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Publication Date

2016-04-01

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Sanctuary

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E-scholarship upload
9 May 2016
UCB Graduate School of Journalism
Documentary Production
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Sanctuary
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Project Summary

In 2014, Lourdes Varela was in her late 20s and working for a pharmaceutical company, and feeling unfulfilled. She began googling causes and, after trying several, including working for the homeless, she settled on the pro-life movement.

Lourdes's hometown, Mexico City, had decriminalized abortion only seven years earlier, in 2007, making the city an oasis of legal abortion access in Mexico, and in much of Latin America. A then-nascent Mexican anti-abortion movement rose to oppose this change, drawing inspiration, volunteers, and materials from the American anti-abortion movement.

One of the most successful exporters of American anti-abortion activism is 40 Days for Life, an organization founded in 2004 in a small college town in South Texas. They specialize in a licensable model of protest, consisting of a 40 day, 24-hour clinic vigil. To date, 40 Days for Life protests are active in 300 cities around the world.

Lourdes reached out to 40 Days for Life in 2014 and soon was managing several campaigns in Mexico City, the first such campaigns in Latin America.

In late 2015 and early 2016, a small crew and I followed Lourdes through planning and executing her 4th campaign. Shot in a mixture of verite and formal interview, this immersive half-hour documentary offers opportunities for an exploration of the modern American anti-abortion movement's efforts in Mexico, and a glimpse of the movement in its modern incarnation—nebulous, global, and international.

People on either or any side of the abortion debate, and either side of the border, could benefit from a deeper understanding of what drives this movement and its sources of strength.

Sanctuary Research Sources and Interviews

Interviews included in film:

Lourdes Varela

Interviews recorded but not included in film:

David Bereit, director, 40 Days for Life

Estefania Barba, lawyer and journalist

Andres Ruiz, a pro-life priest in Mexico City

Luzma Cortez, Pro-Vida Mexico

Background sources:

Steve Karlen, 40 Days for Life USA

Katharine Bretton, 40 Days for Life USA

Robert Colquhoun, 40 Days for Life International

Wynette Sills, 40 Days for Life California

Ana Luisa Liguori, Ford Foundation

Kathryn Joyce, Nation magazine

Gillian Kane, Political Research Associates

Cynthia Gorney, National Geographic writer, author of *Articles of Faith* (advisor)

Teresa Herrera, Marie Stopes, Mexico City

Carla Eckhardt, Marie Stopes, Mexico City

Kelly Blanchard, IBIS Reproductive Health

Jorge Serrano Limon, director of Pro-Vida

Ethan Bien
Draft-Jan. 21, 2016
Not fact checked.

Sanctuary
A Profile of the Anti-Abortion Movement in Mexico

Brief synopsis:

Mexico City decriminalized abortion up to twelve weeks in 2007, making Mexico City an oasis of legal abortion access in Mexico, and an outlier in Latin America. The then-nascent Mexican right to life movement rose to oppose this change, drawing inspiration, volunteers, and materials from the American anti-abortion movement, but also creating something completely of its own.

One of the most successful exporters of American pro-life activism is 40 Days for Life, an organization founded in 2004 in a small college town in South Texas. 40 Days' model of prayer and vigil is now practiced in over 300 cities worldwide, including Mexico City and 36 other cities around Mexico.

This half-hour documentary is an immersive exploration of the modern American right to life movement's efforts in Mexico, and a snapshot of the right to life movement in its modern incarnation—lightweight, online, visual, somewhat nebulous, and all over the world.

Film will be shot primarily in Mexico City.

Direct Cinema with coverage.

TREATMENT

40 Days for Life anti abortion protest in Fairfield CA, viewed from inside a closed Planned Parenthood.

David Bereit gives us a standup interview, describing 40 Days' international reach. Europe, Africa, and Latin America.

We then cut to a Mexico City courtroom in 2007, with citizens of Mexico City taking turns addressing a court assembly from a podium. Their words are chosen with care—they are discussing an issue that at that time was rarely discussed in public. It is striking how little vitriol we hear, how careful and reasonable the arguments are. We hear a variety of opinions on both sides of the debate, but the consensus is largely in favor of the new law. The measure passes—we see TV reporters and newspaper headlines announcing the change, and its popular support.

