS LAS CONSULTAS DE PRENSA

✉ Info@BackstreetFilm.com | ☎ 213.632.8078



WEBSITES

→ PatriciaNazario.com
→ BackstreetFilm.com

