



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
OUT OF COMPETITION
SPECIAL SCREENING
2019 OFFICIAL SELECTION



LET IT BE LAW

Directed by JUAN SOLANAS

Campaña Nacional Por el Derecho
al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito



LES FILMS DU SUD, CINESUR AND GAMELAND PRESENT



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WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
JUAN SOLANAS

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SYNOPSIS

In Argentina, one woman dies every week as the result of illegal abortions. In 2018, for the seventh time, a motion supporting legal, secure and free abortion was presented to the National Congress.

The project provoked a fierce debate, revealing a society divided more than ever between the pro-life and freedom to choose positions.

Through an assemblage of passionate testimonies, LET IT BE LAW documents the determination of women fighting bravely to secure the right to physical self-determination, and bears witness to their massive mobilization in the streets of Buenos Aires. LET IT BE LAW marks Juan Solanas' return to Cannes Official Selection – a powerful, militant and necessary documentary revealing the urgent vital, struggle for the recognition of women's rights.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In Argentina, one woman dies every week following an illegal abortion – more than one a day in Latin America, where 300 million women live without the right to end their pregnancies.

In 2018, for the seventh time, a women's collective for the right to legal abortion presented a draft bill in a particularly tense context: Argentina stands once more at the edge of a precipice, with 36% of the population – and 48% of minors – living below the poverty threshold.

It was within this context that, for the first time, a cross-party group of representatives was formed to support this law; after an historic 24-hour debate, they succeeded in getting it through the lower chamber.

Abortion rights are a very controversial issue in Argentina, where the influence of the church remains very strong. This is a debate which literally splits the country in two, regardless of social class or political allegiance.

LET IT BE LAW assembles a portrait of women fighting for these fundamental rights, as well as addressing more generally the position of feminism and Argentine women in a country in decay.

The idea for the film came to me on the morning of the positive representatives' vote. Three days later, while awaiting the decisive vote of the Senate, I shot the first images of the streets of Buenos Aires with two guiding principles. First, to confront reality head on, not to intervene but to record in a raw and instinctive way whatever appeared in front of the camera. Never forcing anything, the camera would be a window through which the participants could tell the truth. And above all, not to deliver a tract or pamphlet, the truth and nothing but the truth, but also – vitally – not to be drawn into caricaturing the other side.

From this first idea came the second: adopting the simplest method by which to capture reality while altering it as little as possible – a one-person crew. This enabled me to grant the people I filmed an intimacy that allowed them to engage fully with the camera. Everything was done through WhatsApp. Meetings were set up in an hour or a few days, and then it was a case of jumping into a cab with whatever equipment I could carry: a backpack, a tripod and a battery-powered light.

It was also a safeguard for me, this rough and ready approach. It gave me no time to intervene and made me fully adaptable to whatever came up, shooting with an urgency that mirrored the reality in which, every week, a woman dies following a clandestine abortion.

The film begins with the positive representatives' vote, followed by the legislative process leading up to the negative vote in the Senate, travelling 4,000 km by car, taking in five provinces and hundreds of witnesses to create a portrait of the strong women who share this struggle, united and resilient.

The anti-abortion camp may have won a battle but, like the mothers in the Plaza de Mayo, the women of Argentina have not given up. Their unflinching determination and their spirited fight fills us with hope.

To finish, the film speaks not only of Argentina and Latin America, but addresses the world. In Europe, abortion rights that have stood for 40 years are being called into question – in Italy, but also in Spain, where the explicitly Anti-Choice extreme right Vox party was recently elected to the Senate and the Congress of Deputies, and in Poland where the government would like to suppress them. And in the US, where Trump nominated an Anti-Choice judge to the Supreme Court with the objective of undermining Pro-Choice jurisprudence and outlawing abortion...

– Juan Solanas, 2019



JUAN SOLANAS - BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1966 in Argentina, Juan Solanas left the country at the age of ten, fleeing the dictatorship. He settled in France, where he would live for the next 37 years.

He quickly discovered a passion for photography and cinema thanks to his father, Fernando Solanas, a filmmaker renowned for his social awareness.

In 2000, Juan Solanas wrote, produced and shot his first short film, *L'homme sans tête (The Headless Man)*, for which he received the Jury Prize at Cannes, as well as the César for Best Short Film and some fifty further prizes worldwide.

