



Awards, applause for Latinx film community



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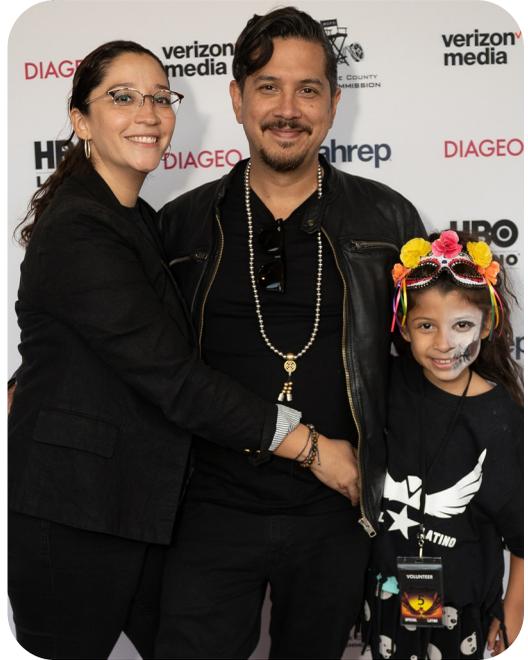
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Awards, applause for Latinx film community

In 2014, photographer Danny Hastings noticed how few Latinos were present at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Oscars awards show. While he was thrilled when Alfonso Cuarón won best director for the film "Gravity," Hastings was disappointed not to see films featuring the culture and traditions of American Latinos. "It seems like the narrative is always international," says Hastings. "We are nowhere in this conversation."

Friends challenged Hastings to do something about it when they read his complaints on social media. Instead of continuing his rants, Hastings founded the [Official Latino Film Festival](#), a traveling event, in 2015. Hastings stipulated that any films considered for the festival had to be produced in the U.S. by people in the Latina and Latino community. "The festival is centered around the accomplishments of the Latinx community here in the United States," says Hastings, who resides in LaQuinta, California, and Queens, New York.

Films are submitted through [Film Freeway](#) for a nominal fee between April and August. Adventure, comedy, family, horror and LGBTQ+ are some of the "blocks" or category submission themes. A panel of judges, made up of actors and filmmakers, watches



Danny Hastings, his wife Crissy Hastings and their daughter Daniela Hastings attend the 2019 Official Latino Film Festival. Photo courtesy of Danny Hastings



The crew from "Slipping Into Darkness," including the film's director, Alex Ferrufino, and producer, Davy Mansanalez, gathers for a photo at the 2019 Official Latino Film Festival. Danny Hastings and Danielle Robinson from DIAGEO, one of the founding partners of the festival, join the group for the photo. Front row, from left: Davy Mansanalez, Alex Ferrufino, Danielle Robinson and Hastings. Photo courtesy of Danny Hastings

A master plan for multiplying wealth



Gary Acosta is the co-founder and CEO of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals. Photo courtesy of NAHREP

California native Gary Acosta is determined to triple Hispanic wealth over 10 years. As the co-founder and CEO of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, Acosta was inspired to take action in 2012 when the [Pew Hispanic Center](#) reported a loss of 66% in net worth for Hispanics during the Great Recession, 2005 through 2009.

A conversation with Acosta's mentor, Henry Cisneros, former secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development under President Bill Clinton, prompted Acosta to launch the Hispanic Wealth Project, a nonprofit to empower the Hispanic community financially and educationally.

"We realized NAHREP was in a unique position to provide leadership around this issue," Acosta says. "We're an organization all about sustainable homeownership for the Latino community, which is the primary source of wealth creation for families. Also, a large percentage of our membership are small business owners and that's an important source of wealth as well."

The NAHREP 10 is the cornerstone of HWP. It's a list of 10 disciplines to provide knowledge and resources for long-term financial strength and wealth-building potential. Acosta wrote the NAHREP 10 with input from the NAHREP membership.

"The membership has embraced the NAHREP 10," Acosta explains. "Our membership is largely made up of real estate agents, brokers and financial professionals that are not only facilitators of real

estate transactions, but they are trusted advisers in their communities. The hope is that the information about the NAHREP 10 would cascade into the broader Latino community through their own personal networks where they have that influence."

The NAHREP 10 can educate a generation of young Latinos, a prominent population in the workforce, says Acosta. "These are the individuals who will be driving our economy in the future," he says. "If they aren't doing well financially, the country won't do well financially. The impact would be felt across our economy. We all have a stake in seeing the Latino community do well."

