

Armadillo Productions present

The Echo of Pain of the Many

PRINCIPAL PRODUCTION FACTS

Director:

Ana Lucía Cuevas

Producers:

Ana Lucía Cuevas, Fred Coker

Documentary feature,

95 minutes, Hi-definition

Language versions available:

Spanish

English

Formats available:

PAL , NTSC

DVD , Blu Ray, Quick Time

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SYNOPSIS SET

In **'The Echo of Pain of the Many'** we witness a moving, thought-provoking and rare documentary by a Latin American woman, recording her return from exile and into the still dangerous and volatile political environment of contemporary Guatemala. Filmed over the course of four years, writer-director Ana Lucia Cuevas discovers, through the archived records of the perpetrators of the crimes themselves, the involvement of her own government in the abduction, torture and murders of her brother and his young family.

At each stop on what becomes an emotional and investigative as well as cinematic journey, another piece of this puzzle of a personal and national tragedy is brought into focus by the filmmaker. This remarkable debut documentary is also, in equal parts, a forensic examination of historical evidence, and a testament to how the endurance of love can overcome fear.

En route to Guatemala Lucia visits Boston, meeting with world-renown author and political analyst Professor Noam Chomsky, who puts the US intervention in Guatemala into the context of their wider historical designs for hegemony across the region. His contribution regarding the role and strategy of the US historical intervention in Latin America is brought vividly to life by unique footage shot by the US military itself.

His account is further confirmed as Lucia travels to New York City, where she finds, in recently de-classified State Department documents, the role of the CIA in the 1954 overthrow of Guatemala's elected Government, the event that culminated in the rising up against the military dictatorship of the popular opposition of which she and her family were a part.

Lucia first discovers the details about the ultimate and tragic destiny of her brother, Carlos, upon meeting Kate Doyle (Senior Analyst at the National Security Archive), with whom she examines the history and content of a unique Guatemalan Intelligence Services' dossier, known as 'the Military Diary.' This chilling document is the Government's own record of their surveillance, "intelligence gathering," and eventual abduction and murder of 183 members of the political opposition and ordinary civilians. It's in this horrific dossier that the director reads the Guatemalan state's own coded, handwritten note of when they carried out her brother's execution.

Travelling across the breadth of Guatemala, visiting police archives, mass 'clandestine' graves, indigenous communities who have suffered genocide, and the first trial in over 25 years of those responsible, Lucia brings vividly to life a contemporary political-military conflict through a cinematic portrait of the personal experiences of her own family, and of those fellow survivors whom she meets along her travels.

Given that the personnel responsible for the genocide in Guatemala are still at large and have not been prosecuted, it was necessary for the filmmaker and her cameraman to work as a 2-person team, adopting as low a public profile as possible. This contributes to the program's intimate character. And it is these very personal whilst often harrowing true stories of the other survivors, the mothers, daughters, sisters ... the families of the disappeared, whose courage and testimonies sustain the filmmaker across her intimate and difficult journey, and leave the viewer as a fellow witness to the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity in this loving and relentless search for justice.

As the story of the crimes committed against Guatemala's 45,000 disappeared plays out in original footage and unique photographic and film archive materials, we sense the profound absence left in the lives of each of those families and communities who remain behind. **'The Echo'** began as one particular woman's search for facts about the destiny of her brother. And yet, as she builds a historical montage of CIA intervention in Latin America, the inner workings of a modern, repressive 'Intelligence' apparatus, the practice of forensic science in the reconstruction of historical memory, and moving witness testimonies, Lucia takes us on a cinematic tour of the contemporary Guatemalan historical landscape. **'The Echo'** is a remarkable story of one family, but provides the starting point and context to understand the tragic events that brought such 'pain to the many.'

ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

In **'The Echo of Pain of the Many'** we witness a moving, thought-provoking and rare documentary by a Latin American woman, recording her return from exile and into the still dangerous and volatile political environment of contemporary Guatemala. Filmed over the course of four years, writer-director Ana Lucia Cuevas discovers, through the archived records of the perpetrators of the crimes themselves, the involvement of her own government and foreign Intelligence Services in the abduction, torture and murders of her brother and his young family. At each stop on what becomes an emotional and investigative as well as cinematic journey, from meeting with political analyst Noam Chomsky in the USA, on to travelling across the breadth of Guatemala, visiting police archives, mass 'clandestine' graves, indigenous communities who have suffered genocide, and the first trials in over 25 years of those responsible, one piece after another of this puzzle of a personal and national tragedy is brought into focus by the filmmaker. This remarkable debut feature documentary is also, in equal parts, a forensic examination of historical evidence, and a testament to how the endurance of love can overcome fear in one woman's, and a nation's search for justice and an end to impunity. **'The Echo'** is a remarkable story of one family, but provides the starting point and context to understand the tragic events that led, in Guatemala, to their 45,000 'disappearances' amongst civilians and the political opposition to dictatorship.