VO interview with Ana Luisa and the Mexican lawyer, describing the battle for reproductive rights in Mexico and how the battle was won, the coalitions they built between feminists (IPAS, Madre, etc.), international orgs (UN) justices, and some Mexican clergy, how they were able to convince clergy to sign on.

A gigantic, imposing statue in a Mexico City plaza of a mother and child. There is a plaque next to the statue that says, in Spanish, “Mothers by choice, not by chance.” Ana Luisa or an historian explains that this plaque was attached to the statue in the 1990s, and explains Mexico’s long-standing tradition of a separated church and state, and discusses the roots of the the feminist movement.

Another monument, this one in the Panteon de Dolores, Mexico City’s oldest cemetery. The monument is large, new, and well-maintained in comparison to the children’s graves around it, which are neglected, old, and strewn with garbage. This time we are accompanied by a right to life activist explains the monument to us—a sanctuary for prayer and a monument commemorating the life of the unborn.

Lourdes, a Mexican woman in her early 30s, is gathering water, snacks, and protest paraphernalia, making calls, in her Mexico City apartment. She’s on her way to a protest.

Lourdes life story in voice over—her career, her disillusionment, her search for a cause. She relates the story that radicalized her—the story she heard from her mentor, Luz Maria, of an aborted fetus passed around an operating room, then given to a policeman, who used it in a ritual—an offering to Death, a “satanic ritual”. Our first inkling of something deeper, weirder, and Mexican behind this movement.

With Lourdes, we arrive at a vigil, and find it shaping up to look exactly like an American vigil. The protesters are getting ready. A few of them give us short interviews—they describe their tactics, their successes, what they hope to accomplish, and what inspired them to join this movement. The gist: they want to stop this holocaust on babies; they see the law decriminalizing abortion as an import from the United States.

We see their banners, their logos. The virgin of Guadalupe.

Then a busful of religious people arrive—the San Bartolome contingent. The protest goes from 10 people to 210 or 310. The priest arrives. The atmosphere changes.

We sit down with the priest and discuss his community’s reasons for participating in the protest. He describes the culture of death—the narcoviolence, and abortionists.

We follow the San Bartolome people in their parade through the streets on 12th of December, to the church. The priest addresses the congregation. He makes the claim

that the numbers of victims of abortion equaling the victims of narcoviolence. We see pious people listening.

Lourdes addresses the congregation, echoing some of the priest's claims, adding her own.

The priest at the podium again, thanking the contingent from the US, and Mexico, and 40 Days for Life.

Lourdes in a sit-down interview discussing 40 Days' tactics—prayer and vigil. Who can argue with prayer? Lourdes explains the appeal of 40 DFL—the simple tactics of prayer and fasting are much more appealing to modern Mexicans than the older tactics of graphic abortion photos. Where do they get their funding? They sell t-shirts.

Lourdes and Luz Maria discuss their movement, the methods, and the international threat they feel they are facing—Marie Stopes International, Planned Parenthood International, and the Mexican government are all in collusion to usurp Mexican identity and Mexican culture.

Ana Maria comes back to describe the changing tide in NGO spending—a shift away from funding reproductive rights. Essentially one side of the fight is giving up! What are the results? A changing tide. Latin American countries are changing back—El Salvador (flipped in 1998), Brazil,

Archival: News coverage from Guardian of Beatriz, the Brazilian woman forced to premature delivery via caesarean section of a fetus that was not going to survive.

News coverage from Guardian of the Chilean 11-year old incest victim forced to bring her pregnancy to term.

We return to the Mexican protest we were with earlier, we now see activists practicing their activism, some living up to the ideal form of activism they explained to us in the earlier parts of the film, some failing. The overall tone is somewhat droll; we see passersby reactions, mostly annoyed, disengaged. Seeing women trying to access the clinic is not so funny, however, we likely feel for them. We see the t-shirts for sale. It's all quite small, somewhat grating, somewhat alien, but yet familiar, resembling protests in the US.

