

LA LLORONA



Cast
María Mercedes Coroy (Ixcanul)
Margarita Kénefic
Sabrina de la Hoz
Julio Díaz

Director
Jayro Bustamante

Production Company
La Casa de Producción

Genre
Magic realism

Running Time
97 minutes

Language
Spanish, Mayan-Kaqchikel, Mayan-Ixil

Format
Digital 4K, Color

Final Format
DCP

Country
Guatemala

Shooting date
December 2018

A woman with dark hair and a somber expression is shown from the chest up, partially submerged in water. She is surrounded by large, dark green leaves that are wet and glistening with water droplets. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on her face and the leaves, and deep shadows in the water and background. The overall mood is one of grief and loss.

A MOTHERLAND THAT WEEPS FOR HER
SACRIFICED, LOST, DROWNED, DEAD CHILDREN.

THE LEGEND

LA LLORONA is one of the most widely known horror legends in Latin America. It tells the story of the sorrow, desperation, mourning and consequences of one woman's erratic decision.

An indigenous woman abandoned by her husband moves on with her life and has two sons outside of marriage. The unexpected announcement of her husband's return forces her to take measures in order to redeem her status as a married woman. She drowns her children, only to commit suicide when she regrets it. God then punishes her to wander the world as a lost soul, weeping and searching for her two sons. Her wailing terrifies all who hear it.

Unlike the legend, our Llorona is placed in today's world. She weeps for her children who died during Guatemala's armed internal conflict. Far from being a victim of social morality, she is a woman seeking revenge.



SYNOPSIS

With the words “If you cry, I’ll kill you” ringing in their ears, Alma and her kids are murdered in Guatemala’s armed conflict.

Thirty years later, a criminal case is brought against Enrique, a retired General who oversaw the genocide. But he’s acquitted through a mistrial and the spirit of La Llorona is unleashed to wander the world like a lost soul amongst the living.

At night, Enrique starts to hear her wailing. His wife and daughter believe he’s having bouts of Alzheimer’s-related dementia. Little could they suspect that their new housekeeper, Alma, is there to mete out the vengeance the trial did not.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is estimated that the 36-year Guatemalan civil war left 250,000 dead, over 40,000 missing and some 100,000 displaced.

The great majority of these victims were civilians. The most violent period was from 1981 to 1983. During that time, the national army had up to 51,600 active service members, supported by paramilitary groups and almost 500,000 peasants organized into armed cells. Meanwhile, the rebel armies of the left never reached more than 6,000 members.

The bloodiest period was under the rule of Efraín Ríos Montt, from 1981 to 1983. It is estimated that during each month of his 18 in office, 3,000 people were murdered or made to disappear. Half of the war's total victim count was generated then. Strategically, the evangelical religion was fostered in the country in order to counteract the work of Catholic priests who practiced Liberation Theology, which made Guatemalan farmers aware of their rights and social injustice. In Guatemala, the debate about the genocide never concluded. It is ongoing, still polarizing society.

It's a country where having ideals about social justice is still considered dangerous and communist, where there's no room for intermediate nuances, where "communist" is an insult. The word genocide has managed to deflect the attention from the human rights abuses committed by both sides during the war, to a greater or lesser degree. Above all, the root motivations that dragged the war out are still alive and well, in the shadow of the debate.

On the other hand, the left has managed to integrate itself within the political sphere, where they have been laying on heavy pressure to get the crimes against humanity committed by the army processed, while the right accuses them for biasing justice.



difusores
EN VIVO

Canon

INTENTION OF THE FILM

The intention of this film is to contribute to the dialogue about the unconcluded process of reconciliation in Guatemala and thus free us from weeping for our dead children for all eternity.

“The problem in Guatemala is that, unlike other Latin American countries, the army has not yet recognized the big crimes committed and, at the same time, it holds on to an incredible level of control over civil society, including its judicial apparatus.”

