



STRANGERS TO PEACE

After a lifetime of war, three former child soldiers abandon Colombia's FARC guerrilla army. They now face anxiety and danger as they attempt to rebuild their lives in a homeland that sees them as terrorists.

"...gives a human face to the FARC without sanitizing the guerilla movement's past actions."
-Film Threat

"...told through a very personal lens... its engaging rhythms and humanist point-of-view offer lessons..."
-Golden Globes

"... opens a necessary debate on the reintegration of former FARC members in Colombia."
-AL DÍA

"Some of the most well-developed characters I have ever seen in a documentary...This film stays with you like few others."
-Tom Musca, Writer/Producer

"Poignant and powerful... a roller coaster of emotions."
-Overly Honest Movie Reviews

"...a marvel of deeply humanistic storytelling."
-Gabriel Rhenals, Director

EDGECLIFFE MEDIA PRESENTS "STRANGERS TO PEACE" MUSIC BY NASCUY LINARES EDITED BY MATTHEW COHN
DIRECTED BY LAURA ANGEL AND NOAH DEBONIS PRODUCED BY LAURA ANGEL AND NOAH DEBONIS
AND COLLEEN O'BRIEN CO-PRODUCED BY RAJIV SMITH-MAHABIR AND MARGARET CARDILLO
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LAURA ANGEL AND RAJIV SMITH-MAHABIR EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NOAH DEBONIS

An aerial view of a dense city, likely Bogotá, Colombia, with a stone wall and three people in the foreground. The people are looking out over the city. One person is holding a camera. There is a blue telescope-like structure on the wall. The city is filled with buildings and skyscrapers, with a hazy atmosphere.

SYNOPSIS

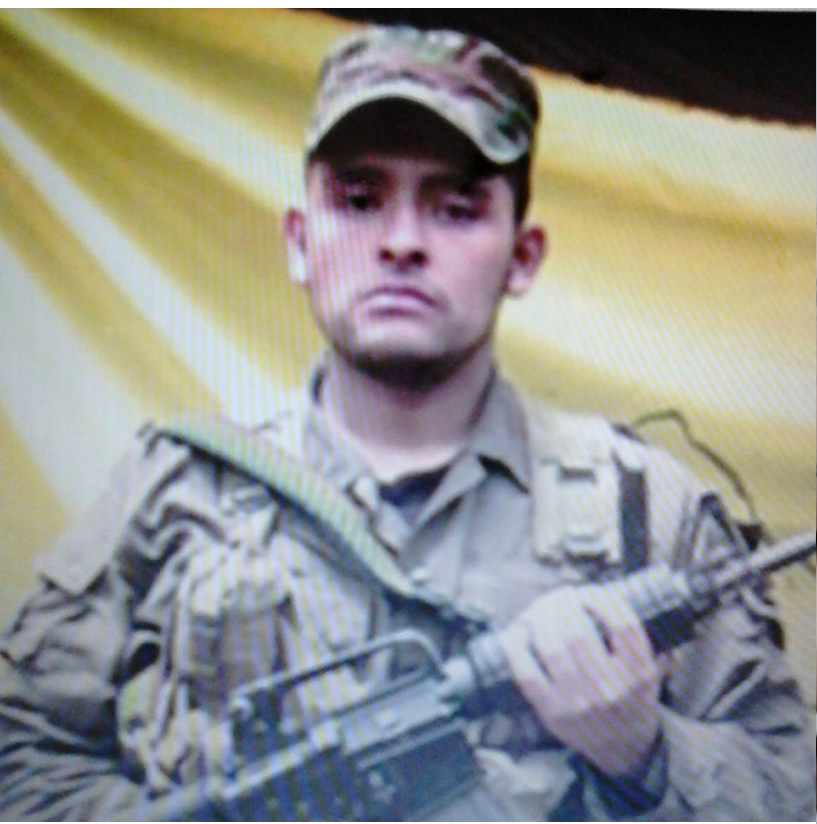
Three former child soldiers face retribution, anxiety, and danger as they attempt to rebuild their lives after leaving the FARC guerrilla army and the bloody Colombian conflict. *Strangers to Peace* intimately captures the personal stories of Dayana, the market vendor navigating her new identity as a trans woman; Ricardo, the young father secretly clinging to his communist ideology; and Alexandra, the indigenous child soldier, who was forced to leave her family behind in the Amazon. Their stories are told through the lens of filmmaker Laura Àngel, who herself was a victim of FARC violence.

CHARACTERS

RICARDO

Ricardo (26) grew up in southern Bogotá – the wrong side of the tracks in a city divided by an invisible poverty line. Growing up among sharp inequality made a lasting impression. He was conscripted into the FARC at 14 by his high school teacher and spent the next six years as a clandestine recruiter. Ricardo also fought in the jungle until an assassination attempt from his comrades disillusioned him to the cause. After deserting the FARC, Ricardo returns to Bogotá with dreams of becoming a teacher.

