

# THE MONUMENT OF PUERTO RESISTENCIA

make art not war

a documentary by  
ANTON WENZEL

co-directed by  
VIVIANA GÓMEZ ECHEVERRY





## LOGLINE

During nationwide protests young people from a marginalized neighborhood in Cali, Colombia, block a major intersection. In the midst of chaos and violence and against brutal state oppression and internal struggles, they fight for a better society through art and culture. They raise a monument as a symbol of their hope.

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

In 2021 Colombian people take to the streets protesting inequality, a corrupt political system and an unjust tax reform. The government responds with violence leaving hundreds dead or injured. To pressure the government into negotiations, people start to organize road blocks. One of them is the main intersection of Puerto Resistencia, a marginalized neighborhood in Cali and one of the most emblematic points of resistance in the country. Despite the chaos and the violent circumstances, political, social and cultural awareness flourishes within the blockade. But the longer it exists, the more exhaustion, boredom and inner conflicts take over. Spirits are low when a group of people decides to create art instead of destruction. Driven by their dreams and hopes they raise the “Monument to the Resistance” and the community celebrates itself. In this neglected part of town for many it is the first time to experience achievement, validation and a sense of belonging. The monument symbolizes their voice in a society that doesn’t seem to care about them.





## LONG SYNOPSIS

Archival video from news outlets and amateur cell phone footage give an introduction to the developments of the national strike that took place in Colombia in 2021. People took to the streets against social inequality, a corrupt political system and a neoliberal government that had just announced a tax reform that would increase the basic cost of living drastically while the coronavirus was raging at its peak. Nationwide protests began peacefully, but were soon undermined by looting, vandalism and police infiltration. Violent clashes between protesters and the riot police quickly escalated into war-like scenes, leaving hundreds of protesters injured or dead. While mainstream media and the government criminalized the resistance, upper-class armed citizens and right-wing militias, alongside with police forces, began shooting indiscriminately at the demonstrators. In many cities protesters started to organize road blocks to protect themselves and pressure the Government into negotiations for social change and personal protection. But even when the President finally withdrew the tax reform, it wasn't enough to stop the outcry of Colombian people's discontent.

With *Cinéma Vérité*, this is where the story of this documentary begins to unfold. For weeks the main intersection of Puerto Resistencia, a marginalized neighborhood in Cali, has been blocked and turned into an improvised fortress. It has become one of the most emblematic points of resistance in the country.

To prevent armed forces from attacking or entering, the protesters have built improvised barricades. They live in tents made out of garbage. The local police hut was burned and turned into a public library. In open community kitchens soup and rice are being prepared for everybody and there is a medical unit with volunteer staff that takes care of the wounded with donated medication. The movement consists, with few exceptions, of young people from the neighborhood: students, workers, artists, mothers, fathers, unemployed, homeless, community leaders, gang members and drug addicts. Most of them cover their faces with masks for fear of persecution.

The group in charge of intern security calls themselves the "First Line". It began as protectors for peaceful demonstrations with makeshift shields and rocks, but now it has turned into a full-blown social and political movement. In assemblies with the local community, they manifest their struggle for equality and opportunity for all and report supposed negotiations with the city administration and vicious attacks by police forces.

Political, social and cultural awareness flourishes in midst of chaos and violence. Artists of all kinds come and share their work with the community: musicians, theater and circus groups, dancers, painters, storytellers, poets and comedians. Athletes organize games and competitions, religious groups spread their message, esotericists hold rituals, academics teach social studies and politics, and feminists educate women. But the longer the blockage lasts, the more the movement loses momentum. Fewer and fewer supporters are showing up to express their solidarity, and the Colombian public is getting generally tired of the blockades that cut off whole cities and bring gas and food shortages. Exhaustion, boredom and inner conflicts within the blockade take over and the community.



That is when Juan Carlos (28), a young fashion manufacturer from the neighborhood with little resources but with a vision and inspiring leadership, has an idea. Together with Alejandro (25), one of the leaders of the “First Line” movement, unemployed and with little education, but with great political conviction, they decide to raise a monument that symbolizes their struggles and commemorates the fallen comrades. They form a group and commence a mission against time. At any moment the police could break the barriers and lift the blockade. One of the most hardworking people on site is “El Indio” (43), a homeless from the block, proud of his neighborhood, who thinks and talks like a philosopher. Jhon (50) is an unemployed welder who lost his son to police violence and finds new meaning in the building of the monument. He is older than most protesters, but feels inspired by the youth’s spirit. “La Zarca” (31) is a displaced mother of three with no formal education who joined the “First Line” movement out of sheer desperation for a better life. Over time, the violence takes its toll on her, but she holds out till the end.

Thanks to the people’s hard work and money and material donations from the community, the monument keeps growing. Meanwhile the efforts of the “First Line” to negotiate with the government are hopeless and their initial goals out of reach. By now they are really only asking for safety guarantees for the members of the movement.

