

"Would you allow a juvenile murderer to live in your home?"

Well you just might if by doing so there were hope of stopping a senseless killing. This was our thought after watching countless news events of juveniles, seemingly without a conscience, taking others lives and the criminal and judicial systems unable to make an impact to cease the killings. Being native Los Angeles residents, we are not strangers to violent crime. Were these juvenile killers monsters, as some would want us to believe, or victims of a system that has disregarded them? We were interested in finding out what makes kids kill and, if we could find out, how could we change that. How could we change the remote and impersonal feeling of pulling the trigger and driving off to a first hand experience of the pain a family goes through after losing a child by a senseless shooting.

Greg & Jeanne Morgan felt compelled to write a story that focused on the victims. People found the idea of this unique program so intriguing that they invested time and money to make it into a film. They wrote, produced and directed "**17**" a 35mm feature film done on a small budget and financed by people who care. The story focused on the aftermath of senseless violence and the serious need for alternative ways to rehabilitate those kids unfazed by the murders they have committed. The premise was based on a fictitious law, "Proposition 432," that sentences young murderers, "seventeen and under," to live with a family that has lost a child to violent crime, hopefully to raise the consciousness of the young audiences and give them insight into the consequences of taking a life. By doing so we felt we were providing a voice for the many victims and their families that would otherwise be silenced by a system that forgets about the pain they endure. Driven by our message, we wanted this film to inspire others to concern themselves with the state of our youth. A cry for action is needed if we want the killing to stop.

We also intentionally had a largely Latino cast in response to the lack of roles provided for the many talented Latinos that make up our culturally diverse city. It angered us that, for the most part, just as victims of crime are being left out of television and film, so are Latinos, a population much ignored in the entertainment media - especially roles that present Latinos in an affluent setting. We hope the viewing public will request more diverse programming with race and idea.

The old formula of mindless sex and violence should make way for the thinking public to use the media as a vehicle for change. We're normal folks who see a desperate need for change and want to challenge the press to cover stories like ours that otherwise would never be heard and are all too often forgotten... as are the victims.

CAST

Cesar Herrera	Juan "Smiley" Sanchez
Sunny Lombardo	Kate Romero
Rodrigo Obregon	Tom Romero
Lina Gallegos	Maria Romero
M. Lee White	James Johnson
Robert Servellon	Chuy Gomez
Kenneth Garcia	Ernesto Sanchez
Alex Arizaga	Mouser
Jonas Morales	David Romero
Jerome Katz	Inmate 1
Jordon Preston	Inmate 2
Brian Buccellato	Inmate 3
Kristine Louise	Gang Babe in Van
Ian Lantz	Manuel, Driver of Van
Orlando Estrada	Front Passenger in Van
Ray Horton	Killer of David
Antonio Collins	Reform Class Student
Calvin Johnson	Passenger That Confronts David
Scott Schauer	School Official
Oscar Arguello	Pool Enthusiast at Party
Diana Romero	Ana Sanchez
Henry Blunt	Teacher in Wheel Chair
Lombardo Boyar	Gang Member Working on Car
Rudolpho Zuniga	Tagger in Alley
Erick Bonilla	Manuel's Sidekick
David Bonilla	Manuel's Sidekick
Scott Brooker	Manuel's Sidekick, Driver
James N. Gordon	Police Officer
Adrian H. Glenn III	Police Officer 2
Will Aguilar	Reform Class Student
Alvin Perkins	Reform Class Student
Rudy Jurado	Reform Class Student
Ray Tongpo	Reform Class Student
Seneca Woods	Reform Class Student
DuJun Johnson	Reform Class Student
Jameel Anderson	Reform Class Student
Jheri Walker	Reform Class Student
Craig Craddock	Reform Class Student
Philip Huggins	Parent of Student
Marlo Alonso	Girl In Photo
Raymond Grafius	Military Instructor
Garry Van De Vliert	Military Instructor
Gregory William Morgan	Military Instructor
Jeanne Flynn-Morgan	Mr. Johnson's Secretary
Michael Fabella	Reform School Inmate
Carl Christman	Reform School Inmate
Edwin Velez	Reform School Inmate
Jeff Calantas	Reform School Inmate
Chris Kanke	Mother Crossing Street
Cale Kanke	Little Boy
Dan Nikolai	Father Crossing Street
	Teacher With Briefcase
	Relative at Party
	Relative at Party
	Relative at Party
	Relative at Party
	Relative at Party

