

# PRESS NOTES



## FIVE YEARS NORTH



Official Selection  
full frame  
Montreal World Film Festival  
2020

Official Selection  
MOUNTAINFILM  
2020

Official Selection  
DOC NYC  
2020

Official Selection  
Scottish International  
Film Festival  
2020

Official Selection  
PTFF  
2020

Official Selection  
SARIN  
2020

Official Selection  
DOC ANDS  
2020

an OPTIMIST production a film by CHRIS TEMPLE & ZACH INGRASCI starring LOUIS & JUDY music by T. GRIFFIN  
PRODUCED BY JERMA KELLY EDITOR ALEJANDRO VALDES-BUCHIN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MORGAN RAYNS, SJ WOODRAT, JAY PASTERGAN, KELLIE PASTERGAN, TOLDI BLODUMI TITLE DESIGN BY PATI CONTRERAS SOUND DESIGN BY MONKEYLAND AUDIO  
Canon color correction by DIFFERENT BY DESIGN cinematography by NICK KRABS, CHRIS TEMPLE, ZACH INGRASCI. INVITED BY SHY WIDS LOCAL SPONSOR CREATIVE VISIONS FOUNDATION

# FIVE YEARS NORTH

**DIRECTED BY ZACH INGRASCI & CHRIS TEMPLE**

**RUNTIME**

88 minutes

**AWARDS**

Grand Jury Prize at DOC NYC Film Festival  
Grand Jury Prize at Flickers' Rhode Island Film Festival  
Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award Finalist

**OFFICIAL SELECTION**

Full Frame Film Festival  
DOC NYC Film Festival  
Seattle International Film Festival  
MountainFilm Festival  
DocLands Documentary Film Festival  
Port Townsend Film Festival

**PRESS CONTACT**

Producer Jenna Kelly  
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609-577-6682

**FILM WEBSITE**

[FiveYearsNorth.org](http://FiveYearsNorth.org)

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

@FiveYearsNorth



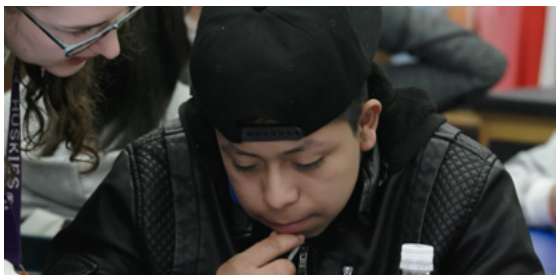
## LOGLINE

*Five Years North* is the coming-of-age story of Luis, an undocumented Guatemalan boy who just arrived in New York City. He struggles to work, study, and evade Judy—the Cuban-American ICE officer patrolling his neighborhood.

## STORY

*Five Years North* is the coming-of-age story of 16-year-old Luis, an undocumented Guatemalan boy who just arrived alone in New York City, set against the experience of Judy, a veteran ICE officer and first-generation Cuban immigrant.

Luis has come to the U.S. to make money for his family back home, all of whom are relying on him for their very survival. Getting by as a delivery boy and a cook, Luis faces all of the obstacles that come with being an undocumented worker, as well as the added burdens of being a child in a new country coping without his parents. Luis suffers anxiety and homesickness, struggles with working full-time while complying with mandated participation in the NYC school system, and feels overburdened by social workers tasked with monitoring his every move. But above all, Luis lives in constant fear of being caught by ICE. Judy patrols Luis' Brooklyn neighborhood, and must weigh the human cost of her work at ICE against the uncertain future her family would face without her paycheck. The film is intimate and observational – following Luis, Judy, and Luis' family back in Guatemala for more than three years to provide a fresh and valuable entry point to understanding America's immigration system and its human cost.



## FEATURED CHARACTERS



### **Luis**

On the surface, Luis is just a Gen-Z teenager. It's hard to understand his music taste, and somehow he has 35,000 Facebook friends. But as the oldest of eight siblings, his family back in Guatemala is relying on him to survive. Without legal status or parents nearby, Luis must grow up far too quickly.



### **Judy**

Judy is not your typical ICE officer. She's a first generation American, the only female on her team, and raised by a mother who spent 41 years resettling refugees. But she lives up to the reputation of a true New Yorker – she's candid, openly critical of her agency, and loves vigilante superheroes.

### **Myrna**

Judy's mother loves her daughter dearly, but struggles to support Judy's career at ICE. For Myrna it's personal, she's spent 41 years resettling refugees in need.

### **Pedro and Maria**

Luis' parents do what they can to help their son Luis, but from 3,000 miles away, they are powerless.