The disciplines consider the importance of asset diversification - having a wide variety of investments - in real estate, small businesses and the stock market, but also includes information about family, health and being involved within your community. "

The NAHREP 10

- Have a mature understanding of wealth and prosperity.
- Be in the top 10% of your profession.
- Live below your means and be ready for the next recession.
- Minimize debt.
- Invest at least 20% of your income in real estate and stocks.
- Know your net worth, including the value of your business.
- Be politically savvy.
- Be physically fit.
- Be generous with people who are less fortunate.
- Be active in the lives of your family and children.

For more information about the Hispanic Wealth Project and The NAHREP 10, visit:

- garyacosta.com
- hispanicwealthproject.org
- hispanicwealthproject.org/nahrep-10-disciplines



Alluring portrayals of a multifarious society

Picture That ART CONSULTANTS

For more information on our cultural fine art services, visit www.picturethatart.com.

The artists featured in this edition of *Unity* endeavor to showcase the beauty of Hispanic people and their rich culture.



"Calf Pasture Beach" by Sarah Lopez

SARAH LOPEZ

Born and raised in Norwalk, Connecticut, Sarah Lopez comes from an artistic family who encouraged her to pursue drawing, painting and photography. Art has always been a major influence in her life, especially the art of photography. Lopez says she appreciates being able to pursue a passion that evolved into a viable career.

"I fell in love with the idea of capturing the world through photography ever since I held my first camera when I was a child," says Lopez, "and the first images I captured were in Ecuador."

"Calf Pasture Beach" is one of many favorites Lopez took with her first professional camera. The contrasting colors of rocks and flora in the foreground help to frame the placid body of water.



"Palmas" by Sarah Lopez



"Playa Cristal" by Sarah Lopez

"Palmas" captures another side of nature on the coast of Ecuador, with palm trees and leaves of light and dark contrasted against a backdrop of faded pastel blue sky and gentle hints of white clouds.

Viewers can bask in the warm mystique of Ecuador's sun in "Playa Cristal," a stunning shot capturing the sunset over the ocean in Cojimies.

Lopez' artistic eye has allowed her to capture the awe-inspiring beauty of her native country. "It is my hope," says Lopez, "that when people see my photos, they will want to visit and explore this small and amazingly diverse country."



"Oilfield Desert Sunset" by Farrah Lozano Reyes

FARRAH LOZANO REYES

Farrah Lozano Reyes describes herself as a small-town girl from Balmorhea, Texas. Reyes realized she was an artist when her ninth-grade art teacher acknowledged her talent after she completed a classroom painting assignment. Days later, that same teacher gave Reyes her first set of oils and paintbrushes. That's when Reyes says she was inspired to pursue her passion to paint.

"My artwork comes from my personality of being a strong, independent and an open-minded Hispanic woman," Reyes says. "My usage of bright colors also influences my work," she continues, "because it reflects celebration and a festive spirit in my culture."



"The Spirit of Music" by Farrah Lozano Reyes



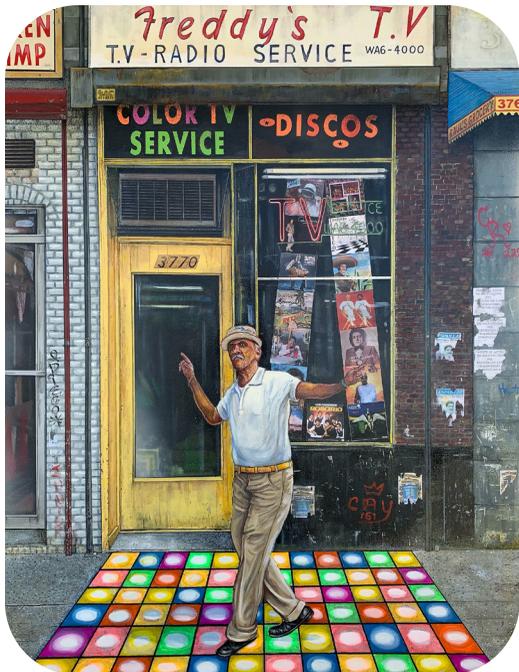
"Swirls of Chaos" by Farrah Lozano Reyes

That subtle, yet boldness of color comes through in her piece, "Oilfield Desert Sunset." This work of acrylics "is inspired by the marvelous and colorful west Texas sunsets and the oil boom in my hometown," she says.

"Swirls of Chaos" is "a random mix of acrylic colors and swirls," says Reyes. "The multitude of colors and swirls represents life in a chaotic state."

"The Spirit of Music" mixes acrylic, oils and black sand. It was inspired by Reyes' love for blues and jazz music. This piece was featured in an auction in Midland, Texas, during a 2018 music festival.

Reyes believes her artwork opens the minds of children and adults in her culture as well as others. She hopes others who come from small towns will be inspired to paint and express themselves through visual and other art mediums.