Now Ricardo supports himself by working at the agency responsible for the FARC's reintegration while taking night classes. After becoming a father, his priorities have shifted, and it has opened new wounds: his mother implores him to teach his daughter not to take up arms, but Ricardo protests that his daughter must choose her own path. As a guerrilla, his former life had purpose; now he feels like a cog in the machine and longs to take action. Long sleeves cover his rebel tattoos, but are his revolutionary ideas too ingrained to let him move on?



CHARACTERS

DAYANA

Dayana (47) spent 25 years in the FARC but today, in the slums of Bogotá, she's worlds away from the jungles she once knew. These days she passes unnoticed in the market where she works; here nobody asks for a resume or questions her experience. Describing her childhood, she talks of the mother who abandoned her: "Being in the FARC was the first time I felt like I had a family." But even from them she had something to hide: she was born Javier but has always known she was transgender – a fact she kept secret as it was punishable by death.

Since escaping from the FARC, she has partly transitioned into life as a woman. However, she struggles to connect with others, even those in the LGBTQ community, worrying that her guerilla past might make friendships impossible. Nevertheless, she has befriended a fellow transgender woman, Andrea, but quickly learns that Andrea and her family were displaced when the FARC massacred their town. Will Dayana be able to reveal her guerrilla past and, if so, will her friend accept her?



CHARACTERS

ALEXANDRA

Alexandra (21) doesn't feel at home in her new town of Valledupar. Years ago, she lived a very different life as the daughter of the chief of the Barasana tribe but that was a thousand miles away in Pacoa, an indigenous village in the Amazon closed off to the outside world. After running away at 12 to escape her mother's abuse, she was recruited by the FARC and has never returned. Now she'd give anything to see her family; when she tries to imagine them, she can't even picture their faces.

It's hard for Alexandra to talk about her sadness, even to her boyfriend José. She knows the trip would be dangerous as her old FARC battalion, the First Front, has refused to demobilize and still holds power near Pacoa. If they were to discover that a deserter has returned she could be executed. When Alexandra receives a message informing her that her parents are alive and want to see her, she must decide whether to undertake the journey. But Alexandra is left wondering: will her family truly accept her once they learn about her secret past in the FARC?



FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

When I was young, my grandfather would tell me horror stories about the FARC guerrillas. He referred to them as “demonios” who could camouflage themselves in the jungle, dodge bullets, and massacre entire towns without ever being seen. In part, these stories were fueled by my own family’s displacement; it was my grandfather’s generation that lost our farm and relocated to Bogotá, like millions of other victims of the armed conflict. Growing up in Colombia, the headlines were always about the FARC. The message was clear: the FARC were responsible for the violence around us. During this time, my family would occasionally allow refugees from the war to camp in our backyard, a constant reminder that I was reliving the same conflict as my grandfather.

At 23, while working in a rural region, I was held by the FARC for three days. Guerrilla soldiers stopped my bus, and when they entered holding rifles, I feared the worst. Those three days were the most frightening of my life, but I was ultimately released. This incident never left my mind, and it is the impetus behind my desire to better understand the circumstances and motivations of those who joined the FARC. For me, this film is as much about documenting the lives of the guerrillas as it is about personal forgiveness and finally bringing about an end to the conflict.

In 2016, I met co-director Noah DeBonis, who was living in Colombia at the time. Noah and I instantly connected: he’d grown up among displaced people in a Vietnamese refugee camp where his parents worked as teachers. Like me, he wanted to tell stories about marginalized people trying to rebuild their lives. Together with producer Colleen O’Brien, a linguist and anthropologist conducting fieldwork in Colombia, we began filming footage for what would later become *Strangers to Peace*. The peace agreement had just been signed and thousands of FARC guerrillas would soon lay down their arms to return to society.

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT (CONT'D)

We wondered: What had driven them to leave their homes and join a violent rebel movement? And how would they now be able to live alongside ordinary Colombians?

Co-Director DeBonis and I are now married and work together as a filmmaking team. We are committed to making documentaries through an observational approach and telling stories that are authentic and focus on groups living outside of mainstream society. I believe it is important to tell stories not often seen in the media that make us consider difficult questions surrounding justice, victimhood, and reconciliation. Through *Strangers to Peace*, our first feature documentary, we showcase the challenges that these armed rebel soldiers face as they attempt to rebuild their lives.

-Laura Ángel





DIRECTOR/PRODUCER: LAURA ÁNGEL

Laura is a Colombian filmmaker and screenwriter. She has produced several short films including *Gallo* (2014) and *El instructivo del buitro* (2014), winner of The 48-Hour Film Project Bogotá. Her latest film, *Pichirilo* (2016), was an official selection at the 2016 Bogotá Short Film Festival. She is a graduate of the Politécnico Grancolombiano, where she majored in media studies.



