

ON THE DIVIDE



Directed by Maya Cueva and Leah Galant

Produced by Diane Becker, Melanie Miller, Amanda Spain and Elizabeth Woodward

Runtime: 79minutes | USA | 2021

World Premiere: Tribeca Film Festival 2021, Documentary Competition

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FESTIVALS



LOGLINE

On The Divide follows the story of three Latinx people living in McAllen, Texas who, despite their views, are connected by the most unexpected of places: the last abortion clinic on the U.S./Mexico border. As threats to the clinic and their personal safety mount, these three are forced to make decisions they never could have imagined. (336 characters)

SYNOPSIS

McAllen, Texas is home to Whole Woman's Health — the last abortion clinic in the US/Mexico border. Mercedes, a tattooed Latina woman in her thirties who used to be involved in gangs, is now part of the pro-life Church movement, embracing the support from the Christian pregnancy center located next door to the clinic. Denisse, a young mother of four, volunteers at Whole Woman's Health of McAllen and helps guide women into the clinic, providing much-needed comfort and assistance. Protecting the entryway into the clinic is Rey, a Latino security guard in his late sixties who is fervent in his religious beliefs, but also deeply understands the plight of the women who arrive at the abortion clinic.

Their life decisions intertwine at this abortion clinic, as they grapple with how their devotion informs their role in fighting for or against abortion rights. The film chronicles their actions during the shadow of the Trump administration, the storytelling bolstered by an empathetic lens and an authentic concern for spotlighting the consistent assault on reproductive rights. Throughout *On the Divide*, filmmakers Maya Cueva and Leah Galant expertly bring the audience into the rising tensions—and humanity—at the center of this contentious issue.

On the Divide is a Fishbowl Films production in association with Giving Voice Films, Willa Productions, Latino Public Broadcasting, and a co-production of American Documentary | POV. The documentary is directed by Maya Cueva and Leah Galant. The producers are Diane Becker, Melanie Miller, Amanda Spain and Elizabeth Woodward, and the editor is Berenice Chávez. Erika Dilday, Justine Nagan and Chris White are the executive producers for POV. Sandie Viquez Pedlow is the executive producer for Latino Public Broadcasting. The original song, "Aquí No Hay Pena," is performed by Grammy nominee Ximena Sariñana.

RESOURCES

[ON THE DIVIDE PHOTOS](#)

[ON THE DIVIDE CLIP 1](#) H.264 Format. Password: otd

ORIGINAL SONG: "Aquí No hay Pena": <https://warnerchappellmusic.lnk.to/aquinohaypena>

SOCIAL

Facebook: [@OnTheDivideMovie](#)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/onthedividemovie/>

Twitter: [@OnTheDivideMovie](#)

Hashtags: #OnTheDivideFilmPBS, #OnTheDivide, #OnTheDivideMovie

INSPIRATION



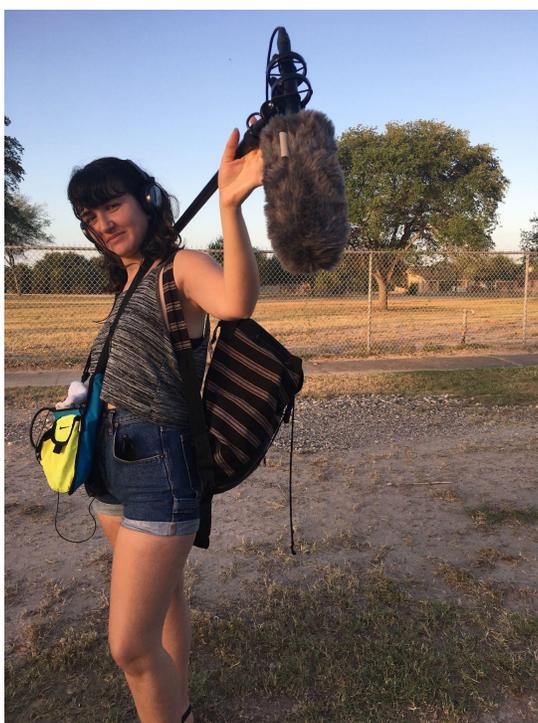
McAllen, Texas, located at the southern tip of the state within the Rio Grande Valley, is the largest city in Hidalgo County. A true bi-national city, it is home to the Ursula Detention Center which is at the center of the migrant children crisis, and the Whole Woman's Health of McAllen — the last abortion clinic on the US/Mexico border. Since there is only one abortion clinic in the entire Rio Grande Valley, if this clinic were to close, undocumented people would have to travel over 250 miles to get to the nearest clinic and risk deportation crossing these border checkpoints along the way. In *ON THE DIVIDE*, filmmakers Maya Cueva and Leah Galant, focus on individual health care in the region and the cultural/religious/political wars over this issue.

