

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE****CONTACT**

Adrianna Paidas
646-762-8704
adrianna.paidas
@beckmedia.com

Aisha Almada, ITVS
415-356-8383
aisha.almada@itvs.org

For downloadable images,
visit pbs.org/pressroom

AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY “SANSÓN AND ME” PEELS BACK THE LAYERS OF A YOUNG IMMIGRANT’S JOURNEY FROM ORPHANED MEXICAN CHILD TO INCARCERATION, OPENING NEW SEASON OF PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS ON SEPTEMBER 19

July 26, 2023

*Mexican American Filmmaker Rodrigo Reyes Uses Dramatic
Reenactments to Depict Sansón’s Story and Highlights the
Systemic Forces and Personal Choices that Envelop Young,
Incarcerated Men of Color in America*

(San Francisco, CA) July 26, 2023 — A powerful examination of immigration and incarceration in the United States, Rodrigo Reyes’s award-winning documentary “Sansón and Me” will kick off the new season of PBS’s Emmy® Award-winning documentary-anthology series INDEPENDENT LENS on September 19. “Sansón and Me” is a co-presentation of INDEPENDENT LENS and Latino Public Broadcasting’s VOCES.

The documentary vividly portrays the life of Sansón Noe Andrade, a young immigrant from coastal Mexico. Sansón is currently serving a life sentence in a California prison for his role in a murder that took place when he was 19 years old. Reyes served as Sansón’s interpreter during his trial in 2012, and was struck not only by his earnestness and their common Mexican roots, but also how the systemic failures that plague the immigrant experience in America had touched the life of this young man—with devastating consequences.

Shortly after the trial, Reyes reached out to Sansón in prison to explore making a film about his experience. The result is “Sansón and Me,” which took home the Best Film Award at the 2022 Sheffield DocFest. The film will make its broadcast debut on INDEPENDENT LENS on September 19, 2023 (check local listings), and will also be able to stream on the PBS App.

After exchanging letters with Sansón and visiting him in Pelican Bay State Prison, Reyes began to shape what the film documenting his life would look like. Barred from conducting on-camera interviews in the prison, Reyes turned to reenactments to bring Sansón’s story to life on-screen. He strategically cast Sansón’s family members still living in the coastal town of Tecomán, Mexico, to play key roles in his narrative. Reyes also traces the growth of the friendship he and Sansón formed over the course of making the film and the deep, personal reflections they often shared with one another.

Reyes’s depiction of Sansón’s story—from a childhood stricken with tragedy to the multilayered obstacles he experiences in adolescence and adulthood—illustrates a world defined by borders—between Mexico and the U.S., fact and fiction, and incarceration and freedom. At age 12, Sansón moves from Mexico to California, eventually finds a job and falls in love while avoiding the gang activity that surrounds him, only to go to prison seven years later, where he’s again surrounded by gang activity on the inside. In casting an untrained actor to play teenage Sansón, and with the support of his extended family to play his loved ones, Reyes uses cinematic poetry to capture the harsh realities of immigration, the U.S. prison system, and a man’s journey toward redemption.

“For years I’ve dreamed of telling the story of an immigrant whose life had previously been overlooked and unknown,” said Reyes. “Over the course of a decade, I had the opportunity to learn of Sansón’s story and the pivotal, unfair moments that led him to life in prison. I hope with the film’s broadcast debut, audiences recognize these realities for those who have been left behind and even see themselves in my friend.”

“We’re thrilled to partner with VOCES to open our season ‘Sansón and Me’ which showcases Rodrigo’s innovative and critically-acclaimed documentary filmmaking,” said Lois Vossen, executive producer of INDEPENDENT LENS. “The film traces the poignant story of an incarcerated immigrant, the chilling patterns young men of color face trying to pursue a better future in America, and reveals an intimate understanding of systemic issues and the hope for individual redemption.”

“Sansón and Me” received funding through ITVS’s Open Call funding initiative and is a part of INDEPENDENT LENS’s [Stories for Justice](#) initiative, created to spark community conversations and boost the work of people on the front lines of justice reform.

Visit the [“Sansón and Me”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS for more information about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

Rodrigo Reyes, Director/Producer

Rodrigo Reyes is a Mexican American filmmaker whose work is grounded in the contradictory poetry of the immigrant experience. He has received numerous honors, including the Guggenheim and Rainin Foundation Fellowships, Creative Capital, as well as awards at select film festivals including Tribeca, Hot Docs, and Sheffield DocFest.

Su Kim, Producer

Su Kim is an Academy Award-nominated and Emmy and Peabody Award-winning producer. Her films in release include “Bitterbrush,” the Oscar and Primetime Emmy Award-nominated “Hale County This Morning, This Evening,” and “Midnight Traveler.”

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by	Rodrigo Reyes
Produced by	Su Kim
Executive Producer	Inti Cordera
	Sally Jo Fifer
	Lois Vossen
	Sandie Viquez Pedlow

Visit the INDEPENDENT LENS [website](#) for more information.

ABOUT VOCES

Produced by Latino Public Broadcasting, the acclaimed PBS documentary series [VOCES](#) features the best of Latino arts, culture and history and shines a light on current issues that impact Latino Americans. Devoted to exploring the rich diversity of the Latino experience, VOCES presents new and established filmmakers and brings their powerful and illuminating stories to

a national audience — on TV, online and on the PBS app. VOCES is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Luis Ortiz is series producer; Sandie Viquez Pedlow is executive producer. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series, airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Action Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at @independentlens.

ABOUT ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 30 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs [them](#) for free on PBS via our weekly series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

###