### **Mario**

Luis' uncle and legal sponsor. When Luis misses his court date, Mario is put at risk of jail or deportation.

### **Chino**

Luis' cousin who didn't want to be left behind. When Luis started posting photos of his new life in the U.S., the temptation to leave the gang violence of Guatemala City became too much and Chino headed north.

### **Danny**

Judy's son, and self-proclaimed best friend. In search of a stable job with benefits, he follows the path of least resistance to become an ICE officer like his mother.



## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

We didn't set out to make an immigration film. In 2010, while working on a different project, we met eight-year-old Luis, a quirky kid from a Mayan village in Guatemala. We've kept in touch with him ever since, watching as this shy child grew into a bubbly and opinionated teenager. Then in late 2017, at just 16 years old, Luis headed north to help his family. After a dangerous journey, he arrived alone, and without papers, in New York City.

We began to make a documentary about his new life, but quickly realized he'd have to reckon with a powerful force: ICE. It took over a year to get filming approval from the agency, but we eventually did. That's when we met Judy, the supervisor responsible for Luis' neighborhood. An officer, single mother, and daughter of Cuban immigrants, she's been candid, personal, and critical of her agency in ways that we've never seen on screen before.

Because we had such unique and personal access to our two main characters, we made it our goal to provide a deeply personal look at their lives as complex individuals inside of our inhumane immigration system, rather than aim to provide a broad view of the issue. The film isn't intended to be a representative take on the experiences of all immigrants or ICE officers. This personal access also informed our decision to omit outside voices from news anchors, politicians, or activists.

Judy and Luis challenged us at every turn. Their choices often surprised us, and in the case of Judy, were agonizing to bear witness to. We watched her arrest a father as he walked his daughter to school. And in the devastating aftermath, his grieving family spoke to us about why they didn't think he should be deported. We learned the father had already paid the fine for his past drug charge, and had been released by a judge five years earlier. Yet, Judy still deported him. She had a binary view of immigrants as "criminals" or "non-criminals", but that doesn't hold up in a system that is fundamentally unjust.

The years spent filming with Judy and Luis unearthed challenging questions we, and many film viewers, still struggle with: How do we all justify our actions when we know they are hurting others? What lengths would we go to for family? What is the human cost of the American Dream? How can we build a more compassionate system rooted in restoration rather than punishment? How can we support those struggling within the system like Luis?

Immigration law is often compared to tax law in its complexity. Yet we expect children like Luis to be able to navigate it without lawyers, or mistakes. Luis buckled under the pressure of trying to adjust his status, and he's story is just one of millions. We hope *Five Years North* deepens the conversation and can support the incredible work of activists and organizations helping those crushed by the system.

### **NOTE FROM LUIS (TRANSLATED)**

My name is Luis. For me this movie was an opportunity to show the world what the experience of an immigrant is. Because life can be difficult. But the hardest part is thinking about my mom. It's so hard talking to her, because there's COVID there [Guatemala] too, and she's not able to work. They're all relying on me.

I want to show the film to more people, and am really proud that my story won an award. I love talking and sharing now, because I'm getting better at English too. We've had very good times filming. I kept calling Chris and Zach and asking when they were going to come back to visit me again. I would call and say, "let's film more!" We've been making this video for so many years you know. And we've become close friends little by little, trip by trip. It's all been really exciting and something really special for me.

When this is all over, we're also going to make a music video together. But after Covid.



## IMPACT

The stories in *Five Years North* have never been more relevant as hundreds of unaccompanied minors continue to arrive at the US-Mexico border. We're using the film as a tool for partner organizations and community groups to support newly arrived undocumented immigrants. Through test screenings we've identified that the film has unique value shedding light on the mental health toll for new arrivals, especially teenagers like Luis. Working with our experienced impact producer, we've designed a campaign centered around the following outcomes:

1. Inspire a national conversation around the human cost of the U.S. immigration system.
2. Fundraise to help vulnerable immigrant children with legal advice and mental health services.
3. Advocate for the humane treatment of undocumented minors, including more comprehensive legal support and social services.

At our non-profit Optimist, impact is front and center. Our films to-date have helped raise \$91 million for poverty alleviation and refugee education programs – helping to improve the lives of 275,616 people.

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## STATE OF IMMIGRATION TODAY

We've recently seen an increase in unaccompanied minors [arriving at the US-Mexico border](#), with arrivals expected to reach a 20-year high. Unfortunately, this has led to overcrowding in shelters for unaccompanied minors, as they await placement with their legal guardians. These children are likely having a similar experience to Luis before he was released to his uncle Mario in New York. But now, with the added threat of COVID-19, these facilities are more precarious than ever before. In response, the Biden Administration has deployed FEMA to the most overwhelmed border regions and is opening more emergency shelters.

