



# STRANGERS TO PEACE

After a lifetime of war, three former 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 NASCUIY 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, high-angle view of a sprawling city, likely Bogotá, Colombia, with numerous skyscrapers and dense urban development. In the foreground, three people are standing on a stone wall, looking out over the city. A blue, cylindrical monument or sculpture is visible on the left side of the stone wall.

## SYNOPSIS

Three former 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

**Belfast Film Festival** November 8, 2023

**Saarbrücken Latino Film Fest** November 13, 2023

**Festival Internacional de Cine el Ojo Cojo** November 17, 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>

**El Espectador** February 18, 2023

La cinta "Ajenos a la paz" ahonda en el presente y pasado de excombatientes

<https://www.elespectador.com/el-magazin-cultural/la-cinta-ajenos-a-la-paz-ahonda-en-el-presente-y-pasado-de-exintegrantes-farianos/>

**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

### **Advising Editors**

Ricardo Acosta  
Andrea Cignoli

### **Writers**

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

### **Executive Producer**

Noah DeBonis

### **Music Composer**

Nascuy Linares

### **Directors of Photography**

Rajiv Smith-Mahabir  
Laura Ángel

### **Sound Design/Post Production Coordinator**

Jorge Fernandez

### **Producers**

Laura Ángel  
Noah DeBonis  
Colleen O'Brien

### **Colorist**

Anthony Tocchio

### **Co-Producers**

Rajiv Smith-Mahabir  
Margaret Cardillo

### **Associate Producers**

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

### **Editor**

Matthew Cohn

### **Communications/Grants**

Giulio Rocca



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