But thanks to the Monument’s construction people start coming back to Puerto Resistencia to show their support. Anybody can join and many do. Everybody has a voice and decisions are made democratically. They achieve the impossible and raise a 10 meter high statue before government forces can enter and lift the blockade. The statue gains nationwide recognition as a symbol of hope and solidarity. In the end the whole community proudly claims authorship of the construction. They call it “The Monument to the Resistance”. In a huge celebration the statue is inaugurated and attended by thousands of people.

**JUAN CARLOS**



**ALEJANDRO**



**EL INDIO**



**JHON**



**LA ZARCA**



Even though the national strike and the killing continues, for many it is the first time to experience achievement, validation and a sense of belonging. To them the monument symbolizes their voice in a society that doesn't seem to care about them.

Archival video from news outlets and amateur cell phone footage show how after a total of three months the blockade of Puerto Resistencia is finally lifted violently by police forces. They threaten to tear the Monument down, but the whole neighborhood gathers and shields it from destruction.

Text panels inform that one year after the end of the national strike, Juan Carlos continues to be successful with his fashion label growing. He thought about going into politics, but refrained from doing so for safety reasons, since he has been a target of police harassment and death threats. Unfortunately, one year after the great inauguration Alejandro, among many members of the "First Line", was arrested without official charges and is awaiting a politically motivated trial and long jail time. "El Indio", with his mission completed, packed his bag and left the country. He now lives in the streets of a border town in Chile. Jhon never found stable work as a welder after the strike, but always kept his positivity. He unexpectedly died in a mud slide while hiking with his girl friend in 2022. "La Zarca" turned on her former comrades from the "First Line". She became a police informant after pressure to protect her family and is currently in a witness protection program.

One year after the end of the crisis Colombia for the first time in its history elected a left-wing President.

To this day the "Monument to the Resistance" proudly crowns the main intersection of the Puerto Resistencia neighborhood. It has been legally recognized by the local administration and every day visitors come from all over to see it and take their picture with it.

While the credits roll, photos of visitors in front of the finished Monument are shown.





RESISTENCIA

RESISTE

Cacerolazo Suficiente

SISTENCIA



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am a German filmmaker living and working in Colombia for over a decade now. My wife, my daughter and I had just moved to Cali from Bogotá when the national strike against the tax reform began. The COVID-pandemic was at its peak when the strike turned into full-blown social crisis. Cali became the epicenter of the protests. After months of home confinement, now road blocks and shortages of food and gasoline became normal. Then violence began to escalate in all parts of the city. Locked into our home over weeks, we witnessed contradicting news and social media videos of horrendous violence in the streets. The government had labeled the protesters armed terrorists but the internet was flooded with terrifying images of police brutality and even civilians shooting at civilians. From our terrace we could hear the gunshots. We were scared, but I felt the need to find out myself what was going on in the streets of our country and our new hometown. Without preproduction, budget or crew I picked up my film equipment and went to the road block of Puerto Resistencia, an emblematic neighborhood renamed after the people's resistance. The initial investigation actually happened on site, where I was understandably met with a lot of suspicion and mistrust, as the community had been tormented by biased or false media coverage and infiltration. It took a lot of dialogue to understand the dynamics within the movement and gain permission to shoot in this paranoid surrounding, where almost everybody was masked and in constant fear for

their lives. But their courage and resilience deeply impressed me. I was surprised how political, social and cultural awareness thrived in midst of the chaos. Little by little I was able to find the main protagonists. When I heard about the building of the “Monument to the Resistance” I knew this would be the leitmotif of the film as a culmination of their cultural and political expression. The Monument of Puerto Resistencia is so important to me, because it tells the stories of people who have been made invisible in the country that has become my home so many years ago. Between my own perspective as a German living in Colombia, the inherent social and historical friction that comes with that relationship and my personal political bias I feel great responsibility and respect for this story and the participants’ subjectivity. My wife is Colombian and also the co-director and producer of this film. Our views and interpretations can vary due to our different backgrounds, but we share enough confidence to be open about our thoughts and feelings, so these discussions often lead to new perspectives. Even though I have been living here for so long and feel such a strong connection to the country and its people, her critical input as a Colombian, as a filmmaker and as a woman is essential to put my vision for this film into perspective. She accompanied me throughout the whole process of filming and editing. Together we would watch the footage and evaluate our next steps and the general route we would take with the film. Without glorifying violence or populist political discourses and away from geopolitical justification, we want to share a different side of resistance: transforming society through art and culture from within the community.





