

TRANSCRIPT:

My Beautiful Nicaragua

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



Edelsin Linette Mendez: My name is Edelsin Linette Mendez. I live in the community of El Castillito, in the municipality of Las Sabinas. My house is 1300 meters above sea level. Five of us live here at my house - my dad, Rufino Mendez, my mom, Digna Lopez, my siblings, Olivin Mendez, David Mendez, Fanny Mendez, and me. I always wanted to try using a camera and was a little nervous at first. But Joyce and Cat had me using one right away and I loved it.

My parents own a small coffee farm on the side of the mountain. It's been in our family for many generations. All my siblings are much older - I'm almost thirteen. It's a long climb up from our house to the road but we're used to it. Very few farmers own trucks, so walking long distances is what everyone does. I'm lucky I can walk to school in ten minutes, and walk to church in an hour.

This is the entrance to my room. This is the bedroom where I sleep. This is the guitar that my dad plays... That he uses at church. These are memories of my siblings' graduations. This is Olvin, my older brother. This is Rudy, the youngest... and Reyna Imara. And Fanny Escarleth. And this is my Papa.

I'm very happy to make this film because it's on a very important topic... Climate change. It has greatly affected our family, the community and its coffee and the entire region. For generations, Nicaraguan farmers have relied on coffee cherries for their income. But higher temperatures and poor rainfall are allowing a fungus, called [roya](#), to take over.

Papa, how is roya affecting your coffee farm?

Rufino Mendez: Roya makes leaves drop to the ground, and then the new ones are affected by the roya. Every leaf affected with yellow spots will drop to the ground. And then the fungus spreads to the stem, the stem rots and falls, and the trunk dies. Climate change also affects our coffee farms when the rainfall is heavy... The trunk starts to weaken and the crop decreases. Now we have lost all our coffee crops for the last three years, it has all been affected by roya. Climate change affects our coffee farms as well since our lands lose their fertility. That's why we don't harvest the same amounts. For example, here, this one has neither leaves nor beans. It has nothing because it just started sprouting. This one has nothing, it has no beans... And none of these have beans. Let's take a look at this one with cherries, but they are empty.

Before, I used to grow 11 acres of coffee trees and produced 300 coffee tin containers. Last year I only got 30 coffee tin containers overall. With the roya, I had to prune the whole farm. The

production of red oak trees was also lost. Now I will be able to produce maybe seven or eight loads of coffee.

[Singing] He has healed me, He has redeemed me, and now I praise only Him.

Edelsin: This little building serves as our local place of worship during the week. Every Sunday, we also celebrate mass in Las Sabanas. I can't tell you how important faith is in my father's life, especially now. Our schools are closed during harvest time and the whole family helps. I already knew since I was a little girl to pick only the hard red coffee beans.

[Children Laughing]

When enough beans are collected, the work of processing them begins.

Rufino: It looks like we're getting there, little by little.

Edelsin: Where are you coming from?

[Coffee Processing Noises]

The outer red shell has to be separated from the white bean inside. Then the beans are washed clean. They are left to soak for twenty-four hours then are dried in the sun. This is as far as the coffee processing will go. My father will deliver the filled bags to his coffee cooperative in town. Because northern Nicaragua has rich volcanic soil, my family is proud we are growing the finest coffee in the world. There are 120 members in the coffee co-op. They are all facing the same difficulties as my father.

How will climate affect you in the future?

Farmer 1: The thing about climate change is that it affects the family's income source... and the income source for the workforce that is used to pick the coffee. And there are a few things, you see, about the phenomenon... Sometimes it is out of control. So we have to coordinate our actions with all the coffee farmers to fight this plague. We do not have normal temperatures. Because of that, everything is out of control.

Farmer 2: Since it rains at the wrong time when we sow the basic grains... the seeds don't grow at the same time. In the case of coffee, it rains late, so the beans turn out smaller. In the coffee fields, the ones on the hillside suffer from landslides. It rains very hard in one cycle and then it doesn't rain again.

Farmer 3: For the infestation, there are no borderlines, no borderlines for the neighboring farms... and that is why we spread it to other countries as well.

Farmer 2: if we stop cultivating coffee because of roya, we won't be leaving our children a better future. That's what we lived off of, that's what our children were raised on. We hope that by planting trees and protecting the water source, we would leave behind a better future for our children and grandchildren. Because that's what we're looking after, so that our families stay alive... so that they can make a living off of coffee. With or without roya, we're going to keep fighting so that our families can keep moving forward.

Farmer 3: Well, roya in the future will lower us in the economy. And, well, we have to fight against the roya because... Well... Growing coffee has been a way of life since our ancestors. We have to fight the roya because the future of the economy... The future of our children, well it wouldn't be a dignified life... And there we are plowing forward and we... Disappear.

Digna Lopez: This garden suffers, you see, because we don't get a winter season anymore... It affects everything, not only the garden but the whole world. The lack of rain, you see, is because sometimes we are the guilty ones.

Edelsin: In the future, I'd like to be somebody professional. I want a career where I can earn a lot. I'd like to be a teacher or a reporter. I'd also like to study nursing, but my parents are very poor and don't have the economic resources to give me the education I would like. My older sisters, Fanny and Ruth, also wanted to study.

Fanny: I studied six months and couldn't continue because University is very expensive. The monthly payments, transportation, all of that.

Ruth: I have my little girl who is just six years old and well, for her, I want the best, right? That she studies, that she prepares herself. She's a very intelligent girl. As for myself, I like studying, and I like to go out. I like to go out and enjoy myself. I like the labor of life, and if I could have studied, I would have. And of life? Well, for the moment we came to help our father, Rufino Mendez, to cut coffee. That's what we do for now.

Edelsin: Today is the Festival of El Señor de Esquipulas. For one day, all thoughts of troubles are left behind. Villagers started walking here from miles around at dawn.

Public: [Singing] The force of the Spirit lives in us, as the Son was sent by the Father. He impels, guides and feeds us Pilgrim Church of God. We are the seeds of another kingdom on earth, we are witnesses of love. Peace for wars, light among darkness.

Guitar Quartet: [Singing] I come with my lady Casimira looking to sell something. She comes filled with chilotes and chayote. It won't rain, so with the little beans and the little corn there is nothing to do. I am looking for answers as to why it won't rain. I just understand that I caused this with the axe and the machete. My poor little Juan won't get to see the deer. My poor little Juan won't get to see the rabbits.

And if we continue like this, death will be a sure thing for all of us. I am looking for answers as to why it won't rain. I just understand that I caused this with the axe and the machete. My poor little Juan won't get to see the rabbits. My poor little Juan won't get to see the deer.

The mockingbird and the lark can't be heard singing any longer, and if we continue like this, death will be sure for all of us.

Edelsin: School is starting again and I'm really glad to be back. There's so much I want to learn. Especially about the climate and what me and my friends can do to help. I think it will take millions of kids like us to stop the disaster. But we're getting ready.

And I hope as you watch this film and drink your cup of coffee you will be thinking about what you can do before it is too late, and save our beautiful planet Earth.