

"Absolutely masterful!"
 "¡Absolutamente magistral!"



PROJECT SUMMARY

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



SURVIVAL ISN'T TRENDY. IT'S THE ONLY WAY FORWARD.

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



Backstreet to the American Dream

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 100 | 90 | 54 min. (Classroom Cut + 4 modules)
- 18 Awards & Commendations
- Documentary Feature
- National Educational Distribution: New Day Films
- Dolores Huerta – Exec. Producer
- Jarritos – Promotional Partner
- International Doc Assoc. (ida) – Fiscal Sponsor
- Grant: Eastside Arts Initiative (EAI)

FILM FESTIVALS

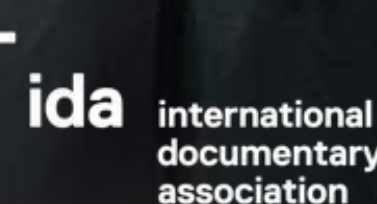
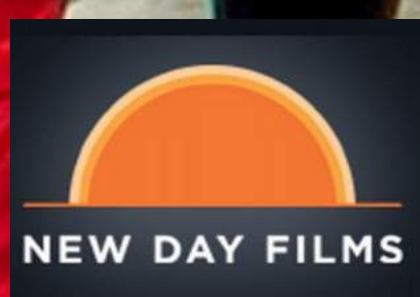
- 12 in the United States
- 1 in Paris, FR
- 1 GuadaLajara, MX (L.A.)

EDUCATIONAL REACH

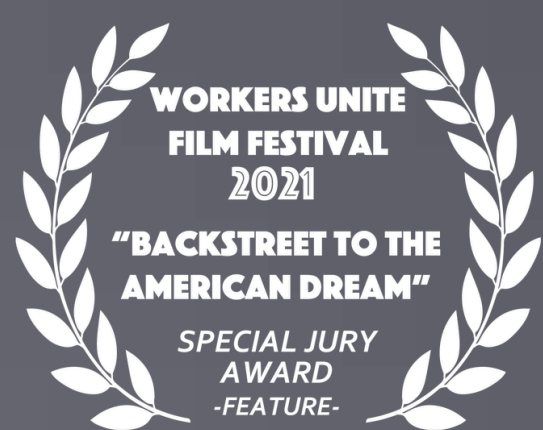
- Universities
- Cultural Centers
- Community Screenings

SOCIAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN

- Cinema. Cultura. Comunidad. (CCC)
- Gardena Cinema | Sept. 27, 2025
- Grant: L.A. County Sup. Holly Mitchell



FILM FESTIVALS



SYNOPSIS

SURVIVAL ISN'T TRENDY. IT'S THE ONLY WAY FORWARD.

LOGLINE

A bilingual, cross-cultural portrait of race, labor and class in modern-day America, following entrepreneurs from two radically different worlds as they pursue their slice of the American pie.

REACH & RECOGNITION

Timely and unflinching, this slice of contemporary Americana examines the people, labor and lived experiences behind the pursuit of economic opportunity in modern-day America. The award-winning documentary has screened internationally at 14 film festivals, including **Dances With Films**, **Newport Beach**, **Sonoma**, **San Antonio**, **GuadaLajara**, **Workers Unite-NYC** and **Ethnografilm Paris**, as well as at universities and cultural institutions across the U.S. The bilingual feature has earned 18 awards and commendations.

PLOT SUMMARY

Backstreet to the American Dream follows entrepreneurs from vastly different backgrounds as they pursue their piece of the American Dream. Cleveland natives Matt Chernus and Chef Ryan Harkins burst onto the national stage in 2010 when their heavy-metal-themed burger truck, Grill 'Em All, won the first season of Food Network's *The Great Food Truck Race*. Their victory propelled the business from the streets of Los Angeles into reality-TV fame, a devoted social-media following and a booming brand.