DIRECTOR/PRODUCER: NOAH DEBONIS

Noah DeBonis was born in the Philippines, raised in Japan, lived in Colombia, and now calls Los Angeles home. His work as a Director and Editor has been featured on Netflix, Amazon, BBC America, Spotify, CBS, CNBC, The Smithsonian, and more. *Strangers to Peace*, which he is directing alongside his wife Laura Ángel Rengifo, is his first feature film and has been supported by the Sundance Institute. His short film *Posthumous* (2014) won a College Emmy Award. He is currently editing the Netflix documentary series *Last Chance U*.



PRODUCER: COLLEEN ALENA O'BRIEN

Colleen studies indigenous languages and cultures in Colombia. Her work focuses on linguistic description and language documentation while incorporating ethnographic filmmaking into her projects. She holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Hawai'i and degrees in Classics and Anthropology from the University of Miami. She is currently writing a book about the reintegration of ex-combatants at the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

Our film emphasizes the themes of loss, acceptance, and reconciliation through vérité storytelling. Interviews are minimal, and the narrative is told by observing our subjects' circumstances and challenges, pausing only when contemplation is necessary. Sweeping shots of the Amazon jungle and mass protests are set against intimate scenes of Ricardo telling his daughter about his guerrilla past and Alexandra reuniting with her family.

Steady shots and drone footage promote a cinematic quality. Our camera focuses on subtleties: the minutiae of a character's expression, an offhand gesture, or a veiled reaction convey meaning as effectively as dialogue. Deliberately constructed sound design captures the sounds of Colombia from its bustling streets to its remote jungles.



SCREENINGS & AWARDS

Miami Film Festival March 6, 2022
World Premiere / Documentary Achievement Award Runner-Up

University Film and Video Association July 30, 2022
Best Documentary Award

New York Latino Film Festival September 15, 2022
NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Documentary Directing

Trinidad + Tobago Film Festival September 23, 2022

Seattle Latino Film Festival October 8, 2022

Heartland International Film Festival October 10, 2022

San Francisco Latino Film Festival October 12, 2022

Toronto Latin American Film Festival October 17, 2022

Portland Film Festival October 20, 2022

Sherman Oaks Film Festival October 21, 2022
Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary

Muestra Internacional Documental de Bogotá October 26, 2022

Key West Film Festival November 20, 2022

Flagler Film Festival January 20, 2023

Houston Latino Film Festival March 19, 2023

One World Festival March 27, 2023
Václav Havel Jury Award

València Indie Film Festival April 21, 2023

WITH SUPPORT FROM



SELECTED PRESS

Overly Honest Movie Reviews February 27, 2023

A Story That You Won't Believe

<https://ohmr.themailnewspapers.com/a-story-that-you-wont-believe>

Golden Globes February 23, 2023

"Strangers to Peace" Showcases Difficulties of Deprogramming Violence

<https://www.goldenglobes.com/articles/docs-strangers-peace-showcases-difficulties-deprogramming-violence>

Film Threat March 23, 2022

Strangers to Peace

<https://filmthreat.com/reviews/strangers-to-peace-ajenos-a-la-paz>

Screen Anarchy March 15, 2022

Miami Film Festival

<https://screenanarchy.com/2022/03/miami-film-festival-freya-parsley-win-jury-and-audience-awards.html>

El Tiempo March 10, 2022

Documental 'Strangers to Peace' reflexiona sobre el process de paz

<https://www.eltiempo.com/cultura/cine-y-tv/strangers-to-peace-reflexiona-sobre-el-proceso-de-paz-colombiano-657304>

AL DÍA March 4, 2022

Ten Latino Movies to Watch at the Miami Film Festival

<https://www.aldianews.com/culture/screen/latinos-miff>



TECHNICAL DETAILS

Title	Strangers to Peace
Run time	88 minutes
Aspect ratio	16:9
Format	1080p, DCP, ProRes
Sound	5.1 & Stereo LtRt
Language	Spanish
Subtitles	English
Country	Colombia

CREDITS

Directors

Laura Ángel
Noah DeBonis

Writers

Laura Ángel
Noah DeBonis
Matthew Cohn
Ricardo Acosta
Colleen O'Brien

Directors of Photography

Rajiv Smith-Mahabir
Laura Ángel

Producers

Laura Ángel
Noah DeBonis
Colleen O'Brien

Co-Producers

Rajiv Smith-Mahabir
Margaret Cardillo

Editor

Matthew Cohn

Advising Editors

Ricardo Acosta
Andrea Cignoli

Executive Producer

Noah DeBonis

Music Composer

Nascuy Linares

Sound Design/Post Production Coordinator

Jorge Fernandez

Colorist

Anthony Tocchio

Associate Producers

Pivote Cine
Leilani Gushiken
L.A. Strucke
Jules M. Vanfau

Communications/Grants

Giulio Rocca

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