CREW

Director	Gregory William Morgan
Producers	Gregory William Morgan Jeanne Flynn-Morgan
Screenplay	Gregory William Morgan Jeanne Flynn-Morgan
Executive Producer	Kathy Nikolai
Director of Photography	Dave Porfiri
Editor	Will Santa Cruz
Music Supervisor	Raj Gupta
Music	Kumbre
Associate Producers	Britton Hein Perigil A. Ilacas, Jr. Michael A. Gary
First Assistant Director	Charles McVicker
Art Directors	Jeanne Flynn-Morgan Delores Flynn
Costume Designer	Louise Moore
Second Assistant Director	Chris Martinez
Sound Mixer	Doug Allen
First Assistant Camera	Don Humer
Second Assistant Camera	Julia Scott Kevin Osgood
Continuity Supervisor	Sarah Brown
Boom Operator	Martin Mattison
Make Up	Victoria Puga
Gaffers	Robert Webb Dave Womack Mike Graef Rene Karp Pedro Castro Glenn "Rusty" Roland
Key Grip	Scott Buckey
Dolly Grip	Michael Rha
Grips	Felipe M. Calica, Scott Dennis, Aaron Jennerjahn Nikki Barsegian, Chris Dabbs, Glen Braun Ben Brunkhardt, Massa Kobayashi William L'Heureux
Production Assistants	Jerlaine Beckwith, Lisbeth Vitallo, Luz Cardona Nadine Ray, Crystal Hunter, Andrew Hartzell Christian Huber
Casting	Film Punk Mormi Cake
Still Photographer	Souren Karapetian
Set Mom	Delores Flynn
Post Sound	Norman Arnold
Negative Cutter	Marilyn Sommer @ U.S. Compumatch
Titles & Opticles	Tom Anderson @ T & T Opticle
Script Consultants	Dick Morgan, Bettina Moss Barbara Schiffman
Catering	Classic's Catering Company
Processing	Ashfield Color Lab, Inc.
Telecine	Magic Film & Video
Dollies Provided By	Chapman Dollies
Cameras Provided By	Panavision

Gregory William Morgan
Gregory William Morgan
Jeanne Flynn-Morgan
Gregory William Morgan
Jeanne Flynn-Morgan
Kathy Nikolai

ABOUT THE CAST

Performing since she was a little girl, **Sunny Lombardo** (Kate Romero) started her acting career early. She has acted in several community theater productions such as "The Music Man," "Tom Sawyer" and her personal favorite, "The Wizard of Oz." Sunny attended Interlochen Arts Academy, a boarding school for the performing visual arts, where her training expanded with such plays as "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid." Now a member of the Los Angeles based Pacific Shakespeare Company, Sunny continually adds to her extensive theater repertoire. Television credits include several commercials in addition to a pilot called "The Ivy League." Sunny's leap to film has been a sudden and straight road to the top. Very favorably received in her debut film, "Drums, Bass & Guitar," in which she co-starred, she was asked to be in several film shorts. One short, "Looking For Love," was then noticed by producer/director Greg Morgan and subsequently she was asked to audition for *17*.

A relative newcomer to the acting profession, **Cesar Herrera** (Juan "Smiley" Sanchez) began his career in 1995 with a jump start landing a lead role playing Bobby in the theatrical production "Three Pieces." Winning acclaim from the critics, he went on to study at the renowned Beverly Hills Studios under the tutelage of Bob Bancroft and Tony Tanner. It was during this period that Cesar answered the audition call for *17*. "We knew this was our Juan from the start," says Greg Morgan, the film's director. "Many other people auditioned for this role, but none could come close to the intensity that Cesar has." Cesar has participated in several film shorts including the recently finished short comedy, called "Sandman," where he played a jittery cannibal capturing motorists for his barbecue dinner. After shooting Sandman, Cesar went on to a supporting role in the feature film "East of Hope Street."