"El Guayaberudo" by Copie Rodriguez

COPIE RODRIGUEZ

Copie Rodriguez, born and raised in Washington Heights, New York City, was exposed to art – and subsequently creating it – from an early age. Throughout his childhood, Rodriguez spent countless hours drawing and painting in his room and was heavily influenced by trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Rodriguez earned a bachelor of fine arts degree with a major in illustration from Pratt Institute in New York City.

The major sources of Rodriguez's concepts originate from his walks in the streets, rides on public transportation and observations of his surroundings. "I use photography and sketching for reference," he says, "then document it from my own perspective."

Rodriguez's work depicts people and places both real and imagined, with an urban twist. A portrait of a legendary Dominican dancer, "El Guayaberudo," has a nostalgic feel. In it, a dancer moves in front of a store topped with a sign bearing a telephone number containing a once-common prefix.

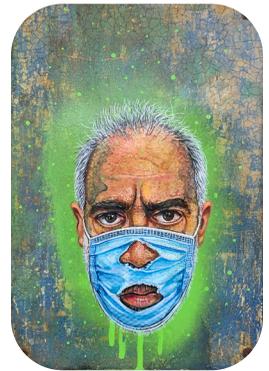
Surrounded by hole-punched tickets that resemble a quilt, "Rail Woman" portrays and magnifies a train conductor's weary look of dealing with the mundane nature of her job.

"2021 Will Be My Breakout Year" symbolizes the uncertainties of the pandemic. Splotches of colors serve as the background for a gray-haired man, whom Rodriguez describes as a self-portrait, whose face is half cloaked by a mask. His nose and mouth are visible through holes cut into the face covering.

Rodriguez says he creates images that feature people who have traditionally been underrepresented. "Hopefully," he says, "those viewing my work can gain inspiration from my images." Rodriguez' work has been exhibited in museums and galleries in the U.S.



"Rail Woman" by Copie Rodriguez



"2021 Will Be My Breakout Year" by Copie Rodriguez

Chef's specialty and passion: Plant-based dishes



"I'm dedicated to plant-based food in a very conscious approach," says Chef Jerome Valencia. Photo by Jessica Cabrera @jessicappas

In sixth grade, San Juan native Jerome Valencia made a Mexican pizza on pan de agua, a common water bread found in Puerto Rico, and topped it with cheese, pepperoni and sauce. His grandmother, who cooked rice and beans, plantains and other traditional dishes found in Puerto Rico, taught him the value of sharing food. "She used to cook for me (and his siblings)," says Valencia. "As a kid, I was into making my own inventions in the kitchen."

Since 2010, Valencia has been building a business as a plant-based entrepreneur chef: He cooks for pop-up and private events, curates menus and consults with local restaurants. He sells premade meals at Cooperativa Orgánica Madre Tierra, an organic and agro-ecological farmers market in San Juan.

Valencia was drawn to a plant-based diet when he started playing guitar with a reggae band in the early 2000s. The Rastafarian culture of eating vegan meals intrigued him. A few years later, he began cooking plant-based food for others. "I'm dedicated to plant-based food in a very conscious approach," he says. "I work with local farmers, always to support the agriculture in Puerto Rico."

His intention is to bring awareness and education about ingredients in a dish and connect them back to the farmer. "You're aware of what you're eating," he says, "before it gets to your plate."

Guanime

(Puerto Rican corn dumpling)

Serving: 6 to 10

Ingredients

- 1 cup of water
- 2 cups of fresh coconut milk or organic canned
- 3 teaspoons of sea salt or Himalayan salt
- 3 cups of organic corn flour or masa harina
- 1/4 cup of small coconut flakes, unsweetened
- A few green banana or plantain leaves (Corn paper is traditionally used, but parchment paper is an alternative).
- Cooking thread, also called oven-safe string or kitchen twine

Directions

In a medium saucepan, heat the water, coconut milk and salt. When it starts to boil, remove from the heat. Add the corn flour and coconut flakes and, with a wooden spoon or spatula, incorporate until a soft and firm dough is formed.

Cut the banana leaves into 8-inch square pieces, then carefully put each leaf near a gas or electric stove burner on low heat until they become soft. Do both sides for better results (Skip this step if using parchment paper).

Use 1/4 cup of the dough and shape like a cylinder using a spoon or your hands. Lightly oil 1 side of the banana leaf, and then add the dough to the center of the banana leaf. Wrap it tightly to make it waterproof. Tie the sides with the cooking thread.

Boil in salted water for 30 minutes, remove from the boiling water, cut the thread and open the guanime. Serve with store-bought seasoned jackfruit, tofu or any plant-based protein.



