



Sonya Rosario
Online Media Kit

Sonya Rosario Productions



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Sonya Rosario Filmmaker Artist Statement

I am deeply moved by sharing the stories of ordinary people doing extra-ordinary deeds. It is what people bring to this world but are not acknowledged for that drives me forward. As a filmmaker, filming women and women of color in Idaho, my goal is to utilize my skills and talents as a filmmaker to create a place of safety for the storyteller and give them the opportunity to remember their commitment to those who can no longer speak on their own behalf. I believe that personal stories and reflections can help bring into question stereotypical portrayals that sometimes dominate myths about each other. By merely hearing something familiar, it can remind us that we are not so different.

Film and storytelling can help us create a public record of little known and neglected histories for future generations to come. I grew up in many different cultures (Italy, Holland, and Azores, Portugal)—raised in a military family (as a military brat) with the opportunity to see the richness of culture and community with all its flavors.

“

A natural storyteller and social justice activist, my films and writings are a commitment to the silent voices that cannot speak on their own behalf and of ordinary people doing extraordinary deeds.”

This opened my sight to what I could bring to the world. Coming from a long line of women poets, storytellers, musicians and community organizers built upon my conviction. The stories I was told by my mother, Gloria Reyes, and other women in my family were rich in imagery, and filmmaking has always been a natural progression. A novice through my first film, I learned to use natural light and my surroundings to the benefit of the story, capturing the resilience of the human spirit. I also enjoy teaching the women how to use the camera. Many of my participants actually become my assistants on the shoots. I founded the Women of Color Alliance in 1999, a non-profit organization working with women in leadership living on the Reservations and in rural Idaho. This aided my films in using real people in real settings with imagery befitting their life, and provided a large scope to open the mind to what we need to do to facilitate change.

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My reliance falls on oral histories, community leaders, and Latino and Native American storytellers, combining the old ways with new generational thinking. *Idaho's Forgotten War* gave me the opportunity to build a personal relationship with Amy Trice, Kootenai Tribal elders, historians and storytellers as consultants, and utilizing Nez Perce Elder, Horace Axtell's 'GOD' like voice to interject the enormity of "the power of one." In each film, I aim to create a mystical and empowering sensation. It is tantalizing that I am chosen to hear the most private and personal reflections.

As it has throughout history, film can and does inspire people to move into action, both empowering them with information and challenging negative beliefs about others and themselves. My films and writings are my commitment to social justice. By sharing stories of courage, my goal is to stimulate memory of historical events that influenced and changed lives in a community for the better. Film and storytelling can help us create a public record of little known and neglected histories for future generations.

Sonya Rosario Productions



Short Biography

Sonya Rosario is an independent filmmaker, owner and CEO of Sonya Rosario Productions, founded in 2000 and lives in Idaho. An Award-winning filmmaker, dedicated to give voice to women living on reservations and in rural Idaho, so that their voices are not forgotten or diminished, as they leave a significant marker through activism and legislature.

Sonya Rosario was born in San Antonio, Texas, where she was highly influenced by the Mexican culture and women in her family, starting with her mother, Gloria, who were storytellers, poets, musicians, and community organizers. Sonya also grew up in Italy, Holland and Azores, Portugal – as a military brat while her father served in the U.S. Air Force. Her film *The Sofa Diaries*, dedicated to her mother, Gloria Reyes, a significant influence in her life followed by Amy Trice, former Chairwoman of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, who was the only documented woman to declare a war on the US Government, as a Sovereign Nation in 1974 (the basis for the film: *Idaho's Forgotten War*).

The cornerstone of Sonya Rosario Productions is built on the cultural experiences and enriching history that has inspired the work cultivated throughout the artist's life. Notable business affiliations include founding the Women of Color Alliance in 1999, and being the Executive Director from 1999-2016; Organizer for United Vision for Idaho a political watchdog organization in 1998-2004 and a Family Advocate for Head Start from 1995-1998. Civic/nonprofit affiliations include; working with the Latino Economic and Development Center, Ann Frank Memorial Center and Idaho Women's Network to name a few. Recent awards include Idaho Business Review nomination for Women of the Year 2020, Geena Davis-Bentonville Film Festival Award (1st Place in 2016) and the Idaho Hometown Hero Award in 2016 from JRM Foundation.

