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¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest Announces 2021 Award Winners

*Month-long festival celebrating emerging Latinx filmmakers concludes with
¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest Awards Show*

BROOKLYN, NY – [¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest](#), a month-long virtual film festival presented during Hispanic Heritage Month and launched by [HITN-TV](#) to celebrate and support emerging Latinx filmmakers, announced this year’s award-winning films at an online event hosted on cineyouthfest.org.

“I Am Soil Breaking Off,” produced and directed by Paloma Sierra, a Puerto Rican writer, educator, and curator from San Juan, Puerto Rico, won the festival’s \$5000 grand prize. The short film based on a poem written by Sierra shares a metaphor about national identity and migration presented through a mangrove seed and its journey through the ocean. Sierra’s work combines music, lyricism, and translation; and often centers on the Hispanic population in the United States.

“As a born-and-raised Puerto Rican who has also lived in the diaspora, I am well aware of the tensions between those who live on the island and outside of it. As Puerto Ricans, we often sing our lungs out, saying “Yo sería borincano aunque naciera en la luna,” yet fail to put this belief into practice,” Sierra said. “I wrote, directed, and produced the video poem “I Am Soil Breaking Off” in response to this reality. It is my hope that, in the future, we can acknowledge that Puerto Ricans can exist, thrive, and grow both in our beautiful island and outside of it.”

“Doble Cultura,” chosen as the student prize winner, is directed by 22-year-old Chicana filmmaker from Windsor, California, Yessenia Sanchez, who received a \$2,000 scholarship. This film centers on Marisol, a 12-year-old serving as a translator for her family because of her status as the sole English speaker in her household. It highlights the responsibility and psychological impact endured by children who are forced into adult spaces to mediate for their family members.

According to Sanchez, her film is intended to create greater awareness regarding the marginalization of disabled working-class immigrants. “Seeing your parent(s) live through these immense misinterpretations and misunderstandings while you are also being exposed to these stigmas can leave detrimental effects on how you will grow and develop later on,” Sanchez said.



“Through my short film, I hope to convey the pressures, the anxieties, and the level of professionalism a child has to take on while being the sole source of communication for their parents.”

“Our young Latinx creators have lived a diverse set of experiences and developed unique viewpoints on what it means to grow up, live, and work in American culture,” said Lina Sands, Director of Marketing at HITN. “We want those experiences and their voices to be represented in film and shared across the country to empower and inspire other Latinx people – students and adults alike – and to effect broader change across society. That’s why we’re delighted to provide these talented creators with the opportunity to share their work through HITN’s multiple platforms.”

In addition to the two winning films selected by the festival’s judges, “Nuestro Rostro,” directed by Damaris Calderon, was the public’s favorite, receiving the Voters’ Choice Award. The winner of My Pandemic Year was Amanda Hunter, a film student from St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York, who participated in the Cine Youth Fest Young Filmmakers Conference.

Films that received an Honorable Mention Award include “The Williamsburg Italian Feast” by Erica Star Domena; “Hirviendo” by Wendy Medina Herrera; “Miracle of Love” by Jose Vera; “It Happened in East L.A.” by Victor R. Aguilar; “Señora Océano” by Omar De Leon; “Pandemates” by Devin Redmond; “Amor Encerrado” by Nory Gonzalez and “Oda a Las Frijoles/Ode to the Beans” by Karolina Esqueda.

The winning films and the selection of other notable works from the festival were recognized during the ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest Awards Show livestreamed on Oct. 24 and hosted by comedian and actor Lorena Russi and activist and educator Jessie Fuentes. The awards show is available on the HITN GO app and the ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

In addition to the opportunity to compete in the film festival and broadcast their work on HITN, the ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest has exposed young filmmakers to leading Latinx professionals in their fields. The festival’s series of virtual events, Conversations Among “X,” and the Cine Youth Fest Young Filmmakers Conference connected aspiring filmmakers with award-winning industry experts for educational workshops and panel discussions.

“Through the ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest, we’ve been able to create opportunities and connections for a host of bright and promising young filmmakers and artists,” said Luis Alejandro Molina, ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest Director. “Our filmmakers produced exceptional, thought-provoking content, and the judges and panelists who supported the event gave their time and talents to inform and inspire the next generation of Latinx creatives.”

The inaugural ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest was presented in collaboration with educational institutions across the United States, including in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, Pennsylvania, Miami, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. An independent jury evaluated the projects, and winners were selected based on criteria including awareness of the subject matter, creativity



in the approach of the subject matter, technical aspects (such as directing, acting, cinematography and editing), originality, and inspirational and storytelling impact of the piece.

For more information about the ¡Tú Cuentas! Cine Youth Fest and to watch the top 20 films from the festival, visit <https://cineyouthfest.org/>.

About HITN-TV:

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