## ARTISTIC APPROACH

The film's principal narrative line makes use of the language of Cinéma Vérité. It documents the building of community through culture and art in a polarized society. This is portrayed through a structural analysis of the microcosmos and a emphatic observation of the protagonists inside of the road block of Puerto Resistencia during the national strike in Colombia in 2021. Resistance as a political and cultural statement is shown first-hand. The common thread of the film is the making of the "Monument to the Resistance". It's exemplary of the community's will to make themselves heard and fight for their utopia.

Video and Audio capture an ambiguous ambience. The place looks like a post apocalyptic war zone. Dark smoke covers the sky, gun shots can be heard at any hour and helicopters steadily roar above. The constant danger of police aggression and shootings can be felt. But there is a lot of street art happening, be it rap, dance or graffiti. Theater groups come and present their craft. Social and political discourses are held in public and the building of the monument is an inspiring enterprise.

The camera captures the film's reality without much intervention. Still, it feels involved and equally exposed to the ubiquitous dangers as the protagonists. Sometimes, without being asked, participants turn





directly to the camera to address the filmmakers. While documenting a wide spectrum of participants, the film focuses on five protagonists who are followed around the perimeter. While the statue grows and is finally inaugurated, they get to know each other, resolve problems and reveal their stories.

The second narrative level consists of archival videos from news media and social networks. These recurring, dynamic found footage segments will elaborate and condense the factual political and social context and its conflicting interpretations by different media outlets. With a hectic montage it reflects the overwhelming situation that the filmmakers experienced over weeks while following the events on news and social media before deciding to go out and film.

Text and graphical elements provide additional context and help with temporal and spatial orientation inside of the blockade.

At the end of the film information is given about the protagonist's current situation and events that happened between the inauguration of the Monument and the finalization of the documentary.



# TOPIC SUMMARY

If we look at recent protests in Latin America e.g., Nicaragua (2018), Chile (2019), Venezuela (2019), Cuba (2021), Ecuador (2022) we see that they vary in their specific circumstances, but are very similar in other ways. In midst of polemic ideological polarization, especially young people rise up against failed political and economic systems, corrupt leaders and inequality, but are met with severe violations of human rights and freedom of expression by the state. Colombia is the second most unequal country in South America. It has a very polarized political panorama dominated by populists, often with strong ties to criminal organizations. Traditionally it has a right-wing government with a neoliberal alignment. While notoriously corrupt politicians enjoy impunity, severe criminalization of poverty and inhabitants of low-income areas by the public force is common place. In the 2022 elections and one year after the strike, Colombians for the first time in history voted for a far left President and administration. Cali is Colombia's third biggest city with a diverse social and racial background. Many people come here looking for a better life after being displaced by violence and armed conflict in the country and end up in the vast slums in the east and west of the city. The presents of leftwing guerrilla, rightwing paramilitary and powerful drug trafficking organizations that use Cali as a major



transshipment base is very influential in this region, city and its lower income neighborhoods. Basic education is of very low quality and university access is out of reach for most. The context in which people live is violence, rooted in the violent history and culture of the country. More than half of Colombian people work in the informal sector and depend on self subsistence. For many the situation was difficult even before the pandemic, but the lockdown had a devastating effect on the economy and pushed even more people to the limits of survival. When the government announced a tax reform during the peak of the pandemic, substantially raising basic living costs, people wouldn't comply anymore and took to the streets. The state responded with intimidation, defamation and violence and showed its authoritarian face. But the lids had already been blown off and many people were ready to give their lives for change. Their desire to show the world that they are not vandals or criminals as the government had labeled them, solidified in Puerto Resistencia in a meaningful cultural and political statement: the building of the Monument.





# IMPACT STRATEGY

One of the film's central message is that art and culture are powerful tools for communities to protests injustice, as it leads to identity, validation and belonging. We want to inspire people to create and consume art and culture, to express themselves, protest and therefore build a better and more peaceful society. To achieve this behavioral change our key agents are cultural foundations/ institutions, human rights and governmental organizations, press, museums, church and a general public on a national and global scale. The film itself is a contribution to change society for the better and has its own cultural and artistic value.

Free expression and perception of art and culture builds democracy in a sense that it lets everybody have a voice and be heard. We want people to believe in democracy and free expression, so the Film emphasizes on these topics in a inspirational manner.

A socially and politically polarized society leads to inequality, violence and oppression of those left behind and we want to use the events depicted in this documentary as example of the people's desperation. Not everybody who is poor is a criminal and not everybody who was involved in the national strike of 2021 is a terrorist as they were stigmatized by mainstream media and the government. Colombian society is deeply polarized into right-wing upper-classes and left-wing lower-classes. We want to generate critical discus-





sion and raise consciousness for social and political responsibility and empathy, especially in Colombia and within the right-wing establishment. We achieve this in giving the film a broader context and discourse by including archival footage of contradicting media coverage in the film and contrasting it with empathic footage of the protagonists. This way we hope to generate the friction that the film needs to stir up discussions.

