

# LATIN AMERICA IN CINEMA AND TELEVISION OF THE AMERICAS: AN ANALYSIS OF HOW LATIN AMERICA IS PORTRAYED IN INTER- AMERICAN CINEMA AND THE IMPACT OF THESE REPRESENTATIONS

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## *Introduction*

Cinema is often a reflective form of media which demonstrates popular opinion on a certain individual, group, or subject. The variety in subject of cinema reflects the vast number of opinions that exist on every discernable subject. Due to this, film analysis is a particularly relevant form of studying society or a specific subset. Racial or ethnic groups are one example of what can be studied through film analysis. Hispanics/Latinos as an ethnic group have received a long history of bias, and are oftentimes represented by racial portrayals in North American media, and Latin American cinema is rarely consumed in North America. In order to analyze the representation of Latin America in television and cinema from North, Central, and South America, it is necessary to examine the context in which this media is being released and what bias may come along with it. Latin America is an important player in international economics, politics, and current events and deserves to be treated respectfully and accurately through the media. Latin America and North America have been tied together by politics and economics for many years (IU). The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs began

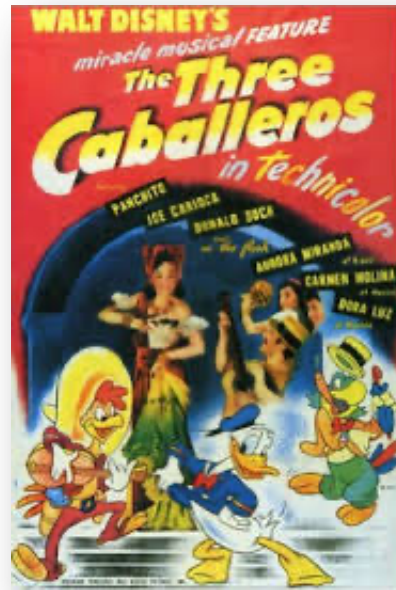


to release films to assure a solidarity during World War II (IU). These inter-American films were intended to “show the truth about the American way” to Central and South America to ensure an allegiance between the United States and Latin American nations (IU). The analyzation of inter-American cinema is rarely spoken about in academic publications, despite these border studies reflecting the Latin American experience (Fitz 11). Comparative literature of inter-American cinema is increasingly necessary in a world where globalization has forced nations to have a relationship. By analyzing film throughout recent history, it is possible to evaluate how societies’ view on Hispanics has become more diverse, nuanced, and representative.

### *The Framework*

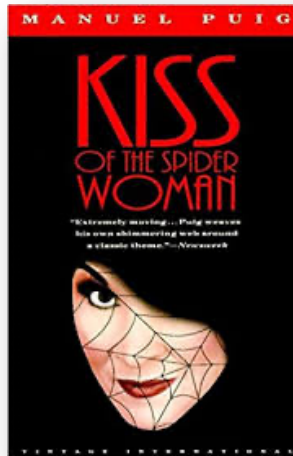
In order to analyze Hispanics in cinema, we must first consider cinema as an aesthetic representation of reality. For that reason, I rely on Bill Nichols’s theorization of film as a documentary. All films include the intertwining of the film, filmmaker, and the audience creating a specific perspective on their topic, even when the filmmaker intends to be unbiased. The viewpoint of the filmmaker, which is shaped from their life experiences, is mixed with a representation of the world that they are analyzing, resulting in an altered reproduction of reality (20). Nichols explains that a film not only has a point of view but can also be trying to make an argument (43). The individuality of a documentary comes from the filmmaker’s decisions on how they are trying to emphasize their argument (5). Ethics become involved with a documentary as the filmmaker will always have a bias about the topic they are portraying. For example, the filmmaker may have predisposed ideas of how a Latin American behaves and their life experience, whether or not they are actually correct. This bias is the lens through which the audience is gaining their information and often humans will accept what they are exposed to as the truth without investigation (9). Through factors of identity, the subjects of the film are given structure and are fleshed out into realistic people or groups, which are becoming more visible in the evolving representation of Latin Americans in theater.