As female directors, one of whom is Latina, we are closely connected to the issues of reproductive healthcare and Latinx identity. We also worked closely with organizers and people from the area of McAllen and the Rio Grande Valley in order to make sure the community was represented in the storytelling. Our film team is composed of mostly women of diverse backgrounds, including our associate producer, field producer, and story producer who are all from McAllen, Texas.

We [Maya and Leah] met at Ithaca College where we made our short film about a traveling abortion doctor in Texas called *THE PROVIDER* (SXSW 2016). While in production on that film, we attended a rally in the Rio Grande Valley for reproductive healthcare and realized there was only one clinic in the entire region. After that event in 2014, we were connected to another traveling abortion doctor Dr. Bhavik Kumar who worked at the Whole Woman's Health of McAllen in Texas. He introduced us to clinic workers, community members and organizers in the Rio Grande Valley, and we were drawn to the stories of people who are often misrepresented and neglected in the mainstream news coverage.

It became clear we needed to keep telling the complicated stories from people in this border region. Through the trust we built over the last few years, we were introduced to the tight knit community of McAllen and eventually our three characters. For the past seven years, we have been filming ON THE DIVIDE in a small border town that the media paints as a “war zone” surrounding access to reproductive healthcare and immigrant rights. Despite the often-reductive media representation, McAllen is a community filled with organizers, artists, and those deeply rooted in tradition, religion, and family. Some religious viewpoints in the area leaves very little room for nuanced views on abortion or empathy for people whose views fall somewhere in between.

Despite the majority anti-abortion sentiments of this area, all of our characters in ON THE DIVIDE share nuanced perspectives on abortion regardless of their political position. We wanted to share the stories of people who might be the unlikely faces behind the issue of reproductive healthcare -- such as Rey, a 67 year old Latino man who is the security guard at the clinic. Our characters share many cultural similarities, and their stories create space for connection and dialogue as opposed to division. Their stories demonstrate how people who once held rigid beliefs can change and what choice and survival really looks like for those in the heart of the battle surrounding reproductive rights.



Maya Cueva, Director & Sound Recordist



Leah Galant, Director & Director of
Photography

PARTICIPANTS FEATURED IN *ON THE DIVIDE*

SOUTH TEXANS FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

South Texans for Reproductive Justice is a civil rights, social action and advocacy alliance in McAllen, TX, which was founded in 2020.

Denisse, Volunteer Escort



Pictured L- R: Melissa and Denni, Co-Founders, South Texans for Reproductive Justice



MCALLEN PREGNANCY CENTER

McAllen Pregnancy Center's mission is to provide professional & honest services to those facing pregnancy decisions.

Mercedes, Organizer



Yolanda Chapa, Founder of McAllen Pregnancy Center



WHOLE WOMAN'S HEALTH OF MCALLEN

Whole Woman's Health believes that everyone must be at the center of their own healthcare decisions. Whole Woman's Health is committed to destigmatizing abortion and creating safe spaces for all people.

