Jose Antonio Vargas is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and filmmaker whose work centers on the changing American identity. He is the founder of Define American, a non-profit media and culture organization that seeks to elevate the conversation around immigration and citizenship in America, and the founder and editor of #EmergingUS, a digital magazine focusing on race, immigration, and identity in a multicultural America that will launch in 2016. In 2015, MTV aired, as part of its “Look Different” campaign, White People, a television special he produced and directed on what it means to be young and white in contemporary America.

In June 2011, the New York Times Magazine published a groundbreaking essay he wrote in which he revealed and chronicled his life in America as an undocumented immigrant. A year later, he appeared on the cover of TIME magazine worldwide with fellow undocumented immigrants as part of a follow-up cover story he wrote. He then produced and directed Documented, a documentary feature film on his undocumented experience. It world premiered at the AFI Docs film festival in Washington, D.C. in 2013, was released theatrically and broadcast on CNN in 2014, and received a 2015 NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding Documentary. Documented is now available on various digital platforms.

The media’s evolution and the rise of the digital era has guided his career. He has written for daily newspapers (Philadelphia Daily News, San Francisco Chronicle) and national magazines (Rolling Stone, The New Yorker), and was a senior contributing editor at the Huffington Post, where he launched the Technology and College sections. Prior to that, he covered tech and video game culture, HIV/AIDS in the nation’s capital, and the 2008 presidential campaign for the Washington Post, and was part of the team that won a Pulitzer Prize for covering the Virginia Tech massacre. In 2007, Politico named him one of 50 Politicos to Watch. His 2006 series on HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C. inspired a documentary feature film, The Other City, which he co-produced and wrote. It world premiered at the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival and aired on Showtime. He has appeared on an array of television and radio programs, including: Good Morning America, The O’Reilly Factor, The Colbert Report, Univision’s Aquí y Ahora, and The Filipino Channel’s Balitang America.

Among other accolades he has received are: a Public Service Award from the National Council of La Raza, the country’s largest Latino advocacy organization; the Salem Award from the Salem Award Foundation, which draws upon the
lessons of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692; the Freedom to Write Award from PEN Center USA; and an honorary Doctor of Letters from Colby College.

A very proud graduate of San Francisco State University (‘04), where he was named Alumnus of the Year in 2012, and Mountain View High School (‘00), he loves jazz, hip-hop, and anything by Gershwin, and worships at the altars of Altman, Almodovar, Didion, Baldwin, and Orwell.

He lives in Los Angeles, California.