Sanctuary Script_Final
 5 May 2016
 BIEN ETHAN

<u>Visual</u>	<u>TC</u>	<u>Dialogue</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Blank screen		Lourdes OS: What is an abortion?	
		OS praying in background	
Lourdes		Lourdes: What is an abortion? Do you think it's the elimination of a life, or do you think it's the removal of a clump of cells	
CARD		Card: ON APRIL 24, 2007, THE MEXICO CITY LEGISLATURE DECRIMINALIZED ABORTION IN MEXICO CITY	
CARD		Card: THIS MADE MEXICO CITY THE ONLY PLACE IN MEXICO, AND MUCH OF LATIN AMERICA, TO OFFER LEGAL ABORTION	
		OS praying in background	
Luzma and Scarf man praying with 40 Days for Life signs		Mumbled prayer	
Fade to black			
Fade up on Panteon de Dolores graves		TITLE: SANCTUARY	
		2 nd TITLE: 40 Days for Life in Mexico	
Guitarist and accordionist		Guitarist and accordionist singing	

Funeral seen through trees, fade out			
Fade up on Lourdes in church		[00:00:24.23] Lourdes: An unjust law was passed in 1917. In 1926, with the Calles Reform, it was enacted in Mexico. In such a way that the Catholic cult was practically prohibited - not practically - prohibited. //And at that time, what did a Catholic Mexico do? Did it fall, did it hide, did it stop practicing the Catholic religion? [crowd murmurs no] It fought. It fought for the right to faith, for the right to believe, for the right to continue being a Catholic Mexico under the chant of "Viva Cristo Rey," (Long Live Jesus Christ), the Cristeros fought from 1926 to 1929. Thanks to them, today we have the right - not only to practice our faith - but thanks to them, we are still here as a Mexico united in religion.	
Lourdes in church		[00:01:49.11] Lourdes: On April 24 of 2007, another unjust law was passed. The right to kill a baby in the womb. And now, will Catholic Mexico remain silent? [crowd murmurs "no"]. One more time, we will fight.	
March gathering		We are going to fight for the lives of all Mexicans. For the life of even the smallest. And like that, as it happened with our grandparents and our ancestors who defended the faith with their life, today I invite you to defend life with the faith in 40 Days for Life.	
Marchers		Through prayer, let us ask for the mercy of God so	

gather, and head towards the clinic		that in this fourth campaign for life, we may remain under the mantle of our Virgin, at the chant of "Viva Cristo Rey!" (Long Live Christ the King) "Viva Maria Reyna!" (Long Live Mary the Queen) "Viva Mexico!" (Long Live Mexico) "Viva La Vida!" (Long Live Life) "Viva La Vida!" "Viva La Vida!"	
Marchers gather outside Marie stopes clinic			
		Title: Marie Stopes Clinic, Mexico City, 12 midnight.	
WS of Lourdes and Little Man outside clinic		Card: 5:30AM	
Lourdes and Little man WS			
Lourdes and Little man WS		Lourdes: It was like a conversion. Of how I lived, what I did, my whole life. I was searching for a mission. Looking for my place in this world.	
		Lourdes: When I heard this talk about what the Pro-Life movement was doing in Mexico, how it was saving lives, and helping women.	
		I knew this was something I could do. There are many needs in the world. But we can't do everything. This felt like one that I could do, that might help me a little more than other activities. I can't fight the drug war, for example	
Marching in San Bartolo		Marchers praying	

		Title: Parade for the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe	
Fireworks		Fireworks booming	
Inside the church as virgin comes in		Singing	
Audience		Mexico certainly lives in the shadow of death	
San Bartolom People		Our history is one of constant war, and death	
San Bartolom People		Idolatry and The sacrifice of children, of maidens, and of men	
Priest		The demons say they are returning to Mexico	
Priest		Before the Virgin appeared, innocent children were sacrificed [by the indigenous]	
Priest		The Virgin was the one who put an end to this, and drove them away	
Priest		And now they're back, because the sacrifices have begun again	
Priest		The sacrifice of innocent children	
Crowd		The number of children aborted in Mexico City each year	
Crowd		Is the same number of people murdered at the hands of criminals	
Priest		Surprising, No?	
Church service		Lourdes OS: Catholic faith says to love thy neighbor like thyself. I forgot all that. It was just me me me. I worked very hard. I got a good job here in Mexico City. I started to return to the church. But I was partying, and drinking. It wasn't healthy, to say the least. Parties are fun, I will not say no, but they	

