

Eli Zavala talks at AFI Fest about cultural authenticity while playing "Nelly" in "El Carrito"

"El Carrito" premiered at AFI Fest and lead actress Eli Zavala talks about the importance of being specific and respectful of culture when creating a character.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- "Authenticity is rooted in specificity and respect for a culture", [Eli Zavala](#) who gave a ravishing performance as "Nelly" in "El Carrito", told the audience during the film's premiere at [AFI Fest](#). "As a performer, those two approaches are fundamental to steer away from stereotypes on the screen".



Eli Zavala at AFI Fest. Photo: AFI/Shutterstock

In the film, deeply rooted in neorealism, Zavala plays Nelly, a street vendor living in Queens, New York. Determined to improve her circumstances, Nelly makes a risky business decision that ends in misfortune. Zavala delivers an organic performance to the point where "at times the film feels more like a documentary than fiction" commented one moviegoer during the film's premiere.

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Eli Zavala

To prepare for this role, Zavala shared with the press and audience gathered at the iconic Grauman's Chinese Theater, that she shadowed and helped street vendors

around New York City. "That was something necessary for me to do, to fully immerse myself in the world of street vending, to understand the material world of this character and, above all, to be able to respectfully portray Nelly, who represents thousands of street vendors not only in [New York City], but all over the world." She added, "beyond that aspect of the character's world,

I wanted to bring my Mexican, immigrant and WOC experience to Nelly. For me it was utterly important to bring the isolation and fear that comes with leaving the country you were born in, and, at the same time, bring in the excitement that comes from pursuing and slowly getting better opportunities in a foreign land, all while steering away from stereotypes”.



Eli Zavala as Nelly in El Carrito

Zavala noted that “being close to the street vending community brought another layer for me and to this film, which was fully embraced by the Queens Latin community and the street vendors of Queens Plaza” said the actress, “[they] told us between takes that scenes like the ones we were shooting where precisely what happened to them, especially when the police arrives.”

Before concluding the presentation, the actress said: “this adds another type of responsibility on my end as a performer, as a producer, as a storyteller: dignifying the unseen and the unrepresented.”

“El Carrito” had its world premiere at AFI Fest and Zavala’s performance is creating quite a buzz on the Festival circuit, while the film itself is being highly praised by the audience.

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