



I am a Mexican immigrant filmmaker based in Denver, Colorado, USA. My work intersects contemporary art, political documentary, and visual ethnography to explore themes of belonging, alienation, and the concept of “home.” I approach this exploration through present tense, observational filmmaking, because the moment before someone makes, or doesn’t make, a choice, uncertain of its outcome, is the most heroic. On screen, this also allows characters to own their experiences and be experts in their own stories, something especially important among underrepresented populations where we’re often overlooked as experts, even of our own lives.

My films are inspired by characters that live in the inbetween of belonging and not belonging, and the greater psychological and socio-political forces that forced them into limbo. My films are critical for the decolonization of visual ethnography and documentary film, and are part of a movement of BIPOC filmmakers, activists, and academics whose very existence disrupts the status quo. Understanding that true impact goes beyond one's work, I seek out collaborations with artists and academics that are working on bold projects that shape public discourses on xenophobia and racism. My work has contributed to many ongoing experimental films, multimedia projects, and museum installations, like the worldwide "Hostile Terrain94" installation which raises awareness about the thousands of migrant’s deaths at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“Border South,” my last feature film, followed the migrant routes from southern Mexico to the U.S.-Mexico border. Over the course of five years I directed, produced and shot the film. The film is a close-up, original view of the migrant experience, one fraught with risk, comradery, ingenuity, and humor. *“Border South”* screened at festivals worldwide including the Sheffield Doc/Fest, AFI Docs, and the Guadalajara International Film Festival among many more. *“Border South,”* has been regarded for its intimacy to detail, and for exploring the humor and quotidian moments of migrants as they cross one of the most deadly migrant routes in the world.

My long-term goal is to create a body of work that recognizes and honors the strengths, challenges, and ingenuity of my immigrant community. I seek to do this through artistic, observational films that highlight BIPOC people as experts of their own experiences. My work has received support from Sundance, ITVS, Firelight Media Documentary Lab Fellowship, Ford Foundation-Just Films, the Princess Grace Foundation, Catapult Film Fund among others.

**Solidaridad,
Raúl O. Paz-Pastrana**

Artist website + <https://raulpazfilms.com/>