

# Painted Nails documentary at Sebastopol Film Festival

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In “Painted Nails” we witness the American dream crumble when Van, a Vietnamese nail salon worker, discovers her health problems, including two miscarriages, are the result of toxic chemicals in the products used in her salon. Van courageously becomes the first worker to testify against the cosmetic industry in over 30 years.

Van, a Vietnamese nail salon worker

“Painted Nails” enters the rich culture of Vietnamese-American Van Hoang’s bustling nail salon in the Mission District of San Francisco. The salon caters to a diverse clientele, women of African American, European, Latino, and Asian ethnicities, who come not only for the acrylic nails with original designs—each a miniature painting that might include gold stars, glittering palm fronds, or frolicking blue dolphins—but also for the caring environment. The salon clients beam as they hold up their vividly colored talons for the camera, in a proud display of their identity as women.



Through the advocacy of nail salon safety groups and the media, the world becomes aware of the toxic chemicals in nail products. The California Healthy Nail

Salon Collaborative, and Women’s Voices for the Earth invite Van to be a candidate to testify in Washington, DC. In front of the congressional and environmental protection agency staff and the opposing cosmetic industry, Van advocates for the Safe Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Act with testimony marked by tears she fights to keep back, but which make her words all the more powerful.

Major loopholes in the U.S. federal law dating back to 1938 allow the 50-billion-dollar cosmetics industry to put unlimited amounts of chemicals into personal care products with no required testing, monitoring of health effects, or labeling requirements. The Safe Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Act is designed to give the U.S. FDA authority to ensure that personal care products are free of harmful ingredients and that ingredients are fully disclosed.

Van intends to protect her unborn child, her own health, the health of her family and other salon workers. She wants the world to care about the dangers she and others, who are largely immigrants from Vietnam and other Asian countries, have been facing from unregulated chemicals. Unraveled are the layers of a seemingly shy woman from Vietnam, who realizes she has something powerful to share with the world.

## Why the producers made *Painted Nails*

*Co-producers Dianne and Erica were initially fascinated by the proliferation of San Francisco nail salons, the Vietnamese women who work in them, and this affordable luxury so many women desired. When they entered the nail salons with translator and Associate Producer Nhung Pham, they realized the story was much deeper. The three women united to tell Van Nguyen’s story, as a labor of love and personal commitment to spread awareness about worker’s rights. Each of them had a personal connection to this story.*

*Dianne Griffin and Erica Jordan, with Associate Producer Nhung Pham*

For **Erica Jordan (co-producer/director)**, the immigrant themes that run through *Painted Nails* resonate with her deep connection to her grandmother --a Russian immigrant who worked in the New York garment industry and dedicated her life as a union organizer. Erica saw the connection between her grandmother's struggle to assure worker's rights in the 1900's and the health issues Van faces her workplace today. (for more info about Erica visit [pivotaleye.com](http://pivotaleye.com))

**Dianne Griffin's (co-producer/director)** Iranian husband was displaced by circumstances of the Revolution. She has been exposed first-hand to the immigrant experience in America. Dianne is reminded daily of their cultural differences. Through *Painted Nails*, Dianne was able to revisit themes she has explored in her past work, produced on many continents around the world – the complexities of a multicultural society and how we perceive and negotiate differences, the stranger, the other. (for more info about Dianne, visit [diannegriffin.com](http://diannegriffin.com))



**Nhung Pham** has been working to help the Vietnamese community since she immigrated here in 1998. In her Master's program in International and Development Economics, Nhung engaged in on-site field research on the impacts of pesticides and herbicides on the health and productivity of small farmers in Nam Dinh province in Vietnam. Nhung was drawn to working on *Painted Nails* because of her commitment to assisting the Vietnamese immigrant community; especially those friends who suffer the consequences of working daily in the toxic environment of nail salons.

Join us for ***Painted Nails*** screening at the Sebastopol Documentary Festival

Saturday, March 19th. 5:15p.m.  
Red Hen Room, Sebastopol Center for the Arts  
282 South High Street, Sebastopol, California 95472

Tickets can be purchased at <http://sebastopolfilmfestival.org/films/painted-nails/>

For more information: [PaintedNailsMovie.com](http://PaintedNailsMovie.com)

**Painted Nails, a documentary by**

Dianne Griffin and Erica Jordan, with Associate Producer Nhung Pham

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