Andrea Rizzi (El País, 2005)



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was a boy, the idea of hearing the cry of La Llorona during the night terrified me. I pictured her to be a demonic soul who, because of her sins, was condemned to lament and wander the world. I was told that hearing her was a sign that she knew I too deserved punishment. What surprises me now is the power that she still has in Guatemala and in other Latin American countries. Despite knowing it is nothing more than a moralist myth for mandating the behavior of women, a large part of the population believes in her existence. The cry of guilt, of moralism and of a chauvinist society still echoes in our ears.

Creating a new version of La Llorona is the perfect opportunity to try to change those stigmas that are etched into our cultural inheritance. At the same time, the psychological suspense that goes along with the character allows me to recount Guatemala's recent, dark history to a national audience that is generally more interested in purely commercial entertainment movies. Like in all beginnings, films that address true events of a painful history are classified as bad publicity for a country.

Taking a land—or a people like the Guatemalan one that has lamented so much—and comparing it to this myth seems more than natural to me. It was thus also easy for me to justify using the horror genre to talk about the bloodiest former dictator of Latin America.

This film mixes together the story of the killings during the armed conflict in Guatemala, former president Efraín Ríos Montt being condemned for genocide and seeing it annulled, the Sepur Zarco case of crimes against humanity, the domestic and sexual slavery of native women, misogyny, classism, religiosity, mysticism and magic realism. All these ingredients create an amalgamation of suspense and terror that surpass the legend itself.

I needed to captivate interest internationally, but above all that of my people, and so I began this journey by going back to my childhood fears, to my new fears as an adult and my interest in storytelling. A cinematographic way of denouncing, all under the guise of entertainment, without ever losing sight of universally recognized auteur cinema.

Jayro Bustamante



LA CASA DE PRODUCCIÓN BIOGRAPHY

Founded in 2009, La Casa de Producción began its endeavors at a time when filmmaking was just emerging in Guatemala, a country where stories were piling up in silence and new talent was looking for a space to express itself.

Early on, it produced three short films that garnered awards at international festivals and were broadcast on European television stations. It produced two documentaries: AU DÉTOUR DES MURS, LES VISAGES D'UNE CITÉ (2011) and TERRITORIO LIBERADO (2015). In feature fiction, La Casa de Producción has produced IXCANUL (2015), 1991 (2018) and TREMORS (2019).

Our base became solid with independent film. Our structure is committed to new projects that need a roof over their edifice and to voices that don't accept censure.

IXCANUL garnered a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, as well as over 50 other awards at international festivals. In 2015, it became the first film to represent Guatemala for a nomination at the Oscars and the Golden Globes.



LA CASA DE PRODUCCIÓN PRESENTS A LA CASA DE PRODUCCIÓN AND LES FILMS DU VOLCAN PRODUCTION

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JAYRO BUSTAMANTE - SCREENPLAY BY JAYRO BUSTAMANTE AND LISANDRO SÁNCHEZ

WITH MARÍA MERCEDES COROY - MARGARITA KÉNEFIC - SABRINA DE LA HOZ - JULIO DÍAZ - MARÍA TELÓN - AYLÁ-ELEA HURTADO AND JUAN PABLO OLYSLAGER

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICOLÁS WONG DÍAZ - ART DIRECTOR SEBASTIÁN MUÑOZ - COSTUME DESIGNER SOFÍA LANTÁN AND BEATRÍZ LANTÁN - MAKE UP AND HAIR BY AIKO SATO

EDITED BY GUSTAVO MATHEU - JAYRO BUSTAMANTE - SOUND EDUARDO CÁCERES MUSIC SUPERVISOR HERMINIO GUTIÉRREZ

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS ALEJANDRA COLOM - DIDIER DEVERS - SOPHIE JOOS - HERMINIO GUTIÉRREZ - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GUSTAVO MATHEU

PRODUCERS JAYRO BUSTAMANTE - GUSTAVO MATHEU - GEORGES RENAND - MARINA PERALTA

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