Some of the films chosen for this analysis were featured in the Latin America Cinema Today Film Festival at the University of Alabama at Birmingham from February until April 2019. All other media analyzed was chosen due to its popularity in popular culture and because it represents different parts of Latin America with very different histories. My point of departure is *The Three Caballeros*, released in 1945, because it represents Latin America at the birth of a renewed interest in the region on the part of the United States. *The Three Caballeros* is a foundational film in inter-American cinema as its purpose was to help heal the relationship between Latin America and the United States by demonstrating the companionship of the United States, Mexico and Brazil. This paper will compare *The Three Caballeros* with the modern animated film *Rio* (2011), demonstrating how media targeted towards children has changed in its representation of the Hispanic identity.





Other films analyzed in this paper are targeted towards adult audiences and discuss issues of sexuality, language, and violence. The *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985) was selected for a focus of study as it demonstrates the antiquated ideas of society while beginning the transition into newer opinions. *The Kiss of the Spider Woman* is a Brazilian-American movie, further representing that inter-American films have a large role in cinema. The *Panama Canal Stories* (2014) demonstrates another Latin American perspective, that of Panamanians. This film is inter-American because the stories portrayed all have the background of the relationship between the United States and Panama, through the history of the Panama Canal. Season four of *Orange is the New Black* (2016) differs from the other adult oriented films chosen because it is an American TV show. However, due to the unique localization of groups of races and ethnicity, it offers a unique perspective on the identity of Latin Americans living in the United States. *Don't Call Me Son* (2016), a Brazilian film that follows the struggles of a teenage boy, takes place during the current political climate, and addresses attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Since the film follows a young adult, the influence of the United States on his life is a heavy presence. Over time, the cinema of the Americas has grown and expanded to create a more nuanced representation of Latin Americans and the intersectional nature of many Latinx identities.





### *Disney Films: Pan-American Propaganda?*

Disney films have a unique impact on the American idea of Latin America by specifically targeting their stories to children. *The Three Caballeros* follows the story of Donald Duck receiving the history of Latin America as presents for his birthday. By featuring the classic Disney character of Donald Duck, the filmmakers ensured that not only Latin American audiences would be interested in the film, but that American children would as well. The film was released in Mexico in 1944 and in the United States in 1945, towards the end of the Second World War. It was unknown if there was going to be an attack on the Americas and as an effort to unite North and South America, an Inter-American Affairs Motion Picture Department was created (Black 69). The department commissioned Walt Disney Studios to make films to accomplish this goal and one of those attempts was *The Three Caballeros*. The film features aspects of Latin America such as the environment and wildlife as well as entertaining parts of its culture that children would enjoy. The tradition of the piñata is featured in the film, in which the character Panchito shows Donald how to break it. The stories are



entertaining and feature songs, quick animation, and bright colors as a way to attract children to watch. By incorporating humor and history, the film paints a picture of the past of Latin America. The film specifically features stories that ignore any uglier parts of history, such as the impact of colonialization. The character of Donald Duck is intended to represent the American lifestyle to Latin American audiences while Panchito and José are representing the Latin American people to an American audience. This film uses relatively stereotyped characteristics to represent the United States, Brazil, and Mexico because the purpose of the film was to be propaganda, rather than an accurate portrayal of the citizens of these countries. The films' depiction of their friendship aimed to recast the relationship between citizens of North and South America as amiable, despite the fraught legacy of colonialization and enslavement. The film serves to create an alliance in the minds of the viewer during a time of war in order to unify the Americas in case of an impending attack. Thus, this film is foundational for inter-American cinema.

Despite the stereotypical representation of Latin America in this film, there is one nuanced moment featured. The ending of *The Three Caballeros* manages to create a cohesive explanation of what the Hispanic/Latino identity means with only a few words. Panchito, José, and Donald Duck take a bow at the end of their song and the words "Fin" appear in fireworks, followed by the word "Fim", and then "The End". "Fin" appears in the colors of the Mexican flag, "Fim" appears in the colors of the Brazilian flag, and "The End" appears in the colors of the United States flag.

