

Tec professor shows migrant struggles and pain in award-winning film



On August 22, 2010, a **massacre** occurred in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. 150 km from the U.S. border, the **Zetas cartel executed 72 migrants who refused to work for them** and left their bodies out on display.

This true and cruel **story inspired the film “*The Pool of the Nobodies*” (2022)**, by **José Luis Solís Olivares**, the [Tec de Monterrey](#) professor who wrote and directed it.

Over the past 6 months, this film **has been selected for more than 20 film festivals** and has won **12 international awards**.

In an interview with [CONECTA](#), Solís talks about what went on behind the scenes of his film and **the challenges of making films in Mexico**.

Historical fiction: A way of making art and expressing views

José Luis Solís is a professor at the **School of Education and Humanities** in the area of film and creative writing for the degrees of **Communication** and **Hispanic Literature**.

He **writes historical fiction**, a genre that allows him to take a real event and construct a fictional story from it.

*“This narrative is **a way of making art**, to express my passion for cinematography, but to also allow me to **express my view as a human being**,” he says.*

His latest film is inspired by the **Tamaulipas massacre**, in which he tells the story of a **group of Central American and Mexican migrants** held captive in a drug farm in Tamaulipas.

The characters **Alex and Anayeli** are two indigenous migrants who do the unthinkable to survive.

Alex is played by Alex Bautista, while Anayeli is played by Maria Mercedes Coroy, who featured in **Black Panther: Wakanda Forever**.

*“I wish I’d never had to write this script, but **this is the reality, and it must be told**,” the filmmaker says whenever he can.*

The film shows how real violence makes us completely change our **ethical and moral principles**, he explains.

Over the past 6 months, *“The Pool of the Nobodies”* has won **12 international awards**.

His film won **Best International Film** at the *Fabrique Du Cinéma Awards* in Italy and **Best Narrative Feature** at the *Barcelona Planet Film Festival*.

His screenplay was recognized by the **Conarte State Award for Feature Film Screenwriting** in Nuevo León.

*“I wish I’d never had to write this script, but **this is the reality, and it must be told**.”*



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The challenges of filmmaking in Mexico

The Tec professor believes, as many other filmmakers do, that **filmmaking in Mexico is like a competition of endurance, not speed.**

His earliest challenge was at the beginning of his degree when he decided to study cinema: **the degree did not exist in his hometown of Monterrey**, but his family encouraged him to start at the origin of drama: **the theater.**

Later, when he decided to pursue a specialization in the United States, he encountered a **new way of doing theater** that was closer to cinema, which he adapted to with difficulty.

He later did a graduate course in playwriting and directing at **Tulane University** and postdoctoral studies in digital filmmaking at the **University of California at Berkeley.**

Solís is currently a **member of Mexico's National System of Art Creators** in the area of film screenwriting, and he has won several awards since his first feature film "*Gringo*" in 2016.

However, there are always challenges. For example, during his latest project "*The Pool of the Nobodies*," he struggled with **painful documentary research** and the challenge of **telling a human story.**

*"My greatest joy was when this film was nominated by festivals dedicated to **human rights and migration** because this is where I truly see that it has transcended, that it was worth it,"* said the 54-year-old professor.

In contrast to other filmmakers, Solís is happy to make art in his **native country**, although he has studied abroad and has had some productions outside. As he says:

"The film industry in Monterrey is established. There's no need to go anywhere to produce films. 12 films were produced in Monterrey between November and December 2021 alone.

"The Pool of the Nobodies" was filmed in 2021 between November and December in the municipality of García, Nuevo León.

Cinema develops skills in students

"Tec de Monterrey was the first to recognize my training and value as an interdisciplinary professor specializing in audiovisual language."

Solís always aims to provide his students with **experiences that did not exist** when he was a student. For example, he allows them to **experience all the processes involved in a film in real time.**

This encourages them to take an ethical stand, to be disciplined, to be punctual, to solve problems in real time, and to adapt to stories.

"Even if they're not going to go into film, it's going to help them learn about and become skilled in teamwork, in working with horizontal teams," said Solís, who is also Artistic Director of the Ternium Latin American Film Festival.

He made his debut in the seventh art in 2003, with his short film **Mañana sí**, which was selected for several international film festivals.

Solís also directed the short films **Los Amorosos** (2007) and **El Hombre Bueno** (2016), the latter winning the [Belize International Film Festival](#).



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Awards for the film *"The Pool of the Nobodies"*:

- **Best International Feature Film** at the Fabrique Du Cinéma Awards (Italy, 2022)
- **Best Narrative Feature Film** at the Barcelona Planet Film Festival (Spain, 2022)
- **Best Actress** (María Mercedes Coroy) at FICMY Merida & Yucatan Film Festival (Mexico, 2022)
- **LASA Award of Merit in Film** at the Latin American Studies Association Film Festival (Canada, 2023)
- **Best Iberoamerican Feature Film, Best Director, Best Actress** (María Mercedes Coroy) and **Best Actor** (Álex Bautista) at the Caracas Iberoamerican Film Festival (Venezuela, 2023).

- **Best Feature Film, Best Director, and Best Cinematography** at the Tequila International Film Festival (Mexico, 2023)

- **Honorable Mention** at the New Delhi Film Festival (India, 2023)

- **Honorable Mention** at the MICMX4 International Film Festival (Mexico, 2023)

Official selections of the film “*The Pool of the Nobodies*”:

- ICARO International Film Festival in Central America (Guatemala, 2022)

- Punta del Este International Latin American Film Festival (Uruguay, 2022)

- Cuenca International Film Festival (Ecuador, 2022)

- Cinema Nahualli Film and Video Festival in Merida (Mexico, 2023)

- Houston Latino Film Festival (United States, 2023)

- SANFICI - Santander International Independent Film Festival (Colombia, 2023)

- Orlando Human Trafficking Awareness Film Festival (United States, 2023)

- Philadelphia Latino Film Festival (United States, 2023)

- Hueyotiplan International Film Festival (Mexico, 2023)

- International Migration & Environmental Film Festival (Canada, 2023)

- Des Moines Iowa Latino Film Festival (United States, 2023)

- Erronka Munduan Zinemaldia/Challenge for the World Human Rights Film Festival in San Sebastian (Spain, 2023).

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