

# WALK RUN CHA-CHA

## EXPLORATION GUIDE

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# 1

This 20-minute short film took over six years to complete. Director Laura Nix discovered this dance studio in Alhambra, CA, with a fascinating cultural mix of Eastern European instructors teaching Latin dance to a mix of people from the Asian diaspora in suburban Los Angeles. Laura loved to dance herself so she signed up for dance lessons at the studio where she eventually met Paul and Millie. Laura started filming the couple, their teachers and the community for six years. That footage eventually resulted in the Oscar nominated short film, *Walk Run Cha-Cha*.

**Perhaps this is an example of how we make some of the most meaningful discoveries in life. Think back on your own life. Was there something you decided to do, somewhere you moved to, a person you met, that eventually led you to surprising opportunities and experiences that changed your life?**

# 2

Laura makes the intentional decision to tell a story about Paul and Millie's life in the present instead of focusing solely on their past. Films about refugees and immigrants are often focused on the point of entry, when the newly arrived are most vulnerable to the upheaval in their lives. But it's essential for us to hear stories about what happens next over the course of many years. As with many immigrants and refugees who flee difficult circumstances in another country, Paul and Millie's story embodies resilience and the courage to start over. But it is much more than that.

**Immigration stories are a central feature in American culture, but they are as varied as the diverse countries and people who live out these stories. What were some of the distinctive features you found striking about Paul and Millie's story beyond their escape from war-torn Vietnam?**

# 3

We meet Paul and Millie when they are middle aged. They have already started their lives over in a new country, learned how to speak English, worked at multiple jobs, finished up college degrees, pursued successful careers, while raising a child and taking care of their aging parents who left everything behind when they left Vietnam. In this film they are choosing to reinvent themselves again. Paul describes himself as very shy and reserved but he is learning to use his body to reach another level of freedom. Millie is rediscovering the love she had for music and dance as a teenager. Even though Paul and Millie grew up in a culture that placed severe restrictions on foreign music and dance, they are both finding great joy on the dance floor.

**Are there times you wanted more – something beyond all your responsibilities? Are there times when you had to overcome personal inhibitions or cultural norms to reinvent yourself? What did you learn about Paul and Millie and their decision to take ballroom dancing late in life?**

# 4

Fundamentally, this film is a love story that spans many decades. Paul and Millie meet and fall in love as teenagers in Vietnam, are separated by societal and political turmoil, and are reunited 6 years later as they start over to see if they can reestablish that initial connection. Now, much later in life, they are discovering how to enjoy life and searching for new ways to rekindle their love for each other. For their final dance scene, Millie chose the song "We've Only Just Begun", as her and Paul look for ways to make up for lost time.

**How have you experienced changes in the relationships with those you love? What obstacles and challenges have you faced along the way? What do Paul's and Millie's story teach you about different seasons of love?**