

Expanding Sanctuary

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Director: Kristal Sotomayor

Runtime: 21 min

Genre: Documentary

Country of Origin: USA

Completion: November 2023

Logline

An immigrant mother's fight sparks a community's battle against ICE.

Short Synopsis

Expanding Sanctuary follows an immigrant mother who becomes a powerful community leader in the fight to end police data-sharing with ICE. The film captures her transformation from personal desire to bring her mother to the U.S. into a passionate, collective movement for immigrant rights and family protection.

Long Synopsis

An immigrant mother becomes an unexpected community leader during a groundbreaking campaign to end the Philadelphia police's data-sharing with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). *Expanding Sanctuary* tells a rarely seen story of resilience, tracing the Latinx immigrant community's successful fight to protect families and change legislation against a backdrop of systemic injustice.

At the heart of the film is a personal journey of transformation. What begins as a woman's quest to bring her mother to the United States for her wedding evolves into a profound awakening. As she works with the immigrant rights organization Juntos, she discovers her voice, power, and agency, channeling her initial hope for personal connection into a larger purpose. Her newfound role as an organizer not only redefines her life but strengthens her entire community's fight for justice, illuminating the extraordinary potential of collective action and solidarity.

Film Festivals



Director

Kristal Sotomayor

Director/Producer/Director of Photography

Kristal Sotomayor is an award-winning nonbinary Peruvian American director, producer, journalist and curator based in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Named one of “10 Latinx Filmmakers You Should Know About” by *HipLatina*, they are a 2023 DOC NYC Documentary New Leader Honoree and Rockwood Documentary Leadership Fellow. Their college thesis film *To My Motherland* streamed on Comcast Xfinity On Demand. Kristal’s short Latinx immigrant rights documentary *Expanding Sanctuary* won the Philadelphia Filmmaker Award at the 2024 BlackStar Film Festival and is distributed through OTV, Kanopy, and New Day Films. Their short experimental documentary *Don’t Cry For Me All You Drag Queens* won Best LGBTQ Documentary at the 2025 Poppy Jasper International Film Festival. Kristal’s debut narrative short film *Las Cosas Que Brillan* is a coming of age story about a Trans Latina mermaid and produced with support from BlackStar. They are in development on their debut feature documentary *Untitled PARS Project* about surveillance of immigrant communities, produced with support from the Sundance Film Institute. Kristal’s work has also been supported by the Outfest, If/Then, Points North Institute, MDOCS, DCTV, and NeXtDoc.



[Downloadable Director Headshot](#)

Photo Credit: Becca Haydu

Director Statement

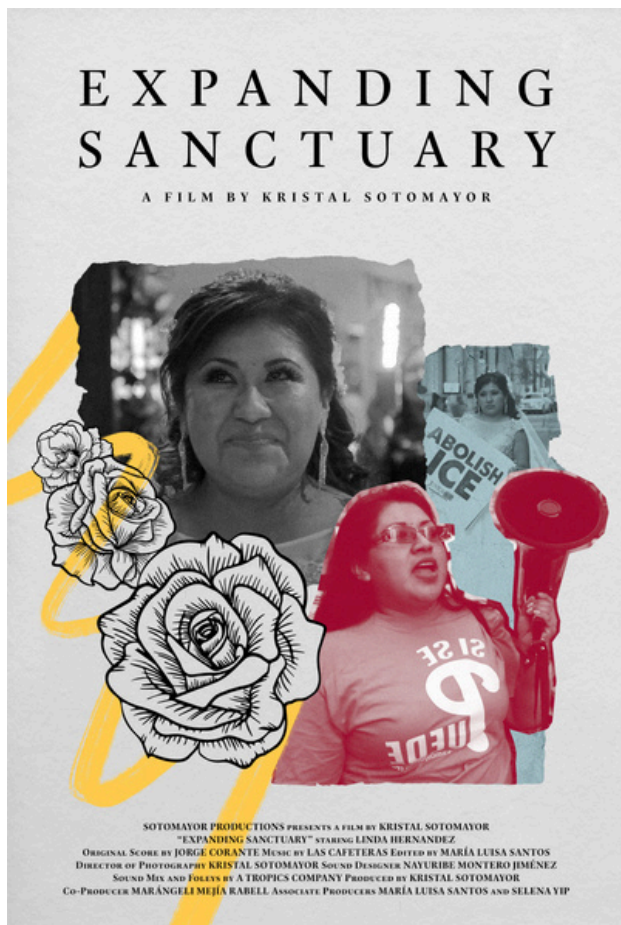
Expanding Sanctuary has been over six years in the making, born from my deep collaboration with Juntos, a Latinx immigrant rights nonprofit. This partnership lies at the heart of my filmmaking process, focusing on authentic, community-driven storytelling.

The film follows an immigrant mother who becomes a leader in the fight to end police data-sharing with ICE. What begins as her effort to bring her mother to the U.S. transforms into a passionate journey for immigrant rights. As Linda discovers her voice, the film documents her powerful shift from personal desire to collective action, culminating in a historic victory for the community.

This project is deeply personal to me, inspired by my love for my immigrant parents and my desire to honor the struggles of immigrant families, particularly Latina mothers. As a first-generation Latinx nonbinary person, my experiences mirror those of the community, yet I recognize the privilege I hold in telling these stories. I aim to decolonize the typical portrayal of immigrants in media and provide a platform for authentic representation.

My work with Juntos ensures that power, transparency, and accountability are at the forefront of the process. The crew, made up primarily of Latinx, immigrant, and gender-expansive people of color, reflects the community we document, ensuring an inclusive and intersectional approach to filmmaking.

Media Kit



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