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## CYNTHIA GARCIA WILLIAMS ON EMPOWERING LATINO STORIES IN HOLLYWOOD

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Director Cynthia Garcia Williams discusses her passion for storytelling, the importance of authentic representation, and how her Latina heritage shapes her journey in Hollywood.

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“BEING A LATINA IS MY SUPERPOWER. MY AFRO LATINA IDENTITY CONNECTS ME TO MY ANCESTRAL HERITAGE, WHICH I DRAW ON FOR STRENGTH.”

CYNTHIA GARCIA WILLIAMS, FILM DIRECTOR



**Cynthia Garcia Williams is a filmmaker** whose work radiates the vibrancy of her heritage and the depth of her personal experiences. Born to a Cuban mother and a Mexican father,

Cynthia's journey into filmmaking is deeply rooted in her rich cultural background and unwavering commitment to representing underrepresented voices on screen. In an industry that often overlooks the stories of people of color, Cynthia has made it her mission to bring these narratives to the forefront, portraying them with the authenticity and dignity they deserve.

As a Latina filmmaker, Cynthia's identity is not just a part of her; it is the lens through which she views the world and tells her stories. Her latest film is a testament to this vision, as it explores themes of love, growth, and the complexities of human relationships.

Collaborating with writer and producer Rae Lashea, Cynthia was able to assemble a diverse team where women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community were at the heart of the creative process. This film, set against the vibrant backdrop of Los Angeles, is more than just a love story; it is a celebration of diversity, personal growth, and the power of authentic representation.

Cynthia's latest film, *We're Not Married?*, continues her exploration of the complexities of human relationships, blending humor with heartfelt moments. *We're Not Married?* tells the story of two couples whose lives are turned upside down when they discover that their marriage officiant wasn't licensed. As they navigate the legal and emotional consequences, the film explores love, identity, and the challenges that come with personal growth. With its diverse cast and themes, the film is a celebration of the resilience of love and the importance of authentic representation.

Cynthia's background in mental health has also played a pivotal role in shaping her storytelling. Her films often delve into the intricacies of the human psyche, exploring the possibilities of healing and the importance of mental well-being. With each project, Cynthia continues to challenge the status quo in Hollywood, pushing the boundaries of what it means to live your best life, both on and off the screen. In this exclusive interview, Cynthia Garcia Williams opens up about her journey, the significance of her Latina identity in the film industry, and her dedication to creating stories that inspire and uplift.

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### [Mental Health and Healing](#)

**Your background in mental health significantly shaped the therapist’s character in the film. How do you hope this portrayal will resonate with audiences and spark conversations about mental well-being?**

My background in [mental health](#) deeply influenced the creation of the therapist’s character in the film. Over the years, I’ve spent countless hours with families in therapy sessions, witnessing firsthand the transformative power of doing the hard work to understand how past trauma impacts present-day actions and relationships. Watching families heal through that process was one of the most rewarding aspects of that work.

I hope that this portrayal will resonate with audiences by offering a realistic and compassionate depiction of therapy. I hope to spark conversations around mental well-being and encourage people to see self-exploration and healing as a normal, necessary part of life. By bringing this perspective to the screen, I hope to help reduce the stigma around seeking help and inspire viewers to reflect on their own [mental health](#) journeys.

### Crafting Distinct Endings

**You created distinct endings for the couples in the film. What was your inspiration behind these endings, and how do they reflect the broader themes of trust, vulnerability, and communication?**



Without giving away the ending, the inspiration behind the distinct endings for the couples was rooted in making sure their outcomes reflected the honest progression of their journeys. We wanted the endings to feel authentic, staying true to the exploration of the film's themes of vulnerability, trust, and open communication. The ending isn't meant to offer a one-size-fits-all resolution but instead to reflect the reality that relationships evolve based on how individuals choose to face those core themes. Some grow stronger through trust and open communication, while others might struggle. By staying true to each couple's journey, we ensured that the endings felt genuine and resonated with the film's broader themes.

#### Male Friendship and Vulnerability

**The film touches on the importance of male friendship. Why was it important for you to explore this theme, and how do you think it contributes to the film's overall message?**

Highlighting the importance of male friendships was a key focus for me in this film. Philip and Joey gave fearless, emotionally charged performances, allowing us to explore a depth of male friendship that isn't always shown on screen. It was important to me because, as a society, we're beginning to normalize men expressing emotions and being self-aware in ways we haven't in the past.

I believe it contributes to the film's overall message of vulnerability and personal growth. It aligns with the broader themes of trust and communication, not just within romantic relationships but in friendships as well. By emphasizing male vulnerability, the film encourages viewers to rethink traditional gender roles and embrace emotional openness, which is a powerful step toward more authentic and meaningful connections.

#### Celebrating [Los Angeles](#)

**As an Angeleno, showcasing the city's vibrant energy was integral to the story. How did the setting of Los Angeles influence the film's narrative, and what aspects of the city did you aim to highlight?**

Showcasing the vibrant energy of Los Angeles was one of the most exciting aspects of creating the film. I wanted to capture the city in a way similar to how *Sex and the City* highlighted New York City—as a character in its own right. Los Angeles influenced the film's narrative by grounding the characters' journeys in a setting that's dynamic, diverse, and full of life.