In 2005, he wrote, produced and directed his first feature, *Nordeste*, which screened at Cannes in Un Certain Regard.

Next, he co-directed the documentary *Jack Waltzer: On the Craft of Acting*, a portrait of one of the last grand masters of the Actors Studio, whose student Solanas was.

In 2012, he wrote and directed *Upside Down*, starring Kirsten Dunst and Jim Sturgess.

In 2019, he wrote, produced and directed his third feature-length film, *Let It Be Law (Que Sea Ley)*, about the struggle for legal abortion rights in Argentina, which has been selected to screen Out of Competition in Cannes.

Solanas' producer credits include Santiago Otheguy's *La León*, which he also co-wrote, and Liliانا Paolinelli's *Por sus propios Ojos (Proper Eyes)*. He is currently producing Christophe Reveille's feature-length documentary, *Les survivants du Che*.



CASES THAT HAVE CATALYSED THE FIGHT FOR ABORTION RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA

ANA MARIA ACEVEDO

Ana Maria Acevedo was 19, with three children, when she was diagnosed with cancer of the jaw. Doctors refused to treat her because she was a few weeks pregnant. Chemotherapy might have harmed the foetus but saved her life. An ethics commission ruled that priority would be given to the life of the foetus. In Argentina, "abortion to protect the health of the mother" has been legal since 1921, but health professionals and representatives of the church prevent it on moral grounds. Ana Maria had the right to terminate her pregnancy because her life was in danger.

Her mother, Norma, wants justice. According to her, her daughter didn't die, she was murdered. She is travelling to Cannes with her lawyer, Lucila Puyol, a feminist activist representing the campaign for the right to legal abortion.

LILIANA HERRERA

Four days before the historic session of August 8th, 2018, during which the senate rejected the bill to legalize abortion, 22-year-old Liliana Herrera died following an illegal abortion performed in unsafe conditions. She left behind two orphan daughters because she was terrified: terrified of going to hospital. Her sister had also died following a clandestine abortion.

BELEN

After she noticed severe vaginal bleeding, Belen went to a public hospital in the Tucumán province and was diagnosed with a miscarriage. She didn't know she was pregnant; nevertheless she was accused of having induced an illegal abortion. Belen was arrested and sentenced by the local court to seven years in prison for "aggravated murder, for the premeditated killing of a close relative" during a judiciary process marred by irregularities. A significant social mobilization organised in order to liberate her has forced the local Supreme Court to order her release.

ABORTION FIGURES AND DATA

- » More than **97%** of women of childbearing age in Latin America and the Caribbean live in countries with restrictive abortion laws.
- » In Argentina there are an estimated **350,000 – 500,000** clandestine abortions per year – more than one abortion for every two births.
- » According to official data, **354,627** abortions are carried out every year. In other words: **29,000** per month, **970** per day, **40** per hour.
- » Some **50,000** hospitalizations in Argentine public hospitals are registered each year due to complications from illegal abortions.
- » **3,030** women have died from clandestine abortions since the country's return to democracy.
- » Worldwide, **11%** of maternal deaths are due to abortions. In Argentina, this figure rises to **20%**.
- » Uruguay has succeeded in reducing maternal mortality due to abortions to **0%** by legalising abortion.

LEADING ARGENTINE ACTIVISTS FOR THE RIGHT TO LEGAL, FREE AND SAFE ABORTION

CECILIA OUSSET, GYNAECOLOGIST

A practising Catholic, Cecilia was categorically opposed to abortion. As a doctor, her duty was to report women who came to her hospital having undergone clandestine abortions. The deaths and isolation of these women, as well as the irreversible damage caused to their bodies, have led her to change her mind: today Cecilia campaigns for legal abortion.

She travels with her husband, José Gijena, a surgeon and activist for the right to legal abortion. Recently they terminated the pregnancy of a girl from the Tucumán province who had been raped by her grandmother's partner.

MARTA ALANIS, ACTIVIST

Marta is the founder, president and organizer of "Catholics for the Right to Decide" (CDD), which discredits dangerous myths while guaranteeing Catholics equal rights to abortion. She was recently honoured by the "International Women's Health Coalition" (IWHC) for her "tireless commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights and the battle for social justice" and for her role at the forefront of the "National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion".

