

Nonny de la Peña, PhD

Emblematic Group & REACH.Love

SUMMARY

Over the past decade, Nonny de la Peña has been one of the top leaders in the XR field. As the founder of Emblematic Group, she has led the team in creating such innovations as a 5G machine learning app for ATT, a police de-escalation tool for Google, and several award-winning virtual reality news pieces produced in partnership with PBS Frontline and NOVA. With each endeavor, de la Peña's and Emblematic Group have further established their renown as setting the gold standard in the medium. Emblematic's current endeavor, REACH.Love, breaks entirely new ground: democratizing the ability to create and distribute XR content across all platforms and devices. De la Peña was named WSJ Technology Innovator of the Year and one of CNET's twenty most influential Latinos for her pioneering work; her TED Women talk, which describes the use of cutting edge technologies for creating intense and empathic engagement on the part of viewers, has over a million views. A New American fellow, Yale Poynter Media Fellow and a former correspondent for Newsweek, de la Peña is widely credited with pioneering the genre of immersive journalism and her paper in the MIT journal *Presence*, "Immersive Journalism: Immersive Virtual Reality for the First-Person Experience of the News," remains the second most downloaded article in the journal's history. The piece *Hunger in Los Angeles* became the first VR piece ever shown at Sundance and inspired Wired Magazine to nominate her a "#MakeTechHuman Agent of Change" and she was called "The Godmother of Virtual Reality" by Engadget and The Guardian. Additionally, Fast Company named her "One of the People Who Made the World More Creative."

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Media Arts + Practice **2019**

University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts

Dissertation title: "Inventing Immersive Journalism: Embodiment, Realism and Presence in Nonfiction"

Master in Communication Management **2009**

University of Southern California, Annenberg School of Communications & Journalism

Bachelor of Science in Visual and Environmental Studies and Sociology **1984**

Harvard University

XR EXPERIENCE

REACH.Love **2018 – 2020**

Reach is a volumetric toolset and publication platform for WebXR using drag and drop interface instead of coding. Initially funded by Knight Foundation for journalists, REACH.Love has recently been adding clients as diverse as the Italian fashion brand GCDS, the Japanese American National Museum, the Texas Center for Civil Liberties and universities as a teaching tool including MIT, University of Nebraska, Chapman University and Syracuse University.

EMBLEMATIC GROUP **2014 – 2020**

Founder and CEO, directed, produced and managed global teams to execute multiple XR projects and

technology innovations for a diverse variety of world class clients and nonprofits to create high impact virtual reality and augmented reality experiences.

Select EMBLEMATIC projects include:

- *Trashed*, a virtual reality documentary game about great Rock 'n' Roll trashings
- *GCDS – Milan Fashion Week 2020*, a combined virtual production rendered video and WebXR backstage experience
- *New Realities*, directed and produced three of a ten part 360 video series about young female activists from around the globe
- *Untitled Lyme*, a virtual reality experience about Lyme disease, that follows a nurse's battle with the virus and uses mini-games to teach the science
- *Stanley Hayami*, Interactive Quill animation and Unity experience on Japanese American incarceration for the Japanese American National Museum
- *ATT 5G Origins*, A series of three interviews using videogrammetry and photogrammetry made for ATT Shape Conference featuring Trombone Shorty, former Olympic fencer Doris Wilette, and the first volumetric kiss professionally recorded
- *Greenland Melting*, a PBS Frontline and Nova collaboration, premiered Venice Film Festival
- *After Solitary*, a partnership with Frontline on solitary confinement
- *Passage: Life of A Road*, Adapts the work of artist Lin Yilin into a game in which the player must walk a wall full of bricks across a busy virtual Hong Kong street in an experience that mirrors Lin Yilin's risky original performance, a statement on uncontrolled development
- *Across the Line*, a virtual reality experience that uses real audio to put the audience on scene to experience the vitriol shouted at young women entering health clinics where abortion is provided
- *WSJ Fintech VR/AR app*, an Android, iPhone and Google Daydream goggles tool providing an interactive Dow Jones stock market data visualization that was updated every two minutes
- *Out of Exile*: a collaboration with the *True Colors Fund* on LGBTQ homelessness
- *Cartier: A Classic Landmark for the Modern Age*, an interactive tour and 360 time-lapse celebrating Cartier's new 5th Avenue store
- *Kiya*, a piece on domestic violence against women shown first at Sundance Film Festival and then the the NYTimes
- *We Who Remain*, a piece on the war in Sudan purchases by Arte, the NYTimes and AJ+
- *World Economic Forum: Project Syria*, an exhibit on the crisis commissioned by the World Economic Forum for the 2014 gathering and remade for Sundance 2015
- *Use of Force*, which details a homicide committed by Border Patrol and winner of the Impact award at the largest independent game's festival Indiecade for "changing the landscape of games"
- *Hunger in Los Angeles*, first ever Sundance Film Festival VR experience, which puts the viewer at an actual event when a diabetic waiting at a long food line collapses into a coma.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