I made sure to highlight iconic parts of the city, from the Santa Monica Pier to the Hollywood Sign, and even our newest tourist attraction, the Graffiti Towers—it's an LA thing. LA's unique blend of ambition, creativity, and personal reinvention really complemented the film's themes of love, growth, and self-awareness.

#### [Living Your Best Life](#)

**Your films often delve into personal growth and self-awareness. How do these themes reflect your journey of living your best life, personally and professionally?**

My films reflect personal growth and self-awareness because they've been pivotal in my own life. I spent 15 years in mental health, driven to make sense of my life and journey of

recovery. With 23 years of sobriety, I've gained a new life—one beyond anything I could have imagined. That's what I consider living my best life. Maintaining that life requires self-awareness and growth, and I've learned that helping others by sharing my experiences can lessen my own pain. My passion for storytelling comes from the same place, with the hope that impactful stories can help others heal, find hope, end aloneness, and view life differently.

Latina Identity in the Industry

**As a Latina filmmaker, what does your identity mean to you in an industry that often lacks diverse representation? How do you navigate the challenges and opportunities of being a Latina in Hollywood?**

Being a Latina is my superpower. My Afro-Latina identity connects me to my ancestral heritage, which I draw on for strength. In an industry that often lacks diverse representation, this heritage gives me the opportunity to tell culturally rich stories that help people feel seen. Growing up, I rarely saw anyone who looked like me on TV or film—it felt like being invisible. So now, writing films for people like me and casting actors who reflect our diversity feels incredibly empowering. It's about creating the representation I never had and ensuring others don't feel invisible.

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CYNTHIA GARCIA WILLIAMS WITH CAST

### Latina Organizations

**Several Latina organizations in Los Angeles support Latinas with job opportunities in the film industry. How have these organizations impacted your career, and what role do they play in supporting diversity in Hollywood?**

I don't believe I would be in the industry had I not taken advantage of membership in organizations that support women of color. These groups have provided me with training, mentorship, and, most importantly, a sense of community. That community has been invaluable in shaping my goals and navigating the film industry. These organizations raise awareness about the importance of representation, celebrate both our differences and our similarities, and promote unity. They challenge the idea of gatekeeping, showing that there's enough space for all of us.

### Directorial Debut and Growth

**Since your directorial debut with *Dukkha*, how has your approach to filmmaking evolved? What lessons have you carried into your most recent film, *We're Not Married*?**



Since my directorial debut with *Dukkha*, my approach to filmmaking has evolved in significant ways. I've grown more confident in the choices I make as a director, trusting my instincts while remaining open to suggestions. One thing that remains constant is asking myself, "Are you still having fun?" It's a question that helps me push through tough moments and reminds me why I wanted to do this in the first place.

Filmmaking has pushed me to grow both personally and creatively in ways I never anticipated. It has challenged me, leading to significant self-development. Therapy has been essential in helping me navigate that growth, providing a space to process emotions and experiences. It ensures that my creative expression remains safe and fearless, allowing me to explore and express my art without being held back by emotional barriers or fears. It's all about managing the trauma enough to release and express.

I've also developed a deeper appreciation for the miracle of completing a film—it takes so many people working together to realize one vision, and that vision is mine, which is a huge responsibility. This has made me more aware of the importance of strong leadership on set. A lesson from my mentor during *Dukkha* still sticks with me: "Don't be a jerk on set; treat everyone the same—from the PA to the lead." I also carry the advice that, as a woman of color, I have to hold myself to a higher standard and stay composed under pressure. These lessons have shaped my approach to filmmaking, and I've carried them into *We're Not Married*.

#### Ancestral Influence

**Your storytelling reflects your cultural heritage and ancestral faith. How do these elements shape your narratives, and what core message do you aim to convey?**

As I mentioned before, I believe representation is crucial, and my cultural heritage is intricately woven into all of my storytelling. I feel that my ancestors' thoughts, dreams, and strength run through my DNA, adding a touch of magic to my life. My narratives are deeply shaped by this connection to my roots, and I hope to convey the importance of honoring and celebrating one's heritage.

I strive to create stories that allow audiences to feel seen and validated in their own experiences. At the same time, I want to offer a window into worlds that might be unfamiliar to many, providing a vantage point into lives and cultures that people might not otherwise have the chance to experience. By doing this, I hope to bridge gaps in understanding and foster empathy, encouraging viewers to connect with and appreciate the rich diversity of human experience. Through my work, I aim to not only celebrate my own heritage but also to open doors for broader conversations and deeper connections across different backgrounds.

#### Uplifting Underrepresented Voices

**Your work consistently uplifts underrepresented voices and narratives. What drives your commitment to this cause, and how do you hope your films will impact the industry and audiences?**

I have so many stories to tell, and since this is my second act, I don't want to waste any time. I've come to see time as a precious gift, prompting deep reflection on the impact I

want to leave on the world. My commitment to uplifting underrepresented voices is driven by a desire to make the most of this opportunity and to create a meaningful legacy. I aim to impact the industry by demonstrating that it's never too late to pursue and live out your dreams. Through my work, I hope to show that it's possible to forge a path and make a significant contribution regardless of when you start. My hope is that audiences, especially younger generations, will see themselves in my stories and find inspiration in them. I want to ensure that no one ever feels unseen or invisible. My commitment is fueled by the love I have for my husband, children, and grandchildren. I want to leave behind a legacy of storytelling that reflects authenticity and honesty. By sharing these narratives, I hope to convey that I lived my life with integrity and that I expressed my true self through my career.