Doña Guillermina Villa's path looks nothing like theirs. She immigrated from Mexico in 1977 to provide for her toddler son back home in Nayarit. In 1982, Doña Guillermina launched El Pescadito, a family-run mariscos lonchera. For decades, she has parked in the same South L.A. immigrant neighborhood, building a livelihood through family labor and deep community ties.

Placed side by side, these stories reveal contrasting approaches to entrepreneurship. They expose the complicated relationship between survival and spectacle, asking how race, class, immigration, media visibility and economic opportunity can shape whose work is celebrated and whose labor is overlooked.

The bilingual feature also reaches back in time with an award-winning four-minute animated journey from Ancient Mexico to South Los Angeles, tracing the cultural roots of street food across generations. Told in English, Spanish and Náhuatl and accompanied by handmade instruments, the sequence anchors today's entrepreneurs within a much richer history of food, migration, labor and cultural identity.

At its heart, *Backstreet to the American Dream* is about people working to build something of their own. Through the everyday act of breaking bread, the bilingual, cross-cultural odyssey brings different lived experiences into a singular conversation. It challenges assumptions about pop culture, Latino immigrants and social biases.

Moving between survival and success, visibility and invisibility, the informal economy and mainstream marketplace, *Backstreet* asks enduring questions about living the dream: Whose labor is valued? How do race and class shape economic opportunities? And what does making it look like when success means something different to everyone chasing it?

AWARDS & COMMENDATIONS

2025 Certificate of Special Recognition: United States Congresswoman Maxine Waters (43rd District, California)

- “For creating **Cinema. Cultura. Comunidad.**, a film and cultural festival in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month...and whose work humanizes the perception of immigrants...”

2025 Certificate of Recognition: City of Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass

- “...I extend appreciation for her dedication to telling the stories of the workers and families that demonstrate the strength, resilience, and entrepreneurship that continue to shape the City of Angels.”

2024 Special Commendation: L.A. County Supervisor (Dist. 1) & Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis

- “We recognize the film’s accomplishment of delving into how street food fosters inclusion, while exploring the deep connection between food, culture, and community.”

2024 Special Commendation: L.A. County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath (Dist. 3)

- “We applaud Patricia for the illustrious response she has received for this film...”

2024 Special Commendation: L.A. City Councilmember Mónica Rodríguez (Dist. 7)

- “Thank you for documenting the hard work and sacrifices of immigrants as they chase the American Dream.”

Garifuna International Indigenous Film Festival

Intangible Heritage Documentary

2022

Highland Park Independent Film Festival

Best Feature Documentary

2022

Highland Park Independent Film Festival

Humanitarian Award

2022

Culver City Film Festival

Best Director Documentary Feature

2022

San Antonio Film Festival

Best Food Film

2022

San Antonio Film Festival

Audience Award Best Documentary Feature

2022

Ruben Salazar National Journalism Award

Digital Media (Finalist)

2021

Riverside International Film Festival

Jury Award Best Animated Short

2021

Independent Shorts Awards

Jury Award Best Animated Short

2021

Workers Unite Film Festival (New York City)

Special Jury Award

2021

2012

U.S. Representative Loretta Sánchez, CA’s 47th Congressional District - **Congressional Certificate of Recognition**

U.S. Representative Linda Sánchez, CA’s 39th Congressional District - **Congressional Certificate of Recognition**

La Asociación Latina de Asistencia & Partners - **Leaders Blazing Trails Award**

- All three 2012 honors recognized Patricia’s vision for *Backstreet to the American Dream* as a work in progress.

“Hosting Patricia Nazario and screening *Backstreet to the American Dream* at Cal Poly Pomona was a highlight for our campus community. Patricia’s brilliant presentation sparked essential conversations about labor, identity, and economic justice that resonated among our campus community attendees long after the event ended.”

