



# How to Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps

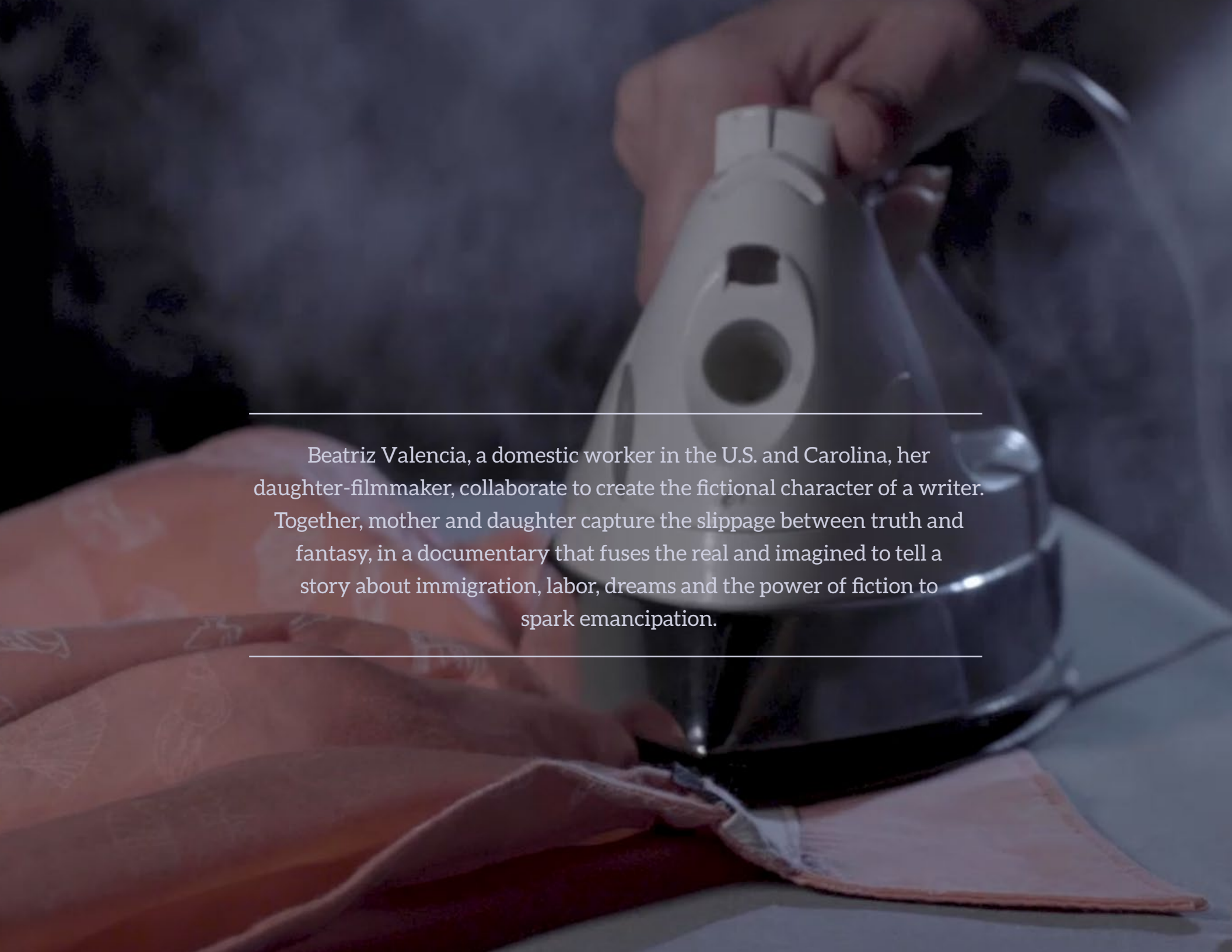
---

A film by **Carolina González Valencia**  
In Collaboration with **Beatriz Valencia**

---

[carolina@fromawayfilms.com](mailto:carolina@fromawayfilms.com)  
[www.fromawayfilms.com](http://www.fromawayfilms.com)



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white steam iron over a piece of light-colored fabric. The iron is positioned vertically, and steam is visible rising from the soleplate. The background is dark and out of focus.

