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**Film Review: *Under the Same Moon* by Patricia Riggen**

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The storyline of the film *Under the Same Moon* (2008) demonstrates a Mexican mother and son who are separated by the U.S.-Mexico border. The film examines the challenges and risks of immigrants who face hardship when crossing these neighboring countries. Patricia Riggen is a Mexican film director born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, and has gained experience in journalism and writing for documentaries. Riggen obtained a degree in Communication Sciences, and her thesis work is titled “Female Directors,” which allowed her to interview the top four female film directors at the time. Given that opportunity, Riggen had many job inquiries lined up but worked as a writer for her local newspaper and for a producer, which allowed her to collect research on the production industry. With that, she moved to New York City, where she received her master’s degree in directing and screenwriting at Columbia University. Since English was not her first language, Riggen started writing short movies without dialogue. While attending Columbia University, she directed two short films and found herself interested in writing and producing films. This led to the directing of her major-recognized movie *Under the Same Moon*, which was acknowledged by many industries and granted even more opportunities. Directing the film *Under the Same Moon* allowed Riggen to portray the immigrant experience of a young woman who is working in Los Angeles illegally and is separated from her 9-year-old son, still living back home with her mother in a small Mexican village.

*Under the Same Moon* begins by illustrating a single mother, Rosario, who entered the United States illegally to secure work in Los Angeles, leaving behind her young son Carlitos in Mexico for his grandmother’s care. With this separation, the son dearly misses her and wants her to return home; although she wants to see Carlitos and wants him to come to Los Angeles, she cannot make the arrangements for him to come to the States and live with her due to her immigration status. As time passes, 9-year-old Carlitos loses his grandmother and does not want to live with

his aunt and uncle because they want his mother's remittances. With that in mind, he decides to gather some money and seek help from a 'coyote' – a person who helps smuggle people across the border. Carlitos finds two Mexican American students who need cash to help take him to the United States, and it takes a turn when border officials impound the two students' vehicle. As Carlitos is stranded in the car, trying to make a run to seek help, he lands in the hands of drug addicts but is later rescued by a woman who helps immigrants. Seeking any new resources that will help him be reunited with his mom, Carlitos takes the opportunity to work with some men who pick crops. Carlitos realizes the work provided to him is hard work and can acknowledge the difficulties and risks of work in the field. As they are working, suddenly, the farm is raided by police, but Carlitos manages to escape with Enrique, a middle-aged man who is also working at the farm. As they search for new work, Carlitos manages to get jobs at a restaurant for two for the price of one deal which both Carlitos and Enrique will work but split the wages of a single worker. After some time, Enrique decides to accompany Carlitos searching for Rosario in Los Angeles, where the mother and son eventually reunite in a location Rosario would describe while she would call and stay in touch with Carlitos. As the film shows the timeline of the mother and son being separated, it also has a representation of immigrants who cross the border illegally in hopes of finding opportunities but deal with the hardship of fear over being caught.

This film demonstrates many social issues immigrants face when looking for employment opportunities. Social issues are a problem within society as they affect many individuals who are seeking a better lifestyle. *Under the Same Moon* shows experiences of discrimination, the lack of resources, deportation, family difficulties, poverty, and the purpose of social functioning. It illustrates how society has set aside people who do not have the same opportunities as someone who has to risk their lives to find a job for a proper lifestyle to afford their daily needs.

The story underlines the struggles that immigrants face from separation of family, exploitation of labor, and deportation. The film represents social issues of family separation through Rosario having to leave her son in order to work and to be able to provide for her son's future. During one of the scenes, after

Rosario calls Carlitos she states to one of her coworkers, “Es que yo le estoy haciendo más daño estando aquí, lejos de él. El no sabe por qué me fui. Solamente sabe que lo dejé.” Which translates, “It’s just, I’m hurting him more, by being here away from him. He doesn’t know why I left. He only knows that I left him.” This stood out to me because Rosario chose to seek the opportunity of work to be able to provide a better lifestyle for Carlitos. The separation of family shows that many are willing to take the risk of finding better working opportunities to help better assist themselves and their loved ones.

Though released in 2008, *Under the Same Moon* still represents issues that are occurring today. The exploitation of labor and human trafficking is presented when immigrants are utilized as a trade to work under horrible working conditions. Immigrants who migrate to the United States seeking opportunities have barriers that can result in a conflict in having the ability to interact with a society who disagrees with them coming to the U.S. for work or education purposes. Migrant workers often are paid low wages and work in poor conditions while doing jobs that are more hands-on and do not require language fluency or book knowledge. The exploitation of labor in the film shows how immigrant workers work in unsafe conditions for long hours while only receiving low pay. In the film, young Carlitos works the farm alongside the others in hot sunny conditions cropping crops in order to make some money to be able to reunite with his mother. At one point while acknowledging the heat, Carlitos states, “Pero eso no fue nada. Cuando crucé la frontera eso fue lo más difícil. Pero, ¿qué importa? Vale la pena. Yo haría lo que fuera por mi mamá.” This translates to, “But this was nothing. When I crossed the border, that was the most difficult part. But what does it matter? It is worth it. I would do anything for my mom.” To me this quote shares how, despite working in poor conditions and almost getting caught by ICE when the farm is raided, Carlitos believes the most difficult part was crossing the border and now that he has succeeded, he would do anything to reunite with his mother. This highlights elements of family separation because if Carlitos was caught by ICE as a child alone traveling, it would have been a difficult spot for his mother who is in the state with no documentation.

Lastly, deportation is the risk many immigrants face if they are detained, especially as undocumented people who are in the states illegally; they will be removed from the country because they have no authority or legal right to be there. In the film, when Carlitos is working on the farm, it shows the risk of getting raided and having to flee the area without getting caught to continue working. Working in the U.S. without the proper documentation while avoiding any potential legal consequence always has the possible consequences of getting caught that could limit migrants' opportunities to improve their situations. With the current policies and laws that are being passed in the U.S., we can see the hardship and difficulties of getting caught and detained. Many individuals who are accused of migrating or coming to the states illegally have been detained for long periods of time before preparing to leave everything they have built in the U.S. and be transferred back to their homeland.

The film *Under the Same Moon* illustrates the hardship and treatment many immigrants receive when coming to the United States for opportunities. It portrays resilience, family, immigration, identity, and hope, which reflects the experiences of individuals who cross the borders to seek opportunities to move forward to help themselves and their loved ones. In the shoes of Rosario, we can see the difficulties of having to leave her child in order to be able to provide a better lifestyle and chance of making ends meet. It demonstrates the representation of resilience and finding the strength to move forward in finding working solutions to help one find the opportunities that will help them provide the essentials needs they lack. This film is essential to understanding the story behind an individual and real-life events that happen to those who migrate for opportunities to have a better future and a chance to succeed and help their family move forward, aside from the many challenges and barriers an individual may face. With that perspective, this film shows the importance of acknowledging and comprehending the struggles many immigrants face by risking their lives and leaving their families to achieve a better living.

#### REFERENCES

Riggen Patricia. 2008. *Under the Same Moon*. Querétaro, Mexico and Los Angeles, California Potomac Pictures