The film *Rio*, released in 2011, has a similar theme towards unification as *The Three Caballeros*. The film focuses on the beauty of Brazil, both in nature and culture. Scenes in the film show the beauty of Brazil's animal life and shots of the jungle, while also featuring the colorful celebration of Carnival. The film shows the cooperation of the human characters as Linda, a human, brings the bird Blue to Rio de Janeiro at the request of her colleague Monteiro in order to have Blue mate with the last female of his species. Linda and Monteiro work together toward the advancement of science and to better the world, eventually creating a bird



sanctuary. At the same time, Blue cooperates with Jewel in order to save themselves from being captured by smugglers. Considering that this film was released after the announcement that the 2016 Olympics were being held in Brazil, the film's theme of companionship reflects the ideals of the Olympics and the idea of friendly competition between countries. The film demonstrates the beauty of Brazil, showing an idealized image of what Americans can expect to see during the Olympics. This film uses an entertaining story that will appeal to children in order to teach them from a young age of the positive relationship that exists between the United States and Brazil.

While the themes of both films are aimed at creating unity and portraying the relationship between Latin America and the United States, there is a significant difference in these depictions. *The Three Caballeros* relied on stereotyped representations and ignoring the uglier parts of the history between Latin America and the United States. *Rio* on the other hand, uses fully fleshed-out characters who are dealing with a more realistic situation. There are villains in the story as well as heroes. It is only through this more realistic portrayal of the relationship between North and South America that the younger generation will be able to heal from the past and move on to the present.



### *Abandoning the Stereotypes*

An inter-American approach to cinema allows us to better understand gender and sexuality politics as well, not just foreign policy. Interactions with cinema are life-long, making them one of the most effective ways to introduce and reinforce norms into a society. The types of characters that are portrayed in media are often the ideal image of someone in society. By following these ideals that are created by societal norms, this locks portrayals into being repetitive and continuing a chain of maintaining gender and sexuality roles. The common gender roles are that of the role of the man versus the woman. A man is taught to be a “breadwinner” so he is associated with finances, hard labor, and physical activity. The majority of men on television are known for being independent, aggressive, confident, powerful, and competent (Wood 32). These characteristics are related to the idea of a “strong man” (Pardo 300). The gender gap found in cinema helps to support the idea that men are worth more than women by having the audience spend more time with male characters. The inter-American films, the *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Don’t Call Me Son* reverse this idea through their protagonists. The stereotypes surrounding machismo and its embodiments were already challenged in the *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, released in 1985. The film, based on the 1976 novel of the same name by Manuel Puig, was set in an Argentine prison. The film *Kiss of the Spider Woman* follows the story of Valentin, a revolutionary against the Brazilian military dictatorship, and Molina, a transgender woman, who are both sharing a prison cell. Even Valentin, a revolutionary who in other media would typically have machismo characteristics, shows a capability to be emotional and loving, not just hard and cold. The film demonstrates that gender is not only on a binary scale with the character of Molina. *Don’t Call Me Son* does the same as the protagonist struggles to understand his gender identity.

Women are taught to handle the emotional side of a relationship, being viewed as weaker and more delicate. The role of a woman eventually converts into that of a mother,





someone who spends time cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. The women that appear in the popular cinema are represented as sex symbols and only once these actresses age are they associated with motherhood. The show *Orange is the New Black* does a rare portrayal of their characters by ignoring this. Many of the prisoners depicted in the show are mothers, and they talk about sexuality and their sexual experiences just as much as their younger counterparts. While a female character may be central to the plot, they are rarely the protagonists and these numbers drop even more in the context of women of a racial minority (Murphy 19). *Orange is the New Black (OITNB)* on the other hand, features a cast that is predominately female, with the exception of some guards, administration, and loved ones. Women that appear in cinema are thinner and younger than the general population and are characterized by their dependence on men (Wood 33). While the show does follow a white, thin, and pretty inmate as its protagonist, it features in-depth storylines with the minority women in almost every episode. The Hispanics who are a part of Spanish Harlem are a stark contrast to the inaccurate representation of gender shown in most films. OITNB portrays realistic characters with whom audiences can identify.

