

Film follows immigrant's struggles to study at U-Md.

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The Gandhi Brigade and a Montgomery College student worked together to document the undocumented this summer.

Montgomery College student Laura Moya and the Silver Spring-based community group made a **film** this summer **following** an undocumented **immigrant's** journey to get a higher education.

The documentary, "The Rights of Butterflies," **follows** a Montgomery College student, known only by Katya in the **film**, who is **struggling** to find the money to complete her bachelor's degree at the University of Maryland.

Katya immigrated to the United States from El Salvador with her mother when she was 13. She completed her associate's degree at Montgomery College and now wants a degree in communications from Maryland, said Laurel Gwizdak, media trainer for the **film**.

Although she has been accepted at Maryland, Katya can't afford tuition. Because she still is an El Salvador resident, Katya is not eligible for in-state tuition. And because she has no legal status, Katya is not eligible for loans or grants, Gwizdak said.

In the documentary, Katya applies for small scholarships, hoping they will add up. At the end of the **film**, Katya still does not have enough money to enroll, Gwizdak said.

"People will connect with her and see the injustices she is facing and want to fight for her, and want to root for her and want her to go to school," Gwizdak said.

Moya wanted to show the human experience behind the discussion about undocumented immigrants in the United States, Gwizdak said.

"[Moya] had a very strong viewpoint that she did not want this to be a politically divisive **film**," Gwizdak said. "She wanted to stay clear of topics and focus in on an individual who could be our sister, friend, neighbor."

Moya approached the Gandhi Brigade, which works with youth on media projects, about her idea last spring, and five members of the group joined her crew. The Gandhi Brigade signed on as the executive producer, said Richard Jaeggi, executive director of the Gandhi Brigade.

Moya, Gwizdak and the Gandhi Brigade members **filmed** from the end of June through August, Jaeggi said.

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The crew members, most of whom came from immigrant families, worked about five hours per day, five days per week, Jaeggi said. They **followed** Katya to school, home, her friend's houses and offices where she met with people about scholarships.

"What [Moya] really wanted was for it to be something that reached people that either were indifferent to the plight of young people who lack documentation, or were against it but didn't have all the facts," Jaeggi said. "She really wanted to create something very personal, very human."

Those working on the movie also collaborated with a separate team at Pyramid Atlantic, an arts center in Silver Spring. The Pyramid Atlantic group created posters inspired by undocumented immigrants, said Catherine Chu, a youth organizer with the Gandhi Brigade.

The group working on the movie and those collaborating on posters would come together to hear from experts on immigration. Then, one group left to **film**, and the others headed to the art studio.

The group of 10 high school students made silk-screen posters, working on them four hours a day, four days a week in July, Chu said. They completed many rounds of designs and eventually settled on three posters for the final project.

One poster features an image of a family portrait cracked in half, another shows a girl with wings chained down, and the third shows scenes of a boy growing up and graduating from high school, **followed** by an image of a question mark.

"They were really proud of them," Chu said. "You could see the progression in posters as they were made that month."

"The Rights of Butterflies" will be screened Monday from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building at One Veterans Place. The screening is free and open to the public.

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