

La Civil

a film by Teodora Ana Mihai

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cinéfondation
LA RÉSIDENCE

Technical Information

Working Title: La Civil
Director: Teodora Ana Mihai
Screenplay: Habacuc Antonio De Rosario & Teodora Ana Mihai
Nationality: Belgium/Romania/Mexico
Genre: Drama
Format: HD
Length: 110 min
Shooting location: Mexico
Production Company: One For The Road Bvba (Belgium)
E-mail: info@onefortheroadfilms.com

Director's Biography

Teodora Ana Mihai was born under Ceausescu's regime. In 1989 she was reunited in Belgium with her parents, who had fled the year before. She completed her film studies at Sarah Lawrence College, NY. Her feature documentary *Waiting for August* was awarded with more than 10 prizes and was nominated for the European Film Awards. Currently, she is developing the feature doc *Alice* and the fiction *La Civil*, also selected for the ScriptLab workshop of Torino Film Lab. Her films take on the challenge of striking a balance between social relevance and audio-visual poetry.

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Since 2000, the Festival Residence has provided each year accommodation and support to twelve selected young directors in order to help them prepare their first or second feature film. A jury presided by a film director sits twice a year, selecting these young filmmakers on the basis of their short films, or

even first feature film, and the merits of their feature film project. During their 4-and-a-half-month stay in Paris, they work on the writing of their feature film project, have meetings with professionals and try, with the support of the Cannes Film Festival, to bring their project to co-production status.



A mother's extraordinary transformation after her daughter's kidnapping by a violent drug cartel.



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Synopsis

Cielo's teenage daughter is kidnapped by a local drug cartel in a small North Mexican town. Despite significant efforts to gather enough money with her ex-husband Gustavo to pay several ransoms, the girl is not returned.

When Gustavo adopts a fatalistic attitude and the authorities offer no support in the search, Cielo takes matters in her own hands beginning her own investigation in search of her child. She manages to earn the trust and sympathy of an army Lieutenant who agrees to assist her – off the record – in exchange for intel which she can provide as a local.

No longer the passive housewife she once was, Cielo obsessively pursues the cartel members who wronged her, unaware that this will pull her into the vicious cycle of violence that made her a victim in the first place.

Despite making progress in her own investigation and – in the process – helping other victims, Cielo is unable to reunite with her daughter; her relentless search however, puts her in the crosshairs of cartel members and dubious officials alike.

Statement of Intent

“When I wake up, how do I feel? I don't know, like killing... or dying. That is how I feel every morning.” This was told to me a couple of years ago by a Mexican middle-aged woman, a housewife, a mother. These words felt like a slap in the face and I couldn't help but wonder what someone – especially someone with her profile – must have gone through to come to such a strong conclusion.

La Civil was inspired by many testimonies of drug war victims, but particularly by this mother's account. Losing her daughter at the hand of a drug cartel made her spiral from victim to perpetrator, perpetuating the vicious cycle of violence that had victimized her to start with. I felt this story carried an important message about the chronic environment of violence that people are subjected to in today's Mexico.

It was important for me to ally myself with Mexican writer Habacuc Antonio De Rosario to write out an authentic script on this delicate subject matter. Together, we set out to shed a light on this reality, and doing so through the rare point of view of a female protagonist, which gives *La Civil* its additional relevance and strength.

Quote from the mother's testimony which inspired this film:

“When I wake up, how do I feel? I don't know, like killing... or dying. That is how I feel every morning. So, I tell myself: my daughter is no longer here, but I will help the people who are living the same as me. Because I know they must feel the same way I feel every morning; I have realized we all wake up the same.”

March 2015

Synopsis

La fille adolescente de Cielo est kidnappée par un cartel local de la drogue dans une petite ville du nord du Mexique. Malgré des efforts importants pour rassembler l'argent avec son ex-mari Gustavo et payer les ransoms, sa fille n'est pas libérée.

Alors que Gustavo adopte une attitude fataliste et que les autorités n'offrent aucun soutien dans la recherche, Cielo prend les choses en mains en commençant sa propre enquête à la recherche de sa fille. Elle parvient à gagner la confiance et la sympathie d'un lieutenant de l'armée qui accepte de l'aider – officieusement – en échange d'informations qu'elle peut fournir en tant que locale.

Plus du tout la femme au foyer passive qu'elle était autrefois, Cielo poursuit obsessionnellement les membres du cartel qui lui ont fait du tort, ignorant que cela l'attirera dans le cercle vicieux de la violence qui a fait d'elle une victime en premier lieu.

Malgré les progrès réalisés dans sa propre enquête et, tout en aidant d'autres victimes, Cielo est incapable de retrouver sa fille; sa recherche implacable la place cependant dans le collimateur des membres du cartel et des officiels douteux.

Note d'intention

« Quand je me réveille, comment je me sens? Je ne sais pas, avec l'envie de tuer... ou de mourir. C'est ce que je ressens tous les matins. » Cela m'a été raconté il y a quelques années par une Mexicaine d'âge moyen, une femme au foyer, une mère. Ses mots m'ont paru comme une claque dans la figure et je n'ai pu m'empêcher de me demander ce que quelqu'un – surtout quelqu'un avec son profil – a dû endurer pour parvenir à une telle conclusion forte.

La Civil a été inspirée par de nombreux témoignages de victimes de la drogue, mais surtout par le récit de cette mère. Perdre sa fille aux mains d'un cartel de la drogue l'a fait passer de victime à agresseur, perpétuant le cercle vicieux de la violence dont elle avait été victime au départ. J'ai senti que cette histoire portait un message important sur l'environnement chronique de la violence à laquelle les gens sont soumis dans le Mexique d'aujourd'hui.

Il était important pour moi de travailler avec l'écrivain mexicain Habacuc Antonio De Rosario pour écrire un scénario authentique sur ce sujet délicat. Ensemble, nous cherchons à faire la lumière sur cette réalité, et ce, à travers le point de vue rare d'une protagoniste féminine, ce qui donne à *La Civil* sa pertinence et sa force supplémentaires.