ONE SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

In **'The Echo of Pain of the Many'** we witness a moving, thought-provoking and rare documentary by a Latin American woman, recording her return from exile and into the still dangerous and volatile political environment of contemporary Guatemala, where over the course of four years, writer-director Ana Lucia Cuevas discovers, through the archived records of the perpetrators of the crimes themselves, the involvement of her own government and foreign Intelligence Services in the abduction, torture and murders of her brother and his young family.

PRODUCTION TEAM – Summary biographies

Ana Lucia Cuevas

B.A. in Graphic Arts, Academy of Fine Arts, Sofia, Bulgaria

Masters in Electronic Graphics, Goldsmith College, University of London, UK.

She began her professional career as a fine artist, with exhibitions in Europe and Central America.

Since 1995, she has worked as an independent producer, director and editor in England, France, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

In 2006, she co-founded Armadillo Productions with Fred Coker.

Fred Coker

B.A. in European Studies from Lehigh University, USA (1972)

Diploma in Cinematography from London International Film School (1974)

He was a founder member of Workers Film Association (London, 1975) and WFA Media & Cultural Centre (Manchester, 1979), as cameraman in their production unit (ACTT/BECTU), and as head of the Film & Video Distribution Dept. (1975-1990).

Earned a PGCE (teaching degree) in 1990, eventually becoming an advisory teacher specialising in the use of ICT to support Inclusion and Special Needs.

In 2006, he co-founded Armadillo Productions with Ana Lucia Cuevas.

Joshua Lorenz

Graduated in 2008 with a BSc. in Media Technology from Salford University, before working as a freelance editor and sound engineer in the Northwest of England.

Since 2010, he has worked, as well, as an editor for Asta Films, based in central Manchester. Josh spends his spare time creating music under the pseudonym, 'Confetti Tsunami', and with the band Mock Riot.

Gerardo Martínez

B.A. from the National (Autonomous) University of Honduras, with a further specialization in script writing from the University of Madrid (2011).

He heads the Video Production Dept. for the NGO 'Comunica' in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, producing social issue-based documentaries, and works as an independent editor.

Gerardo writes and performs original music, and is a founder member of the popular Honduran-based music group, Pez Luna.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Director, scriptwriter

Ana Lucía Cuevas

Producers

Ana Lucía Cuevas

Fred Coker

Lighting cameraman / location sound

Fred Coker

Editors

Gerardo Martinez

Ana Lucía Cuevas

Narrator

Ana Lucía Cuevas

Post-production sound

Mike Thornton

Archive photography

Jean Marie Simon

Mauro Calanchina

James Rodríguez

Patricia Goudvis

Fundación Myrna Mack

Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo

Archive Film / Video

Asociación Comunicarte (Guatemala)

Rob Brouwer (Amnesty International – The Netherlands)

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos (Guatemala)

Mikael Wahlforss

Original Music

Emilio Talva (Guatemala)

Joshua Lorenz (England)

Gerardo Martinez (Honduras)

A film by Ana Lucia Cuevas

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born in a country deeply divided by social differences, one in which political involvement and discussion was 'gagged.' Guatemala suffered 36 years of fratricide and civil war, a war conducted, in the main, by the State against its own people.

I grew up in the middle of all that, in the heart of a family with deep democratic principles, for which we ultimately paid an extremely high price: the ransacking of our house by the police and Intelligence Services; death threats; the disappearance, in 1984, of my brother Carlos; the subsequent abduction, torture and murder of my sister-in-law Rosario Godoy, her younger brother, and her 2-year old son; and finally, political exile.

From an early age I wanted to be part of the destiny of my country, and so became a member of the Opposition movement that aspired to have a more just society for everyone. The campaign for the release or recovery of my brother has been long and tortuous. The most recent phase began with the discovery of the historical archive of the National Police in Guatemala City, and culminated with the formal recognition by the Government of Guatemala, in June 2011, of their direct responsibility for the crimes committed against our family. The principal difference in the work over the period 2007-11, is that I decided to take up the camera and to document my return journey, and the investigations carried out across the USA, Costa Rica and Guatemala (Nb. ...although this created even more pressure within a process that was, in itself, complicated enough!).