Once voted "The Most Handsome Man of Columbia," **Rodrigo Obregon** (Tom Romero) began his professional career at the age of eight when he toured Russia with the Ballet Folclorico de Columbia. His passion for acting led him from his Columbia to New York where he trained with the famed Lee Strasberg. Almost immediately upon arriving in New York, he was given the opportunity to work with acclaimed directors Tom O'Horgan ("Hair") and Andre' Sevan ("The Greek Trilogy"). Rodrigo returned to Latin America when director Nello Rosatti offered him the lead role in the feature film, "Fuga." The Latin American response to Fuga was overwhelming and Rodrigo became a household name overnight. Recently, Rodrigo starred in his first television series in Latin America, "Escalona." "Escalona" rapidly became a very popular series and Rodrigo's performance made him a heartthrob. Between films in both Latin America and the United States, Rodrigo resides in Los Angeles. The completion of *17* marks his twenty-sixth film appearance.

Having moved to Los Angeles from Houston in 1989, **Lina Gallegos** (Maria Romero) has made an impact in Southern California with her creativity as an actress and writer. Lina received a Master's Degree from the University of Houston and has had careers in theater, radio newscasting and in education. As an actress, she has studied with Estelle Harman, Michael Shurtleff, Susan Strasberg, and Ernie Martin. Lina has appeared in several film shorts with *17* being her first feature effort. She performs in both English and Spanish and in 1991 won the Cesar Award for Best Actress. Recently, Lina appeared as Benita in "Souls on Fire" at the Met Theatre in Los Angeles and in the bilingual production of "Woman to Woman/Entre Mujeres." In 1993, Lina wrote and produced a comedy television pilot, "Maggie's Madness." The comedy centers around Maggie Alvarado, a divorced Latina, her college freshman daughter, and the motley crew that forms her family and friends. Lina incorporated professional, educated, middle-class Latinos within the sitcom as she believes they have been largely ignored by the networks. Lina continues to work on

other original materials, including a screenplay "La Perla," set in Galveston, Texas during World War II, and a one-act play, "Yellow Tulips," which deals with contemporary urban violence.

A native of North Carolina, **Lee White** (James Johnson) has performed on television, stage and film. Most recently, Lee has appeared on the television show "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" as Vedek Tonsain. Stage credits include the productions of "Master Harold and the Boys," "A Taste of Life" and "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men." Film credits include "The Five Heartbeats," "Crocodile Dundee" and "The Narrow Road." Lee is a graduate of North Carolina Central University where he earned a B.A. in Dramatic Art and an M.A. in Counseling. In addition to acting, Lee currently works as a counselor for youth between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, a position almost identical to his role in *17*. Lee travels around to different youth camps and counsels young men during and after incarceration. The character of James Johnson in *17* was parallel to his real life role and Lee drew upon his experiences in creating the character from the script. "I hope the kids that see this film will learn from it and avoid having to see me in real life," states Lee.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Award winning filmmakers **Greg & Jeanne Morgan's** film companies, **Film Punk Films** and **Coal Mine Canary Films** are two personas of the same, small (but mighty), independent feature film production company that is driven by the two hard-core lovers of the art of filmmaking. Feeding off the love of independent film (and absolutely no tie to a Hollywood connection) they fueled their passion of filmmaking and as a result of not using any cognitive contraception, gave birth to their debut 35mm feature film, *17 AKA 17 & Under*.

The film is a drama about a seventeen-year-old murderer sentenced to live with a family that has lost a son to a random act of violence. *17* went on to be distributed worldwide and can still be found in most videos stores including Blockbuster, Hollywood Video and 20/20 Video. *17* was highly received in screenings and press reviews, winning several awards including the Grand Prize at the Saguaro Film Festival '98 and the Audience Award in the 1999 Hermosa Beach Film Festival. **Greg and Jeanne** co-wrote, Greg Directed and Jeanne produced.

In 2004, Greg produced the low budget feature *Party Animalz* again for Artisan Entertainment which was released in May 2004. The Latino comedy was Jeanne's concept and she was the uncredited co-writer.

Learning how to do things inexpensively and efficiently on the set, **Greg & Jeanne** became big advocates of guerilla, "do-it-any-way-you-can," filmmaking. Aside from working on their own films, they also work as consultants to other "indy" directors and producers. In different capacities the couple has gone on to produce, direct, edit and write other independent films. Their longevity within the independent film arena is impressive, spanning ten years. Their credits can be found on the industry known IMDB database and articles about them or their films can be found on the web.