Sonya Rosario Productions



Extended Biography

Sonya Rosario is an independent filmmaker, owner and CEO of Sonya Rosario Productions, founded in 2000 and lives in Idaho. The cornerstone of Sonya Rosario Productions is built on the cultural experiences and enriching history that has inspired the work cultivated throughout the artist's life. The multidimensional Rosario has infused films dating back two decades with grassroots activism and great courage. An award-winning artist and Latina filmmaker in the State of Idaho – she captures the very essences of the stories told in the voices of the change-makers and films these legacies that will inspire future generations in creating change. Rosario's films contribute to the social consciousness of the Idaho landscape by empowering women to share their stories through the medium of film.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Sonya was highly influenced by the Mexican culture and the women in her family, starting with her mother, Gloria, who were storytellers, poets, musicians, and community organizers. She was also privileged to have experienced different cultures and communities growing up in Italy, Holland and Azores, Portugal – as a military brat while her father served in the U.S. Air Force. These early experiences in growing and thriving in different parts of the world, began with her mother, whose work in social justice and activism influenced Sonya at a young age. Gloria, while at the National Women's Employment and Education organization worked with disadvantaged women in learning to become carpenters, plumbers and electricians, in order to earn a livable wage and become self-sufficient, allowing them to leave their abusers and poverty.

In 1995, Rosario began working with Head Start in small agricultural communities in Mountain Home, Grandview and Bruneau, Idaho. In 1998, this multifaceted woman with an enriching history as an activist, artist, creator, and public speaker, worked with a political watch dog organization called United Vision for Idaho, where Rosario was the Lead Organizer on Campaign Finance Reform. In 1999, Rosario founded the Women of Color Alliance (WOCA), a non-profit organization that encourages the entrepreneurial spirit in women living on reservations and in rural Idaho by placing their handcrafted items on store shelves at Ten Thousand Villages, and then into Dunia Marketplace. These organizations benefited indigenous women, with an opportunity to earn a first or supplemental income. It is through this journey of growth Sonya witnessed the work of other women that there was enormous opportunity through community for them to leave the legacy of their work through film.

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Her film, *The Sofa Diaries* is dedicated to her mother, Gloria Reyes, a significant influence in her life followed by Amy Trice, former Chairwoman of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, who was the only documented woman to declare a war on the US Government, as a Sovereign Nation in 1974 (the basis for the film: *Idaho's Forgotten War*). The cornerstone of Sonya Rosario Productions is built on the cultural experiences and enriching history that has inspired the work cultivated throughout the artist's life. Notable business affiliations include founding the Women of Color Alliance in 1999, and as the Executive Director from 1999-2016; Organizer for United Vision for Idaho, in 1998-2003 and a Family Advocate for Head Start from 1995-1998. Civic/nonprofit affiliations include; working with the Latino Economic and Development Center, Ann Frank Memorial Center and Idaho Women's Network to name a few.

As the work progressed, in 2002, Rosario interviewed Native sisters throughout Idaho on the historical impact of the word "squaw," and created the film, "S" Word. In 2010, the groundbreaking film, *Idaho's Forgotten War* on the declaration of war by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho on the US Government in 1974 premiered at Boise State University, and was then screened on Idaho PBS. The film was accepted to the San Francisco Native American Film Festival in 2012. As a grassroots organizer and filmmaker Rosario's creative endeavors give voice to people who deserve to be recognized for their struggles to advance their communities. The work is an intersection at the identities of gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, environment, and relationships. Sonya Rosario is known for her films: *Idaho's Forgotten War*, *The Historical Impact of the "S" Word*, and *The Sofa Diaries*.

Recent awards include Idaho Business Review nomination for Women of the Year 2020, Geena Davis-Bentonville Film Festival Award (1st Place in 2016) and the Idaho Hometown Hero Award in 2016 from JRM Foundation.

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Awards and honors received

- 2020 Idaho Business Review, Women of Year Award
- 2016 Geena Davis-Bentonville Film Festival Award (1st Place)
- 2016 Idaho Hometown Hero Award, JRM Foundation
- 2011 Smart Women, Smart Money Cultural Grant, Zions Bank
- 2010 Anti-Shackling Bill Award, Western States Center
- 2009 Women of Color Alliance Achievement Award, Women of Color Alliance
- 2007 Legacy Leadership Award, Spelman College
- 2001 Women Making History Award, Boise State University

