



**Grand Rapids  
Latin American  
Film Festival**

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Emily Hunsberger, Tertulia - [emily@tertuliaspanish.com](mailto:emily@tertuliaspanish.com), 616-965-1760

### **LOCAL FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS WITH THE BEST OF LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA IN AN ONLINE, INTERACTIVE FORMAT**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – The Grand Rapids Latin American Film Festival (GRLAFF), an annual, award-winning cultural event with the power to bring together different communities, celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The 2020 Festival, originally scheduled for the first weekend in April, was postponed in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thankfully, GRLAFF fans will still be able to celebrate the Festival's anniversary: the organizing committee has found a safe way to show nine feature-length films and a series of short films, as well as offer audiences the chance to participate in discussions following a select number of screenings.



Committee members, volunteers, and a guest director at the 2019 GRLAFF.

GRLAFF 2020 will now take the form of an online festival over the period of one month, from September 15 to October 15, 2020, which coincides with National Hispanic Heritage Month. Follow GRLAFF on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, using the handle @GRLAFF, to receive updates and, most importantly, exclusive links to access all the films and facilitated discussion sessions during the online festival.

In the past, GRLAFF was held each year at the Wealthy Theatre, where hundreds of attendees enjoyed screenings of the best and brightest of Latin American cinema, panel discussions with local speakers, Q&A sessions with visiting directors, Latin American-style refreshments, and children's programming. GRLAFF was founded in 2010 by Dr. Zulema Moret, a professor of Spanish at Grand Valley State University, and Daniel García, who was a professor of film at Calvin University at the time. Moret

and García aspired to bring independent films by Latin American and Latinx directors to West Michigan and to make it possible to engage with these directors in person.

Their vision still guides GRLAFF, which is organized by a committee of volunteers from five area universities. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevents the organizing committee from offering an in-person experience in 2020, the Festival slogan, “Cinema Without Borders,” is more relevant than ever. Stéphane Bédère, a professor of French and Spanish at Aquinas College, has been on the GRLAFF committee since the first festival in 2010. “Establishing a bridge between different communities and being a meeting point is more and more important in today’s context,” said Bédère earlier this year. Now, many of us are turning to online tools to reach across the physical boundaries that are needed to keep us safe during the pandemic.

The online format will also allow even more people to participate in the Festival in 2020. Traditionally, each film is screened one time, in-person, over the course of a Festival. This year, each film will debut online on a specific date and then remain available for online viewing until the close of the Festival on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Those interested in attending the online Festival are encouraged to follow GRLAFF on social media, where links to the films will be posted on the day of their debut screening.

GRLAFF 2020 will open with *The Unafraid*, a 2018 documentary that follows the lives of Alejandro, Silvia, and Aldo, three college-age DACA recipients in Georgia, a state where they are banned from attending the top five public universities and from receiving in-state tuition at any public college. (The film was originally part of a pre-festival series of social justice documentaries focused on the Latinx community that had to be cut short in March.) After the debut online screening of *The Unafraid*, GRLAFF will host a virtual panel discussion with education researchers and Latinx students.

Audiences can also look forward to eight feature-length films from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru, and five short films from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Venezuela that will be shown together as a series. (All the films will be shown in Spanish or Portuguese with English subtitles.) Six of the feature-length films and three of the shorts were directed or co-directed by women. This year’s award-winning selections touch on a broad range of themes, from the era of slavery in Brazil (*Vazante*, Brazil) to the challenges faced by service workers (*La camarista* [The Chambermaid], Mexico). Among the films to be shown is *Temblores* (Tremors), by Guatemalan director Jayro Bustamante, who visited GRLAFF in 2017 for the screening of his acclaimed debut film, *Ixcánul*.

Even though international travel is not possible this year, GRLAFF will still be able to celebrate its milestone anniversary by welcoming several special guests to its online Festival: directors Melina León from Peru, Maura Delpero from Argentina, Rubén Mendoza from Colombia, and Bettina Perut and Ivan Osvonikoff from Chile. León’s *Canción sin nombre* (Song Without a Name) is inspired by real events; the film takes place in the 1980s during Peru’s political crisis and follows a mother’s search for her newborn daughter who was stolen from her after she gave birth at a fake health clinic. Delpero’s *Maternal* (Hogar) takes place in a convent in Buenos Aires that

provides shelter to teenage mothers and explores the complicated relationship between the nuns and the young women who live with them. Mendoza's *Niña errante (Wandering Girl)* is a road trip film where four sisters explore their relationships following the death of their father. Perut's and Osvonikoff's film, *Los Reyes (The Kings)*, is a documentary whose protagonists are two stray dogs living near a skate park in Santiago, Chile, and it has been a hit with viewers and critics alike.

Audience members will have a chance to participate in virtual Q&A sessions with the directors following the debut online screenings of their respective films. As mentioned before, GRLAFF will post exclusive links on its social media accounts to view the films and to participate in the Q&A sessions.

As always, the Festival is free for everyone in the community. This is made possible by the generous support of GRLAFF partners and sponsors, as well as donations from the public. You can make a suggested \$5.00 donation online at [grlaff.org/donate](http://grlaff.org/donate).

WHAT: 2020 Grand Rapids Latin American Film Festival ONLINE

WHEN: September 15 – October 15, 2020

ADMISSION: Free to the public; donations appreciated

MORE INFORMATION: [www.grlaff.org](http://www.grlaff.org)

Be sure to visit the Festival website for more information and follow the Festival on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for updates, using the handle @GRLAFF and the hashtag #GRLAFF2020.

###

*The mission of the Grand Rapids Latin American Film Festival (GRLAFF) is to foster a nuanced understanding of Latin American and Latino experiences through the art of film, to provide opportunities for constructive dialogue across cultures, and to enrich the social fabric of our community. GRLAFF is organized by a coalition of area universities (Grand Valley State University, Aquinas College, Calvin University, Davenport University, and Ferris State University), and the 2020 Festival is sponsored by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Tertulia, and anonymous donors. Learn more at [www.grlaff.org](http://www.grlaff.org).*