

COCHOCHI

Short synopsis

Evaristo and Tony, indigenous brothers from northwest Mexico, have just graduated from elementary school when they receive an assignment from their grandfather: to deliver some medicine at the other extreme of the Sierra Tarahumara. Tony and Evaristo, dreading the long road ahead, decide to take their grandfather's horse and set off into a journey that becomes longer than they expected.

Long synopsis

Evaristo and Luis Antonio —indigenous brothers from the Sierra Tarahumara in northwest Mexico— have just graduated from boarding elementary school. Evaristo desires to continue his education, leading a bicultural life, where the Tarahumara, or Raramuri as they call themselves, have the opportunity to keep learning to speak, read and write in Spanish, the Mexican official language. Meanwhile Luis Antonio “ Tony” is very happy to be done with school. Even though he is a smart kid and has won a grant to move on to high school, he prefers to live life in the ranch, where the kids grow up at a very young age.

One morning the brothers are sent to deliver some medicine to a far away community. Tony asks their grandfather for permission to take his horse but the answer is no. Nevertheless, Tony decides to take it, even if Evaristo is not convinced. They take a wrong path that leads them to a narrow and deep canyon. The horse cannot go on so the boys tie it around a tree. When they come back for it the horse is no longer there. Both, angry and worried, walk in the forest looking for it; Tony thinks the horse was stolen while Evaristo is worried about the assignment. Arguing about this they suddenly lose each other. Now each on their own they continue the journey separately; Tony looks for the horse and ends up at an amusing party, while Evaristo is lonely in the canyons looking for the place to deliver the medicine. The trip becomes longer than expected. They can't go back without the horse.

Director's statement

The idea of the film was born in the summer of 2005 when we met Evaristo and Tony in the valley of Okochochi, in the Tarahumara Sierra. From our encounter with them grew some ideas, still not very defined, to do some kind of project with them; a documentary or a drama. What was for sure is we had to do something with Evaristo and Tony, in the Sierra and that we needed to find a simple story. From the beginning we had in mind the search of their lost horse and the consequences this would imply.

During the year we were visiting them periodically we developed a working dynamic with them, and also made some friends through which we started to know stories of the place, locations, characters and details from the life in the mountains. Little by little, while rehearsing, we found out that Evaristo and Tony, apart from good friends, were becoming good actors.

That year Evaristo and Tony were about to finish elementary school; a step at which most students desert from school. We saw reflected in them a common reality: to work or to study. This decision means —more or less— to lead a bicultural life or to remain in their traditional culture.

To us, this situation made Evaristo and Tony strong characters, representative of the Tarahumara reality and perhaps the indigenous reality of Mexico. This motivated a transformation within the story we wanted to tell. Without looking for it, Evaristo and Tony were giving us all the elements to start writing a script, always keeping the initial narrative of the search of the lost horse.

When the shooting was becoming a reality we thought a lot on how to approach the community with a film camera and how we wanted the production to be like. After a year, we had some understanding of the culture and how to get along with the people there, but the other twelve collaborators didn't at first and had to adapt quickly. Respect was always the motivation, then came other things, but the essential was to never be a burden or invaders for the community.

In August 2006 we started shooting. During the prep, someone in our team suggested we should cast other kids in case Evaristo or Tony could not do it. We didn't put any attention to this suggestion but we have to admit it wasn't easy for the actors to understand the beginning of the shooting.

The lack of secondary characters made many of the scenes we had written collapse. So we started shooting the scenes more organically, with the people that surrounded us, mostly family of Evaristo and Tony, trying not to change things too much from how they were, but adapting our necessities to them, and from there elaborating a narrative.

When we see Cochochi we constantly discover the enormous adaptation capacities of the Raramuri people, their ability to translate into scenes our intentions as directors. They're

the soul of the project and we were lucky, not only to work in a beautiful place, but to count on Evaristo and Tony's performance in our first film.

Director's biographies

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on 7 May 1980, Laura Amelia Guzmán graduated from Altos de Chavón/ The School of Design, where she studied fine arts and photography. After some photography shows, she attended the International Film and Television School in Cuba, specializing in cinematography. During that period she photographed and directed several short films and documentaries, some of them acclaimed in international film festivals. Since 2004 she lives in Mexico where she works with her husband Israel Cardenas, with whom she shares script writing, directing and photography credits in their first feature "Cochochi".

Israel Cárdenas was born in the 15th of February 1980 in Monterrey, Mexico. After diverse film workshops, he begins Blueberry Films in 2001; a young company with the goal of making independent film productions. Since he has produced several projects, among video clips, commercials, documentaries and short films. "Cochochi" is his first feature film.