The production of **'The Echo of Pain of the Many'** has been the most ambitious project of my life, both from an emotional and from a technical point of view. I don't like to view myself on the screen, but I understood, from the beginning, that this story needed the intimacy and directness of being told in the first person, from a participant rather than an observer.

I wanted to make a film which takes as a starting point my family history, but which transforms into an 'echo' representing thousands of similar stories, and gives voice, in that way, to those who don't have access to the tools of communication that we have worked hard to build up.

As too often I have seen my country and our history portrayed from an 'outsiders' point-of-view, with an approach that frequently reinforced old stereotypes, this motivated me to produce a documentary that more closely represented our true identity and aspirations. That is why I took special care in all the details of the production, from the tone we used to tell the story, the manner in which we spoke with other survivors, to the avoidance of using filters aimed at presenting this harsh history in a more 'stylistic' manner. And so, in this case, I feel both privileged and obliged to tell the story as a Guatemalan.

I wanted to contextualize my family history in an effort to contribute to a more profound reading of what happened in Guatemala in the last half of the 20th century. That is why the documentary starts with an introduction, based on their own film footage and de-classified Government documents, of the role that the United States played in the establishment of the Guatemalan 'intelligence services', and the re-building of the armed forces of subsequent military dictators. Although I have always maintained that the testimonies of thousands of victims of the war was evidence 'enough' about what really happened during the conflict in Guatemala, I insisted that my story was based, as much as possible and appropriate, on documentary evidence.

We made an effort to recall what it was really like to grow up and try to survive in a country ruled by violent military regimes. But we also tried to portray those who today, in spite of all the difficulties, continue to try to establish justice and a process of democracy in my country.

In Guatemala today, there are many and diverse discussions going on around the need to 're-visit the past as a way to inform the present'. There are those who say these only return us to prolonging the agony. Others, including me, insist that reconciliation must be based on the recognition of what really happened, and that this is the only way to build a foundation for a healthy and sustainable democratic future.

The Guatemala of today is very different to that in which I grew up. I am profoundly convinced that my children's generation must know the origin of the pain still present in the hearts and minds of my fellow Guatemalans, and that we have been carrying, too often in silence, for over a quarter of a century. The **'Echo'**, as a film, is but one of many voices in Guatemala today addressing this objective.

Ana Lucía Cuevas
Manchester, England 2012

PRODUCTION HISTORY

For 27 years, since I had to leave my country, I lived with the desire to tell the story of what happened in Guatemala and to my immediate family.

Since 1996, when the 'Peace Accords' were signed between the guerrilla and the Army, I have returned countless times. But the decision to come back to Guatemala with film equipment, and to document my journey, was not easy.

Various events that had taken place over the previous few years had given me hope to find information on the fate or whereabouts of my brother, Carlos, who had been disappeared in May 1984.

The United States' Dept. of State, under pressure of numerous Freedom of Information Act requests, began to de-classify more and more documents related to both overt and covert activities of the US Government in Latin America.

In 1999, a document came to light that has become known as **'the Military Diary.'** This is regarded as being a key and unique document of the Intelligence Services of the Guatemalan Government, in which they recorded their capture and execution of members of the political Opposition and civilian members of the public, and which included entries for my brother, Carlos Ernesto Cuevas.

And finally, in 2005, a secret archive of the now-disbanded Guatemalan National Police was discovered in Guatemala City. Of the 70 million documents discovered, it is thought that 7 million relate to human rights abuses perpetrated by the Guatemalan state. This last event, in particular, renewed my hopes to find more evidence as to the whereabouts or fate of Carlos.

With the news of the discovery of the Police Archive, I felt I had no other option than to return home and continue the search. This time, however, I wanted to document the journey, and all that I found.

The situation in Guatemala was, and still is, highly fragile and violent, especially now with the return to power of the military in January 2012. Given that my investigations were going to involve research on the role of the Army and police in mass human rights violations, I was particularly sensitive to questions of our personal safety and security, as well as of those we would be meeting.

This led us to consider carefully how we moved about, how and where we conducted interviews, and what type of equipment would be most portable and yet of the highest quality (e.g. HD). Finally, was I going to be physically and emotionally able to re-engage with the search, continue with the on-going legal processes in which we were engaged with the Government of Guatemala, and to direct the production of a documentary?