TERESITA VILLAVICENCIO, MEMBER OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

Teresita was a police officer. On numerous occasions she had to investigate and incriminate women who had been forced to resort to illegal abortions. Today, she wonders how she didn't understand and care for these women as she does now as part of her parliamentary role. She defines herself as a feminist police officer.

NELLY MINYERSKY, LAWYER

Nelly Minyersky is an 89-year-old lawyer who heads a law firm and has fought for human rights and the feminist cause since her youth. She is an historical reference for feminism and the campaign for the right to legal abortion. "All my life I have considered it a right; I had an abortion when I was young, I understand it as the expression of the will of women to exercise their rights over their own bodies."

ANA, FEMINIST ACTIVIST

Ana always wears a green handkerchief tied to her wrist. She knows that many women who have to have abortions are scared and alone. The handkerchief is the silent signal she always carries so that women know they can have abortions, that she will accompany them so they do not endanger their lives in their attempts.

FATHER PACO

Father Paco, as well as a Preferential Option For The Poor priest, is also a professional nurse. That is why he understands that "abortion is a question of public health and public affairs are questions for the State." He sees this reality every day in the poorest neighbourhoods, where the most primitive abortions are performed, and the idealized notion that "to be a woman is to be a mother" is the only path of personal achievement available to girls.

CREDITS

CAST

FAMILIA ACEVEDO	FAMILIA HERRERA
CLAUDIA ACUÑA	LORENA
MARTA ALANIS	KENA
BRENDA AUSTIN	ALIKA KINAN
ANA, MILITANTE FEMINISTA	DANIEL LIPOVETZKY
ANA, MILITANTE "LINEA DORA"	SILVIA LOSPENNATO
KARINA BANFI	LU
DORA BARRANCOS	CAROLINA MOISES
BELÉN	MONICA FERNANDA MACHA
CAMILA	MERCEDES MEIER
MARIANA CARBAJAL	MAYRA MENDOZA
NORMA CUEVAS	CECILIA OUSSET
PADRE EDUARDO DE LA SERNA	PADRE PACO
LUCILA DE PONTI	CLAUDIA PIÑEIRO
ROMINA DEL PLA	BEATRIZ QUISPE
ESTELA DÍAZ	ELSI SAN MARTIN
VICTORIA DONDA	INÉS PILATTI VERGARA
NORMA DURANGO	MURIEL SANTA ANA
MARIA EUGENIA ESTENSSORO	MARIO SEBASTIANI
ARACELY FERREYRA	JUAN SUAREZ
FLORENCIA	MARTHA ROSENBERG
MALENA GALMARINI	PATRICIA ROSEMBERG
JUANA GARAY	SENADOR PINO SOLANAS
LEONARDO GROSSO	TERESITA VILLAVICENCIO
GABRIELA GUERREROS	SERGIO WISKY
VERÓNICA HEREDIA	

CREW

WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND EDITED BY	JUAN SOLANAS
PRODUCERS	VICTORIA SOLANAS, JUAN SOLANAS
DP AND CAMERA OPERATOR	JUAN SOLANAS
CONTENT CONSULTANT	LAURA CANIGGIA
CONTENT PRODUCTION	LAURA CANIGGIA, VICTORIA SOLANAS, JUAN SOLANAS
GRADING	JUAN SOLANAS
SOUND	JUAN SOLANAS
ADDITIONAL SOUND	NICOLÁS SULCIC
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	FLEXA CORREA LOPES
SOUND POST-PRODUCTION	FABIÁN OLIVER
MIX	ALEJANDRO GRILLO
MIXING STUDIO	LAMAYORSTUDIO
ORIGINAL MUSIC	PAULA MOORE
SONG	"Libres" by MORA NAVARRO
POST-PRODUCTION	
IMAGE COLOR AND FX	LES FILMS DU SUD
LIGHT AND SOUND EQUIPMENT	SINNERPIXEL
PRODUCTION	VICTORIA SOLANAS (CINESUR S.A.), JUAN SOLANAS (LES FILMS DU SUD) CARLOS ABBoud (GAMELAND)

