

## Visitor's Day

A life-affirming story of resilience, hope and redemption, this documentary follows Juan Carlos throughout the most transformative year of his life, as he finds the strength to return to Mexico City to overcome his sense of abandonment and forgive his father for the past. Along the way we watch other boys overcome their own obstacles with the support of the extraordinary staff at IPODERAC, a unique group home and social enterprise located in Puebla, Mexico.

**Themes:** homelessness; abandonment; leadership; teamwork

**Director:** Nicole Opper

**Official film website:** <http://www.visitorsdaythefilm.com/>



## SET THE STAGE | THOUGHT-STARTERS

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mexico City is the largest city in the Western Hemisphere, with a population of 9 million people; its metropolitan area includes 21 million people. An estimated 15,000-30,000 children live on the streets of Mexico City. In Mexico, approx. 62% of children reach secondary school (middle school).

**Director's Statement:** I first encountered the IPODERAC boys as an eighteen year old volunteer, and I was deeply moved by my experience there. The boys at IPODERAC come from all over the country. Most ran away to escape abuse and lived on the streets for months or years before they get here. Many of them have never been able to trust an adult before IPODERAC, but they quickly learn to become accountable to one another and to their adopted home. Eleven years after volunteering as a teenager, I unearthed the journal I kept during my time there. In it, I had vowed to come back, and make a documentary about this place. I returned to IPODERAC to fulfill this promise.

## TALK ABOUT IT | DISCUSSION

- Describe the conflict Juan Carlos and his father.
- How does Tio Carlos help Juan Carlos?
- In what ways did IPODERAC help Juan Carlos and his future?
- What is the significance of the title of the film and how does it relate to the purpose of the film?
- How is this film socially/culturally important?
- What was your favorite moment in the film? Why do you think that moment stands out to you?

### TERMS TO KNOW

- **Documentary:** A type of film that attempts to explain reality.
- **Group home:** a home where a small number of unrelated people in need of care, support, or supervision can live together.
- **Nonprofit organization:** dedicated to furthering a particular **social cause** or advocating for a particular point of view, which uses its **surplus revenues** to further achieve its purpose or mission, rather than distributing its surplus income to the organization's shareholders
- **Ward of the state:** someone placed under the protection of a legal guardian by a court.

## GET CREATIVE | EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



## MAKE CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS

#### **Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America**

By Jonathan Kozol

An unforgettable record of the desperate voices of men, women, and especially children caught up in a nightmarish situation that tears at the hearts of readers.

### FILMS

#### **Off and Running**

Directed by Nicole Opper (director of **Visitor's Day**)

With white Jewish lesbians for parents and two adopted brothers - one mixed-race and one Korean-Brooklyn teen Avery grew up in a unique and loving household. But when her curiosity about her African-American roots grows, she decides to contact her birth mother. This choice propels Avery into her own complicated exploration of race, identity, and family that threatens to distance her from the parents she's always known. She begins staying away from home, starts skipping school, and risks losing her shot at the college track career she had always dreamed of. But when Avery decides to pick up the pieces of her life and make sense of her identity, the results are inspiring. OFF AND RUNNING follows Avery to the brink of adulthood, exploring the strength of family bonds and the lengths people must go to become themselves.

### LOCAL CONNECTIONS

<http://www.sdyouthservices.org/>

Launched in 1970, this non-profit charitable organization has stabilized the lives of over 500,000 homeless, runaway, abused and at-risk youth in the San Diego area. SDYS provides intensive services to more than 12,000 children and their families each year.

## BEYOND THE FILM | RELATED INTERNET LINKS

<http://www.ipoderac.org/>

IPODERAC's Children Fund (ICF) is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization committed to the work of IPODERAC in Puebla, Mexico. IPODERAC is a home for abandoned, homeless children ages 6-18 that ensures they get an education and training for jobs, combined with life skills to be self sufficient. A social enterprise, IPODERAC, raises 75% of its operating funds from the sale of artisan goat cheese, goat's milk soap and carpentry items.

**Media Arts Center San Diego** offers project-based Youth Media classroom residencies where students can learn the art of digital storytelling. Contact Larry Da Silveira at [larry@mediaartscenter.org](mailto:larry@mediaartscenter.org) or (619) 230-1938 to learn more.