

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a light blue tank top with a decorative strap, smiles broadly. The background is a dramatic scene of a landfill at sunset, with a bright sun low on the horizon, silhouettes of birds, and a person in the distance.

ILEANA'S SMILE

THERE'S ALWAYS LIGHT
IN THE DARKNESS

TRAILER



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PW: DONTSHARE24

SYNOPSIS

SHORT

Ileana's Smile is the inspiring story of a girl who endures life in a trash dump and the devastating choices she faces.

MEDIUM

Ileana's Smile is the inspiring story of a girl who endures life in a trash dump in Nicaragua, and the devastating choices she faces. The film follows musician Brad Corrigan and several Nicaraguans as they try to help Ileana on her journey.

LONG

Ileana's Smile is the inspiring story of a girl who endures life in a trash dump in Managua, Nicaragua, and the devastating choices she faces. The film follows musician Brad Corrigan and several Nicaraguans as they try to help Ileana on her journey. Love Light + Melody -the NGO executive producing the film- was founded in 2007 by musician / activist Brad Corrigan after he encountered Ileana and the community of families living and working in "La Chureca," the largest open air land fill in Central America. Ileana's Smile was distilled from 15 years of film, photography, and journaling - and captures much of the origin story behind Love Light + Melody as Brad and Nicaraguan taxi driver Bismark meet Ileana and her family in the dump, develop close bonds with them and their community, and watch them all endure the brutality and beauty of life in and among the trash heaps. The film is directed and produced by Brad Corrigan of the indie band Dispatch. In the film, Corrigan narrates his own journey, colliding with Ileana's, and the tragic story that ensues. "There's my life before I met Ileana and her family, and then there's my life after where I cannot shake the courage and resilience that I saw in Ileana, her sisters, and family..." Corrigan started Love Light + Melody to be a force for good—to offer an opportunity for vulnerable children to grow and thrive through education, music, art, and sports. Over the past 18 years, the organization has built a vast community of supporters and partners who are helping to fund their work expanding the reach of Ileana's School of Hope in Nicaragua.

FILM INFORMATION

TITLE

Ileana's Smile

PROJECT TYPE

Feature Documentary

RUN TIME

62 minutes 32 seconds

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

United States

COUNTRY OF FILMING

Nicaragua, United States

LANGUAGE

Spanish + English

ASPECT RATIO

16:9

FILM COLOR

Black + White + Color

SHOOTING FORMAT

Many- shot over 15 years

FIRST TIME FILMAKER

Yes

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Brad Corrigan is a creative visionary, living a unique and traveled life. As a member of the indie band, Dispatch, he has played and sold out some of the most storied venues across the United States including Madison Square Garden, Red Rocks, Red Bull Arena, the Boston Garden, and Radio City. A dynamic solo artist and communicator, through film, photography, and music, Brad's innate kindness touches those around him and inspires hope. Regardless of the medium, he is committed to creating and sharing stories with art that shine light, raise awareness, and inspire action. Brad believes in social justice and is an advocate for many causes and communities. He is the founder and president of Love Light & Melody, a non-profit organization dedicated to battling physical, emotional and spiritual effects of extreme poverty. The Colorado native believes humility, generosity, and relentless love can turn any tide... And speaking of, he also loves to surf.



PRESS RELEASE



'Ileana's Smile' finds trauma, tragedy, and hope in Central America's largest landfill

Overview

Denver, C.O. – October 4, 2023 – [Love Light + Melody](https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/) (<https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/>), [Love Light + Melody](https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/) (<https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/>), founded by rocker Brad Corrigan of Dispatch in 2008, offers a unique window into life in the La Chureca trash dump in Managua, Nicaragua, following a remarkable young girl enduring the harsh realities of living and working in a trash dump, in the documentary film *Ileana's Smile*. The film is directed and produced by Brad Corrigan.

Ileana's Smile, an official selection of the 2023 Denver Film Festival, will make its world premiere on Saturday, November 4, 2023.

