**Children of Las Brisas: A Symphony of Hope Amidst Despair**

**Network: PBS through Independent Lens / Latino Public Broadcasting through Voces.**

**Original Airdate: January 2023**

"**Children of Las Brisas**" is a story of resilience, hope, and the transformative power of music set against the backdrop of Venezuela's socio-political crisis. This film follows the lives of Edixon, Dissandra, and Wuilly, three young musicians from the dangerous and violent suburb of Valencia, known as Las Brisas. As they navigate their musical journey through "El Sistema," Venezuela's renowned musical education program, their story reflects a larger narrative, of a country devastated by a dictatorship’s wreckless governance and the tragic consequences for the people of Venezuela.

Our film has been compared to *Hoop Dreams* and *Boyhood* in its use of observational footage, personal interviews, and cinematic storytelling, creating a compelling narrative spanning over the course of a decade.  This long-term engagement allowed us to witness the impact of Venezuela's decline on the children and the music program that once offered them hope.

The editorial and production goals of this documentary were focused on the question of how art affects the everyday lives of these children and their families, and through the process, we gained trust and access and were able to capture the stark contrast between the dream of their musical aspirations and the difficult challenges that they faced in Las Brisas.

While filming in the El Sistema institutional spaces we began to see El Sistema in a new light, and realized we had to address a reality not portrayed in previous documentaries; the complex relationship between "El Sistema" and the Venezuelan government.

Originally celebrated as a symbol of cultural pride and achievement, "El Sistema" was gradually turned into a tool for propaganda by the government. ​​On one hand, El Sistema provided millions of children with a musical education; but on the other, the government used these children to transmit a narrative of the success of the Bolivarian Revolution.  Nevertheless, for our protagonists, studying music became a means of survival and resistance and inspires viewers to reflect on the role of cultural education.

The documentary explores the causes of this mass migration and humanizes the statistic of the 7.5 million Venezuelans who have fled the country.  By showing the journey of Edixon, Dissandra, and Wuilly, the film helps raise awareness around the ongoing plight of Venezuela. In a world increasingly dominated by authoritarian regimes, stories like these, particularly from underreported countries like Venezuela, becomes vital in bringing awareness and context for the immigration crisis at the southern US border. An Emmy nomination would significantly aid in this matter.

 The documentary has garnered international acclaim, premiering at prestigious film festivals such as the Sheffield Doc Film Festival and DOC NYC. Its accolades include Best Musical Documentary in 2022 by SACEM (France), and Best Director at FIFAC (French Guiana), among others, it was nominated for the Children’s Resilience in Film Awards and also for Best Documentary in the Image Awards 2023.  Its impact is further amplified by its distribution through PBS's Independent Lens and Latino Broadcasting Voces, where it reached close to 5 million views, and sparked discussions about the power of cultural education and the universal struggle for freedom.