Rey, Security Guard at Whole Woman's Health Clinic



WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE IN TEXAS FACT SHEET

As of September 1, 2021

- In 2013, a bill known as House Bill 2 effectively shut down most abortion clinics in Texas, but after the bill was struck down by the Supreme Court, many clinics in Texas could not reopen. Whole Woman's Health of McAllen was a plaintiff in this case, Whole Woman's Health vs. Hellerstedt. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2015/15-274>
- In 2014, the McAllen WWH clinic shut its doors but reopened after a federal judge ruling allowed it to reopen. This is because it was the only abortion clinic offering services in the Rio Grande Valley. <https://www.texastribune.org/2014/03/06/whole-womans-shutters-mcallen-and-beaumont-clinics/>
- As of July 2021, there is still only one abortion clinic in the Rio Grande Valley, which is located on the border of Texas/Mexico in McAllen, Texas.
- Rosie's Law, which aims to stop the Hyde Amendment and allow federal funding for abortions will be introduced to the Texas Legislature this year in 2021.
- The Biden administration's latest budget did not include the Hyde Amendment.
- As of November 2019 there are around 22 clinics in Texas providing abortions, which is a state home to 29 million people. (<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/11/18/741117422/for-supporters-of-abortion-access-troubling-trends-in-texas>)
- In July 2021 the city of Edinburg wanted to pass an abortion ban on the city but it was struck down and died after hours of testimony from reproductive rights groups such as South Texans for Reproductive Justice. <https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/edinburg-city-council-to-vote-on-outlawing-abortion/>
- In May 2021, Texas' Governor Greg Abbott signed the "heartbeat bill" into law that could ban abortions at six weeks and "would let nearly anyone — including people with no connection to the doctor or the woman — sue abortion providers, and those who help others get an abortion in violation of the proposed law. People who support abortion funds and clinics could also be hit with lawsuits, and lawyers warn those sued would not be able to recover some of the money they spent on their legal defense." The law came into effect on September 1, 2021. (Sources: <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/05/18/texas-heartbeat-bill-abortion-law/> and <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/02/texas-abortion-heartbeat-bill/>)

THE FILMMAKING TEAM

Maya Cueva, Director and Sound Recordist



Maya is a Latina award-winning director and producer with a background in documentary, radio, and audio producing. Her work has been featured on NPR's "All Things Considered," "Latino USA," *The Atlantic*, *Teen Vogue*, and *National Geographic*. Her feature film, *ON THE DIVIDE*, premiered in the documentary competition at Tribeca Film Festival in 2021. She was also selected to be part of the Tribeca Film Institute/A&E StoryLab in 2020. Her short documentary, *THE PROVIDER*, premiered at SXSW and was nominated for a student Emmy. Maya's

other film *ONLY THE MOON* premiered at Full Frame Documentary Festival in 2019 and awarded her a Sundance Ignite Fellowship via the Sundance Film Institute. Maya was a 2019 North Star Fellow part of the Points North Institute, a 2019 Film Independent Documentary Lab fellow, and a fellow at the Jacob Burns Film Center. Her most recent short documentary *ALE LIBRE* was selected to screen at several Oscar qualifying festivals, including Big Sky Documentary Festival, Hot Docs, Aspen Film Festival, and SFFILM. Maya's feature documentary *ON THE DIVIDE* will broadcast on POV PBS in Spring 2022.

Cueva's Director's Statement:

As a mixed Latinx filmmaker, ON THE DIVIDE was an incredibly important film for me to make because of my personal connection to the story and topic and understanding the complexity around abortion and choice in the Latinx community. Although I am not from the border region, I felt connected to our participants'--Rey, Mercedes, and Denisse stories and felt like they could be family members of mine. I felt that it was important to share the unlikely faces behind the issue surrounding reproductive healthcare and what it means to have to grapple with survival and choice when options are limited. Rarely do we see Latinx voices being centered in the battle surrounding reproductive healthcare, and it was important for me to take an intimate look into their lives to show how the issue is not as black and white as it might appear as well as show how choice is ultimately necessary for survival, bodily autonomy, and agency.

Leah Galant, Director and Director of Photography



Leah Galant is a Jewish filmmaker and Fulbright Scholar based in New York whose storytelling focuses on unexpected narratives often through the lens of womxn. While at Ithaca College in 2015 she was named one of *Variety's* "110 Students to Watch in Film and Media" for her work on *THE PROVIDER* (SXSW 2016, Student Emmy Award) and *BEYOND THE WALL*. She was a Sundance Ignite and Jacob Burns Fellow where she created *DEATH METAL GRANDMA* (SXSW 2018) about a 97-year-old Holocaust survivor Inge Ginsberg who sings death metal

which won "Best Documentary" at the American Pavilion at Cannes Film Festival, and is a *NY Times* Op Doc. Leah is a member of Meerkat Media worker-cooperative film production company in Sunset Park NY. Leah serves as the Director and Director of Photography on her feature debut, *ON THE DIVIDE*.

