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## Film may sway immigration debate by touting human element, proponents say

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By MIKE SACCONI

The Daily Sentinel

Local immigrant rights proponents say for all their public protests and talking points, the most powerful weapon in changing minds on the Western Slope lies in a short **film**.

Larry Archuleta, a leader with the local chapter of the Colorado Grassroots Movement for Immigrant Justice, said he has found the **film** "Dying to Live: A Migrant's Journey," to be the best counter argument he and his colleagues could offer to the anti-illegal **immigration** crowd's message.

"Dying to Live," which was released by a professor at the University of Notre Dame in January, depicts the struggles of illegal immigrants coming to the United States. In addition to tracking their steps over the southern border, the **film** depicts the current **immigration** debate from the view of immigrants, academics, border patrol agents and clergy.

Archuleta, who has distributed several copies of the **film** locally, said the **film** helps people on every side of the issue gain an "informed conscience" on the human side of **immigration**.

"I find that it changes more perceptions more than any other thing," Archuleta said.

Sue Miller of Grand Junction, who recently saw the **film**, said "Dying to Live" changed the way she perceived Latino immigrants. Miller, who moved to the area earlier this year from Iowa, said she had just assumed that "the people trying to come up from Mexico were trying to take over the United States."

Miller said the **film** had caused her to change her mind on the issue.

"What I did know about **immigration** was very little," Miller said. "What I did know was very biased."

She said the **film** showed her that the Mexicans and South Americans who come to the United States do not have some nefarious plot to destroy the country's culture. Miller said they merely want to provide for their families.

"The hardest part to watch was that these people are leaving their families because they cannot feed their families," Miller said. "I was not aware of the poverty situation and how bad it was. They're not trying to take from the United States, they're trying to survive."

Fr. Daniel Groody, assistant professor of theology and director of the center for Latino spirituality and culture at the University of Notre Dame, said his decision to make "Dying to Live" grew out of experiences he had working with immigrants dating back to the late-1980s.

Groody, author of "Border of Death, Valley of Life," a first-hand account of those ministering to poor immigrants, said he decided to make the **film** as a way to illuminate a public debate that has come to be dominated by "sensationalized" news reports. He said these reports do more to obscure the issues surrounding illegal **immigration** than to explore its root causes.

"You listen to Lou Dobbs and it's not even good journalism. It's sensationalized migration talk," Groody said. "It's looking at migration as the problem. Migration isn't the problem, it's a global economy where people don't have enough work, enough money to feed their families. Unless you deal with that, you're just putting a Band-Aid on the issue."

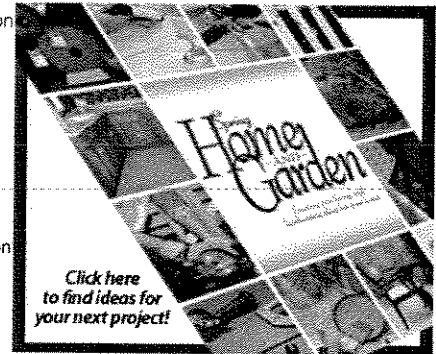
Groody said his goal was to show the human face of **immigration** and "the face of Christ" in each immigrant.

He said once the public could see the dignity and purpose of those crossing the border, they would undoubtedly rethink how they approach the issue.

"It's not that they're breaking a law, they're obeying a more fundamental law," Groody said. "Their families are hungry and they're finding food."

Groody estimates there are at least 3,500 legal copies of "Dying to Live" circulating the country. He said he hopes a partnership with a number of PBS stations will help get the **film** to a wider audience.

Locally, "Dying to Live" will find a broader audience and perhaps its hardest sell Tuesday, when local immigrant rights advocates, including Archuleta, meet with Dana Isham, the leader of the Western Colorado Minutemen.



Archuleta said at a recent meeting of immigrant rights advocates that he hoped it would at least show Isham why he and so many others in western Colorado believe in immigrant rights.

To further spread the message of "Dying to Live," Grand Valley Peace and Justice will host a screening of the **film** at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 790 26½ Road, on June 28 at 7 p.m. The screening will be free of charge.

For more information on the **film** or to obtain a copy, visit [www.dyingtolive.nd.edu](http://www.dyingtolive.nd.edu).

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