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EXPLORE THE UNSEEN STORY OF AMERICA'S REFORESTATION IN "A THOUSAND PINES" PREMIERING APRIL 1, ON PBS'S INDEPENDENT LENS

FEBRUARY 8 2024

Throughout One Working Season, Oaxacan Guest Workers Plant Trees Regrowing America's Forests

(San Francisco, CA) February 8, 2024—"A Thousand Pines," the intimate documentary following a season of Oaxacan tree planters traveling the United States, directed and produced by Noam Osband and Sebastián Díaz, explores the hidden world of guest workers regrowing America's forests and the challenges the workers and their families face. "A Thousand Pines" is a co-presentation of INDEPENDENT LENS and Latino Public Broadcasting's VOCES.

"A Thousand Pines" debuts on PBS's INDEPENDENT LENS on April 1, at 10 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will be available to stream on the [PBS App](#).

The award-winning documentary film follows the journey of Raymundo Morales as he oversees a crew of 12 Mexican guest workers to plant trees across the United States. The crew struggles to balance the job's physical demands and its extreme isolation, trying to remain connected to the life they are providing for back home. As the season progresses, they become a small family, cooking and caring for each other to endure the punishing work.

"It's important to show the hardships and sacrifices tree planter guest workers endure to provide for their families, especially in the political climate regarding immigration and the workforce today," said directors Sebastián Díaz and Noam Osband. "For the Oaxacan workers, this job is not about regrowing America's forests, but to ensure their families are taken care of, and can have a happy and healthy life home in Mexico."

The United States is the world's largest producer of wood and paper products, and each year the industry relies almost entirely on foreign guest workers who plant over one billion trees to replenish harvested forests.

Using archival footage and featuring modern interviews, the film also shows the backstory. Many Many of America's tree-planting contractors, founded by members of the Back-to-the-Land movement in the 1970s—white, self-described hippies who had moved to Arkansas to find a simpler lifestyle in the Ozarks.

As the industry boomed, hippies turned into capitalists and small companies turned into million-dollar businesses. Planter salaries plummeted and companies discovered a cheaper workforce: temporary guest workers from Latin America. Raymundo and his crew carry out extremely strenuous work, with each worker typically planting at least 3,000 trees a day for a weekly salary of several hundreds of dollars. While the crew works regardless of weather conditions, some types of weather make it challenging for them to plant, which causes them to earn less.

Raymundo is in his 20th season working for the largest reforestation company in the United States. When he began, he was single and had few responsibilities. Now, he must balance his obligations to his wife, his children, and his elderly mother with a heart condition, while also tending to the needs and emergencies of the planting crew.

“A Thousand Pines’ is an intensive and intimate look at the challenges faced by these Oaxacan guest workers and their families during one tree planting season, spanning over nine months,” said Lois Vossen, INDEPENDENT LENS executive producer. “It’s inspiring to see what people will do to provide for their families, even if it means sacrificing the thing they value most, spending time with each other. Raymundo and the crew’s jobs are both their families’ salvation and their heartbreak.”

“A Thousand Pines” received funding through ITVS’ Open Call Initiative. Winning Best Documentary at the Buffalo International Film Festival, the documentary features music from Grammy-winning singer Lila Downs, who is from the same Oaxacan town as the film’s protagonists. Visit the [“A Thousand Pines”](#) page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

About the Filmmakers

Sebastián Díaz Aguirre, Producer/Director

Sebastián Díaz Aguirre is a filmmaker and Emmy® Award-winning editor originally from Mexico. His short documentary “Toñita’s” premiered at MoMA Doc Fortnight. His award-winning documentary “Brilliant Soil” has screened internationally. Sebastián was awarded the PBS Emerging Filmmakers fund for “A Thousand Pines.” He sits on the board of UnionDocs, NYC.

Noam Osband, Producer/Director

Noam Osband is a filmmaker, radio producer, and anthropologist. His first feature, the nationally-broadcast film “Adelante,” won Best Documentary at the Catskills Mountain Film Fest and his next documentary, “The Radical Jew,” won Best Short Doc at the Charlotte and Tallgrass Film Festivals. He is also a radio and print journalist, whose bylines include *The Atlantic*, BBC4, Criminal, and Freakonomics Radio.

CREDITS

Director and Producer

Sebastián Díaz
Noam Osband

Executive Producers

Catherine Tambini
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ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS App. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens.



ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years, the San Francisco nonprofit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS App. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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