Galant's Director's Statement:

We decided to film ON THE DIVIDE in an intimate verite style in order to focus on the real human stories behind a complicated and polarizing issue. As the cinematographer, I wanted the lens to feel as close as an extension to Maya and I as possible and it was important for us to create a safe space for our characters to share. By allowing our participants to tell their own stories we hope to create dialogue across echo chambers and for people to understand what choice means if you are not provided many options.

Diane Becker, Producer



Diane is a Peabody Award winning producer and a graduate of the American Film Institute. Credits include HBO films SERGIO, MANHUNT, THE FINAL YEAR, and TINA, nominated for a 2021 Emmy Award. She has also produced a slate of prestigious music films with director Stephen Kijak: WE ARE X, IF I LEAVE HERE TOMORROW, and SID & JUDY. Recent credits include: BELUSHI (Showtime), the docu-series' TRIAL BY MEDIA (Netflix), and EQUAL (HBO Max). Diane and Melanie Miller are the co-founders of Fishbowl Films. INVENTING TOMORROW premiered at Sundance (2018), was broadcast on POV, and was awarded a Peabody in 2019. Diane and Melanie were awarded the 2020 Sundance Institute/Amazon Producer's Award for Non-Fiction for the film WHIRLYBIRD, which Greenwich Entertainment is releasing Summer 2021. Diane was also a 2017 Sundance Documentary Creative Producing Fellow and is a member of the Producers Guild of America (PGA), the Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA), the Television Academy (ATAS), and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

Melanie Miller, Producer



Melanie Miller is a Peabody Award winning producer with nearly three decades of experience in the entertainment industry. Melanie pairs extensive knowledge in producing and development with a deep experience in innovative and effective distribution strategy. As Vice President of Acquisitions & Marketing at Gravitas Ventures and Executive Vice President at Samuel Goldwyn Films, she has been instrumental in the new paradigm of independent distribution. Melanie and Diane Becker are co-founders of Fishbowl Films. Their films include William Dickerson's DETOUR (Gravitas Ventures), Shaz Bennett's directorial debut ALASKA IS A DRAG (Array | Netflix), 2018 Sundance alum & 2019 Peabody Award winner INVENTING TOMORROW (POV) by Laura Nix, 2020 Sundance alum WHIRLYBIRD (Greenwich Entertainment) by Matt Yoka, and ON THE DIVIDE by Maya Cueva & Leah Galant, which recently received a standing ovation at

the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival world premiere and will be released by POV | Latino Public Broadcasting in 2022. Recent credits also include the Netflix docu-series TRIAL BY MEDIA, EQUAL for HBO Max and MARVEL 616 for Disney+. Melanie is a frequent guest speaker and mentor at renowned organizations including the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Sloan Summit, the American Film Market (AFM), the Produced by Conference, and the Sundance Institute. She is a member of the Producers Guild of America (PGA), the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (ATAS), the Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA), and was awarded the 2020 Sundance Institute | Amazon Studios Non-Fiction Producers Award with her producing partner Diane Becker.

Amanda Spain, Producer



Amanda Spain is a producer with over 15 years experience in both feature and series documentaries. She is currently the VP of Longform Acquisitions for MSNBC Films. Before joining MSNBC she was the Director of Non-Fiction for Blumhouse Television. Recent credits include: Executive Producer - Pray Away, Producer - Television Event, On the Divide, After Antarctica, and Krimes. In addition to her most recent credits, Amanda produced the audience favorite and award winning documentary Bathtubs Over Broadway, which was nabbed by Focus Features, as well as a number of films, shorts, and series for numerous outlets including ESPN, A&E, PBS, MTV, HLN, Netflix, and the Sundance Channel. She was a 2016-2017 Sundance Producing Fellow and is a current member of the Producers Guild of America (PGA) and the Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA).

