

FARMINGVILLE

A film by

Carlos Sandoval & Catherine Tambini

Directed by Catherine Tambini & Carlos Sandoval

Running Time: 78 Minutes

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PRESS NOTES CONTENTS:

Press Release page 2

Synopsis page 3

Q&A with the Filmmakers page 4

People of Farmingville Bios page 8

Filmmaker Bios page 9

Presenters, Outreach and Underwriters Info page 10

*“When we don’t allow for the moderately disgruntled
it makes the marginally angry more powerful.”*

Gregory Rodriguez
New America Foundation

For nearly a year, Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini lived and worked smack in the middle of Long Island so that they could capture first-hand the voices of people for whom the issue of immigration is not an abstract debate, but a reality of daily life. Once the shocking hate-based attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers catapults the town of Farmingville into national headlines, a new front line in the border wars is unmasked: suburbia. Blending the stories of town leaders, residents, day laborers and activists on all sides of the debate, this powerful, balanced film reveals the human impact of national policies that can lead to fear, isolation, racism and violence. FARMINGVILLE also captures the essence of the American dream by showing how these new pioneers weather even the ugliest storms by coming together and ultimately contributing to the community that is becoming their new home. FARMINGVILLE was produced in association with ITVS (Independent Television Service), LPB (Latino Public Broadcasting), P.O.V./American Documentary, Inc., and Moxie Films, and was developed with the assistance of the Sundance Institute. FARMINGVILLE premiered on PBS as the opener of the 2004 P.O.V. season. The award-winning P.O.V., now in its 17th season, is American television’s most-watched documentary showcase. Active Voice has created the community engagement campaign.

SYNOPSIS

The chilling hate-based attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers catapults the Long Island town of Farmingville into national headlines, exposing a frontline of the new border wars – suburbia. Blending the stories of town residents and day laborers, this bilingual, verité documentary reveals the human impact of national policies that can lead to fear, isolation, racism and violence.

Like Farmingville, communities from Siler City, North Carolina to Gisors, France, are grappling with assimilating new, unfamiliar neighbors as more and more economic migrants risk illegal crossings – whether across the Rio Grande or under the English Channel – in search of a better life for their families back home. The filmmakers lived and worked in Farmingville for nearly a year in order to capture first hand the voices of people for whom immigration in the new global economy is not an abstract debate, but a reality of daily life.

Q & A with The Filmmakers

Q: What inspired you to make the film?

A: [From Carlos Sandoval] For me, making the film was an entirely selfish act of self-preservation. In the summer of 2000 I started reading articles in the East Hampton Star in which residents were complaining about Latinos hosting large, competitive volleyball games in their backyards. The residents referred to the increasing number of Latinos in their neighborhoods as “an invasion of locusts.”

I grew up in pre-Civil Rights California, at a time when signs saying “No Mexicans or dogs allowed” were still posted at some swimming pools. So this language of the “other” set off an alarm. I began researching an Op-Ed piece for *The New York Times*. Farmingville came up repeatedly as the place where the tensions were the most intense.

It was at this time, September 2001, that the beatings of the two Mexican day laborers took place. I felt strongly I could not let this go by. I knew that the Census of 2000 would indicate an exponential growth in the US Latino population. I was afraid that Farmingville might be only the beginning of the negative response to the increasing visibility, and power of Latinos. I thought something needed to be done to intervene in this potential cycle before it took hold. A magazine article didn't seem to be enough. A documentary, some way to establish more viscerally and on a mass level, what had occurred on Long Island – what could be occurring elsewhere in the country – seemed the more effective route. So I contacted the Academy Award-winning documentary director Nigel Noble, who also lives in East Hampton, and the project began.

Q: Why Farmingville?

A: [From Catherine Tambini] Farmingville is strategically placed in the center of Long Island right off the Long Island Expressway. One of the largest wholesalers of landscaping supplies is located there as well as other types of building supply businesses. It's easy for contractors to get off the Expressway, pick up their supplies, pick up their labor and head in any direction – out to the Hamptons, the wealthy North Shore, Fire Island, Connecticut, or New York City. Because Farmingville is an unincorporated hamlet in the town of Brookhaven, it has no mayor to mediate problems. Farmingville is one of the most affordable places to live on Long Island and there are a lot of absentee landlords. Also there are a lot of slumlords. About twenty years ago Farmingville was the destination for a number of Portuguese immigrants. Many of them own construction-type businesses, and there is also a language similarity.

Q: What's your relationship to the subjects?