INTEREST: Using gaming platforms, associated mechanics, embodiment and presence to interrogate nonfiction and social responsibility in AR/VR/XR.

EMBLEMATIC GROUP

2014 - 2020

Studio environment for research, experimentation and practice. Led teams in the creation of multiple immersive projects that were also utilized for separate research studies conducted in partnership with Microsoft Research, Arizona University, Honor Health, USC's Norman Lear Center, Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab, University of Barcelona's Event Lab, and Institute for the Future

MXR STUDIO LAB HEAD - USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

2012 - 2014

Oversaw a lab focused on personal and faculty research endeavors and student projects using motion capture and infrared tracking cameras for exploring the use of immersive virtual spaces. Also worked with the University of Barcelona and University College London and research using a tele-immersive robot for journalism

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW - USC ANNEBERG SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

2009 - 2012

Prototyped and researched immersive and experiential journalism using gaming platforms. Also ran a series of workshops with select students from USC's Marshall Business School, Viterbi Engineering School and Annenberg Journalism School to brainstorm and prototype mobile news solutions

AWARDS

2020

SXSW Hall of Fame Inductee

2019

New America Fellow – renewal for second year

VR AIXR AWARDS – Innovative Company of the Year - REACH.Love

Verizon 5G Pioneer

Jackson Wild Media Awards – *Greenland Melting*

Alumni Society Leadership Award

Venice High School Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni of the Year Award

2018

Wall Street Journal Tech Innovator of the Year

New America Fellow

Digital Entertainment News Hedy Lamarr Award

American Imaging Society - Distinguished Leadership Award

Nextant Lifetime Achievement Award – AWE

CNET – 20 most influential Latinos in Technology

Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Awards (JANM-Stanley Hayami)