Elizabeth Woodward, Producer



Elizabeth Woodward is a producer of documentary and narrative films and founder of Willa Productions. Her recent projects include ON THE DIVIDE (Tribeca 2021, POV) and YOU RESEMBLE ME (Venice Film Festival 2021, executive produced by Spike Lee, Spike Jonze, Alma Har'el, Abigail E. Disney). Past projects include Netflix's THE GREAT HACK (Oscars shortlist, Emmy nominee, BAFTA nominee, IDA nominee, Cinema Eye winner, Sundance 2019), HBO's hit series THE VOW, and PERSUASION MACHINES (Sundance New Frontier 2020), American Masters' BOMBSHELL: THE HEDY LAMARR STORY, and a film with Fareed Zakaria by the CNN Documentary Unit. Her projects have screened at Sundance, Tribeca, AFI Docs and Sheffield Doc Fest and have been supported by Sundance Institute, Tribeca Institute, Chicken and Egg, Film Independent, Impact Partners, Artemis Rising, Field of Vision, Level Forward, The Gotham, Perspective Fund, Berkeley Film Fund, Quiet, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. She is a member of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, the Documentary Producers Alliance, the Young Professionals Group at the Council on Foreign Relations, and she was selected for Berlinale Talents. She is a graduate of Brown University and

the University of Cambridge. She graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa (academic honors) from Brown University and received a masters with distinction from the University of Cambridge.

Berenice Chávez, Editor



Berenice Chavez is a film editor/assistant editor based in Los Angeles. She received her MFA in Film Editing from the American Film Institute in 2016. She has since worked as an assistant editor and an additional editor for notable films such as *M FOR MAGIC*, 2020 SXSW Film Festival participant, *INVENTING TOMORROW* (2018 Sundance Film Festival; 2019 Peabody Award Winner), 2018 Sundance Film Festival participant, and *IF I LEAVE HERE TOMORROW*, (2018 SXSW Film Festival; broadcast on Showtime) participant. She was the Lead Assistant Editor for the HBO Max docuseries, *EQUAL* and recently cut her first feature documentary film, *ON THE DIVIDE*, which premiered in competition at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival and will broadcast on POV in early 2022. She is currently working as editor for the documentary feature, *ON THE DIVIDE*, as well as Lead Assistant Editor for the HBO Max docuseries, *EQUAL*. She has also produced and edited two short documentaries, *PASSING THE TORCH* and *NORTH TO PARADISE*, both of which received a total of three

Pacific Southwest Chapter Emmy Award nominations. She won two of those awards; one of them for editing.

Marina Nieto Ritger, Story Producer



Marina Nieto Ritger has produced documentary and factual programming – features, television and streaming – for over 12 years. Previous to that, she developed a dramatic series at NBC. Marina began her producing career working on major network competition series, such as the Emmy-winning *THE AMAZING RACE*, *BIG BROTHER* and *DANCING WITH THE STARS*. Her field experience involved running with contestants all over the globe, following and documenting story, interviewing subjects, manning the control room, and filming dance professionals and their celebrity pupils. Other projects include docusoaps, documentary series, love and marriage experiments, and food shows. Marina's primary joy is working in post production with editors, shaping and perfecting content with an eye toward the most authentic storytelling. Most recently, she has been able to devote her energy toward more impactful documentary series and features including *TRAIL BY MEDIA* and *CHEF'S TABLE* for Netflix and *ON THE DIVIDE* and *CANARY*, documentary features about abortion and climate change, respectively. Marina served on the Reality Peer Group Committee at the

Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for a number of years. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College, she remains deeply committed to social and political issues.

Ximena Sariñana, Composed and Performed ON THE DIVIDE's Title Song, "Aquí No Hay Pena"



Singer-songwriter and actress from México, Ximena Sariñana has released 4 studio albums, "Mediocre" (2008), "Ximena Sariñana" (2011), "No Todo lo Puedes Dar" (2014), and "¿Dónde bailarán las niñas?" (Where will the girls dance?") (2019). Currently, she's preparing her promising 5th studio album that will include her latest singles "TBT 4EVER" (2019), "Una Vez Más" (2020), and "A No Llorar" (2021).

In 2009, she won the Premio MTV for Breakthrough Artist and received nominations at both the GRAMMYs for Best Latin Rock/Alternative Album and the Latin GRAMMYs for Best New Artist and Best Alternative Song.

In 2019, she received an additional 3 nominations to the Latin Grammy (Album of the Year, Record of the Year, and Best Rock Song) and 2 MTV MIAW nominations (Best Artist: Mexico, and Video of the Year) awards in which she was also recognized as an 'Agent of Change' for her history of supporting important social causes.

