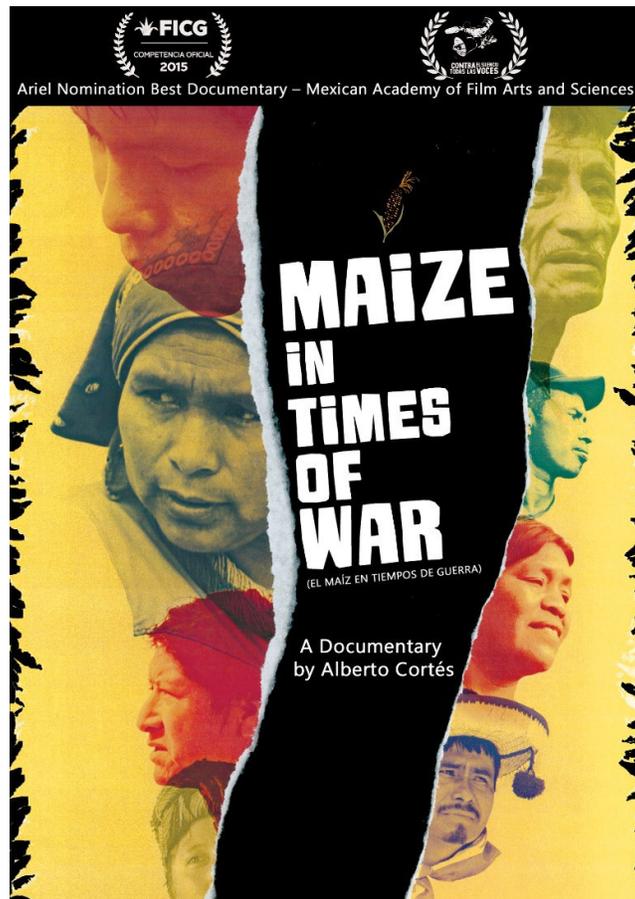


# MAIZE IN TIMES OF WAR (EL MAÍZ EN TIEMPOS DE GUERRA)



A FILM BY  
ALBERTO CORTÉS

88 mins / 2016 / Tselal, Ayuujk, Wixárika & Spanish; Spanish Subtitles and English Subtitles / Mexico



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## HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2018 Ariel Nomination Best Long Form Documentary – Mexican Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
- 2018 Best Indigenous Documentary – All Voices Against the Silence Film Festival
- 2017 Best Latin American Environmental Documentary – Cinema Without Borders Film Festival

## FILM FESTIVALS

- 2018 Human Fest – Festival Internacional de Cine de Derechos Humanos de Valencia
- 2018 San Diego Latino Film Festival
- 2018 Festival Semilla UACM
- 2018 Cine Roxie de San Francisco
- 2018 FINCA Festival Internacional de cine ambiental
- 2018 Terra di tutti Film Festival
- 2018 Festival de cine Watsonville
- 2018 Mostra Tela Indígena, Brasil
- 2017 Festival Internacional de Guadalajara
- 2017 Segundo Festival de Cine de Jardín. Con los pies en la tierra
- 2017 Festival Internacional de Cine de Mérida y Yucatán
- 2017 Festival de Cine Latinoamericano de Trieste, Italia
- 2017 Festival Zanate

## SYNOPSIS

Maize in Times of War (El maíz en tiempos de guerra). Growing “la milpa” is an act of resistance, a profoundly political one. Maize In Times Of War traces the yearly cycle of four Indigenous maize peasants in different regions of México. This film draws the exceptional process of growing maize, the delicacy of selecting seeds and preparing the land, and the tenacity required throughout the whole process until the harvest arrives. Directed by Alberto Cortés.



## **DIRECTORS' STATEMENT**

Given the dire situation of acting against the perverse intention of introducing transgenic corn seed into Mexican territory, I thought of making a film about the corn production process, and about the importance of the seed in the daily life of communities and native people. It was these people and their ancestors who more than ten thousand years ago invented this plant from another, the teozintle, and transformed it until they created the corn plant that we know today. They took advantage of it in the multiple ways, so it could be turned into food and made into the culinary core of what was the Mesoamerica and now is Mexico. Traditionally, corn is planted along with other plants that accompany it, such as beans, squash, tomatillo, amaranth and chili, among others. Together they form an agricultural system known as milpa. My goal was to follow peasant work from the preparation of the land, the sowing, the care during the growth and finally the harvest. With that premise, I visited farmers and invited them to participate so they could talk to us and show us the entire process, allowing me to record the growth of the plant along with their testimonies explaining how and why they do what they do. The proposal caught on. They liked the idea of not only talking about corn, land, water and seed but also the seasons, the ash and the limestone. They have a lot of knowledge about all this. We agreed to return every two months to record how the milpa developed during the 2015 agricultural cycle.