We want to show the film to the community and strengthen it further, but also inspire constructive discussion and critic reflection within the movement. It is also crucial to show the film to more upper-class and right-wing audiences to create empathy and really change minds in Colombia.

In terms of structural change, we want to stimulate inversion in infrastructure and education on a local level by exposing the talent and potential for positive change in the neighborhood of Puerto Resistencia. This would have a great impact on the community's chance for equal opportunity.

During the 2021 national strike, human rights were massively violated by police forces and the state and criminalization of poverty was manifested in the most violent ways. We believe that the Police and especially the Anti-Riot Squad are in urgent need of a structural and ethical reform. To address this the film has an inherent discourse about the state's power and its ethics. Key agents are the Colombian public and the newly elected left-wing Government and President of Colombia.

# BUDGET

## Total Budget:

\$ 211.682,16 USD  
(\$ 1.026.658.500 COP)

## Secured amount:

\$ 70.954,20 USD  
(\$ 278.850.000 COP)





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## **ANTON WENZEL**

(Writer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor)

Anton Wenzel is a German director and editor. He studied film direction in Madrid, Spain and communication design in Stuttgart, Germany. He has been living in Colombia for over a decade. Currently he is based in Cali, where he has found a second home with his family. He co-directed and edited the award-winning feature documentary BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER (Colombia, 2020), selected in IDFA, Hot docs, Doker and Morelia International Film Festival among others. His filmography as director and screenwriter includes short films like THE FAREWELL OF JUAN AND JUAN (Fiction, 2018), GHILLIE AND THE NOTHING (Fiction, 2014), THE CHILDREN OF CHINANDEGA (Documentary, 2013) and TO BE. TO DO. TO FIND (Fiction, 2012). He edited films like the midlength narrative films NIRWANA BLOSSOM (2016), KALIFORNIA (2012) and documentaries like KIBERA (2009). He edited television productions like the documentary series HISTORIAS DEMENTES (Colombia, 2022), for which he was also the head of postproduction. Furthermore he has edited commercials and advertisement in Germany and Colombia. His work has been screened at festivals around the globe e.g. the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), IDFA, HotDocs, the Hamburg International Short Film Festival and Cartagena International Film Festival.

## **VIVIANA GÓMEZ ECHEVERRY**

(Writer, Co-Director, Producer)

Viviana Gómez is director, producer and cinematographer. She studied Social Communication at the Javeriana University. In Spain she specialized herself in cinematography and later acquired a master's degree in Scriptwriting. She is alumni of C&E Pictures, Talents Buenos Aires, Tribeca Film Institute, the Colombian Film Fund. She wrote, directed and produced the documentary BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER, premiere at IDFA and selected in Hot Docs, München Dok.fest, Doker, etc. . She co-directed Andreas Dalsgaard's documentary LIFE IS SACRED, in which she was also the cinematographer and which was produced by Final Cut for Real and premiered at CPH:DOX. Her first feature film was KEYLA, which was selected for Warsaw Film Festival. Viviana is a founding partner and CEO of Viso Producciones and produced the feature documentary MILISUTHANDO, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival, the feature film RED TREE, which premiered at Black Nights Film Festival Tallinn and the documentary series LIKE LOVING CATS for television.



Viviana Gómez Echeverry, Anton Wenzel

## **SONIA BARRERA GUTIÉRREZ**

(Producer)

Sonia Barrera Gutiérrez is a film and television producer. She is the producer of the feature film RED TREE, (World premiere at the Tallinn Black Night Film Festival), the documentary feature film BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER (Premiered at IDFA 2020), selected in more than 20 festivals including Hot Docs, München Dok.fest, Doker among others. Winner of 4 international awards and one national award to best film at FICCALI 2021) and of the documentary feature film THROUGH THE SCREEN. She is executive producer of LA JAURÍA, winner of the Grand Prix of the Semaine de la Critique Cannes 2022. As a field producer, she worked on the feature films LOS VIAJES DEL VIENTO (Cannes Film Festival 2009 and KEYLA (Official Selection at the Warsaw Film Festival) among others, She is founding partner and CEO of the production company Viso Producciones. Among others they co-produced the documentary feature film EL FILM JUSTIFICA LOS MEDIOS and the South Africa co-production MILISUTHANDO (Premiered at Sundance Film Festival).





[www.visoproducciones.com](http://www.visoproducciones.com)

Viso Producciones is a film and tv production company, interested in innovative stories with social, ecological and artistic vision. It is about to celebrate six years since its founding and during this time has produced award-winning projects that have participated in renowned film festivals.

## **CREDITS**

<b>Original title</b>	El Monumento de Puerto Resistencia
<b>English title</b>	The Monument of Puerto Resistencia
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<b>Production company</b>	Viso Producciones

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UNO  
VENCEREMOS

DESPIERTA AL VULCAN