2020 granted her yet another Latin GRAMMY nomination to Best Pop Song for her single "Una Vez Más."

As an actress she has participated in various shows, telenovelas, and movies. Her altruism and activism have placed her as a spokesperson for Greenpeace, WWF, Oceana, and The Young Center, among other initiatives. She is also the first official goodwill ambassador for the UN Women's division in Mexico.

Statement:

"I feel it really resonates with the feminist movement and how we are always supporting each other with our voices, be it with words in private to protests in public. Just like the people in the clinic, supporting these women that have to go through the protesters, the opinions, and the overall experience of feeling judged for choosing is something I wanted the song to convey."

Danielle Leedia Maxine López, Curandera



Danielle Leedia Maxine López is the guardian of the ancestral indigenous cantor that inspired Ximena. The cantor is a medicine song which invokes the Creator, Mother, and ancestors from the four corners for a traditional limpia aka spiritual cleansing in curanderismo and is seven generations old. Danielle is a heritage trained Curandera of Río Grande Valley indigenously known as Somí sek: Payase'l Ayema. Nana Pele'x, Nawaso'l meaning in respect to all relations from Coahuiltecan and Carrizo of modern-day Rio Grande Valley, Dine, Mexican American, Sephardic Jews and French Creole.

A Q&A WITH MAYA CUEVA AND LEAH GALANT

Q: What is your film about?

MC & LG: Our is about three Latinx people who are unexpectedly connected to the last abortion clinic on the Texas/Mexico border. The film follows them throughout the course of four years as they navigate what choice means to them when they aren't afforded many options and are forced to make unimaginable decisions. As our three characters' lives intersect at the only abortion clinic in the Rio Grande Valley, they all are faced with threats to their safety and have to navigate choice as a means of survival.

Q: What inspired you to make this film?

MC: Leah and I first met in college and it was there that we came across an article about a traveling abortion doctor. We had never heard of this type of profession before, and it was from there that we made our way to Texas and saw that only one abortion clinic remained in the Rio Grande Valley, on the border of Texas/Mexico in McAllen, Texas. After completing our short film THE PROVIDER, which follows a traveling abortion doctor, we made our way back to the border and started what is now known as ON THE DIVIDE.

LG: During production on THE PROVIDER we noticed the discourse around the abortion debate felt very polarizing and that folks were not reaching outside of echo chambers. This inspired us to follow multidimensional nuanced characters who did not fit neatly on either side of the debate. We were interested in telling the stories of people's lives as opposed to talking head experts.

Q. America is tackling the issues of gender inequality and racial/social injustice. In the process of making this documentary, were there any moments that resonated, shocked or surprised you?

LG: We were appalled by the sheer volume of anti-abortion legislation that was being pushed at the local, state and federal level. It was also shocking to realize that there was only one abortion clinic that serves the entire Rio Grande Valley and that the nearest clinic was over 250 miles away.

MC: It wasn't until making this film that I really realized how much the lack of access to reproductive healthcare and immigration intersect. Although we didn't touch on this much in the film, the border region is heavily impacted by the militarization of the border, family separation and lack of access for healthcare in general. If the McAllen clinic were to close, undocumented people seeking abortion care would have to travel over 250 miles to get to the nearest clinic, which means they would risk deportation because of border checkpoints along the way.

Q. What do you want audiences to take away with them after they watch the film? Without revealing spoilers, what do you fear they will misinterpret?

MC: I want people to understand that the issue surrounding abortion is not a black and white issue. Many people fall in the gray area with how they feel on the issue, and we need to start having conversations about abortion beyond the debate of pro-choice vs. pro-life. Oftentimes, white women are centered in the conversation around reproductive healthcare, when Black and Brown people are impacted the most. I think it's important that we focus on the people that will be directly impacted if access to choice is stripped away, and how through the journey's of our programists, we

see how choice is necessary for survival. I think that people on either side of the issue might interpret all three of our characters as only on one side of the abortion debate -- but they will be surprised by how complex Rey, Mercedes, and Denisse actually are.

