



**Consuelo Alba**  
Filmmaker/  
Executive Director

# Bringing Cinema Home

## Filmmaker Consuelo Alba reflects on the message of community

By Tara Fatemi Walker

WATSONVILLE—When people see themselves represented on a movie screen for the first time, Consuelo Alba knows she’s succeeding in her mission. She is bringing the rich diversity of the community to the big screen. She is equally delighted to inspire local youth to make their own films.

“We started the Watsonville (Film) Festival because we wanted to showcase the stories and the talent of our community members and present great independent films to bring people together and spark new conversations,” says Alba, 47, who co-founded the festival in 2012 and serves as its executive director. A filmmaker herself, Alba helps others tell their stories.

“Before the festival, we didn’t have a platform to celebrate who we are and the creative work we do in film and video,” she says.

The festival, which also shows films from international, award-winning filmmakers, has drawn a strong following and is helping put Watsonville on the map as a cultural destination.

“I am inspired to be part of a constellation of stars working for equity, opportunity and creativity,” Alba says. She and her colleagues envision new possibilities to grow the festival. “There’s tremendous synergy in our county and in our region right now to work creatively and collaboratively.”

Alba earned a bachelor’s degree in communication sciences and worked as a magazine editor in Mexico. She came to the U.S. to improve her English when she was 27. It was supposed to be a brief stay. She would

immerse herself in the language for a couple of months. Then, she met her husband, John Speyer.

Alba and Speyer worked as journalists at *El Andar*, a bilingual magazine. Alba later worked at *Nuevo Mundo*, a San Jose Mercury News Spanish language weekly.

In 2009, Alba and Speyer taught themselves documentary filmmaking and launched Veremos Productions, an independent film company. Their film, “*El Andalón / The Healer*,” has screened at more than 30 film festivals, received six awards and was broadcast on Mexican public television. Last year, Alba won a NEXTies innovator award for her work as a filmmaker and festival director.

“Twenty years later, I am still here,” she says.

Alba’s passion for serving the community is clear in her volunteer role as vice president of the Springfield Grange in Watsonville. This local community space offers programs and activities, such as Zumba, yoga, concerts and film screenings.

Next year’s expanded fifth annual Watsonville Film Festival — March 2–6—will include five days of films with added venues. Also, the festival will present an ongoing film series throughout the year. Alba encourages people to check [watsonvillefilmfestival.org](http://watsonvillefilmfestival.org) and follow them on Facebook to stay in the loop.

*Alba lives in downtown Watsonville with her husband. She visits her parents, siblings, nieces, nephews and numerous cousins in Mexico City as often as possible.*

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