Ileana's Smile explores daily life within a trash dump community, diving into the family life of a single mother with four daughters making a living scavenging for recyclables and food in the burning piles of trash where they've made their home. Ileana, the second daughter, is full of life, laughter, mischief, and curiosity. Corrigan met Ileana in 2007, and in their first interaction, she pedals up to his taxi as he visits the dump, inviting the unsuspecting visitors out of their air-conditioned car into the heart of La Chureca. Her smile is infectious, and this small interaction ignites a heart-breaking journey and collision of culture, altering the fate of many.

Corrigan narrates his own journey, intersecting with Ileana's, over several years as he is drawn deeper into the trash dump community. He charts the evolution of his understanding, relationships, and ultimately, his altruism in step with the tragic events unfolding around him in the toxic landscape of La Chureca. Once a bright light within the darkness of the dump, Ileana and her sister Mercedes fall prey to the many abuses that plague the community living within its 3 square-kilometer border, leading to their sudden deaths as teenagers. Corrigan and a host of others try to rescue Ileana from addiction but fail to change her course.

Described as 'a light that went out too soon,' Ileana inspired all who met her. Her fate led Corrigan to question his humanitarian efforts, the approach taken by organizations working in distressed communities, and even his role in this tragic story. Ultimately, he finds hope in the transformative power of education, and helps bring light to a community shrouded in darkness.

"When I first met Ileana, her family, and the community surrounding them, I tried to capture our interactions in my journals and on my camera because I couldn't process what I saw. I also wanted to build a platform for Ileana to speak and share her own story. Although it has taken me almost 10 years to complete this project and she is gone, her smile and legacy are still with us. I am excited to share this story broadly and hope the film will draw attention to the challenges faced by vulnerable children around the globe and inspire others to help create a world where every child has the opportunity to flourish."

Corrigan started [Love Light + Melody](https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/) to be a force for good—to offer an opportunity for these children to grow and thrive through education, music, art, and sports. Over the past 15 years, the organization has built a vast global community of supporters and partners who are helping to fund their work in Nicaragua, and beyond.

Ileana's Smile is a [Love Light + Melody](https://www.lovelightandmelody.org/) film. Brad Corrigan is the director and producer. Executive producers are Barry & Melissa Clark, Pete & Devon Briger, Warren & Maureen Spitz, Chip & Becky Kenyon, Scott & Rachel McGuire, Jon + Katie Owsley, Michael & Sue Buzbee, Blakely & John Atherton, Drew & Amy McKnight, and Steve & Elisabeth Zahm.

FILM STILLS



[VIEW MORE HERE](#)

CAST + CREW

DIRECTED & PRODUCED BY
BRAD CORRIGAN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:

BARRY & MELISSA CLARK
PETE & DEVON BRIGER
WARREN & MAUREEN SPITZ
CHIP & BECKY KENYON
SCOTT & RACHEL MCGUIRE
BLAKELY & JOHN ATHERTON
JON & KATIE OWSLEY
MICHAEL & SUE BUZBEE
DREW & AMY MCKNIGHT
STEVE & ELISABETH ZAHM

MUSIC BY
BRAD CORRIGAN
MIKE SAWITZKE

CINEMATOGRAPHERS

MATT KATSOLIS
JONATHAN OLINGER
KASEY KIRBY

PHOTOGRAPHERS

BRIAN NEVINS
LUIZ MAXIMIANO
MANA GOLLO

EDITED BY

JUSTIN BOGARDUS
MERYL GOODWIN
ANNIE EASTMAN

ART DIRECTION

AUSTIN DANIEL BLASINGAME

FIELD PRODUCERS

XIORA MARTINEZ
JACOBO MARTINEZ
NORMAN VELASQUEZ

POST PRODUCERS

CHRISTOPHER NOVIELLO
PATTI BONNET

STORY PRODUCER

JUSTIN BOGARDUS

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Ileana's Smile is a deeply personal story to me, truly life changing. There's my life before meeting Ileana and learning of a brutal and survivalist life in trash dump communities, and my life after. I now live my life with a deep conviction that every child deserves to grow, learn, be safe, and write their own story. I hope this film can transform the lives of other vulnerable children in Nicaragua as proceeds from the film support Ileana's School of Hope and a scholarship fund for ongoing education.

- Brad Corrigan

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Brad Corrigan: Producer and Founder of Love Light + Melody

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