LG: I want people to exercise more empathy and to really challenge preconceived notions on choice and abortion. I also want people to embrace complexity in individual decisions and what autonomy really means. Through the incredible stories of our three participants, we want to ignite a dialogue outside echo chambers as we approach one of the biggest threats to Roe v. Wade in over 48 years.

Q. For this film you've put together a creative team consisting of women and people of color. How have your experiences as women and one of color, impacted your approach to documentary filmmaking?

LG: Most of our crew is comprised of womxn and Latinx individuals. Maya and I intended to create a space within our film that is in direct contrast with the industry and that extends to who we collaborated with and how we approached the film. One of the biggest questions that we would ask community members is "What stories do you feel are not being told?" This helped guide our filmmaking approach while being conscious of how mainstream media has previously documented the region and ensured that we did not tell reductive narratives.

MC: As a Latina director, I strive to tell stories of underrepresented communities that aren't invisible -- they just haven't been seen in a 3-dimensional way. My background in audio influences my POV as a filmmaker, as I often incorporate radio techniques into my films or create films based off of the radio features I create. As a filmmaker, I feel compelled to highlight complex communities, organizers, and the exploration of my personal identity. I seek to shed light on stories that are often misrepresented or ignored by politicians and the mainstream media.

Q. What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

LG: The biggest challenge we faced was not being taken seriously as young womxn in the industry and lack of funding due to this. While we eventually had the incredible support of our producing team and funding partners, the first few years of production were met with rejection after rejection. While I do not want to glamorize our persistence despite challenges-I am grateful that Maya and I ended up being able to film with our participants for such a long time.

MC: The biggest challenge in making this film was not having enough resources or funding as young women directors or access to mental health services to help our participants and ourselves. This is a heavy topic and our characters went through some traumatic experiences. It was also difficult at first to create a film about such a polarizing topic, but because of our approach to the film and always asking our characters what they thought was missing from mainstream news reports on the Rio Grande Valley and abortion, we were able to establish a trusting relationship.

Q. Hollywood is finally acknowledging they have a history of not supporting stories by female artists and people of color. What actions do you think need to be taken to make the film industry—narrative and documentary, more inclusive?

MC: To make the film industry more inclusive, we need to decolonize the documentary space, which means we need to make sure there are anti-racist and anti-white supremacist practices on set as well as making sure that stories about Black and Brown communities are not told through the eyes of white men. We need to make space for Black and Brown women and non-binary individuals to be both behind the camera, involved in industry decision making, and afforded resources to make the films they want to make. It is exhausting that most of the film and documentary gatekeepers are

white executives -- this needs to change. As documentary filmmakers, we also need to have space in our budgets that can support our characters so that we can create a reciprocal relationship between filmmakers and our subjects.

LG: White people in positions of power have to step back and hand over the mic/platform and opportunities to filmmakers of color besides just hiring them. We need to stop categorizing filmmakers of color under coded language such as "emerging" directors since many of these filmmakers have been creating content for a long time. In the documentary space, we need to not just listen, but also respond to what filmmakers of color are requesting and restructure our industry to make it more equitable. We need to fund more filmmakers of color instead of the same established white male directors over and over. The financial resources should be given to not only established filmmakers of color, but opportunities and programs for young filmmakers of color who are interested in film but may not have the same access to resources or film education.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

On the Divide is a Fishbowl Films production in association with Giving Voice Films, Willa Productions, Latino Public Broadcasting, and a co-production of American Documentary | POV.

Directed by

Maya Cueva & Leah Galant

Producers

Diane Becker
Melanie Miller
Amanda Spain
Elizabeth Woodward

Editor

Berenice Chávez

Director of Photography

Leah Galant

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Heidi Ewing
Donna Grunich
Meredith Lavitt
Gini Reticker
Lacey Shwartz
Sean Weiner

“Aquí No Hay Pena,”

Written & performed by

Ximena Sariñana

Courtesy of Warner Music Media

Published by Warner Chappell Music Mexico
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Inspired by Danielle López
and her family López-Rodriguez-Barrientos'
ancestral indigenous cantor

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National Abortion Federation

South Texans for Reproductive Justice

Jeff Antons

Denni Arjona

Omar Casas

Mariam El-Haj

Denisse Gonzalez

Tinta de Guerra/Hector Guerra

Rey Guerrero

Monique Jimenez

Mercedes Soto

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