---

Beatriz Valencia, a domestic worker in the U.S. and Carolina, her daughter-filmmaker, collaborate to create the fictional character of a writer. Together, mother and daughter capture the slippage between truth and fantasy, in a documentary that fuses the real and imagined to tell a story about immigration, labor, dreams and the power of fiction to spark emancipation.

---

# Table of Contents

**Synopsis**

**Major Themes**

**Hybridity**

**Style**

**Team**

**Director Statement**

# Synopsis

*How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps*, follows our protagonist, Beatriz Valencia, an acclaimed writer originally from Colombia, and her over 20-year writing career. Mrs. Valencia has written 2 best-selling titles: *How to Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps*, and *Solitude and Other Challenges, A Mother Working Overseas*. This film captures Valencia's writing process and her lived experience, documenting her years as a working mother to her eventual writing career.

But what is fact and what is fiction? In *How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps* we witness the manipulation of facts and fiction as mother and daughter create ways to heal,

celebrate and emancipate their own stories.

Fact: In March 1998, Mrs. Valencia, my mother, left our home in Medellin, Colombia, and immigrated to the United States, where she would support our family for the next 20 years as a domestic worker. Fiction: My mother is not an acclaimed author. This persona is, in fact, a made-up character my mother created when I turned the camera on her to learn about her immigration story and her life as a domestic worker.

The film reveals how a fictional construct is a tool that the director and Beatriz are using as a way to navigate the difficult conversations surrounding the fractured dynamics of a mother/daughter relationship as well as other tensions between past and present. Through their collaboration, discrepancies appear in the remembering of their time of migration as well as their subsequent time in the U.S. for example, the guilt Beatriz carries for leaving her family, and the trauma Carolina carries from having to take on the maternal role of home and family caretaker as a 13-year old.

# Major Themes

*How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps* explores political, cultural and personal themes using the tradition of autobiography as the driving methodology for storytelling.