We agreed with four peasant families; the Wixarikas (Huicholes) of northeastern Mexico, a Tzeltal family from Bachajon, another Tzeltal family from Chaban (both from Chiapas), and finally, an Ayuuk family from the Mixe mountain range of Oaxaca.

We assembled a small filming crew of five people with high technical quality equipment, full of patience, wanting to look at others with empathy. We were really privileged – we agreed that our object of registration was the corn, therefore, we had full access to all the areas where grain travels; that is, the plot of land, the patio where it is washed and shelled, and the kitchen where it is grounded, kneaded and put on the fire. We could go anywhere the corn was, and as it was everywhere, we went everywhere. Almost without wanting it, we were able to experience their lives day by day, recording how everyone in the family is involved in some way in the cornfield and the corn harvest.

The name of the film has to do with what we found during filming - social conditions are difficult. In some cases, they have to fight for the land in the face of the possibility of dispossession; in others the resistance against transgenics seeds, pesticides, agrochemicals and fertilizers. In addition the war against drug trafficking that affects the entire country. That's why we decided that this film had to be called "El maíz en tiempos de Guerra" [Maize in Times of War]. In other words, it is a film that shows how these men and women – Wixarikas, Ayuuk and Tzeltal - make milpa as a deeply political act of resistance.

Alberto

## DIRECTOR PROFILE

A trip to the Country of Reality in his inventions of the City of Mexico, directing some of the most interesting actors from the world of underground literature, (Albertine Sarrazin, Jean Cocteau, José Agustín), he found a city as raw as it gets in the streets and the open spaces -Amor a la vuelta de la esquina – (Love Around the Corner), within the walls of an enclosed apartment - Ciudad de ciegos- (City of the Blind), and in the relentless corners of the hood of hoods -Tepito vive, barrio- (Tepito lives).

Each story seems to find a way to tell itself. Other revealing encounters “or encountered revelations?” have taken place through essential urban musicians: Jaime López, Maldita vecindad y los hijos del quinto patio, Cecilia Toussaint, Santa Sabina, El Tri. A pioneer in Mexico of the fragmented and speedy aesthetic of music videos, Cortés managed to imprint in images what was floating in the air. It speaks volumes of who he is.

And more. The narrative of his feature films evolves like a musical orchestration; Corazón del tiempo (Heart of Time), Violeta: Ciudad de ciegos- (City of the Blind). His documentaris, México, ciudad hip-hop-(Mexico: A Hip-Hop City) and Tijuana: sonidos del Nortec (Tijuana: The sound of Nortec), happen in the factual place where the music responds to the vital crossing of its circumstance.

A film? A musical? His collaborations with José Elorza, Descemer Bueno and Kelvis Ochoa have managed a creative process where the tale and the singing go hand in hand, further than any movie score.

A film – erotic? Love and desire play a major part of his movies. The infatuated look at the feminine body. The pleasures of pleasure in an intimate space of reality that, exposed to subtle transgressions, lights up.

A film – a social statement? From his indigenous documentaries with the Kunkaak, and the O’dham of Sonora to his proactive testimonies within the Zapatista territory (because our origin is here, our future will come next, we’re the people of maize), or his very peculiar recording of the resistance in San Salvador de Atenco, -La herida se mantiene abierta, (the wound remains open), it’s the society -the people, the village itself- that lead.

The voice of those who do not have one resounds in his own, grandiose and dignified natural scenarios: The Sonora Sea, The Lacandona Rainforest, The Texcoco Lake.

A film – activism? The towns that Alberto reaches, the social movement that he endorses, the comrades that he harvests – those are the activists, the ones that do what needs to be done. Those who will fight for what they believe. He reaches out to them to tell their story.

Borderlines; probably. Alberto Cortés’ films inherits the best of the Mexican Cinema. Their truth is in the invention and gallantry of its characters. Sometimes he aligns with reality, others, he approaches it.

Written by Hermann Bellinghausen,  
Co-Writer with Alberto Cortés, Maize in Times of War

## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

DIRECTOR – Alberto Cortés

PRODUCERS – Ana Solares & Alberto Cortés

BataclanCINE, IMCINE, FOPROCINE, El Barandal Post, Bambú Audiovisual, TV UNAM

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER | Diego Sepúlveda

DIIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY | Marc Bellver

SONIDO DIRECTO | Emilio Cortés, Raúl Locatelli, Enrique Ojeda

WRITER AND EDITOR | Alberto Cortés

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF | Hermann Bellinghausen y Ramón Vera-Herrera

MÚSIC | Steven Brown, Julio García

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR | Carlos Aguilar

COLORIST | Edgar Flores

SOUND DESIGN | Carlos Aguilar, Daniela López y Francisco Hernández