



Señorita Extraviada: Latina Documentary Filmmakers in the United States

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Introduction

This project explores the lives and works of a number of exceptional Latina documentary filmmakers working in the United States whose bodies of work have been recognized by a knowledgeable small group of filmmakers, but have been overlooked in the academic classroom. The focus of the project was as follows: 1) Introducing these women's lives and experiences, using one filmmaker as a case study, 2) examining their body of work in the field of documentary film, 3) choosing one film as a case study, and 4) analyzing their works and their contribution to documentary filmmaking and videography in the United States. Their contributions are extremely important, and relevant, in academia, yet they are grossly underrepresented. Our aim was to shed light on their achievements in this ever-growing field and by doing so, provide a more well-rounded perspective of contemporary documentary cinema.



Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (1985)

- Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1986
- Nominated for an Emmy for News and Documentary in 1986
- Set in Buenos Aires, Argentina in the days shortly after Argentina's Dirty War (roughly 1976- 1983)
- Follows the story of the movement of the mothers of those who were "disappeared" at the hand of the government during the Dirty War, and their fight for information on their whereabouts



Case Study: Lourdes Portillo

"That is my greatest impetus for making films- for people to understand who I am and who the people I come from are."

-Lourdes Portillo

- Born in Mexico in 1944
- Moved to Los Angeles California at the age of 13
- Got her first filmmaking experience at the age of 21
- Popular themes: Women, Immigrants, Injustice, Latin America/Latin-Americans, Identity
- After the Earthquake (1979)
- La Ofrenda [The Offering] (1983)

Plan for Disseminating Results:

The information gathered is to be used in the writing of an academic book to be used in university courses such as Latin American Studies, Women's Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, and Film and Media Culture Studies

Señorita Extraviada (2001)

- Special Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival, 2002
- Distinguished Documentary Award, International Documentary Association, 2002, Los Angeles, California
- Set in border town Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
- Investigates the stories behind the headlines of the hundreds of women who have been kidnapped, murdered, raped, and tortured in the past decade



Conclusion

The field of documentary film has long been an important facet of filmmaking and videography. It is a field that often strives to enlighten, as well as tell a story. Many times this very story tells the audience a great deal about our time, views, morals, and culture. For that reason, and many more, we feel that it is of utmost importance to provide university students with into these women working in an industry that is overwhelmingly dominated by majority males.

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