

WALT DISNEY PARKS AND RESORTS

“Welcome: Portraits of America”



Contact:

Lisa Haines
(818) 560-4107
Walt Disney Parks and Resorts
Lisa.Haines@disney.com

These photos represent some of the many faces seen in the “Welcome: Portraits of America” film and the hundreds of still images.



Athena Archuleta is a member of the Pueblo Tribe of Tesque in Santa Fe, N.M. and speaks their native language Tewa.



Rafael Rodriguez emigrated from Mexico City in 1943 and is grateful for all the opportunities that the United States has given him. He was the Vineyard Manager at the Rubicon Estate Winery in Napa Valley for 25 years and currently serves as the winery’s historian.

“Welcome: Portraits of America” Project

As part of the Secure Borders Open Doors initiative to improve the entry experience for international visitors to the United States, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts commissioned the “Welcome: Portraits of America” project. Featuring Americans from all regions and walks of life pictured against iconic backdrops, such as the Grand Canyon and the Golden Gate Bridge, the seven-minute film and hundreds of still images will be donated to the United States government to help welcome visitors into the country.

Showcasing “Welcome: Portraits of America”

The video and photos (to be incorporated into posters, banners and other imagery) will first be featured at Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas and Washington Dulles International Airport. Meanwhile, plans are being developed to display the multimedia content in various other venues around the world including:

- U.S. Embassies and Consulates
- Airport Federal Inspection Areas
- Airport Arrival Concourses
- DiscoverAmerica.com - the official travel and tourism website of the United States.

Nearly 29 million international visitors pass through the airport Federal Inspection areas each year.

Behind the Magic

As Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts and Chairman of the Travel Industry Association (TIA), Jay Rasulo has long believed that the travel industry has an important role to play in helping the U.S. government welcome international visitors to the U.S. In his first speech as chairman of TIA, Rasulo challenged the industry to contribute its expertise to this effort. According to Rasulo, “We have an incredible opportunity to welcome international visitors to America within their first 100 steps off the plane.”

Taking on the challenge, Disney hired a world-class creative team led by one of Hollywood's top motion picture marketers, Federico Tió, to create a video welcoming international visitors. In the summer of 2007, Tió's team traveled more than 14,000 miles to all regions of the country in search for Americans who embodied the diversity, friendliness and optimism of the true American spirit. Tió, a Cuban-American who himself immigrated to the U.S. at age 5, was thrilled to be part of the project as he believes, “What makes this country remarkable is its people.”

The “Welcome: Portraits of America” project is just one example that exemplifies the power of private-public partnerships. Disney will continue to explore new ways to lend its insights and will partner with the appropriate government agencies to contribute its expertise in customer service and queue management to further improve the entry experience.

Secure Borders Open Doors Initiative

In partnership with the private sector and state and local governments, the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security have introduced a pilot model airport program to ensure a more welcoming environment for international visitors. The pilot phase of the program is currently in place at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. and George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston.

The program will also introduce features such as a customized video message with practical information about the entry process, improved screening and efficient movement of people through the border entry process, and assistance to foreign travelers once they have been admitted to the United States. The goal of the overarching initiative is to create a more transparent and welcoming process from the time a visitor requests a visa all the way through their arrival in the United States.

The United States Senate recently passed a bill that will provide \$40 million to pay for audio-visual equipment, banners, improved signage and additional customs officers at the two model airports and 20 international airports in the U.S. with the highest number of international visitors.

Fun Facts

- On the road for 42 days, the creative crew visited 33 cities and traveled a total of 14,888 miles for the "Welcome: Portraits of America" project.
- More than 500 individuals were interviewed and/or photographed.
- Approximately 80 hours of film and video were captured by the camera crew.
- More than 20,000 photos were taken.



Photographed in Rochester, N.Y., The Lost Boys of Sudan spent 11 years with other "walking boys" in order to escape the Sudanese Civil War. Salva Dut (pictured center) is the founder of the Water for Sudan Project, which raises funds to drill for fresh water in Sudan.



Kristi Neilsen was photographed while on assignment as a Park Ranger at the Grand Canyon. Kristi was recently promoted to Education Specialist and moved to the Sitka National Historic Park in Alaska.



Donald Blake, photographed near Santa Fe, N.M. has traveled to all 50 states and most continents in the world. He served in the Armed Forces and has held a variety of jobs including surveyor and stunt man.