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TRAVEL

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CELEBRITY TRAVELER

Castillo is drawn to Brazil's beauty

BY JAE-HA KIM
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Raised in Chicago and currently a resident of Los Angeles, Alex Castillo portrays a row inmate awaiting his execution in Chinonye Chukwu's film "Clemency." There's a big buzz surrounding the film, which won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize earlier this year. Castillo is also the founder of Castle2000 Films, which aims to produce thought-provoking and diverse projects.

An edited version of our conversation follows.

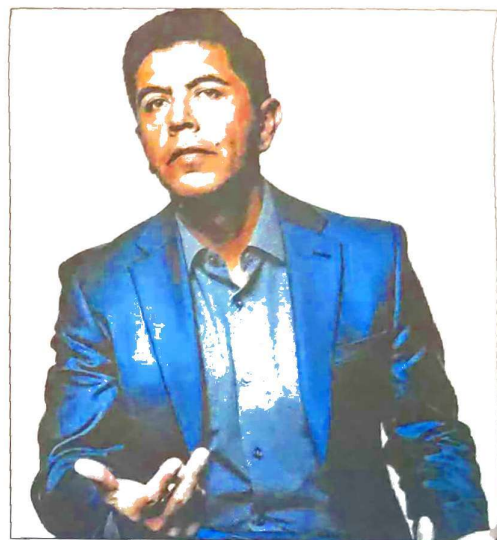
Q: Does a movie's location, rather than filming on a stage set, make a difference in how you tackle your role?

A: It absolutely does. We shot "Clemency" in a decommissioned prison (in Los Angeles). It was really helpful to walk the halls, sit inside jail cells, feel the cold of the steel bars and cement walls. It helped me ground my character — Victor Jimenez — and (understand) his world.

Q: How have your travels impacted how you view equality or inequality within the world?

A: I am very privileged to have traveled a lot of the world, especially the third world. It is through my travels that I have a great understanding of the inequalities existing in the world. I find great inspiration in traveling and credit my work in the social impact space in order to help make the world a better place.

Q: What is your favor-



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ite vacation destination?

A: Thailand. I have been a dozen times and can't wait to get back there again (to) get lost in the streets, smells and sounds of Bangkok. There is nothing like it in the world. The shopping is awesome too.

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?

A: The neighborhoods in my hometown of Chicago. Lots to see and do all year round.

Q: What was the first trip you took as a child? And did you love it ... or not so much?

A: Wisconsin Dells. My parents just loved that place and I grew to love it too. A quick drive from Chicago.

Q: If you could only pick one place to eat, which would you choose: a casual meal at a street cart or fine dining at a nice restaurant?

A: Street carts in Mexico City's Zocalo — the main city square. There are no better tacos anywhere in the world. A close second would be the street carts in the Patpong district of Bangkok for chicken pad Thai.

Q: Where is the most

romantic destination?

A: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I was lucky enough to live there for two years. The natural beauty of the place, but also the natural beauty of its people, makes it the most romantic place for me in the world.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?

A: Antigua, Guatemala. My family is originally from Guatemala and I love the vibe there at Christmas time.

Q: Where have you traveled to that most reminded you of home?

A: Santiago, Chile. It's Southern California in the southern hemisphere.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

A: Antarctica. It would complete my quest to travel to all seven continents.

Q: What is your best and/or worst vacation memory?

A: Island-hopping in Greece has been the best. I don't have a worst vacation memory and I hopefully never will.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.