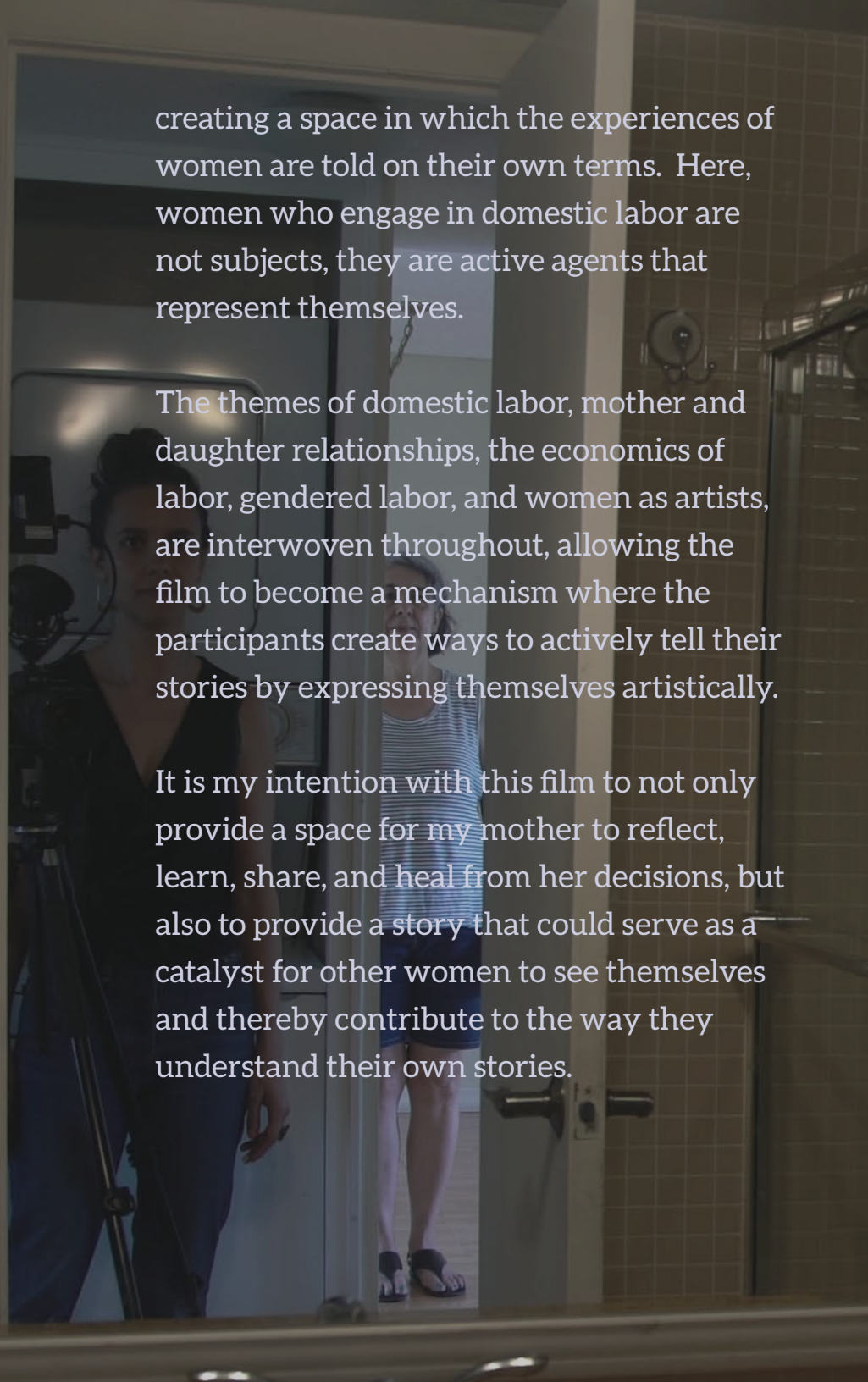
According to the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the number of domestic workers in the US ranges from 650,000 to upwards of one million, the vast majority of which are immigrant women. The private settings of this type of employment make domestic workers more vulnerable to different kinds of abuses stemming from class, race, ethnic, and citizenship inequalities.

*How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps* brings domestic labor out of the shadows, by

creating a space in which the experiences of women are told on their own terms. Here, women who engage in domestic labor are not subjects, they are active agents that represent themselves.

The themes of domestic labor, mother and daughter relationships, the economics of labor, gendered labor, and women as artists, are interwoven throughout, allowing the film to become a mechanism where the participants create ways to actively tell their stories by expressing themselves artistically.

It is my intention with this film to not only provide a space for my mother to reflect, learn, share, and heal from her decisions, but also to provide a story that could serve as a catalyst for other women to see themselves and thereby contribute to the way they understand their own stories.



# Hybridity

*How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps* deploys fiction, through the fact-appearing-fantasy of Mrs. Valencia as writer, to reimagine its stories, and the lies it assumes, as a framework for getting closer to how mother and daughter uncover truth. In this film, fiction is the thread that connects, transforms, and unsettles; it perplexes the present and is the mechanism by which viewers get to examine the nature of truth.


“Fiction is also the means  
by which I get to learn  
about my mother’s journey”

# Style

*How to Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps* intertwines elements of fiction and reality to create a world where the mechanics of telling the story are as important as what is being told. The film combines two cinematic styles. The first uses the tropes of documentary-style filmmaking: talking heads, observational footage, sound bites, and b-roll to build and establish the fictional character of the writer. The second uses stylized cinematic, poetic, and lyrical tableaux, where stage lighting and reflections will show the characters' (director's and writer's) performative gestures, and re-enactments of Beatriz's writings.

In this film, part about domestic labor, we do not see anybody cleaning, instead, the film creates other images to represent that work. From bodies that disappear to women dancing in sequins, each representation is carefully invoked as a device that allows the visual language to cohere with the themes explored in the film.