Finalist, Science Medal Award for *Greenland Melting*

Xprize for Education \$30,000

2017

Knight Foundation Journalism Innovation Award

Knight Foundation News Challenge Award for WebVR Platform

Online Journalism Awards: Excellence in Immersive Storytelling

World VR Forum: Imperial Crown

Vision VR/AR Summit: Social Impact Award

SXSW: VR/Room-Scale Jury Award – *After Solitary*

Ars Electronica: Award of Distinction - *Out of Exile*

Social Impact Media Awards: Best Sound Experience – *Across the Line*

Venice Film Festival: Official Selection – *Greenland Melting*

Mostra Internazionale D'Arte Cinematografica - La Biennale de Venezia

SXSW: Official Selection – *We Who Remain*

Sundance Film Festival: Official Selection – *Out of Exile*

- Unity Awards: Golden Cube Finalist – *After Solitary*
 Future Storytelling Prize: Innovation in Storytelling Finalist – *After Solitary*
- 2016** People’s Choice Award - Future of Storytelling
 Vision Inspire Award - Vision Summit Awards
 Sundance Film Festival: Official Selection – *Across the Line, Kiya*
- 2015** Official selection - Tribeca Film Festival
 Sundance Film Festival: Official Selection – *Project Syria*
- 2014** Official selection - Tribeca Film Festival
 Official Selection - Sheffield Film Festival
 Official Selection - Power to the Pixel
 Official invitee - World Economic Forum
- 2013** Tribeca Film Foundation New Media Fund
 AP/Google Technology and Journalism Scholar
- 2012** One of the 13 People Who Made the World More Creative - Fast Company
 Sundance Film Festival: Official Selection – *Hunger in Los Angeles*
 USC School of Cinematic Arts five year Annenberg Fellowship
- 2010** Knight Digital News Challenge Winner for Stroome
 USC Teaching with Technology Grant
- 2009** Online News Association - “Six in Sixty” Audience Award Winner –
 Stroome – “We need it!”
 USC Marshall School of Business New Venture Competition Second Place Prize for best business
 plan judged by angel investors and venture capitalists
 Rezzable top ten Machinima Winner
 Winner for machinima John Escher
- 2008** American Film Institute Best of International Digital Showcase
 Gone Gitmo – virtual Guantanamo Bay Prison
 Annenberg Public Good in the Virtual World Merit Award Winner
 Virtual installation of Mauerkrankheit/Walljumpers
- 2007** MacArthur Foundation – Bay Area Video Coalition Producers Institute Residency to transform
 significant documentary film into a digital platform: Guantánamo Bay in Second Life

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2021** ADJUNCT PROFESSOR – “Immersive Journalism” at Chapman University.
- 2017 - 2018** CONSULTANT – Worked closely with Alejandro Gonzales Iñarritu on *Carne y Arena*, awarded the
 first VR Oscar
- 2017 - 2019** CURATOR for inaugural Smithsonian Latino Center
- 2013 – 2019** TEACHING ASSISTANT – USC School of Cinematic Arts
- 2009 - 2013** STROOME.COM, start- up co-Founder. A video remix online community and Knight Foundation
 News Challenge winner.
- 2012 - 2013** PBS NEWSHOUR – Consultant for outreach endeavor bringing unheard voices on election issues
 to the forefront and to lead a multimedia, 360 panorama-style coverage of the inauguration
- 2012 - 2013** MYSPACE / ROCK PAPER SCISSORS – Developed and produced virtual human host for relaunch
 under Justin Timberlake

- 2007 - 2008** NEW YORK TIMES, SCIENCE TIMES, Freelance writer
1994 – 2007 PYEDOG PRODUCTIONS – Director and Producer of multiple acclaimed films
 (Details provided upon request)
1987 - 1991 NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE – Correspondent

ADDITIONAL IMMERSIVE NARRATIVES & NEWSGAMES

- 2013 – 2020** MULTIPLE IMMERSIVE JOURNALISM PROJECTS
Origin Stories – ATT 5G interviews for WebVR – Dec 2018
Greenland Melting – Premiered Venice Film Festival – Sept 2017
WSJ Fintech Stock Market APP - Launched Sept 2017
After Solitary – Premiered SXSW – Jury Award winner – March 2017
Out of Exile – Premiered Sundance Film Festival – January 2017
Mary Katherine Goddard – Created for bi-partisan national committee seeking approval from congress for a women’s history museum on the Washington DC mall – fall 2016
Trayvon Martin - Premiered Tribeca Film Festival – April 2016
Across the Line - Premiered Sundance Film Festival – January 2016
Kiya - Premiered Sundance Film Festival – January 2016
Use of Force - Premiered Tribeca Film Festival – April 2015
Project Syria - Premiered World Economic Forum– January 2014
- 2015** ROBOTIC EMBODIED JOURNALISM utilized a motion capture suit and virtual goggles in Los Angeles to enter a body of a robot in order to conduct interviews with researchers in Barcelona. This was held in conjunction with the Event Lab at the University of Barcelona.
- 2012 - 2013** HUNGER IN LOS ANGELES, an immersive journalism nonfiction narrative that premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival which employed Unity 3D and a virtual reality construct using goggles and motion capture equipment. The piece takes audience members to a real scene at a food bank when a man lapses into a diabetic coma while waiting for food. A version was also built using the Microsoft Kinect. HUNGER IN LOS ANGELES has been invited to Google Mountain View, the Online News Association, and Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Journalism
- 2007 – 2013** GONE GITMO is a virtual representation of Guantánamo Bay prison that was initially funded by the MacArthur Foundation and prototyped at the Bay Area Video Coalition. GONE GITMO has been featured in New Scientist, Vanity Fair, Der Spiegel, New Scientist, Chronicle of Higher Education and others. Featured on the cover of the March 2009 International Documentary Magazine. Also, installed at Laboral in Gijon, Spain as a live exhibit built as part of a Whitney Museum of Art co-curated exhibit “The Angel of History” and appeared in June 2013 at the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 2012** THREE GENERATIONS is a newsgame board game on the 1920–1940’s US policy that relied on IQ tests to designate society’s unfit and then sent them for sterilization. Premiered at Games for Change in 2011
- 2010 - 2012** CAP AND TRADE, an immersive journalism newsgame built in collaboration with Frontline World and the Center for Investigative Reporting, which examines the legitimacy and human consequences of a carbon preserve and individualized, personal offsetting mechanisms.
- 2009** IPSRESS – Based on FOIA released interrogation logs and International Red Cross reports, the immersive journalism piece uses 3D models, virtual reality goggles and the interrogations logs to examine the practice of putting detainees in stress positions for lengthy periods
- 2008 - 2009** MAUERKRANKHEIT/WALLJUMPERS, an Annenberg Public Good merit award winner which uses

