

JACQUELINE ARIAS PRODUCTION



# Imaginary Mothers

Documentary Feature Film

Jacqueline Arias - Director/Producer/Editor

Film Production: USA & Costa Rica

1 hr 3min 42 sec

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# Imaginary Mothers: A Journey of Loss for Costa Rican Mothers

This documentary gives voice to Mothers in Costa Rica who bravely speak out about their side of the adoption story.

## SYNOPSIS

One filmmaker's quest to uncover the history of illegal adoption in Costa Rica reveals secrets about her own family's history. Through the eyes of four birth mothers, a dark history of personal loss is explored. This film is ultimately about healing, redemption for Birth Mothers and the restoring of lost identity.

## ABOUT THIS FILM

The filmmaker, Jacqueline Arias, an adoptee from Costa Rica, tells the story of her mother, Angela Arias, who never gave up hope to see her again. In making this film, she learns about her Costa Rican family's grief over her disappearance and their longing to understand the true circumstances around the adoption.

Imaginary Mothers is a feature-length documentary, about four mothers from Costa Rica: Crescencia Maria Castro Chaves, Helen Xiomara Barrantes Mora, Xinia Sancho Viquez and Doris Benavides Morales. These women's lives have been forever changed by adoption. They bravely reveal the heart-breaking impact that losing their children has had on their lives and as they fight to be reconnected with their children, they struggle against the myths about young single mothers in Latin America.

This film brings to light the circumstances surrounding international adoption in Latin America during the 80's and 90's, and the many warning signs that were ignored about corruption in international adoption. This film is not just about women in Costa Rica, but also about women all over the world who have lost their children through adoption.

The mothers in this film speak out for recognition for the wrongs committed against them and their children. This is the first time these women tell their story and, in doing so, they reveal a universal truth

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about the need for redemption and validation for mothers in this situation. Together, these women find a voice in the film to tell their stories and encourage social and political change.

## ANIMATION

Angela Arias, the filmmaker's mother, died two years after being reunited with her daughter, Jacqueline Arias. The only recording Jacqueline has of her mother is on a mini audio cassette tape. Jacqueline chose to use animation to illustrate the voice of Angela Arias. Dunja Pantic Illustrator/Animator worked with Jacqueline to shape the design and style of these animations. Born in Serbia, Dunja works as a graphic designer and Illustrator in New York City. She is currently is the illustrator for Kwart Magazine Belgrade. Her work has been exhibited in Design Week and in Belgrade in collaboration with Mikser. She completed the Design and Technology Master's Program at Parsons, and studied Set Design in Florence, Italy.



## NEGRITA

The mysterious dark figure in my film represents, La Negrita, the black virgin patron saint of Costa Rica. Every August, hundreds of thousands of Costa Ricans make a pilgrimage to Cartago to thank her for miracles and ask her for blessings. In 1635, a young indigenous girl found a black statue of the Virgin Mary in the woods. She took it home, but it kept returning to the spot where she found it in the woods. A



local priest saw it as a sign from God and decided to build the Basilica de Los Angeles on that spot to honor the miracle.

My mother, Angela Arias, always dreamed of making the trip to Cartago. In one of the few recordings I have of her she says, “I need to make the trip, go and pay her for the things she has done for me. Not only this miracle [of us finding her], but also many more.” She believed that her faith and continuous prayers brought us back together. In the spirit of La Negrita, it is my hope that this film brings other families together.

## MUSIC

Guadalupe Urbina, Costa Rican artist, musician and women's rights advocate, has donated her music to this film. Guadalupe was born in the province of Guanacaste, in the Pacific Coast, northwest region of Costa Rica. Her songs and her poetic prose are a philosophy inherited from her mother and her native town, Sardinal de Carrillo. The literary quality and depth of his thoughts have opened doors to her in important stages in Europe, Africa and Latin America. A pioneer in her country of mergers, a lover of the vernacular music of her province, Guadalupe has a name built with her own effort and has acted in various stages, from the Círculo de Bellas Artes, a One Woman Show in New York to the Vancouver Folk Music Festival in Canada. Today she is recognized for her research on the traditional song, oral narration, two books published in Madrid and the other in Costa Rica and as a singer and songwriter.



### Official Website

<http://imaginarymothers.com/>

### Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/imaginarymothers/>

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# CREW



## Jacqueline Arias

Director/Producer/Writer

Jacqueline Arias is an artist, independent filmmaker and media arts teacher. She was born in Alejuela, Costa Rica, has lived in the Panama Canal Zone, and was raised in rural Ohio. This varied geographical and cultural history has inspired a body of work that addresses ideas of heritage, race, and the social construction of identity. She studied photography at Parsons School of Design. Jacqueline teaches media literacy and video production in Jersey City and Brooklyn public schools.



## Sharon Weaver

Producer/Translator

Sharon was born in Paraguay and has lived in the US since 2002. She studied at the University of Central Florida where she earned degrees in Documentary Film and Photojournalism. Her work has been published in newspapers, exhibited in universities, and shown in film festivals. She has worked on multiple documentary film projects both in the US and internationally: ChinaVine, One Day on Earth, The Queen of Versailles, Arbiters of Art, Witness, Imaginary Mothers, World on a String, and The Daniell Lab. She currently lives in Los Angeles where she freelances as a producer, photographer, and editor.



## Nathan Blair

Cinematographer

Nathan Blair is a Director of Photography based in Brooklyn, NY with six years of experience shooting a variety of narrative and commercial video productions. He has worked with many reputable clients and brands such as Broadway Video, Olive, SoulCycle NY, and Hudson Music. In addition to his work on set, he is also a monthly columnist on Script Magazine's website.



## Carolina Calderon

Associate Producer

Carolina is a Costa Rican actress living in Washington, D.C. She earned her B.A. from the University of Costa Rica in Business Management. She has worked in different areas of Marketing, Graphic and Web Design. She has collaborated on social media projects for the international environmental organization ECO Conferences, based in Costa Rica. Her passion is acting and she has performed for theater and T.V. in Costa Rica and USA.

## CREDITS

Written, Directed and Edited by  
Jacqueline Arias

Mothers (in order of appearance)  
Crescencia Maria Castro Chaves  
Hellen Barrantes Mora  
Xinia Sancho Viquez  
Doris Benavides Morales

Associate Producer (on location in Costa Rica)  
Sharon Weaver

Illustrations & Animation  
Dunja Pantic

Director of Photography  
Nathan Blair  
Erik Dettle

Additional Interview Subjects  
Mirah Riben  
Adam Pertman

Re-enactments (Costa Rica)  
Valeska Vinocour  
Carmen Zayate  
Carolina Caldero  
Alfredo Vargas Calderon  
Fiorella Martinez Calvo  
Velvet Salas  
Carolina Solana  
Criss Rojas Villegas  
Fanny Castro Quesada - Ninera

Re-enactments (Jersey City, NJ)

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Wilka Claro  
Zander Ibanez  
Jessica V. Cabrera  
Sara Herrera

Music  
Guadalupe Urbina

Film Score  
Dane Johnson

Production Sound  
Dane Johnson

Additional Editing  
Megan A. Zebrowski  
Juan Roque

News Graphics  
Carlos Funes

Translator & Transcriber  
Sharon Weaver

Associate Producer  
Zachariah Lischer-Katz

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