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Fall 12-13-2020

### Jornada

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Title: Jornada

Logline: A day in the life of a food pantry in Queens.

Synopsis: The crowds of people we see waiting in line to receive food bring us face to face with food insecurity. In the place that was the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, in the richest country in the world, thousands of families are still struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis.

La Jornada, which means “day” or “journey” in Spanish, is the largest food pantry in Flushing, Queens, providing food for 10,000 families across the borough each week. Angélica is one of 400 volunteers who keeps the organization running. Through her eyes and some of the other volunteers, we see the cost of what it takes to provide for the community.

Treatment:

### **ACT 1: Moving parts**

It's early morning in Flushing, Queens, still dark. We see people lined up on the sidewalk, bundled up in coats and carrying empty metal carts. There are boxes waiting on the curb in the glow of street lamps. At Bland Houses, there is a stillness in the courtyard as the subway rushes past. It's a cold fall morning.

Text appears on screen telling us that, since the pandemic hit New York City, 1 in 10 New Yorkers now rely on food pantries.

Then it's daylight, and there are carts lined up on the sidewalk. We go through a montage of our main characters Pedro, Jessica, and Angélica, all working amid the hustle and bustle of the food pantry.

Inside, people are bagging produce. We meet our protagonist, Angélica, who is washing dishes and preparing food in the kitchen as volunteers start to line up for lunch. We hear from Angélica in a voiceover interview, saying how thousands of people died. “How will we eat if we can't work?” she says. “We deserve a dignified life here.” Though Angélica plays different roles at the food pantry, she often finds herself in the kitchen preparing the lunch.

We meet Pedro, the director of La Jornada, working in his office. La Jornada moved into this location in Flushing in March, right when the pandemic started. All 60 of his volunteers (who were elderly) quit out of fear. He arrived on the morning of March 28th—a day he says he will remember for the rest of his life—to find that the line of people waiting for food extended 28

blocks. But new volunteers and donors came to his rescue, and two weeks later, La Jornada started opening additional locations in Queens. They now provide food for approximately 10,000 families a week, from more than ten different locations, with a team of 400 volunteers. He tells us about the recent anxiety he's felt, waiting to find out if his USDA "farmers to families" grant will be extended. Through Pedro, we learn about the difficulties they face in feeding so many people. While Pedro is talking, we move from the office interior to trucks delivering food outside, and Pedro overseeing the operation.

Next we see scenes of Jessica sitting at a table, crossing names off a list as other volunteers in neon vests usher people along to go pick up food. Some people are turned away because they're over 60. Over 60 people are supposed to come on Fridays, not Saturdays. Some people are turned away because they didn't make their appointment on the right day. Others didn't know they had to bring an ID. But these are the rules.

The first time Jessica came to La Jornada was during the height of the pandemic. But that day she came to wait on this line herself, to pick up food for her own family, to feed her three kids. She's from Corona—the epicenter of the epicenter—and though she feared for her family at first, she decided to start volunteering.

We cut to a scene of birds on the sidewalk, pecking at a discarded croissant.

## **ACT 2: Corona**

We meet the volunteer Javier (and Angélica's partner) as he's transporting a van full of farmers to families boxes across town. The words "FUERZA MIGRANTE" are plastered across the top of the dashboard. On Saturdays, Angélica and Javier transport food from the headquarters in Flushing to an offsite distribution spot in Corona, where they provide food for hundreds of additional families.

We arrive at a sidewalk in Corona. Once again, we are met with a line of people waiting. They're filed down the sidewalk and around the corner. The whole thing all over again. We hear Angélica talking into her phone on Facebook Live, inviting community members to come collect food. She talks about her motivation for what she does and the importance of supporting her community, with so many people who are struggling and in need. She starts to tell us about the personal challenges she faces, that people ask her how she does this without getting paid. But they provide food for her people.

We watch as Angélica and her small team of volunteers unload the packages and prep the food. Angélica runs things here, directing everyone in their different places. Her 18-year-old son, Cristian, and 25-year-old daughter, Rubi, are there to help. There is a small table set up where everyone must register their information before being given a card and being sent back in line to wait for the 5 pm start.

The line starts moving as people collect their food. The sun sets in the distance, beyond the elevated subway tracks of Roosevelt Ave.

It's nighttime now, and we follow Angélica home. She heads into the kitchen once again, this time to prepare food for her family. She tells us about the resistance she has faced from her family as we see her at home cooking. We learn that her two sisters live downstairs with their families. They haven't spoken to her since she started volunteering with La Jornada. They resent her for not being available to help out as much. They've even prohibited her from seeing their mom, who is currently visiting from Mexico and staying downstairs.

After dinner, Angélica goes out onto her fifth-floor rooftop and gazes out at the city lights and the traffic below, the 7 train riding past in the distance. She wonders if what she is doing is wrong, and asks for forgiveness. But she tells us that volunteering makes her happy.

### **ACT 3: Keep going**

Back at the food pantry the next day, there is a squirrel burying a nut in the grass. We hear from Pedro again, and learn that he, too, is facing family issues. Running La Jornada during the pandemic has taken a difficult toll on his marriage. "It's like having a second wife," he says. Anyone at the food pantry there will tell you that La Jornada is Pedro's whole life. He is going through a divorce right now as a result. But, recently, his son Nicolas told him how proud he is of his dad, something that Pedro had never heard before. It brings tears of joy to his eyes. This December, he is expecting his first grandchild.

Jessica and Angélica are in line for lunch, and Jessica tells us about how working at La Jornada requires her to be away from her family, but it is a choice she has made. Our three main characters have all made personal sacrifices in order to volunteer their time to feed the community. Through these personal stories we begin to understand the untold cost of the nightmare we're living in. Angélica and Jessica laugh and chat while they eat their lunch in the office.

Back outside, it's a hectic system of distributing food and people being shuffled along. Volunteers cut open the pre-packaged food boxes provided by the USDA to remove the self-congratulatory pieces of paper that the Trump administration has stuffed inside. Pedro tells us again about the precarious state of survival for the food pantry. It is an ongoing problem, and the moratorium on evictions is the only thing keeping them from absolute chaos.

It's raining now, and Angélica is working in an orange poncho. She tells us how, despite the pain she feels from being shunned from her sisters, she won't stop volunteering. "If we don't help each other, who will? In the office, she hugs Pedro and makes him coffee.

We end on a long shot of the line of people waiting in line to collect food. Final text explains that while La Jornada's funding was eventually renewed, they will face the same uncertainty from the federal government every two months.