While the film *the Kiss of the Spider Woman* treats its characters empathetically, it still begins on a harsh reality. The reason that Luis Molina is in prison is because she had sex with a minor. When she falls in love with Valentin, she is aware that he is being poisoned by the guards and is spying on him in return for parole. While Molina does change her mind after the two develop a friendship and then a relationship, she begins the story as a villain of sorts. Her favorite film that she describes to Valentin is a Nazi propaganda film disguised as a romantic story, which she enjoys due to the romance, drama, intrigue, and aesthetics of the film. While Valentin begins the story as a revolutionary fighting the Brazilian military dictatorship, Molina is a shallow, manipulative person, who took advantage of a minor and is taking advantage of Valentin. Despite that, Molina develops into a better person, ultimately sacrificing herself to save Valentin. When the film begins, she is an unlikely protagonist. When she is released from



prison, she contacts Valentin's fellow revolutionaries but is shot in the crossfire between them and the police. As she dies, the police demand the phone number to contact the revolutionaries but Molina dies without giving them the information. Molina's love toward Valentin is shown to be true as she chooses to die and keep his secret rather than comply. Valentin's perspective is interesting as well as his character demonstrates that sexuality is fluid. Valentin has been separated from the woman he loves in prison but through the course of the film, he falls for Molina. Valentin is not a stereotypical bisexual character as he is masculine, intense and has been hardened by the revolution as well as the torture he experienced. The film is unique for its time as it portrays a relationship between a man and a transgender woman, who truly care for one another and are willing to sacrifice to save the other. Considering that at the time the film was released, the Federal Council of Medicine of Brazil decided to remove homosexuality from the category of being deviant, this movie was progressive (*Tire as dúvidas*).

Cinema aids in the process of socialization and in this process, the reoccurring motifs are engrained. These motifs reaffirm the roles of gender and sexual orientation that are taught by society, leading to an inaccurate view of these topics. Individuals who are not cisgender or heterosexual are a vastly underrepresented group in modern media, showing that our media does not consider this group important enough to be depicted.

### *A Transition to Intersectional Representation*

The connection between the terms Hispanic and Latino are often linked with race leading to racism and stereotypes. Due to the treatment of Latinos being considered as *the other*, the separation between Hispanics and other racial groups is commonly seen in media. Due to forces such as colonization and immigration, the United States experiences a unique mixture of other cultures within Western framework which has created a cultural identity that is unique. The people with heritage from other countries are typically identified as a specific type



of American. These groups include Chinese Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, Italian Americans and many other groups.

, one identity is rarely referred to in this way, those of Spanish or Latin American descent. Rather, this group of individuals is identified as being Latino or Hispanic as opposed to other ethnic groups. What makes the Latino identity so different from other cultural identities? In order to evaluate the Latino identity in the United States, the factors of racism, the societal idea of “the other,” and the role of the United States government in the Latino identity must be considered.

During the early nineteenth century, the words “Hispanic” and “Latino” came into use as abbreviations of Hispano-Americano and Latino-americano but declined out of use by the 1920s (Simon). Until recently, the government of the United States did not have an ethnic category for those of Latin-American or Spanish heritage. Prior to this time period, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Mexican immigrants were placed in the same category as Italians and Irish immigrants in the census (Anwar). Individuals of Latin American descent typically categorized themselves with the country they had immigrated from rather than viewing themselves as a group. Despite the fact that Hispanics had not grouped themselves together, the government had.

Prior to WWII, the United States encouraged the immigration of people from Mexico, as the U.S. needed cheap agricultural labor, which was actually detrimental to Mexico and was opposed by the Mexican government, as the loss of workers damaged the Mexican economy (Hernández 428). When WWII began, the U.S. and Mexico began the “Bracero Program”, which allowed Mexicans to work in the USA under short-term contracts (423). But at the same time, it began to put more pressure on Hispanics through stricter border security and deportation of illegal immigrants (427). Media also enforced the concept of Hispanics as criminals and “hoodlums” leading to the Zoot Suit Riots in 1943 (Rule 106). These “Riots”, which culminated in large groups of US military personnel roaming the streets and attacking



Hispanics and others wearing Zoot Suits, resulted in the arrest of hundreds of Hispanics and much negative publicity toward the community (Cosgrove 81). As WWII ended, the Mexican government put more pressure on the U.S. government to expel immigrants as they lacked workers (Hernández, 435). Increasing pressure from Mexico, led to further cooperation between the two governments.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower instituted "Operation Wetback", a mass deportation policy that was incredibly racist (Peralta). The policy was focused on deporting mostly Mexican immigrants but also focused on other racial groups from Latin America, and resulted in many human rights violations (Peralta). It was at this point that a huge barrier grew between Americans of European ethnicity and those of Latin American ancestry. These policies have altered the United States viewing public's stereotypes toward Latin America, creating a need for more nuanced representations of the region.