With an original objective of making the programme suitable for television broadcast, we decided to shoot in Hi-definition. To facilitate the transport of equipment, we abandoned the idea of using tape, and invested in the new solid state technology (P2). In 2007, after a lot of research, we established contacts with a wide range of NGOs who worked in the field of human rights, as well with renowned

authorities such as Professor Noam Chomsky, and National Security Archive Senior Analyst Kate Doyle.

One of the most difficult components was acquiring archive footage from the period of the late 1970s to the mid 1980s in Guatemala. Much of what was filmed during this era, in respect to the events to which the documentary refers, was recorded by foreign journalists, or by local television channels that subsequently went out of existence, and whose 'owners' were sympathizers of the previous Military regimes, and therefore not willing to release materials to anyone they might perceive to be 'the Opposition.'

However, and fortunately, in Guatemala we have an organisation called 'Asociación Comunicarte,' an independent cultural arts and video production group who have been active for the past 30 years, and who gave unconditional support to the project.

In addition, we knew that many activists from Europe and North America had recorded material during the period of the height of the civil war. Dutch documentary filmmaker and Amnesty International activist Rob Brouwer provided additional important footage.

Jean Marie Simon, from the USA, provided us with unrestricted access to her incredible archive of photographs from this period, many of which had featured in her book, '**Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny**'. The photographs of Mauro Calanchina, the late Swiss activist who had lived and worked for years in Guatemala, were made available to us by his widow, Ximena Morales. These were, as well, of great importance for our depicting the atmosphere and activities of the time.

For four years (whenever we had earned enough money and the time to travel), we travelled to Guatemala to cover important events, e.g. the first ever trial of a member of the Military for the crime of 'forced disappearance' of a member of the civilian population.

Principally, I was meeting fellow survivors as a member of a family who had suffered murders and disappearance of a loved one, and not solely as my being the 'director of a film.' The fact that we could explain the purpose of the project, that we could allow audiences to 'hear the voice of the disappeared,' this enabled me the privilege of having intimate conversations with a group of incredible people whom, during the course of the work, I began to regard as my new 'brothers' and 'sisters.' Even when I met and spoke with Professor Chomsky, because of his humility and warmth, I felt as if I was speaking to a member of my own family.

As a Guatemalan, as a documentary filmmaker, I was always aware of the rare and special opportunity that I had in my hands, making use of the medium that I had always considered so powerful. It has been a privilege to share my story with extraordinary people. They gave their time, their stories, and wished me the strength to carry on. This work is dedicated to them.



Professor Noam Chomsky:
“They call it ‘communism’ but what they really mean is social reform...”



It was during Holy Week, a period of profound spiritual reflection, that Rosario Godoy was assassinated along her young family.



**Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst
National Security Archive,
New York**

“That represents the bad seed that was planted in that coup by the United States in Guatemala...”



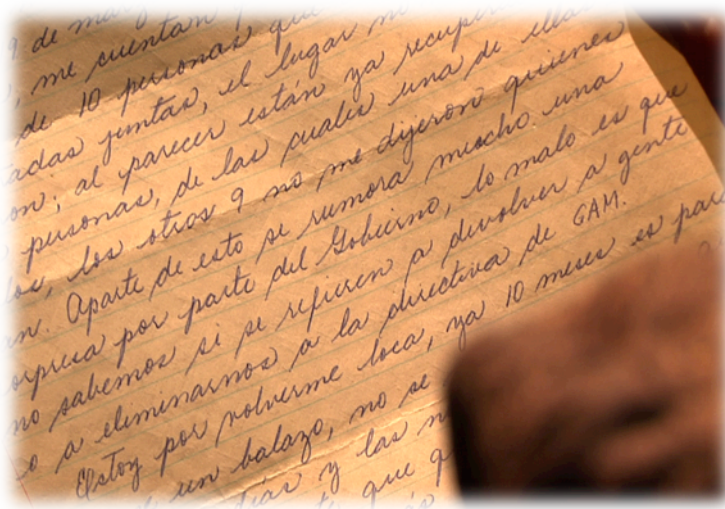
Gustavo Meoño
Director of the National
Police Archive

"Those actions against Carlos Cuevas and his family were part of a general plan and a series of actions from the State to eliminate the opposition..."



Outside the first trial
against a military
commissioner for 'forced
disappearances.

"This is a very important step, a gigantic step, in the fight against impunity because this has never happened here before."



Letter written by Rosario
Godoy to her family, days
before her assassination.

"There are rumours of a 'great surprise' from the government. We don't know whether they are going to release our loved ones or 'eliminate' the leaders of GAM"