These newly arrived minors will face an immigration system that has not significantly changed since Luis attempted to navigate it. President Biden has halted construction of the border wall and overturned the 'remain in Mexico' policy. But most immigration activists feel these changes do not do much in practice for immigrants like Luis and Mario. Immigrants still do not have guaranteed legal counsel, social services are incredibly limited, and [tens of thousands of undocumented individuals have been removed](#) during the first 100 days of the new Administration.

Longterm, there remains an impasse within the government on creating clear paths to legalization and citizenship. While the Administration has [proposed a plan](#) that would allow a path to citizenship for many of the undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S, it's unlikely that it will pass in Congress.

## TEAM



### **Chris Temple & Zach Ingrasci - DIRECTORS**

Chris and Zach are filmmakers and the founders of Optimist, a non-profit production studio that creates films with impact. They are best known for directing the feature documentaries *Living On One Dollar* and *Salam Neighbor*. Their films have been released by Netflix, Amazon Prime, National Geographic, and The Atlantic. In addition to *Five Years North*, they recently directed the short documentary, *The Undocumented Lawyer*, that premiered at Tribeca in spring 2020 and on HBO in 2021.

Every film they make is accompanied by an impact campaign to empower the film's subjects and its partner non-profits. Their projects have raised over \$91 million dollars for the films' causes, changing over 275,000 lives.



### **Jenna Kelly - PRODUCER**

Jenna Kelly is the producer of the feature documentary *Five Years North* and the short documentary, *The Undocumented Lawyer*. Before transitioning into the film world, she was a strategist for the communications firm GMMB.



### **Alejandro Valdés-Rochin - EDITOR & CO-PRODUCER**

Originally from Mexico, Alejandro is an award-winning documentary editor whose collaborations have released theatrically and digitally across National Geographic, PBS, Al Jazeera, Red Bull TV and Discovery. Alejandro's recent credits include *Maxima* (Festival Favorite - Hot Docs 2019) and *Science Fair* (Festival Favorite - Sundance 2018).





### **Morgan Kays - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Morgan Kays is a board member of Optimist, and the Executive Producer of the Tribeca documentary, *The Undocumented Lawyer*, as well as the feature documentary *Five Years North*. She's based in Los Angeles.



### **SJ Murray - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

SJ Murray (PhD, Princeton; tenured faculty, Baylor) is an EMMY-nominated producer and writer, award-winning director, and the co-founder of Cork Studios. She lives in Austin, TX with her feisty wheaton poo, and sits on the board of the Summit Institute.



### **Tolu Olubunmi - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Tolu Olubunmi is a Nigerian-born political strategist and social entrepreneur. She sits on the Board of Directors of the USA for IOM (Un Migration Agency), served on the World Economic Forum's Migration Council, and co-founded Immigrant Heritage Month. She was featured in the 2012 cover story of Time magazine.



### **Ari Rastegar - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Ari Rastegar has earned a reputation as a thought leader in real estate. The recent success of Ari's real estate investment firm, Rastegar Property Company, has enabled him to pursue a longtime passion and acquire an independent film studio.



### **Kellie Rastegar - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Kellie Rastegar, now a successful entrepreneur and co-founder of real estate investment firm Rastegar Property Company, started her business career in the film industry. She served as Johnny Depp's personal assistant during *Pirates of the Caribbean*. This film is personal for her, as her mother was born in Guatemala.



### **T. Griffin - COMPOSER**

T. Griffin is a Brooklyn-based composer who has made music for dozens of series and feature-length films. Notable titles include *Boys State*, *Life Animated*, *One of Us*, *The Overnighters* and recent Netflix series *The Family* and *Unnatural Selection*.

## ADDITIONAL CREDITS

**Cinematographer:** Nick Kraus

**Consulting Editors:** Pedro Kos, Fernando Villena

**Sound Design By:** MonkeyLand Audio

**Color By:** Different By Design

**Fiscal Sponsor:** Creative Visions Foundation

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

**Title:** Five Years North

**Duration:** 88 minutes

**Release Year:** 2020

**Country of Production:** United States, Guatemala

**Genre:** Documentary

**Screening Format:** DCP, ProRes

**Aspect Ratio:** 16x9

**Sound Format:** 5.1 Surround Sound

**Language:** English, Spanish, Kaqchikel

**Subtitles:** English

## DISCLAIMER

Luis' safety has always been our top priority. We don't use the real names of any children or show any identifying locations in the film. We've also worked closely with Luis' immigration lawyer and parents to help protect him. Luis and Judy have both reviewed the film.

