

## **GREGORY NAVA**

### **Critically acclaimed writer and director**

Director and screenwriter Gregory Nava collaborated with his wife, Anna Thomas, on the Academy Award-nominated drama *El Norte*. Shot on an unbearably modest budget of \$800,000, Nava's moving - and often harrowing - film about two young Guatemalan refugees who endure numerous hardships in order to reach the American border was one of the first contemporary films to honestly and compassionately address the modern immigrant experience in America. He also wrote and directed the critically acclaimed film, *Mi Familia*, starring Jimmy Smits and Edward James Olmos.

*Selena*, one of his most popular movies, and Jennifer Lopez' breakout role, tells the story of the slain Latin singer's rise to stardom and tragic death. Also a sought-after speaker, Nava celebrates the triumph of the Latino spirit in his work and his moving speeches.

Born in San Diego, Nava, who is of Mexican-Basque heritage, became interested in filmmaking at an early age. While at UCLA Film School, he made a film based on the life of Garcia Lorca entitled *The Journal of Diego Rodriguez Silva*. For his efforts, he was awarded the Best Dramatic Film Award at the National Student Film Festival.

In 1973, Nava wrote, produced, and directed *The Confessions of Aman*, a tale of a wandering medieval scholar. Making the most of his minuscule \$13,000 budget, Nava's ingenious production went on to win critical plaudits and the 1976 Best First Feature Award at the Chicago International Film Festival. In 1987, he directed *A Time of Destiny*, starring William Hurt and Timothy Hutton.

A man of many talents, Nava also has experience as a cinematographer, a skill he exercised on Anna Thomas's 1977 feature, *The Haunting of M.*, Nava and Thomas co-founded the Independent Features Project (IFP) West.

In August 1998, Nava released *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*, starring Halle Berry, Vivica A. Fox, Lela Rochon, and Larenz Tate. Nava served as director, as well as executive producer, along with Harold Bronson. The fact-based film tells the story of three women, each of whom claims to be the legitimate widow of legendary pop singer of the 1950s, Frankie Lymon. The three women, in the course of a trial to determine the legitimacy of their claims, tell the story of their individual lives with Lymon. In so doing, they reveal their diverse experiences as well as the charismatic, undisciplined, and tangled life of the talented man they all loved and thought they knew.

Nava wrote and directed his first television series, *American Family*, the first Latino drama series on American broadcast television, which premiered on PBS in January 2002. Starring Edward James Olmos and Raquel Welch, *American Family* reveals the enduring strength of family in America today as it chronicles the lives of the Gonzalez Family.

Nava is also developing a film about the life of Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata for Disney. He was executive producer of "Killing Pablo" (2005), starring Antonio Banderas, which is based on the book "Killing Pablo: The Hunt For The World's Greatest Outlaw," the true-life story of Pablo Escobar.