Veteran apple harvester is an expert in her field



Janet Delgado enjoys the variety of jobs she performs at an apple orchard in Washington. Photo by Daisy Delgado

It's only natural for Janet Delgado to feel at home in an apple orchard. Her family has worked at Cornerstone Ranches in Toppenish, Washington, since before she was born in that state; her dad is a supervisor there. Delgado, whose parents are from Jalisco, Mexico, joined the farm full time seven years ago, after graduating from high school.

"They (my family) always worked with apples," says Delgado, who's in her mid-twenties. "When I was about 14, I started getting into apples. I worked every summer. I like the fields."

Cornerstone Ranches, a family farm owned by Graham Gamache, dates to the late 1800s. The farm's 1,200 acres is split between hop fields and apple orchards. Autumn Glory, Braeburn, Cosmic Crisp, Fuji, Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Pink Lady and Red Delicious are grown on 450 acres. Apples are distributed to grocery stores around the country.

Delgado's jobs on the farm vary, depending on the season. Her work in the orchards begins with pruning the trees in January. In June, she sorts apples growing on the branch. "If there are three apples together, you take one and leave two (to allow them to continue to grow)," she explains. "Sorting cuts down on bruising."

Once the weather gets warm, Delgado helps cut branches off the apple trees. This helps each apple get access to the sun and develop its color.

Delgado's favorite job is being the checker between late August and mid-November: She looks for size, color and appearance of every handpicked apple placed in the bin by the apple pickers.

Delgado admits there's nothing like walking through the orchard while eating an Autumn Glory or Cosmic Crisp right from the tree. "The Cosmic reminds me of a sunrise and sunset," she says. "It's a really nice yellow and red color."

Apple Crisp

Servings: 6 to 8

Ingredients

- 6 apples, Granny Smith or Golden, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 3/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon

For the topping

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned oats
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
- Vanilla ice cream

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter an 8-inch-by-8-inch baking dish, or apply nonstick cooking spray, and set it aside.

In a mixing bowl, combine the sliced apples, granulated sugar and ground cinnamon. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish.

In another bowl, add the brown sugar, oats, flour, salt and melted butter for the topping. Mix.

Spread the topping over the apples in the baking dish. Pat the topping to even it out. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until the topping turns golden brown. Serve warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



Awards, applause for Latinx film community

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Elaine Del Valle directing on the set of "Brownsville Bred" with actors Javier Muñoz, left, and Pierre Jean Gonzalez. Photo by Zalo Castillo

the films over a period of three months, deciding on the final films for the festival. They are looking for writing, directing, storyline and pacing. The eighth annual Latino Film and Arts Festival, Dec. 2-4, 2022, will be a hybrid festival with online and live screenings.

Five hundred films were submitted the first year and more than 100 were featured in the festival. In 2021, more than 500 films were reviewed and 120 highlighted in the festival. [Diageo](#) is a founding partner, providing funding for the festival.

In 2015, a \$1,000 cash prize was awarded to the winning filmmaker. Prizes have varied each year, based on sponsorship, and have included financial support and licensing fees with a major network.

Promoting Latinx filmmakers and increasing the representation of Latinx workers in the film industry are objectives for the festival, but Hastings also wants to find money and exposure for these films.

"I was the first festival to actually get HBO to apply a licensing fee," Hastings says. "That means, they (HBO) come to the film festival and choose three films from the festival and they go right to the network. This provides the filmmakers with financial support, but their films get seen on an international platform. That's what I want for the filmmakers."

Since the pandemic, the festival has moved online, making it accessible to people all over the world

through a subscription. The winning films are part of an in-person celebration event in a large city. "The greatest part about having a film festival online is that you can have more people watching our films," he says.

Audiences identify with the films, says Hastings. They see people who look like them, dealing with issues or problems they may have faced. "You're actually watching yourself or someone who looks like you, talks like you, on the screen," says Hastings, who was born in California and raised in Panama.

Since the festival's inception, actor and filmmaker Elaine Del Valle has been submitting films and winning awards. In 2017, "Final Decision" was nominated for Best Drama and Del Valle received the award for Best Actress in a Drama. "Me 3.769" was nominated for Best Drama and won the Vanguardia Award in 2019 and "Princess Cut" was one of three films in 2020 chosen for the HBO Latinx Short Film.

"Being a part of the festival helped me to be an active part of a Latinx filmmaking community," Del Valle says. "Being a winner of the HBO Latinx Short Film Award also catapulted my 'Princess Cut' film onto the HBO Max platform. The accomplishment remains a highlight of my career and a measure of success that encourages other meaningful partners to understand my commitment and support my artistic journey."