



AFI CONSERVATORY PRESENTS  
**PETALOS**



STARRING Maria Genoveva Martinez

CASTING BY Nicole Mejia and Don DiPetta MUSIC BY Alain Emile SOUND DESIGN BY Judy Kim  
EDITED BY Joe King PRODUCTION DESIGN BY Marian Wood CINEMATOGRAPHY BY Bella Finn Parisot  
PRODUCING BY Ahmad Alerwi WRITTEN BY Nicole Mejia and Don DiPetta DIRECTED BY Nicole Mejia



L O G L I N E

An immigrant flower vendor spreads hope and love through the streets of Los Angeles while reminiscing on the life that led her there.



## E X T E N D E D S Y N O P S I S

Chelo is a street flower vendor who takes pride in bringing joy to her daily customers through the beautiful flowers she sells. From hand selecting every flower to putting the arrangements together to helping her fellow flower vendors, we follow Chelo throughout her day as she nurtures people with love.

Animation comes to life as she moves through the world around her to showcase the beauty that she sees in the world despite her struggle of being an immigrant in America. When an injustice happens in her day, she allows herself to get emotional but she showcases the strength she embodies by picking up and continuing to fight to provide a life for herself and her family back in Mexico.

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## A B O U T P E T A L O S

While exploring options of stories to tell for our final AFI project, we immediately thought of our producer, Ahmad's love for flowers. It just so happened that one day, Don & Nicole were driving around the streets of LA and stumbled upon a block with a number of flower vendors. By chance, they pulled over to a particular vendor and started asking questions about her life, her journey to the US, her struggles and how selling flowers is able to sustain her and her family.

This was the story we had been looking for! It was there, we had the inspiration to write a short based on the immigrants who have chosen to dedicate their lives to selling flowers.

We were so impressed by Genoveva, who so willingly let us into her world that we chose to write our story around her. An immigrant woman who came to America in '94, was unable to get a job so she started her flower empire. Genoveva started modestly, buying and selling just a few bouquets a day, but 28 years later has a dedicated garage office where she and her family produce 100's of bouquets a week and have multiple vendors working on her behalf. She is not only providing opportunities for herself and her family but also bringing up the community around her.

With this film, we captured her unique point of view, the hardship and warmth, in both a live-action documentary feel mixed with animation.

This is the first time an AFI student film includes animation! We collaborated with animators, Marc Sanchez from UCLA and Jason Triemer from Kennesaw State University who brought Genoveva's journey to America to life in a magical way.



## F I L M M A K E R ' S   S T A T E M E N T

Our goal as filmmakers is not only to explore the stories around us, but to use our resources to make a lasting impact and shed light on underrepresented communities. We aim to tell stories that cross borders and bring more diversity to the film industry.

In the same week this film is being delivered, at least 51 migrants have died after being trapped inside a sweltering, abandoned, tractor-trailer truck. The deceased migrants, 39 men and 12 women, most of them citizens of Mexico, were discovered on Monday June 27th, 2022 in an industrial area on the outskirts of San Antonio, Texas.

We dedicate this story to the countless immigrant street vendors who spend their days in the sun working tirelessly to make an honorable living. May they be seen and recognized for the contributions they make to their communities. Perhaps this film will inspire you next time you pass by a flower vendor, to stop, give a kind hello, or support by buying their flowers. We promise, they'll brighten up your day!



C A S T



### GENOVEVA MARTINEZ | CHELO

Maria Genoveva Martinez immigrated to the U.S. from Puebla, Mexico leaving her entire family behind. She crossed the border alone and when she got to the U.S. had nowhere to go or work to provide for her. She started off by buying single flowers at the market and selling 1-2 bouquets at a time in 1994 and slowly grew her business. By selling flowers, she has been able to support her 3 children. She is proud that one of them is in the navy, another an engineer and her daughter is finishing her psychology degree.



### SALEM ROCABADO | NINA

Salem Rocabado is a bilingual actor based in Los Angeles. They first made their debut in the original production of Revelation at the 2016 HFF and appears in the Blue Shield of California Do you Hear Me? commercial starring Venus Williams. Salem has a passion for directing which inspired their own original shorts and is looking forward to continue independent filmmaking in the future. As a first generation Mexican-American who identifies as queer and non-binary, they believe that diverse representation in media is paramount and is a driven advocate for centering BIPOC and queer voices in media and in their work.



### FRANCELI CHAPMAN | TITI

Franceli Chapman-Varela an award winning Afro-Latina(Dominican) Artist. Franceli performed at Dominican Day parades and festivals and toured with her father teaching the influence of Africa on Latino music and culture. She began her acting career doing off-off Broadway at the Castillo Theatre in New York at 17 years old. Franceli has been seen on BET's Original Movie, Open, All American (Netflix), The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills (Bravo) and just won best Actor in a Horror/Scifi film for Cult at the Official Latino Film Festival in November of 2021. She was also a part of the 2021 NHMC (National Hispanic Media Coalition) actor showcase. Her theatre credits include White (CVRep), The House On Mango Street, Blues for Mister Charlie (New Harlem Arts) and Children of Killers (Katori Hall) to name a few.