cross-platform techniques including Second Life, Google Earth and documentary film to explore the world's border walls in search of humanity's shared experiences.

2008 - 2009 JOHN ESCHER, a machinima series exploring cross-platform elements for machinima filmmaking, premiered at the 2008 AFI Digifest

SELECT ACADEMIC AND PRINT PUBLICATIONS

"Beaming into the News: A System for and Applications of Tele-Immersive Journalism." In *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, March/April 2018

"Towards Behavioral Realism: Experiments in Immersive Journalism." In *i-Docs; The Evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary*; March 2017

"Embodied Digital Rhetoric: Soft Selves, Plastic Presence and the Nonfiction Narrative." In *Digital Rhetoric and Global Literacies: Communication Modes and Digital Practices in the Networked World*, June 2014

"Physical World News In Virtual Spaces: Representation and Embodiment in Immersive Nonfiction," *Media Fields Journal*, September, 2011

"Immersive Journalism," *Presence*, MIT Press publication, August, 2010

"Avatar Mediated Cinema," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Advanced Computer Entertainment Technology*, 2008.

"What's Making That Awful Racket? Surprisingly, It May Be Fish," *The New York Times*, April 8, 2008.

"Sifting the Garbage for a Green Polymer," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2007 "Hollywood's Scariest Boss," *Buzz Magazine*, September 1994

"Safety Last," *Texas Monthly*, August 1991

"Fighting for the Environment," *Hispanic Magazine*, March 1991. "A Time to Seek," *Newsweek*, December 17, 1990.

"Sex Still Matters," *Newsweek*, October 29, 1990.

"The Greens Are White," *Newsweek*, October 15, 1990.

"The Naked and the Dread," *Newsweek*, September 10, 1990. "The Recession of '90," *Newsweek*, August 20, 1990.

"A Frightening Aftermath," *Newsweek*, July 23, 1990.

"One City, Two Summits," *Newsweek*, July

"The Right-to-Lifers' New Tactics," *Newsweek*, July 9, 1990.

"The Push for Power," *Newsweek*, April 9, 1990.

"Going for the Broke," *Newsweek*, April 2, 1990.

"The Crack Children," *Newsweek*, February 12, 1990.

"Teenagers and Abortion," *Newsweek*, January 8, 1990.

"Danger on the Job," *Newsweek*, December 11, 1989.

"E pluribus, plures," *Newsweek*, November 13, 1989.

"An Ego as Big as American," *Newsweek*, October 16, 1989.

"Tiny Tick, Big Worry," *Newsweek*, May 22, 1989.

SERVICE

MEXLA COMMISSIONER

2019 - present

Partnership with the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, the Pacific Council Mexico's Foreign Ministry, and the Mexican Council of International Affairs (COMEXI) to deepen the cultural, economic, and people-to-people ties between the two regions.

KNIGHT FOUNDATION ASPEN INSTITUTE COMMISSIONER

2018 - 2019

Member of commission for 2019 report on Trust, Media and Democracy.

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

2019 – present

University of Nebraska Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Arts

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

2010 – present

Santa Monica College Journalism Department

ADVISORY AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER – LATINO.LA

2008 - 2014