Significant professional accomplishments

- 2020 Women of the Year, Idaho Business Review
- 2019 Keynote Speaker, College of Southern Idaho
- 2019 Speaker, Women Ignite Conference
- 2019 Speaker, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- 2019 National Association Latino Independent Producers
- 2019 Women in Film Association
- 2019 The Sofa Dairies Film, stories highlighting powerful Idaho women
- 2019 Idaho's Forgotten War Film and Amy Trice, Inducted into Idaho Historical Museum
- 2015 The Sofa Diaries, Idaho Film Commission Grant
- 2014 Trail Blazer Nominee, National Association Women's Business Organization
- 2010 Idaho's Forgotten War, Idaho PBS
- 2010 Idaho's Forgotten War, Journey Stories Smithsonian Selections
- 2010 HERO nominee, Boise State University, Cultural Center
- 2003 Women's Campaign School at Yale University Certificate of Achievement

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Quotes from Sonya Rosario

Life quotes

“You cannot create a legacy for yourself, until you create one for someone else.”

“When you’re surrounded by ‘Superheroes’ you begin to feel and act like one too, although the many women who guided and encouraged me did not wear a Red Cape, their Actions saved many lives, including mine.”

“You really don’t want to upset a woman with her finger on the ‘red button’ called ‘record’.”

Filmmaking Industry Today

“The world of film today is deeply aware of the cultural divide across genres and we find through the works of women filmmakers, there is a shift happening to lessen that divide.”

“Film and storytelling can help us create a public record of little known and neglected histories for future generations.”

“I believe that personal stories and reflections can help bring into question stereotypical portrayals that sometimes dominate our myths about each other and by hearing or seeing something familiar, can remind us that we are not so very different from each other!”

Women in Film

“My goal is to archive grassroots women’s voices, so that their voices are not forgotten or diminished, as they leave a significant marker through civic activism, education and legislation.”

“As women unite, a new generation of women will benefit and be empowered to take their place without any-hesitation and become the formidable change makers of tomorrow!”

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“I never believed or accepted that becoming a filmmaker was by mistake...I knew in my heart that I had come to Idaho for a purpose, and her name happened to be Amy Trice, Kootenai Woman Warrior.”

“I believe that I lived in Idaho a hundred-fifty years ago; this time I happen to have a camera in my hand to document the truth of what really happened...from those who lived it.”

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Mission and Vision Statements

Mission

The mission of Sonya Rosario Productions is to utilize my skills and talents as a filmmaker and writer to create a place of safety for the storyteller, giving them every opportunity to remember their commitment to those who can no longer speak on their own behalf.

Vision

The vision of Sonya Rosario Productions is to stimulate memory of historical events that influenced and changed lives in a community for the better by sharing stories of courage and faith, and in doing so, create a legacy of sharing that continues life transformations the world over.

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Target Market (s)

Primary Market

Industries that focus on bringing historical/cultural films to the general public—public television, cable television, network and other special programming options.

Examples include

- Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) locally, nationally and worldwide
- American Public Television (APT) locally, nationally and worldwide
- Major network affiliate programming focusing on historical programming (ABC, NBC, CBS)
- News and magazine programming across all online platforms related to public awareness and public programming privately and otherwise syndicated
- Cable television options across industries including The History Channel
- Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, YouTube, Disney+, HBO

Secondary Market

Producers of programming for public television, film grant organizations, and museums.

Examples include:

- The Better Angels Society
- Ken Burns
- Smithsonian
- Idaho Historical Museum

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Industry Fact Sheet

On this Industry Fact Sheet, I bring relevant news to the viewer/reader to aid in the creation of stories as they relate to the film industry. This is a gathering of information in keeping with my goal to educate others and assist those looking for information to use in documentation.

General Film Industry Information:

Welcome to our reference library analyzing trends in the domestic movie industry since. In this area of the site, you'll find over 2,000 pages of information detailing the changes that have shaped the industry: [Domestic Movie Theatrical Market Summary 1995 to 2020](#)

First there was Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Hulu. Then in late 2019 came Disney+ and Apple TV+. 2020 brings Peacock from NBCUniversal in April, and HBO Max from Warner Media in May. Other streaming platforms will follow from companies we know and others that don't exist yet: [The global film industry storylines set to dominate 2020](#)

The USA film industry popularly known as 'Hollywood' has gloriously ruled the world cinema for years. Since 1920s this industry has been a world leader in generating maximum revenues per year. However, in recent years a shift in the world-cinema is posing increasing challenges for Hollywood to retain its lead position, especially due to the continuously growing industries like that of China and Russia: [Report: Film Industry in USA](#)

Women in Film

Website educates, advocates, and agitates for gender diversity and inclusion in Hollywood and the Global Film Industry: [Facts to Know About Women in Hollywood](#)