Dave Porfiri (Director of Photography) has been a "DP" for almost five years. Dave attended graduate school at the world renown University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television where he realized his destiny was to become a cinematographer. Dave's interest in still photography allowed him to explore the power of manipulating light and shadow for calculated emotional effect. Fueled by inspiration of professors Jean-Pierre Geuens, Woody Omens, ASC and Earl Rath, ASC, Dave's passion for creating compelling cinematic images drove him to learn the craft from the ground up. Dave developed the tools and confidence to pursue cinematography by working for years as a grip, electrician and gaffer. It was working as a gaffer that he met Greg Morgan who was working as a grip on the same independent feature. The two struck up a friendship and Dave was called in the very early stages of preproduction. The results of Dave's accomplishments have been over fifteen narrative short films, four feature films, including *17*, and numerous corporate, commercial and music video credits with appearances at the Sundance and Hamptons Film Festivals.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The juvenile justice system has always been an inflaming issue for the public, courts and police. In an era where public outcry for more stringent laws has reached an all time high, the film *17* could not be more timely. The filmmakers, Greg & Jeanne Morgan, developed the story idea by watching countless news stories featuring gang killings with little attention paid to the family left behind. "Two weeks after the killing, the story is forgotten by the press, but the suffering family won't ever forget," says Jeanne, who served as the film's art director as well as sharing credit with Greg on writing and producing. "So many films focus on the violence in the hood or barrio. We wanted to focus on the aftermath of the violence and the juvenile justice system in general." Jeanne's own personal experience of losing a brother helped greatly in her efforts to portray grief as both raw and real in a family that has lost a loved one.

With violent crime from juvenile offenders crowding an already bursting court system, many people are looking for an alternative method of punishment/reform for youth. Prison, military style boot camps, visits with hardened adult prisoners are all methods being tried today and all are addressed in *17*. Views on how to reform the juvenile system vary as much as the methods. "I wanted the film to show all sides of the issue through each character and let the viewer decide," says Greg. Whether the imaginary youth program depicted in the film would work is another question. "You never know, maybe some politician will see this film and say, 'Hey, this type of program may work.' If that happens, I want credit for the new law."

"We were horrified by the stories that these were kids that were killing," adds Jeanne. "I think if these teens lived with a family and saw first hand how their violence destroys people, maybe they would think twice before pulling the trigger. I'm sure they wouldn't want their own family to go through that pain. A government program like this could possibly raise the consciousness of kids and give them some insight into the consequences of taking a life."

With a thought provoking performance by Lee White, who plays Juan's program counselor, James Johnson, many issues from the juvenile counselor's viewpoint are described. "These guys deal with problems all day long," says Greg. "I wanted to make the character of James Johnson cynical and to show a counselor's feeling of futility in an ever growing problem."

17 is not without controversy. Without revealing the ending, it is important to convey the reasoning behind the unexpected turn of events. "As unsettling as the end may seem to some, the message we wanted to portray was crucial," adds Greg. "These kids may act like monsters, but somewhere inside they are human beings and if they could somehow feel the pain and loss of a victim's family, for some, it just may be too much of a cross to bear." The film provided a vehicle that allowed the filmmakers to express their concern and frustration with escalating violent crime among youth.

MAKING THE FILM

17 is a very intense, character driven script that consequently relies on the great performances of the actors. The casting process for the film went on for four months. "We definitely wanted the story to center around an upper income Hispanic family. How often do you see a very successful Hispanic family portrayed in film," says Greg. We have always been sensitive to the lack of opportunity in Hollywood for Latinos. I still can't understand why, in a culturally diverse city like L. A., producers are ignoring the Latino population. There just aren't enough good roles for Hispanics today on television or film." Greg, Jeanne and associate producer Britton Hein videotaped actor after actor in order to get the right people for the parts. "I've heard other directors say that they knew the person was right the moment they walked in the door. Well, it wasn't that way with Sunny", says Greg. "But, when she read the part, I knew she was perfect." Sunny Lombardo plays Kate Romero, the distraught daughter in the film.

Most of the casting came from ads placed in the trades, while other main actors came from referrals. "Lina Gallegos (Maria Romero) found Robert Servellon, who plays the Chuy character, and another referral produced Rodrigo Obregon for Tom. They are all seasoned actors, but Cesar Herrera, who plays Juan Sanchez in the film, is a relatively new actor and had only done a few plays and short films before coming to us. But, we knew he was perfect for the part when we watched his audition," said Greg.