F I L M M A K E R S





### NICOLE MEJIA DIRECTOR

Nicole Mejia is a Los Angeles-based director, writer and producer. She is the inaugural directing fellow for the Adelante Lab. A television shadowing fellowship created by the Latinx House in partnership with Netflix, Sundance and Shondaland.

Her first feature *A PLACE IN THE FIELD* premiered at the 2022 Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Nicole's short film, *MANCHA* was awarded the LALIFF/Netflix Fellowship and premiered in June of 2022.

Her AFI thesis film *MY LIFE STOPPED AT 15*, based on her personal story of healing from sexual abuse, won the ASC Heritage award.



### AHMAD ALERWI PRODUCER

Growing up in Saudi Arabia, a country that did not have cinema theaters at that time, Ahmad began his career in emerging tech startups. Later, he found his way into film and content. For six years he led marketing and sales operations at a top Middle East YouTube network @Telfaz11. During this time, Ahmad worked on award-winning commercials, viral videos and short-films—that got licensed to Netflix globally in 2020 (*Six Windows In The Desert*).

Alerwi is a current MFA producing fellow at American Film Institute and has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree in Marketing.



### OLIA ZIMAROVA PRODUCER

Olia has an MBA in economics but decided to pursue her true passion – filmmaking. Working for various production companies, she has experience in development, distribution, and international sales. She has worked with Red Wagon (alongside Doug Wick and Lucy Fisher) and Millennium Films, who produced well-known blockbusters including “Hitman’s Bodyguard”, “Olympus Has Fallen” and “Rambo. Last Blood”. To further her education in film, Olia enrolled into the AFI Conservatory, one of the highest ranked film schools in the world.



### BELLA FINN PARISOT CINEMATOGRAPHER

Bella received her MFA for Cinematography at the American Film Institute and her BFA in Photography at NYU Tisch. While in NYC she interned for Stephanie Black, a documentary filmmaker, and studied 35mm Film at FAMU in Prague. She was an additional photographer for *WITKIN & WITKIN*, a feature-length documentary directed by Trisha Ziff, and a first AC at three Sundance Directors Labs. She also CAMERA PA'd under Robert Richardson on Quentin Tarantino's *ONCE UPON A TIME IN HOLLYWOOD*.

She has worked as a cinematographer for documentary, music video, commercial and narrative content. While at AFI she created films titled, *CHORUS & THE COLOR GREEN*. She is currently working on a documentary that expands on her college photography thesis as well as a short narrative film titled *CUSPID*.



### MARIAN WOOD PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Marian Wood is a recent Production Design graduate from the American Film Institute (AFI). She first received her Bachelor in Interior Design (BID) at Fay Jones School of Architecture. Outside of her formal education, her work in sculptural window displays and designing Theatre stage plays, gave her the love for working hands-on in collaboration with others on narrative projects. Moving around most of her early life, she considers herself from No-Particular-Part-of-Texas.



### JOE KING EDITOR

Joe is a bilingual graduate of the University of Oregon, with a BA in Spanish Language and Literature and an MFA from the American Film Institute Conservatory. With a lifelong passion for editing, Joe has gained experience through a wide variety of projects, both commercial and narrative, including an award-winning short. Joe is an open-minded, unconventional thinker with a passion for inclusive storytelling, collaboration and integrating global perspectives.



### DON DIPETTA WRITER

Don DiPetta is a Los Angeles based writer, producer and actor. Don's latest short film, MANCHA, was produced in partnership with Nicole Mejia & Netflix which premiered at LALIFF 2022. His first feature, A PLACE IN THE FIELD, in which he wrote, produced and starred, premiered at the SBIFF and has found distribution with a major studio. He is currently in development on a number of projects. Don has also recently recurred in the Starz mini-series, Gaslit. He will be seen in the upcoming Sony picture, Lyle Lyle Crocodile, the Hillman Grad feature, A Thousand and One, and the new Peacock pilot The Missing.



### MARC SANCHEZ ANIMATOR

Marc Sanchez was born in Yuma, AZ. Living close to the border helped form his experience of living in between two worlds and identifying as Mexican and American. He has recently graduated from the UCLA masters program in animation. He hopes to inspire and create films that help young adults resolve their past traumas. By doing this, he hopes to help his community. Marc "GIVE.ME.MÁS" is an artist and writer that wants to reach a wide audience to showcase the beauty of the Latino community.

\$4.99 & UP

S T I L L S















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C O N T A C T

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