A photograph of two women lying on a grey couch. The woman on the left is mostly covered by a dark purple blanket, with only her face and one hand visible. She is looking towards the camera. The woman on the right is also lying down, looking towards the camera with a thoughtful expression, her hand near her chin. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid in the center of the image, between two horizontal white lines.

***How To Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps*** creates a space where documentary is not only a place to share trauma but it is also a space to celebrate our beauty. We do not only talk about difficult moments; we also have fun! It is a journey where joy, humor, and pain, fact and fiction, are not mutually exclusive.

# Team



**CAROLINA GONZALEZ VALENCIA**

*Director/Producer*

Originally from Colombia, Carolina is a filmmaker, visual artist and educator. She has worked on projects in Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Lebanon, and the United States. She is the recipient of a BAVC MediaMaker Fellowship, LEF Foundation Production Grant, the Lyn Blumenthal Scholarship (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), the Gelman Travel Fellowship (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), and the Programa Nacional de Estímulos (Colombian Ministry of Culture). She received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Currently, Carolina is an assistant professor in the Department of Art and Visual Culture at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

# Team



**BRENDA AVILA-HANNA**

*Producer*

Brenda Avila-Hanna is a filmmaker and educator born and raised in Mexico City and currently based in California. Her her work has been showcased at HotDocs, Lakino Berlin, Frameline, HBO and Fusion Network among others. Brenda is a recent Fellow for BAVC's National MediaMaker, the National Minority Consortia Lab through LPB, NALIP and DocsMX. She is a member-owner of the film distribution cooperative New Day Films, where she recently served as the first team lead for Equity & Representation. Brenda was in the inaugural cohort of DOC NYC's "Documentary Industry New Leaders" and a 2021 Rockwood/Just Films Fellow. Brenda received an M.A. Social Documentation from UCSC where she is currently a Research Fellow for Film & Digital Media and the Artist Development lead for the Watsonville Film Festival.

# Team



**GONZALO ESCOBAR MORA**

*Director of Photography*

Gonzalo Escobar Mora earned his Master's in film directing from the film factory program in Sarajevo, under the mentorship of Hungarian director Béla Tarr. His work encompasses short films, installations, video art, documentaries, film essays, questioning formal definitions and exploring intersections between the personal and the political. His work has been shown in the Museum of Modern Art in North Miami, the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago, festivals such as True/False in Missouri, and international festivals such as CineSul in Brazil, Art on Display in Romania, Against the Silence in Mexico, Viña del Mar in Chile, the Sarajevo Film Festival in BiH, and the Cartagena.

# Team



**DAVID FELIX SUTCLIFFE**

*Consultant Producer*

David Felix Sutcliffe is a Sundance and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker whose films have been distributed by Netflix, Hulu, PBS, and BBC Storyville. His debut film (T)ERROR, co-directed with Lyric R. Cabral, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Investigative Documentary and was purchased by Netflix. His work has been funded by Sundance, the Tribeca Film Institute, and the Open Society Foundation. David is a former Sundance Edit Lab and Creative Producing Lab Fellow, and was chosen for Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film.

# Director Statement

Carolina's work deploys autoethnography to understand how and where the personal, social and political collide. Her projects are informed by her own experiences as an immigrant living in the US. She investigates the rupture of continuities resulting from migration and diaspora, where she transforms "non-belonging" into a tool that decenters dominant narratives and generates new documents that challenge social and historical representations of migration, otherness, diaspora, and labor.

Carolina storytelling combines genres as a

way to create dissonance and highlight contradictions. With this breaking apart, She offers new takes on initial understandings of a particular story and presents new stories as part of a constellation of intricate complex universes.

By utilizing closeness, physical, emotional, and familial, as a space of power; she aims to expand the way different marginalized communities are represented, creating works where the complexities of their lives are represented, and the creativity, beauty, healing, and resilience of their lives are celebrated.





# How to Clean a House in 10 Easy Steps

---

A film by **Carolina González Valencia**  
In Collaboration with **Beatriz Valencia**

---

[carolina@fromawayfilms.com](mailto:carolina@fromawayfilms.com)  
[www.fromawayfilms.com](http://www.fromawayfilms.com)