– **Dr. Álvaro Huerta**, Professor of Urban & Regional Planning





SOCIAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN | Program + Impact

Cinema. Cultura. Comunidad. (CCC) took *Backstreet to the American Dream* beyond the screen and into the community through film, culture and public dialogue. Launched Sept. 27, 2025, at the historic Gardena Cinema, the daylong event showcased films by 25 Latina directors, local artisans and community storytellers, culminating in a spotlight conversation with NASA astronaut José Hernández (*A Million Miles Away*) examining harmful media portrayals of Latinos and their real-world consequences. *Backstreet* closed the event, which raised \$800 for Public Counsel, a nonprofit public-interest law firm serving immigrant and other underserved communities. Funded by a grant from L.A. County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell (Dist. 2), the initiative received certificates of recognition from U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters and L.A. Mayor Karen Bass. See the highlights.

EDUCATIONAL & INSTITUTIONAL SCREENINGS | PRESENTATIONS

- 05.07.2026 - Higher Ed Hive: Pacific Northwest
- 03.22.2025 - CSULA Mesoamerican Symposium
- 08.03.2024 - Chicano Resource Center
- 12.08.2023 - Smithsonian Initiative/JANM
- 10.10.2023 - UCLA Alumni/Labor Center
- 04.13.2023 - Nat. Hispanic Cultural Center
- 11.10.2022 - USC ASE Dept.
- 10.11.2022 - SF State University
- 09.28.2022 - Cal Poly Pomona
- 09.27.2022 - San Jose City College
- 09.24.2022 - Texas A&M SA (TAMUSA)
- 09.21.2022 - Trinity University (Campus-wide)
- 09.21.2022 - Trinity University (Class)
- 09.20.2022 - UIW - HEB School of Business
- 09.19.2022 - Brick at Blue Star
- 10.13.2021 - NuyoRican Poets Cafe
- 10.12.2021 - Fordham University
- 10.12.2021 - Columbia Grad School of Journalism
- 09.16.2021 - UArizona Journalism School

"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."

- Professor Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Project Director at UCLA Labor Center



MEDIA | PRESS

- 10.28.2025 - Mex-American/Latino Lens Live
- 12.20.2023 - Democracy Center TV
- 10.06.2022 - NBC4/CA Live
- 09.23.2022 - KENS5 (NBC San Antonio)
- 09.22.2022 - The Mesquite News
- 08.05.2022 - Fronteras (Texas Public Radio)
- 08.02.2022 - KENS5 (NBC San Antonio)
- 07.31.2022 - San Antonio Report
- 07.29.2022 - La Prensa Texas
- 03.24.2022 - SonomaTV
- 03.19.2022 - Fandor Festival Podcast
- 12.04.2021 - CCNMA: Ruben Salazar Nat. Journalism Award
- 11.02.2021 - Latina.com
- 10.17.2021 - Newport Beach Independent Newspaper
- 10.10.2021 - KTTV: In-Depth (Hal Eisner)
- 10.07.2021 - WPIX Morning Show
- 08.27.2021 - Mexican Consulate in LA
- 08.23.2021 - LA Daily News
- 08.18.2021 - En Casa con La Plaza

FISCAL SPONSOR

ida.org

PRESS | GENERAL INQUIRIES

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EDUCATIONAL LICENSING | SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

NewDay.com



New Day Films



WEBSITES

- BackstreetFilm.com
- PatriciaNazario.com

In Appreciation

KAREN BASS

MAYOR OF LOS ANGELES

Letter Found



DOLORES HUERTA FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING



MAXINE WATERS

CONGRESSWOMAN FOR CALIFORNIA'S 43RD

janm

JAPANESE AMERICAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM



Smithsonian

MONICA RODRIGUEZ

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 7

★ SUPERVISOR ★
HILDA SOLIS



LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERVISOR

LINDSEY

Horvath

THIRD DISTRICT

MARISCOS JALISCO

CONGRESSWOMAN

Linda ★
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LA PRINT HOUSE