A: [From Carlos] I grew up in a small working class suburb in many ways not too dissimilar from Farmingville, which helped me realize that for many of Farmingville's residents it's really not purely a race issue. I grew up hearing Latinos referring to others as “wetbacks,” complaining about the wage

depressing effect of this shadow workforce, even though their own parents or grandparents may have arrived illegally. On the other hand, I've also known the sting of discrimination. I know how much easier it is to distance a group when they look, talk and act differently. The combination of economic threat and ethnic/racial disparity is combustible.

Ironically, one of the people with whom I became closest in the making of the film is Margaret Bianculli-Dyber, leader of the most extreme local anti-day laborer organization, the Sachem Quality of Life. I found Margaret extraordinarily intelligent and just plain fun.

[From Catherine] I felt a strange affinity to the residents as well as the Mexicans. Growing up in Oklahoma City in the 60's there was a lot of tension, violence, hatred and racism as a result of a shift in the African-American population. I witnessed "white flight" in my community as it quickly went from white to black. There were a lot of the same sentiments being expressed in Farmingville that I had heard in Oklahoma City. People in Farmingville were talking of selling their homes and leaving. Mexicans were being called all sorts of names. Violence was being perpetrated against them. There was victimization on both sides. I felt very strongly for both groups and wanted to do something to help ameliorate the situation. I wanted to help the individuals tell each of their own stories. I wanted it to be as personal for the audience as it was for me.

Q: What do you hope the film will accomplish?

A: [From Catherine] We wanted to make a film that would help people see each other as human beings. Often times people hate out of fear – fear of the unknown. We wanted to let people get to know who's on the other side of their fear; to talk to each other through our film instead of demonizing each other. One of our main goals from the beginning was to start a dialogue between communities receiving large numbers of Latino immigrants and the immigrants themselves.

Farmingville is a model for what's happening or about to happen in the rest of the country. There need to be changes on the Federal level that will address the needs of communities like Farmingville.

[Carlos adds] Farmingville can be seen as the inevitable outcome of our current immigration policies – that is, the "swinging-door" policy we've had with Mexico since the establishment of the border. We open the door for workers when we need them in the good times, and close it in the bad. Because it's an implied policy, it's unregulated. The result is the kind of mischief, the tension you see build in Farmingville, where the term "illegal" can be used to mask over many deeper sentiments. The debate surrounding illegal immigration is re-surfacing. So we're working with Active Voice, a team that specializes in using film to engage public dialogue, make sure that *Farmingville* contributes towards a more rational policy.

Finally, as a lawyer and former policy analyst, I know that if you don't get the analysis right, you won't get the solution right. *Farmingville* is an attempt to analyze, through character and story, the complexity of the problem, in the hope that this human hue will lead to some practical solutions.

Q: While making the film did you encounter any hostility?

[From Carlos] In a word, yes; both as a filmmaker and as a Latino.

First, I felt that if I was going to document a community, it was important to try to understand the community. I moved to Farmingville and lived there for about nine months. My fear, my apprehension in the first days and weeks as I lived and worked there alone were greater than I anticipated. After all, this was a community in which violence had erupted.

I tried to be a good neighbor by keeping a low profile in those early months, even planting flowers as a means of protection. As a “resident” of that house I never encountered any hostility. To the contrary, as long as people understood I was an American they were friendly, garrulous to the point of being over-bearing, in other words typical Long Islanders.

However, if I happened to be walking the streets and mistaken for a day laborer, the situation could be entirely different. One night, while walking home from dinner, a car veered at me. It was more a gesture than an attempt to run me over, but as I jumped to get out of the way, the driver yelled out, “You fucking illegal, why don’t you go back to the fucking country you came from.” I couldn’t decide if he meant the Hamptons or California.

On another occasion, I was waiting for a signal to change to cross the street on foot (I was deliberately obeying the law since residents complained that the day laborers create a traffic hazard by crossing the streets willy-nilly). As I stood there like a good citizen, a car load of kids slowed down and started barking at me. Not too long later, at the same intersection, a large woman in a larger SUV shouted out “Aggravation, nothing but aggravation.” She continued her invectives following me into the shopping mall parking lot.

At one point I was trying to get the cooperation of the SQL. Margaret Bianculli-Dyber tried to intercede for me with the Board of the SQL. When I met with them, I received a full and furious blast, with people screaming that if I was receiving funding from the Soros Documentary Fund, my film was tainted; that I was wrong in even thinking there were two sides since we were talking about people who are here illegally, therefore there could only be one side, the legal side. I was literally yelled out of the room, but received a re-assuring hug from Margaret who stood by me.

Gaining access to the Mexican side required equal effort. I had to attend several meetings, in essence to present my credentials to different groups before they would be willing collectively to allow us to film. In the end, one group refused to cooperate because I asked (on camera) about the existence of a second group representing the day laborers. Months later I discovered they thought I was trying to foment or exploit a division among them. I attended the Spanish language mass every Sunday to help gain trust.