"We were extremely excited about this project and were looking for others to share in the same enthusiasm and vision," says Jeanne. "We told the actors, when we cast them, that we wanted them to share in a project that explores humanity and the consequences of violent crime." Sunny Lombardo, who plays Kate in the film, went one step further and attended a grief encounter group "in character" so she could better prepare for the challenge of playing a sister who witnessed her own brother's killing.

Shooting the film on a three week schedule was very grueling. "We knew films made for television were shot this fast so we could do it too," says Greg. Most days went fourteen hours and many went into the wee hours of the night. One day even reached the twenty hour mark. "We were dead tired after the twenty hour day and we still had to shoot the next day. People were exhausted, but they were totally committed to what this project was trying to say." As with many low budget shoots, the director and the director of photography are usually the first to arrive and the last to leave, *17* was no different. "My DP, Dave Porfiri, is a fantastic cinematographer and was totally committed to the film. We would talk about the next days shoot long after everyone left the set."

OUTLINE

Violent crime is out of control, regularly committed by juvenile offenders without remorse.

Proposition 432, a new crime law, provides promise by sentencing perpetrators 17 & Under to live with a family which has lost a member to violent crime. Juan Sanchez, a teenage gangbanger, is assigned to live with a Bereavement Family, the Romero's, after they lose their only son to gang violence. Juan expects his stay with the Romero's to be a cakewalk, but soon finds that living among those left behind has overwhelming consequences.

SYNOPSIS

Gang member learns a victimized family's pain forcing him to face the consequences of his crimes.

As a result of jail overcrowding, a new crime law, Proposition 432, is passed. The new law combines physical incarceration with psychological rehabilitation for youth seventeen and under, hence the title of the film. The youth serve some time in prison, then are sent off to a military style boot camp for one year. In their last six months, they live with a "Bereavement Family," a family of a victim of violent crime that volunteers to host a young criminal.

Juan "Smiley" Sanchez, a seventeen year old gang member from East Los Angeles is in the Proposition 432 program. After serving his time in prison and boot camp, he is assigned to live with the Romero's. Tom and Maria Romero are both in their forties, with a daughter, Kate, who is sixteen. The Romero's lost their teenage son, David, to a random act of gang violence. He was shot. Tom Romero, a successful businessman, did not want to volunteer for the Proposition 432 bereavement program, but his wife insisted. Maria Romero volunteered her family for the 432 program as she thought it would help her family recover from the loss of their son and brother, David. Kate, having witnessed her brother's brutal slaying, is greatly disturbed by it and struggles to find comfort in her parents, but the loss proves too great for them and in desperation Kate turns to Juan. Juan's pride in his culture and heritage is attractive to Kate and their friendship grows into a strong relationship. Kate, however, has underlying motives.

Each of the three family members suffers David's loss alone and in different ways, and their pain grows as the film develops. Juan begins to see the abnormalities and pain the family suffers from the loss of David which makes him realize the enormity of his own crime. With Kate's help and the encouragement of Juan's brother, Ernesto, Juan decides to escape the gang and get his high school GED. James Johnson, Juan's program counselor, notices his desire to succeed and is pleased. However, his friend, Chuy, informs him that he is wanted by the rival gang in Juan's old neighborhood for something he did not do.

While living with the Romero's, Juan begins to have nightmares about his crimes as a gang member. The nightmares become more and more frequent as he redoubles his efforts to change his life for the better. Kate's help, Ernesto's encouragement and Juan's growing guilt convince him to try harder, get out of the gang, and begin a new life. When his family is nearly shot during a drive-by shooting intended for him, Juan's guilt grows. His gang wants him to retaliate but, when he refuses, they decide to kill a rival gang member in his name.

On Juan's last night with the Romero's, Kate and Juan make love. Kate informs Juan that she wants to have his child so that they can re-create both David and the person Juan had killed. In Kate's deluded mind, this will solve all of the family's problems. Overhearing the two talking in the bedroom, Tom bursts in and sticks a gun at Juan's face, threatening to kill him. Tom realizes through hearing Kate's ranting that she has been mentally deranged by her brother's death. Tom forgets his anger toward Juan and turns to comfort his daughter. Devastated, Juan runs from the house and flees back to the frenzied world of his old neighborhood and right in the middle of rival territory -- finally freeing himself of the pain that he has learned to feel from others.