The number of women working in the film industry reached a historic high in 2019, but men still outnumber women four to one in key roles: [More women than ever working in film – but men still dominate key roles](#)

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Story Ideas for the Media

- Why women of color do not get the credit they deserve for their films
- Three ways we can change the landscape of filmmakers in the state of Idaho
- Why subtitles don't need to be added – “no subtitles, please; I am speaking English...”
- Don't rush to believe what you assume is the truth—history books are often wrong
- Is being a filmmaker as cool as it sounds?
- How being a woman filmmaker is still a struggle in the 21st century
- Why the best cities to produce a film are not always metro markets
- Three ways women can change the world through their story
- Three ways communities are changing the world of film
- Why we need films that take the fear out of pandemics

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Interview Questions and Answers

Question: How did you become a filmmaker; did you go to film school?

Answer: I picked up our family Panasonic camcorder after hearing the Idaho State Legislators, give a poor excuse as to why they did not agree with Tribes of Idaho on reasons to remove the word “squaw” from Idaho land places. I was encouraged by a few Native sisters to film the back stories of what this term has done historically to the First people of this Nation. Idaho’s landscape became my film school, I would stop by the side of the road and shoot the landscape and pull lampshades off for indoor lighting. My participants became my film crew! I picked what I had, a VHS camcorder and set off in the direction of the first reservation that I had relations with, Fort Hall Indian Reservation. I never looked back...was it easy? No, it was not, it was lonely, because of the distances I had to drive, most of the time alone. But after it was done and put together, I knew it was the beginning of something bigger than me, and bigger than Idaho.

Question: Is there a film that you know you were meant to do?

Answer: Yes, it has to be, Idaho’s Forgotten War! I was told by many Native sisters throughout Idaho, about a woman named, Amy Trice, who declared a war on the United States government in 1974. I was too busy finishing up the “S” word, to remove the word squaw from Idaho land places, to really hear what they were sharing with me. But after meeting Amy and filming her story...I knew it was me, who was meant to film her story...I was and am blessed by this woman and her friendship. She changed my life, thinking, and I became the filmmaker, I was meant to become by simply meeting this incredible woman and be the one to share her story of courage and love for her people and commitment to her community; where she changed the landscape of poverty for so many generations in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. I believe EVERYONE should know this woman’s story and her devotion to make a change not only for the Kootenai people, but those who needed a second chance. When you are able to create this kind of film, you want more like them. Where you can make a difference in someone’s life.

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Question: What is the key component to the success of your film, ‘Sofa Diaries’?

Answer: That it’s a love story between mothers and daughters, filled with all its complications, it’s a passionate love story. After years of a bad and often cruel marriage, my mother Gloria, told me she was going to leave my father, after 36 years. Sitting on an old Victorian sofa, we both agreed to divorce an old way of thinking, and move forward. Traditionally, as Mexican women, we had accepted a way of thinking and behavior that no longer fit the life we wanted to live. The divorce was very ugly and painful. But in the end, we both learned more about ourselves and each other, than we realized. Years after she passed away, I fell into a deep sadness and invited that Victorian sofa on a road trip to discover the love, challenges, and stories between mothers and daughters and the ripple effect that it does leave behind on their families and communities. I did not have the perfect relationship with my mother, often filled with potholes, our relationship was as passionate as an Italian film! The day she died, I was at the airport, crying. I did not care who was looking at me, I did not care what others were thinking...I just cried, and cried. I simply knew at that moment, “I had really loved her, and I would not love like that again.” Hence the Sofa Diaries, women share their most intimate stories about women, like their mothers and daughters, who they have learned from and the kind of crazy love that comes from such relationships...at times, it’s really about the “ugly cry.”

Question: Did you ever think your film would make Idaho history?

Answer: Not really. I did wonder why Amy was not in Idaho history books and why wasn’t there more coverage? I feel not everyone wants to address the past, especially when it comes to Native American history in Idaho. Native history is not pretty in this country, I believe that is why it’s left-out history books. I believe that Amy Trice, former Chair of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, deserves more than a movie, she deserves to be in history books in Idaho and the United States. I am very happy she is in the Idaho Historical Museum.

