

# RECOVERING PARADISE (RECUPERANDO EL PARAÍSO)



A FILM BY

JOSÉ ARTEAGA & RAFAEL CAMACHO

72 mins / Color / 2017 / Spanish, English Subtitles / Mexico



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## FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

- Winner Best Documentary – 2017 International Indigenous Film Festival (FICWALLMAPU)
- Winner “Cuenca Award” – 2018 Cinema Planeta Film Festival, Cuernavaca, Mexico
- 2018 Ambulante Coordinadas, Mexico
- 2018 Cinema Planeta, International Environmental Film Festival of Mexico
- Honorable Mention 2018 International Documentary Film Festival in Memory of Santiago Alvarez – Santiago de Cuba
- 2018 The Hispanic Meeting of Independent Documentary Film and Video: Against the Silence, All the Voices
- 2018 Latin American Film Festival of Montréal
- Debut Feature – 2017 - International Documentary Film Festival of Mexico City
- Official Selection 2017 International Festival Signs of the Night, Urbino Italy
- 2017 Stockholm Independent Film Festival
- 2017 Meet The Docs! Film Festival, Forli Italy



## SYNOPSIS

Located on the coast of the state of Michoacán, Santa Maria Ostula, like many other indigenous communities in Mexico, suffered great violence from organized crime. The citizens lost their land to cartels and businesses wanting to exploit their natural resources. They suffered greatly from intimidation and violence. Some were killed. Many leaders of the community decided to move away.

In 2009, a group of Ostula's citizens decided to reclaim some of the land that organized crime and local leaders with the help of the government had taken. They founded the town of Xayakalan. However, by 2011, the community experienced a steep increase in violence. Over the next 3 years, most of the citizens were forced to leave Xayakalan because of the violence, disappearances and murders that ensued.

This all changed in 2014, when a large group of citizens returned to Xayakalan with armed self-defense groups from Michoacán. Mexican citizens are forbidden from carry firearms, yet the Mexican Constitution grants self-defense rights to indigenous communities. The citizens were ready to fight to guarantee their security. Now able to defend themselves, the community reclaimed their land and began reconstruction of their village.

Recovering Paradise documents the armed resistance of the indigenous Santa Maria Ostula community and their struggle to reestablish law and order in their homeland.



## **DIRECTORS' STATEMENT**

Violence in Mexico has become increasingly complicated. Since the beginning of the so-called war against drug trafficking 10 years ago, the number of armed conflicts has increased in several regions of the country, resulting in thousands of deaths, disappearances and displaced families. All of this taking place with the indifference and complicity of most of the Mexican government institutions.

From the commercial media, there has been an attempt to minimize the problem, presenting the conflict as a simple struggle between drug cartels. The critical press has not eluded censorship, and the growing number of journalists killed is an alarming sign for freedom of expression in Mexico.

Because of this, we believe it is important to show how violence affects civil society, and how different communities have organized to defend their lands. We consider this documentary to be a reflection of the armed conflict and the situation that prevails in the country. We want to present some of the organized efforts that communities have carried out to defend their territory and their lives.

José Arteaga & Rafael Camacho

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

The first contact the directors had with the Santa Maria Ostula community was in 2009, when the community approached them to act as independent journalists so the land recovery process and the formation of the first community police in Michoacan would be covered.

However, repression and violence increased rapidly in the region in the following years, making it almost impossible to get near the conflict area.

In 2014, during the armed uprising in the state of Michoacan, José Arteaga & Rafael, together with other journalists and media collectives, accompanied the self-defense forces that were recently formed to fight against the drug cartels in their march towards the coast.

This allowed the filmmakers to return to Xayakalan 5 years later to continue documenting the land recovery process and document the atrocities committed by the criminal organizations.

## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**José Arteaga** is a filmmaker. He has focused on documenting social and environmental movements and events, as well as various types of music and the performing arts throughout Mexico. Recently he has worked on experimental videos and created “video-dances.”



**Rafael Camacho** is a filmmaker and independent journalist. He has covered social conflicts for several years. Rafael has a career in feature films, television and commercials as an art director.





## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Directed by: José Arteaga y Rafael Camacho

Produced by: Rodrigo Frías

Director of Photography: Nicolás Tapia, José Arteaga y Rafael Camacho

Editor: Vidblain Balvas

Production Sound: Regina López, José Arteaga, Emilia López

Sound Design: Rodrigo Lira

Composer: Ulises Martinez

Production Company: Terracería