The stereotype that all Latinos are undocumented is prominent and has become engrained in society through prejudiced rhetoric. Riofrio explains that in locations in the southern U.S. such as Arizona, Georgia, and Alabama there is a long history of anti-immigrant legislation and rhetoric (25). This anti-immigrant perspective reinforced the idea of immigrants as *the other* as an opposing force to "real" Americans. This forced antagonism has resulted in the creation of the prison system in order to eliminate adversaries. Prisoners are often viewed as undeserving of the same rights provided to other U.S. citizens, and therefore are "unworthy of integration into the political system" (110). Conflicts such as the "War on Drugs" and California's "three strikes" legislation largely target minority groups, such as Latinos and African Americans (110). The mass incarceration of these ethnic groups, creates a stereotype around the criminalization of African Americans and Latinos, which is then reinforced by their portrayals in the media of living under incarcerated states. Even television shows that claim to show the real world of inmates in prison, deemed Prison Porn, profit from these stereotypes (105). The violence is often perpetuated as though it is only committed by prisoners who are minorities. Latino characters in *Orange is the New Black* do fall into this stereotype with a



storyline in season 4. In these episodes, there is the development of a white power group called the "Community Carers" who are considered a task force that report gang meetings (We'll Always Have Baltimore). The "Community Carers" report that there have been groups of Dominican inmates running an illegal party selling business, which results in an increase in strip searches and pat downs of inmates of color (We'll Always Have Baltimore). The white inmates, even those who are not involved with the "Community Carers", are still agents, benefitting from not being forced to submit to extra searches. Eventually these targeted searches include all non-white inmates having to drop their pants and show the kind of underwear they are wearing to prove that they are not involved in the illegal trade ("You Also Have a Pizza"). The leader of the Community Carers, Piper, plants evidence and the leader of the illegal operation, Maria, does not receive the normal punishment but instead gets an addition 3-5 years added to her sentence due to the guard's racism (You Also Have a Pizza). As revenge for the increased sentence, Maria and a few inmates brand Piper with a Nazi swastika (It Sounded Nicer in My Head). This escalation in violence is extreme and is started by the Dominican inmates. The violence continues until the season finale when Daya, a Puerto Rican inmate, picks up a guard's gun and threatens to shoot him (We Have Manners. We're Polite). The majority of the inter-inmate violence that occurs during the fourth season is committed by Latino prisoners. However, it is important to note that this is only the case during season four. Other seasons of the show demonstrates inmates of different races as the instigators of problems and the inmates don't always resort to violence, unlike many "Prison Porn" portrayals. In Prison Porn, violence in prison is treated as a rightful punishment for those who are incarcerated (Riofrio 115). When the focus of the episode is not on violence, the reality of sexism, racism, and homophobia in prisons is ignored (115).

*Orange is the New Black*, on the other hand, never shies away from these realities of life in prison and in part this is done because the experience of prison is coming from a different perspective, that of the inmates themselves. When the audience is viewing prison through the



lens of female inmates, this allows for a more empathetic form of media in comparison to Prison Porn. Season four of the show opens on a scene of a guard choking and attempting to kill an inmate (Work That Body for Me). At the end of the season, an inmate is killed at the hands of a guard due to his negligence and his lack of awareness of the situation (The Animals). This is one of the few pieces of media that not only takes place in a prison but treats inmates as real people with a nuanced approach. The viewer sees the show through the eyes of Piper so the Latinas are still one part of *the other*, but they are complex characters, just like the other characters shown. These episodes demonstrate that violence in prisons is not only committed by inmates on other inmates but by those in power as well. The show demonstrates that reality is much more complex than most media make it out to be. The connection that the Latino women share in OITNB, reflects a unity among descendants of Latin Americans in the shared struggle to succeed in a system that does not support them. The victims in this situation are prisoners but the aggressors can be either prison employees or other prisoners.

The intersectional identity of gender and sexuality along with race is important to academic comparison as well. In 2016, across broadcast television, cable, and streaming original series there were sixteen transgender characters (GLAAD). The low end of the estimate for how many transgendered individuals live in the U.S. is 854,006 (Flores). In 2017, out of eight hundred and ninety-five series regulars on primetime television, forty-three identified as being a member of the LGBTQ+ community (GLAAD). Interestingly, both *Orange is the New Black* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* have themes of sexuality in a prison setting. Queerness permeates both prisons as one is full entirely with males with the exception of Molina and fantasy women, while the other is a women's prison and the only men present are the guards and administration. The queer identity impacts all of the characters featured, regardless of whether they themselves are queer. One of the prison guards in OITNB, Piscatella, is a gay man who tortured and killed an inmate at the prison he worked at prior to Litchfield (The Reverse Midas Touch). Despite this portrayal, there are plenty of LGBT characters in the show who are protagonists such as Piper, Alex, Nicky, Sophia and Poussey. OITNB demonstrates a



reality of life, that anyone is capable of good or evil. For example, Suzanne is capable of extreme violence but at the same time she is kind to characters when others treat them horribly. The show consistently has villains and protagonists from every group, regardless of race, gender, or sexuality. OITNB is able to balance the mixture of serious drama and humor, which is very difficult. Another unique approach of the show is its capability to point fun at tropes that other popular media takes seriously for example the “predatory gay/lesbian”, often appearing in cinema marketed at a younger audience. This trope appears in *Orange is the New Black* as Suzanne attempts to make Piper her “prison wife” (Lesbian Request Denied). The show consistently uses humor about sex, gender, and sexuality while at the same time, treating those subjects with responsibility and respect.

The inter-American cinema analyzed demonstrates the intersectionality of Latin American identity, often with the combination of race and gender/sexuality. The protagonist in *Don't Call Me Son* (2016), Pierre, learns that the woman who raised him is not his mother, but rather his kidnapper, while also struggling with his gender identity. The setting in Brazil holds a special significance due to the country's contradictory views on the LGBT+ community. Brazil was one of the first countries to develop government protection for this community. In 2003, Brazil introduced a plan on sexual orientation and human rights at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, making it one of the first countries to propose international legislation to protect these rights (Vance, 226). However, despite the appearances of the government providing legal protection to LGBT+ individuals, the country still has some of the highest rates of murder for LGBT people in the world (Corrales, 54). *Don't Call Me Son* holds a special place in Brazil's media as it demonstrates the individual struggle for someone trying to figure out their identity but also placing that struggle into the large scheme of society. Even when the story is following the experiences of an individual, their actions can be influenced by the presence of the filmmakers. The film includes the Brazilian experience, one that often goes unmentioned within Latin American studies (Fitz 10). Brazilian cinema allows us to see the



variation in the Latin American experience as the separation Brazilians experience from other Latin Americans due to geography and language.

The film never fully defines Pierre's gender or sexuality, expressing that both can be fluid. Due to the fact that pronoun specifications are not made in the movie, this essay will continue to use he/him/his pronouns. Through the eyes of the other characters, the audience is able to see how different people react to someone expressing a gender identity that is outside of the societal norms. Aracy, the woman who raised Pierre, is much more relaxed about his identity. She lets him paint his nails, stay out late, and interact with whoever he wants to. She gives him the space to have a variety of interactions with different people and lets him come to terms with his identity in his own time. The only problem that Pierre runs into in her home is a lack of privacy, simply because they live in a small house. The more serious intrusion on his life occurs when authorities remove Pierre from Aracy's care, and tell him he is going to live with his biological parents, Gloria and Matheus. This intrusion represents that of any organization that seeks to elide an individual's identity. By taking Pierre from the life that he has always known and forcing him into a new world and position, the authorities are essentially stripping him of his identity. Gloria and Matheus want Pierre to conform to society's idea of how a man is supposed to act and when Pierre refuses to do so, they shame him. This shaming is enforced by society as a whole and Gloria and Matheus' interest in Pierre conforming is selfishly based. They want to convince themselves that they are doing a good job as parents and want to appear as a normal family. This reflects Brazil's treatment of the LGBT community as on the surface they offer protection and seeming acceptance but in reality, societal homophobia is rampant.

Pierre's story of discrimination is representative of a greater phenomenon of prejudice towards LGBTQ+ people. Brazil has been described as one of the most lethal countries in the world for trans individuals (Page). In 2018, one hundred and sixty-seven transgender people were reported murdered in Brazil and in the past eight years, over eight hundred trans people were killed in Brazil (Page). In the film, Pierre experiences this own violence from his father,





both in the scenes at the mall and at the bowling alley. Matheus attacks Pierre when he is dressing in traditionally feminine clothing because he is embarrassed by him. During these scenes, Gloria makes few attempts to stop Matheus from attacking their son but rather watches. Despite the typical portrayal of women being more accepting, Gloria reflects these mistaken ideas too, demonstrating that complexity on society's view on sexuality. Pierre's brother Joca is the only character throughout the movie to give Pierre any comfort or an attempt to truly understand him. The clear difference between Joca's view on Pierre and that of their parents is one of a generation. Pierre's parents have been clouded by a history of intolerance and prejudice, leading them to view their son with transphobic ideas. Joca on the other hand is young and is much more open minded. The message is clear, in order to change antiquated ideas in society, one must take action, complacency is not enough. One method of changing these ideas is the portrayal of the intersectionality of the Latin American identity in inter-American cinema.

Inter-American approaches to cinema also illuminate race in the Americas, regardless of the setting. The film *Panama Canal Stories* is comprised of five shorter stories which all take place along the Panama Canal. The first story begins with the 1913 story of two young Jamaican laborers during the building of the Canal. After Clarice is threatened by one of the racist American bosses, her future husband pulls the boss off of her, making himself an enemy. During the construction, a demolition bomb goes off and injures many laborers and, in the ensuing turmoil, the boss attacks her future husband and the husband accidentally kills the boss. The husband then must flee the site and Clarice attempts to follow him when the story ends. The American boss immediately takes a disliking to Clarice due to her skin color, refusing to drink water from the cup that she pours. The difference between races is separated by the job position in building the Canal as well. All of the bosses are American or British and are white. The physical laborers and aides are Black Jamaicans. The two lovers flee the Canal as they know that they will be killed once his crime is discovered, despite the fact that the boss



attacked first. This story reflects that of the history of slavery, as the white masters have all of the power and control over the black workers. In fact, many of the workers involved with the building of the Panama Canal were descendants of slaves brought to the Caribbean. The third story takes place in 1960's, following a student who is infatuated with an American girl during the student protests. The student falls for the American girl and begins to develop a relationship with her and when he attends the student protests, he sees her on the opposite side of the police barrier, screaming at the Panamanians to leave. The story has a vivid parallel that is created visually. The image of the Panamanian students conducting their peaceful protest separated from the racist white Americans yelling at them by a line of police officers is one that reflects current political events. The scene is striking as we see that the protesters are students, all with young faces, wearing their school uniforms and is in juxtaposition with the angry yelling from the group of racist adults. Once prejudiced ideas have been cemented into society, they have remained. The cycle of oppression impacting the Panamanian community is a viscous process, one that will require a steady amount of societal change to be altered.

### *Conclusion*

A long history of intolerance resulted in immigrants being treated as the "other" and in solidarity, those with Latin American heritage bonded over their shared experiences. Many of these shared experiences are visible through cinema. Cinema is created to represent the ideas and bias of the filmmaker and in turn those biases are planted into the minds of the audience. Once the bias has managed to escape from film and into society, it has an impact on societal norms. All of these films are political in nature and are trying to make a statement on Latinidad. Both *The Three Caballeros* and *Rio* focus on unity and cooperation between nations through different portrayals of the United States and Latin America. These societal norms can include stereotypes, gender roles, and views on identity. Some media contrasts societal views on norms, allowing for the analysis of why those norms exist and whether or not they should. The



*Kiss of the Spider-Woman* simultaneously demonstrates antiquated ideas of gender and sexuality while evolving into modern ideologies. *Panama Canal Stories*, *Orange is the New Black*, and *Don't Call Me Son* represent the often-intersectional nature of the Latinx identity through history and certain settings. The impact of cinema has shaped the Latino identity just as the Latino identity has shaped cinema. The evolution of inter-American film has created a more dynamic representation of intersectional identity in Latin America, and an inter-American perspective elucidates the scope and age of this change.



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