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# Violencia

## Violence

### Jorge Forero

**Producer** Diana Bustamante, Paola Pérez, Camilo Ganado, Felipe Aguilar, Carlos Congote, Maximiliano Cruz, Sandra Gomez, Katrin Pors. **Production companies** Burning Blue (Bogotá, Colombia); PostBros (Bogotá, Colombia); Blond Indian Films (Bogotá, Colombia); Congo Films (Bogotá, Colombia); Interior XIII (Mexico City, Mexico). **Director** Jorge Forero. **Screenplay** Jorge Forero. **Director of photography** David Gallego. **Production design** Angélica Perea. **Costume** Ramses Ramos. **Make-up** Liliana Cabrejo. **Sound** Carolina del Mar Fernández. **Sound design** Carlos Garcia. **Editor** Sebastián Hernández, Jorge Forero. **Cast** Rodrigo Vélez (Kidnapped), David Aldana (BMX boy), Nelson Camayo (Paramilitary).

DCP, colour. 74 min. Spanish.

**Premiere** 7 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

Cicadas and birdsong, a black screen, the jungle floor coming into view at the start of day. A leisurely tracking shot: roots, moss, a metal chain, a sleeping man shackled, hands clasped together, feet caked in mud. A silent captive whose captors' faces remain unseen, a daily routine in the forest as helicopters rumble above.

Pleasurable moans in a dark bedroom, a white curtain with black flowers that keeps out the morning light. A teenager making his way through the city, CV in hand, the camera his constant companion: bustling streets, bright colours, huge intersections, a skate park. But he only finds a job in the countryside.

A shower first thing, water droplets on broad shoulders, a trip to a hardware store before work. A man most at home in military gear, eating in silence at the top table, a 360-degree pan surveying his chatting subordinates. Will the new recruits be up to the task?

Jorge Forero's stunning debut exudes a quiet confidence, content to let the links between these oblique episodes emerge steadily and organically: one day, three men, three different settings, the all-pervading violence that envelopes Colombia their inexorable connective tissue.

*James Lattimer*

## What counts is empathy

When I saw the final edit of my movie, I couldn't help but feel a deep sadness inside of me: even after having worked on the this film for such a long, its effect on me was still very strong. So much time had passed between coming up with the initial idea for *Violencia* and filming it that I wondered whether it could keep its validity and expressive power when it was completed. Rather naively, I had assumed that the Colombian people would be able to make some progress in the area of peace and reconciliation. But the reality of the situation proved me wrong and showed me that *Violencia* is even more topical today than it was four years ago. Looking at the topic of violence from the perspective of people who are affected by it as either victims or perpetrators, but without judging, explaining, or blaming, seemed to me to be the only sensible approach for the film, in view of the tendency towards polarisation in Colombia. When everybody believes that right is on their side, when instead of justice we ask for revenge, taking a closer look at those whose daily life is affected by violence allows us to have a broader view, and we are able to recognise them as human beings and develop a deep understanding for the circumstances of their lives.

## Without Manichaeian interests

A few years ago, I was diagnosed with a degenerative disease, which ended up changing my attitude towards cinema and life. While searching for a cure, I was struck by how valuable the capacity for true and sincere empathy with the suffering of others is. For me, this attitude became a chance at reconnection with other human beings. And there I found what for me is the heart of *Violencia* as a movie: generating empathy for others. That's why *Violencia* is a movie about the experience of violence. I didn't want the film to be reduced to only its three protagonists; rather I wanted them to be archetypes of the hundreds of people that are going through the same situations.

I observed the protagonists of my film, created a bond with them and their lives, and accompanied them in their most private moments, but also in more public ones. I avoided dramatising violence as well as the depiction of the connections between cause and effect. That allowed me to make the film without Manichaeian interests. There is no definitive answer to the question of the causes of violence in Colombia, so it would be irresponsible and pretentious to try to explain it in a film. In view of the violent conflicts being carried out in Colombia, it makes no difference who the individuals are who are involved, which armed group is which. Ultimately, both sides are involved, each in its own way.

*Violencia* is made up of three different stories in which the spirit, the emotions and the body are destroyed. I would like my film to make it possible for viewers to recognise in the other a human being of flesh and blood, and I would like to touch their hearts.

*Jorge Forero*

## Violence is an imprint

Forero's debut consists of three fragments, three experiences of violence, three central characters. The starting point feels familiar, almost cold and programmed as if it were an academic essay. But the film itself moves the viewer to another place of understanding; it plays its cards elsewhere. Here, the violence is more

an imprint than an event: the violence was and is in the actors'/ characters' bodies and in their mental and physical traces, which are followed by a camera that doesn't rest. This violence will remain, and with its strange and annihilating force, it will destroy any sense of familiarity and belonging. It is a violence that is not confined to acts, but lurks in words, looks and gestures, and seems not to admit the possibility of a different solution to the standardisation, the banality, of evil. But the film itself is an answer. By refusing to reproduce violence explicitly or literally, it shows a way of escaping the maze through art; it expresses a kind of perception that passes through understanding and distinguishing, through seeing beyond what is seemingly inevitable and homogeneous about violence, and noticing how exceptional and unacceptable violence is for each individual.

*Pedro Adrián Zuluaga*



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**Jorge Forero** was born in 1981 in Colombia. He studied Film at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá and Visual Poetry at the Universidade de São Paulo. He also attended workshops at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión in San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba. In 2010, Diana Bustamante and he co-founded the production company Burning Blue. *Violencia* is his first feature-length film.

## Films

2001: *Uno de esos días* (15 min.). 2004: *En el fondo del pozo* (35 min.). 2010: *Sometamos o Matemos* (12 min.). 2015: *Violencia / Violence*.