

## **Migrant Film Series introduction to Jovita Morales Film**

Hi, my name is Daniel Klein. I am the creator of the documentary series The Perennial Plate. Over the past 8 years I have been telling personal stories about the people behind our food. We have traveled from Ethiopia to China, Mexico to India, using stories of farmers, fisherman and cooks to open up dialogue around sustainability and creating a more human food system.

We were prepared to go on making these films, but had a rude awakening in our home country (the U.S.) during the tumultuous election year. Regardless of where people stood politically, there was a rise in hate crimes and an increasing backlash toward immigrants - particularly Mexican and Muslim immigrants and a rejection by many of the welcoming of Syrian refugees. That negative landscape has only grown after the election with an even larger rise in hate crimes.

As a citizen, a filmmaker and a neighbor to many Mexican and Somali people - I was left wondering what I could do. I began to look into how I had had such a positive experience with migrants, while half of America didn't want them in the country. I came upon an article by the wall street journal that showed the Facebook feeds of Conservative and Liberal Americans and how divided the news was. The program lets you select an issue, like immigration and compare what news is being shared about that same issue - the results are staggering. The news that these "two Americas" are getting is completely different. How can we have a real discussion about migration if we aren't starting with the same information, the same truths?

So the question becomes: "how do you introduce the positive stories into a side of America that is only receiving negative stories?" How do you introduce people living in a homogenous area to the unknown migrant they only hear about in the news and in scare tactics on Facebook? How do you balance the dialogue and partisanship in all of our news feeds?

We had been experimenting with Facebook ads, targeting videos to groups of people that weren't part of our usual fanbase to see if we could reach a new audience. It worked wonders: in a film about surfers-turned-farmers, we successfully made a farming video go viral in the surfing community. What if we could do something similar but targeting people more prone to negative stories about migrants? If we made a film and released it to the usual film festival crowd and documentary film aficionados, chances are it wouldn't change anyone's mind, it would just preach to the choir. But if we spent money targeting people with different points of view on Facebook, it would be a way of balancing the negative news with real positive stories about how immigrants contribute to society. The Facebook feeds would have a counterpart that would encourage empathy and dialogue, reaching across the news-feed imposed boundaries.

We launched a kickstarter campaign to address the immediacy of the issue and received overwhelming support. We raised our 50,000 dollar goal within a few weeks, not relying on giving anything away, but on people believing in the project. We committed to making 5 films about various immigrant populations, not just recent Syrian refugees and undocumented Mexican families but also families that had lived in the US for generations. We wanted to show the parallels in all of our immigrant experiences.

After reaching our goal we began to research stories - the key for us was not to just tell an inspiring migrant story, but to show the parallels between the cultures. Instead of focusing on how we are all different, we wanted to show our common values of hard work, family, eating good food together and loyalty.

I want to show you a segment from one of the first films for this series. This is an example of a story that we hope will influence certain populations to empathize and understand why someone in the US might drive without a license, and why they might live and stay in the US only to give their kids a better future.