In the end, the months of groundwork paid off on certain levels, but it was really the presence of the camera, as handled by Catherine Tambini, that allowed us to capture the story.

[Catherine adds] Basically the people we wanted to talk to did not want to talk to us. The pro-immigrant groups and the anti-immigration groups who were organized both gave us a degree of access after the initial back and forth of what are we doing and why are we doing it. We told everyone involved from the beginning that this was to be a film that gave all sides a voice. The most difficult groups to access were the everyday Farmingville residents and the Mexican laborers . It took a long time of living and working in the community before any of that was possible.

Q: Did that affect how you covered the story?

A: [From Catherine] We just kept trying to make inroads and eventually did so.

Q: Was giving equal time to all sides challenging?

A: [From Catherine] Trying to make a balanced film was very difficult. We continually debated the merits of giving a voice and a platform to opinions that we disagreed with. In the end we decided that the film would be stronger with all sides represented.

A: [From Carlos] Keeping our end goal in sight helped; remembering that we wanted to create a safe place for dialogue in order to bridge understanding. It also helped to concentrate on the humanity of the individuals with whom we were dealing. The most difficult part was listening to the harsh rhetoric of extremist organizations. I didn't understand how much I had to – we all had to – distance ourselves from our emotions until we got through the edit. Since then, all that pent-up emotion keeps poking out as unexpected moments of catharsis.

Q: How did you get some of your extraordinary footage?

A: [From Catherine] Most of the footage came from developing personal relationships with our subjects. We spent a lot of time getting to know them and developing a trust with them. Carlos became very friendly with Margaret Bianculli-Dyber and through their friendship she allowed us to shoot the SQL conference. She also brought her guest speakers over to Carlos' backyard before the conference so that we could get to know them before the conference in an atmosphere that was more conducive to conversation than to rhetoric.

Matilde Parada was instrumental in getting us into the Mexican community. The men were afraid and distrustful. They don't particularly want to call attention to themselves. Because Matilde was such a strong advocate on their behalf, she convinced them that it would be good for them to allow us to film them trying to get paid and reporting abuses to the police. My Spanish is not very good, but I would go with Matilde and shoot whatever was happening. I also crawled into the back of Carlos' Jeep and shot out the smoked glass windows to get some of the footage on the street corners and the scene with the contractor who hadn't paid his workers.

THE PEOPLE OF FARMINGVILLE (in order of appearance)

Margaret Bianculli-Dyber is a New York City high school teacher and resident of Farmingville. She helped found Sachem Quality of Life, an activist group of residents who want to rid the town of illegal immigrants. Bianculli-Dyber testified before Congress in 1999 about illegal immigration. She reached out to national immigration control groups who eventually involved themselves with Farmingville.

Paul Tonna at the time of filming was the Presiding Officer of the Suffolk County Legislature. He is a Republican and the father of six children - one biological, one of Native American descent and four of Mexican descent. He is a successful businessman and a theologian by training. As a result of his position in support of the day laborers, he and his family were threatened with violence.

Louise is a Farmingville resident and impromptu spokesperson for the middle-of-the-road residents of Farmingville. She attended early meetings of the SQL but found their rhetoric inflammatory. She is strongly driven by concern for her 75-year-old mother who lives next door to a single-family house with over 30 men living in it.

Darren Sandow is a passionate advocate for the immigrants. He is a founding member of Brookhaven Citizens for Peaceful Solutions, the group formed as an alternative to Sachem Quality of Life. His involvement with Farmingville dates back to 1998; when day laborers were evicted from their home, Sandow helped secure aid for them.

Matilde Parada is a refugee from El Salvador where she was a community activist working with Archbishop Romero's organization. She is a founder of Human Solidarity, a day laborer-based immigrant advocacy group.

Eduardo is an immigrant from Mexico City. Essentially orphaned as a child, he is a self-made man. He worked his way up to supervisor in a Mexico City printing press warehouse. He and Matilde started the soccer league.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Carlos Sandoval – Co-Director/Producer

Mr. Sandoval is a playwright, lawyer and writer whose essays have appeared in *The New York Times*. He has worked on immigration and refugee affairs with the U.S. delegation to the United Nations.

Catherine Tambini – Co-Director/Producer

Ms. Tambini co-produced the Academy Award[®] nominated documentary SUZANNE FARRELL: ELUSIVE MUSE, which aired on PBS' "Great Performances/Dance In America."