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Film Descriptions



My first film, **The Historical Impact of the “S” Word**, (2002) was on the removal of the term “squaw” a highly offensive word, used to historically traumatize Native women (referencing to women’s genitalia) from Idaho land places. I traveled to and stayed on five Tribal Reservations throughout Idaho; interviewing Native sisters, who experienced firsthand that term. Though, a novice with my first film, I learned to use natural light and my surroundings to the benefit of the story, capturing the resilience of the human spirit. I enjoyed teaching the women how to use the camera; often many of my participants became my assistants on the shoots. Today, this film is part of Women’s, Ethics, Native American studies at Universities, Colleges and Federal/State entities across the country.



Idaho’s Forgotten War (2010) was influenced by Amy Trice, former Chairwoman of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the first and only documented woman to declare a war on the US Government in 1974, as a Sovereign Nation. Amy’s heroic spirit and unwavering commitment to her people armed her with the strength and courage to declare war in order to gain federal status to reclaim lost aboriginal lands, and build a homeland for her people. Amy’s story is now in the Idaho Historical Museum, and her quote will be etched in stone at the Ann Frank Memorial. Had it not been for this fierce and fearless woman’s conviction, the Kootenai Tribe would have lost its past and Idaho its history.



“Who’s in Your Corner,” (2017) a short narrative, first place at the Bentonville Film Festival, hosted by Geena Davis, ESPN and Wal-Mart. A young Latina shares what her life is like day to day, living in a multi-cultural world, speaking English by day and Spanish by night; filmed in a boxing ring, she boxes life; represented by an MMA Fighter, who knows where to hit and take the body off course, knocking her out; A glimpse of her boxing coach and mother, re-assures her, “It’s not how you fall, but how you get up from the fight, I am never alone; its who’s in your corner.”

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The **“Sofa Diaries,”** (2019) my third film dedicated to my mother Gloria, highlights six intriguing and influential Idaho women - Ana Schachtell, Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb, Emilie Jackson-Edney, Kelly Miller, State Representative Melissa Wintrow, and Susie Rios. Interwoven in their intimate stories is my own story; raised by mothers who were visionaries. Their life teachings and the ripple effect of those mother/daughter relationships, influenced, which is reflected through activism, social change, and legislation. I am the only woman filmmaker in Idaho focusing on documenting women's legacy through film. Thereby archiving their historical stories for future generations of Idahoans.

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Testimonials for Sonya Rosario

“With admiration for your courage and commitment to a make change for all of us”

— Dr. Beverly Tatum, President Emerita, Spelman College,
Best-selling Author of “*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*”

“Idaho's Forgotten War, is a reminder that we can *all* make a difference and it just takes one woman to move mountains (or the US government!). Sonya has created an act of love for us all.”

— Dr. Ann Wilson Schaef,
Best Selling Author, “*Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*”

“Sonya’s films humanize the stories and emotions of those whose voices and lived-experiences, might not otherwise be heard, by creating social change through the power of film.”

— Kelly Miller, Executive Director,
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence

“Ms. Rosario has a strong commitment to the films she creates. She builds strong and lasting relationships with the subjects of her films, allowing them to share their stories in a personal and very compelling way.”

— Ron Pisaneschi, General Manager,
Idaho Public Television

“Sonya’s work brings to light the voices who often are marginalized. Indeed, hers is one of those voices for she is the first and only Latina filmmaker in Idaho, filming these stories.”

— Michael Fasison, Executive Director,
Idaho Commission on the Arts

“*Idaho’s Forgotten War*” was a labor of love, created by the filmmaker, Sonya Rosario. It is more than an Idaho story about Amy Trice and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. It is a story that is part of this Nation’s history.”

— Rick Ardinger, Executive Director,
Idaho Humanities Council

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“I consider Ms. Rosario, to be one of the most influential and dedicated women in the state of Idaho who has for many years worked to create opportunity through her skilled leadership.”

— Margie Gonzalez, Executive Director,
Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs

“Idaho’s Forgotten War” and the “S” Word are both moving and brutally honest; told in the very voices of those who lived and experienced the legacy; leaving audience spell bound in the quietness of these powerful women.”

— Randy L’Teton, Shoshone Bannock Tribal Member, Public Relations
Manager, Sacajawea Model for Dollar Mint Coin

“Sonya’s films have created a protentional for cultural sharing through folklore, storytelling, and shared linguistic foundations, which is intriguing and exciting for the state of Idaho, and those of who have a front seat.”

— Julia Davis Wheeler, Nez Perce Tribal Member,
Former, Vice-Chair of the Nez Perce Tribe

I am inspired by Sonya’s dedication by creating the Women of Color Alliance, and her films that address race, gender and history.”

— Linda Burnham, Activist - 2005 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee