



BEYOND MY GRANDFATHER ALLENDE

A film by Marcia Tambutti Allende
An Icarus Films Release

Golden Eye Documentary Prize
2015 Cannes Film Festival

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SYNOPSIS

Almost 42 years have passed since a military coup in Chile deposed the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende. The death of Allende and the years of military dictatorship that followed have left deep scars in both the country and in Allende's immediate family. In *Beyond My Grandfather Allende*, his granddaughter Marcia Tambutti Allende goes in search of Salvador Allende the man. She attempts to reconstruct the past through informal interviews with her family, quickly discovering that they don't talk about "Chico," as he was affectionately known. Memories of him have been buried deep and seem too painful to drag up.

Nevertheless, the filmmaker's aged grandmother slowly but surely becomes accustomed to her compassionate but sharp interviewing style and starts to talk more about Allende, her marriage and her role as the president's wife. Other members of the family, many of whom never knew Allende personally, also start to talk. Marcia goes in search of family photos and videos, and as a result we get to know the kind of man her grandfather was. The film also provides a thorough impression of the complex political situation of the Allende family over the past 40 years.

FILM FESTIVALS

Golden Eye Documentary Prize, 2015 Cannes Film Festival

2015 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA)

2015 Busan International Film Festival

2015 Morelia International Film Festival

2015 London Human Rights Film Festival

2015 Palm Springs International Film Festival

2015 DocMontevideo

2016 Miami International Film Festival

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I'm the granddaughter of Salvador Allende, the first democratically elected socialist president of Latin America. I began my search, wanting to regain my grandfather's personal image that was "stolen" from me by the Chilean coup d'état on September 11, 1973, and by his subsequent exile and the pain of the silence which followed. I have directed the attention of the search towards the process itself, even with sometimes uncomfortable but honest questioning in order to resurface our private memories and our capacity to understand each other in a deeper way.

My family (including myself, a baby) flew to exile and Allende's figure became a significant symbol of democracy and human rights. In a certain sense, he became a myth. Even though during the Chilean dictatorship my family visited every continent speaking to thousands of people about his principles, keeping his memory alive, they barely spoke about my grandfather in our private intimacy. In addition, during the coup d'état, the armed forces that assaulted the presidential residence destroyed or robbed our family photo albums, so I grew up with the same images of my grandfather all exiled children had, which was much too close to a bust.

The image of a grandfather is generally affectionate, full of love, wisdom and understanding, but my grandfather is one of the most controversial figures in my country, being either hated or truly loved and admired. I wanted to leave behind these visions to dive into an intimate search of our family's recollections of living under democracy many decades ago, but everything changed so dramatically with the coup of September 11, 1973 that something as universal as a search for family memoirs is confronted and somehow condemned by a polarized society.

One of the aims of the film is to recover the everyday man, the one warmly nicknamed 'Chicho' by his family, to search for images (moving archive and photographs) and to look for personal gestures, to imagine the daily life of a family that was wrapped around his political causes. The other aim of the story is to invite my family to go into an intimate journey, to allow themselves to think about, reflect, wonder, to miss and to mourn—their father, husband and grandfather, and his daughter Beatriz (affectionately called Tati), who committed suicide four years after the coup. The attention is placed on details that until now have been invisible, that speak of memory, self-censorship, identity and the sense of family.

In another sense, this invitation can be applied to Chile; to our contemporary society that avoids deeper comprehension of its recent past and the expression of different points of view. Until now, everything that is published in the press or shown on Chilean TV is part of an 'official' story. The media has stereotyped figures like my grandfather's; themes are only explored superficially. Furthermore, under the dictatorship, as the political right and military people tried to demonize Allende, his colleagues, friends and the political left have also refused to question the past, and recognize Salvador Allende's iconic history.

For many years, I thought that my grandfather's death (within the coup, at La Moneda, the Presidential Palace) had masked his life, as his death is a landmark in Chilean and Latin American history, and since I was a child, we always paid homage to him every September 11. Furthermore, during the making of the film, a judge decided to investigate the death of 726 people killed by the armed forces during the dictatorship, including my grandfather's. His death was investigated thoroughly, searching for the truth the country needed. The investigation included his exhumation. Even though it was a painful process, for the first time in our family story we had the opportunity to be with his remains in private. I think this allowed us to make a personal mourn we were lacking.

As a consequence of social turmoil that the coup created, Chilean society has been wholly unable to deal with its political and social ruptures. But hopefully, times are changing. Thirty years after the coup, Salvador Allende has re-arisen as the lost figure that was forbidden for a long period, along with the need re-assess him, as an iconic, democratic leader. In 2013, the 40th anniversary of the coup, society and media were trying to understand our past for the first time, looking to our personal motivations and individual stories, and trying unveil how the dictatorship affected the country's life. There is a need to construct a more tolerant and comprehensive dialogue and we hope that this film can contribute to that debate. We hope it will allow others to share similar experiences or reflect upon issues that also remain unseen and do not have a space in mainstream media.

—Marcia Tambutti Allende

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Why make something about Allende when there is so much information out there already?

I was looking for something that had not yet appeared in any biography, film or existing investigation, something personal: what my grandfather was like when he was with his family, or when he was on vacations, or with his grandchildren. Most of the existing material - including films - focus on the consequences and his final sacrifice on Sept. 11, 1973, or has a sociopolitical analysis by people that actively participated in the Unidad Popular as seen from their perspective, in a political context, while for me, my interest lies in deciphering the personal side of my grandfather and considering the mark that he left on my family. Coming from a newer generation offers me the advantage of being able to view the facts from different perspectives with this documentary, like for example, feeling the freedom to explore the daily lives (and cost) of the common people that accompanied the leader whose main priority was "the common good of the homeland", something unseen up to now.

Why would you say that it is important to see this film today?

The film presents a dilemma regarding the role of memory and silence related with certain painful subjects within the family, something that happens in any family anywhere around the world. In my search, I push my family with careful force to recover the ability to talk about our past without all the painful weight that keeping silent brings along. I believe that this can be healing. Sharing pain is also healing. Perhaps the film could help others who identify with the problem, to try this in their own circles. From another perspective, and not having foreseen the current crisis regarding financial aid for political campaigns (in Chile and around the world), the film portrays a way of doing politics based on personal sacrifice and with close associates, by convictions and ideals, a certain mysticism that should be reinstated. My grandfather and his collaborators suffered serious financial losses, worked hard on their eternal visits to the most remote areas of the country, lodging in very humble accommodations, and so obtained extensive knowledge about the country's social situation.

The film is built on several layers, unveiling the role of women in politics, their participation in decision-making or backing their strong male counterparts, in their own personal way by enduring painful situations in silence. They are side B of politics, in the invisible sacrifices of those that are not leaders but share the firm commitment to the cause. I hope that the film is an inspiration in terms of human resilience.

What does it mean to recover the image of Salvador Allende?

Well, first I headed to friends and close collaborators in search of images like the ones you'd find in family photo albums, anything that hadn't been taken away during the coup. Pictures and incredible anecdotes started to emerge, like photos of "Chicho" dressed up in clothes belonging to his friend's son, which allowed me to see a playful silly side of him that I would have never imagined so strong! I understood that those who loved him weren't exaggerating when they spoke of his famous sense of humor and of his ability to suddenly let loose.

On the other hand and to my surprise, there are plenty of photographs of my grandfather, and even though exile did manage to create an iconic repetitive image in our collective imaginary, Chicho had an intense social life for decades, well registered in photographs. In spite of the fact that so many records were destroyed during the military coup, it is possible to find, even in Chile, public archives with an incredible value on a more personal level. To recover or unveil these archives feels like a small victory against the dictatorship's intent to erase him from the map. Unfortunately, the purchase of some of these archives is very costly and too much material could have become overwhelming in the film, but there is enough material to rescue and delve into my grandfather's different facets from various angles. The film's point of view is to "un-archive" the public records, to take possession of them from a perspective that focuses on his personal gestures, on the anecdotes, on sharing personal objects that may have been rescued, on discovering the way that he enjoyed the different corners of the house.

The complementarity of these two worlds allowed me to get closer and get to know my grandfather in a more complete way, and it allowed me to reconcile the public man with the family man.

You are a biologist, how hard was it for you to make this film?

Well, it was a great challenge, especially for not having any professional experience in communications. But film is a collective endeavor and in that sense, I was surrounded by people with special talents and film experience; people that made significant contributions in every stage of this film. Furthermore, to make a movie about your own family in which one is a part of the dynamics that are being recorded as well as appearing on-screen is probably hard for anyone. But we were all aware of that and there were things that we would analyze as a team. I knew that I wanted to make an honest movie, something transparent, and that had to come before any kind of shyness, but I did feel it on several occasions and we had to struggle with it. Additionally, keeping a team together for a span of eight years is a piece of art. It would never have been a possibility without the foresight and collaboration of Paola Castillo, our producer, or without the confidence and solidarity of the entire crew that firmly believed in the value of telling this story. The film was also difficult to make due to other reasons, like the fact that during the shooting and the editing stages, several of my family members passed away, as well as the exhumation of Chicho's remains, events for which one can never be quite "prepared" or ready. So since the film is focused on memory and on the intimacy of the family, I not only suffered these events in my personal life, but we had to carefully consider them on a narrative level as well.

What does your family say about this initiative?

The strong feminine presence in the film unveils how from a tragic past from which a serene pain flows, emerging from something that is irreparable, there is something that does not want to be stirred, but that tries to both find answers and protect itself. When my family saw the film they became aware of that careful force between the family's inertia about the silence that surrounded our every-day memories and my child-like curiosity combined with adult confrontation. It had not been that clear to them before! I believe that it was very generous of them to see themselves in that evasive dynamic, and I am so thankful that they welcomed the opportunity to see things from a new perspective. The film actually moved them and they really liked it; they really approve of it, which was a big relief for me. Now that the debut is coming up, I keep thinking about my brother, about how happy he would have been for me.

What does it mean to you to be premiering the film at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes?

Eight years have passed since we began this tremendous challenge without ever imagining how complex it would turn out to be. It wasn't easy, but we managed to form a crew of great, supportive and warm people that have made a tremendous effort because there is no way that the funding would

have covered a project of this time length. We are very happy and proud because this is a way to acknowledge all that hard work, and the time that it took to deepen, mature and digest certain difficult issues, and create a transparent, sensitive and thought-provoking film, making a contribution in its way of playing with certain official images of my grandfather like the numerous campaigns in which he participated, with a progression that pulls you into the intimacy of the scene in which even the spectator feels disrobed. We are also pleased and honored to be selected for the Directors' Fortnight, because this isn't very common for a documentary. I believe that it's a means of demonstrating the impact of the documentary film genre, one that keeps growing in our country and Latin America, because of the way in which it deals and offers new perspectives.

IN THE PRESS

"The key player is her grandmother, Hortensia ("Tencha")... Frail but lucid and still very elegant, [she] acknowledges her love for her late husband, her suffering at his affairs with other women and her unconditional support for his political ambitions, which involved economic sacrifices to finance his election campaigns. The filming brings up other painful memories, like the tragedy of her daughter Tati's suicide in exile in Cuba during the years of the dictatorship. One can understand how difficult it is to open old wounds, but most viewers will agree the director is right to insist on coaxing out the family truth, before it is too late to put the tale together."

—Deborah Young, *The Hollywood Reporter*



FILM CREDITS

Title: *Beyond My Grandfather Allende*
Spanish title: *Allende mi abuelo Allende*
A film by: Marcia Tambutti Allende
Running time: 100 minutes
Language: In Spanish with English subtitles
Production year: 2015
Production country: Chile/Mexico
Producer: Paola Castillo Villagrán
Executive Producer: Paola Castillo (Chile), Martha Orozco (Mexico)
Associate Producers: Bruni Burres, Juan Manuel Sepúlveda
Line Producer: Soledad Silva
Script: Paola Casti llo, Bruni Burres, Valeria Vargas,
Marcia Tambutti Allende
Camera: David Bravo, Eduardo Cruz-Coke
Sound: Cristián Larrea, Juan Pablo Manríquez
Editing: Coti Donoso, Titi Viera Gallo
Music: Leonardo Heimblum, Jacobo Lieberman
Post Production Image: Daniel Dávila, Jaime Gándara, Kine Imágenes
Post Production Sound: Roberto Espinoza, Sonamos.cl
Graphic Design: Marco Avilez
International Sales: Doc & fi Im International
Distribution in France: Bodega

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