John Bloomgarden – Editor

Mr. Bloomgarden received an Emmy for ZUBIN AND THE I.P.O. He has edited extensively for film and television

Mary Manhardt – Editor

Ms. Manhardt received an Emmy for THE FARM: ANGOLA, USA. She has edited such renowned documentaries as THE EXECUTION OF WANDA JEAN and GIRLHOOD.

Steven Schoenberg – Composer

Mr. Schoenberg's television scores include Emmy award-winning shows for PBS' NOVA and SMITHSONIAN WORLD, and for HBO.

PRESENTERS

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS) brings independently produced programs to the public – programs that transform television into a forum as wildly diverse, creative, and astonishing as the American public itself. Founded in 1988 by a historic mandate of Congress, ITVS fulfills its unique civic mission by supporting, producing, and promoting hundreds of groundbreaking programs for public television. Many have sparked national debate and won prestigious film awards. All champion unheard voices and untold stories, reaching hungry audiences eager to participate in a free, open and informed democracy. *FARMINGVILLE* is one of an astonishing seven titles representing ITVS at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. SALLY JO FIFER is President, CEO of ITVS. For more information please visit www.itvs.org.

Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB) supports the development, production, acquisition and distribution of non-commercial educational and cultural television that is representative of Latino people, or addresses issues of particular interest to Latino Americans. These programs are produced for dissemination to the public broadcasting stations, and other public telecommunication entities. By acting as a minority consortium, LPB provides a voice to the diverse Latino community throughout the United States. LPB has funded more than forty projects for public television since its creation in 1998. Luca Bentivoglio is Executive Director of LPB.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funds ITVS and LPB. CPB is a private corporation funded by the American People. The mission of CPB is to facilitate the development of, and ensure universal access to, high-quality programming and telecommunications services.

P.O.V., now entering its 17th season on PBS, is the first and longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's most innovative documentary filmmakers. Bringing over 200 award-winning films to millions nationwide, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for *Talking Back* and P.O.V.'s *Borders* (www.pbs.org/pov) is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television station including KCET/Los Angeles, WGBH/Boston, and WNET/New York. Cara Mertes is executive director of P.O.V. P.O.V. is a division of American Documentary, Inc.

The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund is dedicated to supporting U.S. and international documentary films and videos focused on current and significant issues and movements in contemporary human rights, freedom of expression, social justice, and civil liberties. In supporting independent vision and creative, compelling stories, the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund hopes to give voice to the diverse exchange of ideas crucial to developing an open society, raise public consciousness about human rights abuses and restrictions of civil liberties, and engage citizens in a lively, ongoing debate about these issues.

Farmingville was part of the 2003 Sundance Institute Documentary Composers Laboratory, a collaboration between Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Program and Film Music program. Modeled after the Feature film Composer's Lab, the Documentary Lab supports Sundance Documentary Fund filmmakers by providing them with an intensive three day laboratory experience focusing on musical composition and non fiction filmmaking.

New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is a funding agency that supports the activities of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in New York State and helps to bring high-quality artistic programs to the citizens of the state. The Council has been directed by the state legislature to maintain the "paramount position of this state in the nation and the world as a cultural center" through the support of nonprofit arts organizations in New York State.

Moxie Films is a New York City based organization, which includes the brands MoxieDocs, MoxieStage and New Century Writer Awards. Launched in January 2001, Moxie Films has raised over \$500,000 support for the Moxie Films Awards Program via partnerships established with leading film, media, industry product and service providers. With the continued support of our industry Moxie Films' goal is to provide the means for complete production, postproduction, and theatrical distribution to one selected documentary proposal annually. FARMINGVILLE is a MoxieDocs Award recipient. Drew R. Figueroa is the Executive Director of Moxie Films.

THE NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

The filmmakers are launching a robust community engagement campaign that will use FARMINGVILLE to stimulate dialogue on the issues surrounding day laborers and undocumented workers, particularly in communities unaccustomed to receiving large numbers of immigrants.

This effort will be designed and implemented by Active Voice, a team of strategic communication specialists who put powerful film to work for personal and institutional change in communities and workplaces and on campuses across America. Through practical guides, hands-on workshops, public events and key nationwide partnerships, Active Voice will position FARMINGVILLE to help people across America speak out, listen up and take the initiative for positive change. Active Voice is a division of the non-profit independent media innovator, American Documentary Inc. (www.activevoice.net).

UNDERWRITERS

FARMINGVILLE is funded by generous grants from: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, The Horace and Amy Hagedorn Foundation, New York State Council for the Arts, The Bishop John R. McGann Mission of Caring Fund of Catholic Health Services of Long Island, The Soros Documentary Fund, The Long Island Community Foundation, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Moxie Films, Avid Technologies, and generous individual donors.