



Film News

From a Trump Piñata to Indigenous Stories: The Academy of Motion Pictures Hosts a Latino Film Festival

By [Manuel Betancourt](#) | 2 days ago

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) will be co-presenting NewFilmmakers Los Angeles' (NFMLA) [annual Latino & Hispanic Cinema program](#) in September. Bringing together films from the United States, Cuba, Spain, Peru, Guatemala, Venezuela and Mexico, the day-long event hopes to shine a spotlight on projects from and about the Latino and Hispanic communities. Open to the public, the various screenings and receptions are designed to encourage networking and discussions between the filmmakers and local audiences.

True to its mission of showcasing a wide variety of genres and stories, the short films set to be screened run the gamut from the quotidian to the historical. Douglas Cushnie's *Neemkomok*, for example, is set in early 1800's and follows Isadora, an indigenous Californian (Gabrielino/Tongva) woman, who faces a battle to survive after being emancipated from the abusive Los Angeles mission where she was raised. And then there's Sarah Clift's more contemporary-sounding *La Madre Buena*, which is about a Mexican mother's epic journey to find her son's birthday request: a Donald Trump piñata. And give the current political climate, it's no surprise to find other shorts tackling issues of immigration, with Daniela Arguello's *2500KM* fictionalizing a true story of a Guatemalan woman pondering whether to run away to the U.S., and Adolfo Mena Cejas' *The Machine* about what happens when a Cuban woman wins the American Visa Lottery and sets out to leave her family on that island behind.

Indeed, the feature film documentary that will cap off the day's program, Guillermo García López's *Frágil Equilibrio (Delicate Balance)*, is a probing look at current geopolitical problems that plague us. Taking a *Babel*-like approach, the doc introduces us to a Japanese executive in Tokyo, a sub-Saharan community, and a family in Madrid. Through those disparate subjects, the doc explores contemporary ideas of democracy, xenophobia, and mental health, and the way they affect populations around the world. As an older Spanish man puts it in the film's trailer, despite all the horrible things currently afflicting the world, "Mankind can reach higher musical keys – but that requires that humanity enters into reason. It's a challenge lying ahead." A challenge García López's, like all those being screened in Los Angeles as part of this inclusive program, are hoping to better illuminate.

The annual [NFMLA InFocus: Latino and Hispanic Cinema](#) event takes place Saturday, September 16, 2017.