		always end. And when they end, that emptiness fills you. And that vacancy remains. So it was also an encounter of myself.	
Lourdes		We are joined today by 40 Days for Life, from Mexico and the United States	
Priest		Please give them your full attention.	
Lourdes takes the stage		During our last 40 DFL campaign we were praying at a clinic when a woman arrived	
Lourdes in San B church		She stood by us and joined us in prayer. We thought she was just another volunteer	
Lourdes in San B church		Until she explained that she had an appointment to abort her son	
Lourdes in San B church		But when she arrived at the clinic and saw the eyes of our mother, the virgin of guadalupe,	
Lourdes in San B church		Her frozen heart began to beat again	
Lourdes in Parroquia		I remember one day on the street it hit me—pow—what I am doing is wrong. Maybe not as bad as when I was in the University, but I was being selfish. [pause] really selfish. If god gave me so much? Can't I share with others? So I decided to start working on behalf of other people.	
Blackness		Skype ringing	
Pixellated David Bereit waiting for call to connect		Ringing stops	

<p>Lourdes at computer</p>		<p>[01:00:21.23] Hello this is David!</p> <p>Hi David this is Lourdes! How are you.</p> <p>Lourdes I'm doing well! [01:00:29.01]</p> <p>[Lourdes laughs.] Nice to meeting you by Skype!</p> <p>No kidding! It's nice to put a face to the name, I've seen you on a video but I haven't gotten to meet you before.</p> <p>Well I'm really glad to be meeting you.</p>	
		<p>[01:00:40.19] So let me just start off, hi this is David Bereit, I'm nat'l director of 40 Days for Life, a pro-life initiative that's made up of peaceful fasting, prayer vigils, and community outreach, I'm actually joining here today from just outside Washington DC, in Fredericksburg, VA, and that's where I'm calling from today. //</p>	
		<p>//[40DFL has now spread it will reach 34 nations, collectively, and some of them have been amazing success stories, and certainly lourdes your leadership has led to that there in Mexico City]//</p>	
		<p>// So Lourdes, us never having met in person, tell me</p>	
		<p>[01:00:40.19] --how did you come to your pro life convictions that you have, and then also how did you first get involved in 40 DFL?</p>	

Lourdes Skype		[01:00:48.14] Lourdes: Well it's really god's path. because two years ago I was completely out of the pl movement, not just pro life, I think it all started because I have a normal life, friends, and a social life, parties, you know// [01:01:58.10]	
Lourdes and David on Skype		Lourdes: [01:05:16.00] So I go to a group, to another group, and after a year of looking for a reason to say um I was invited to a conference, and one talk was about the pro-life movement, // the story that this girl talk about was a really sad, about a baby that was aborted, with the vacuum was the complete body, just sucked, // they was like surprised but not that way that they felt it was a human being, they were surprised like "ah I have a baby look at this!" and they were like playing with it [01:06:42.19] with him and then they gave the baby to the policeman that was in front and he kept the body but show the body to this the proliferers, and they asked to bury the body and everything but the police said no, I will take it to the holy death, a satanic figure here in mexico // so that surprised me that much, it touched me, because how could be possible that the body of the baby was more important to the police than to the mother. [01:07:38.09] Or to the others. So I said here is what I want to do something.	
David's face		David: Hm	
Lourdes at computer		[01:09:20.19] So I looked for you for your webpage< i found you, I sent to you an email, you answered, and ph it just started. And here we are. I really here we are.	

Lourdes sit-down in church		they have a program, it's like a workshop, and in that program they teach you how to lead a 40DFL campaign.	
		Ethan OS: They have an office here?	
		[01:47:16.13] So no it's those are videos. 8 videos. You have to see all of them to understand how to lead a campaign.	
		Ethan OS: Eight videos?	
		8 videos yeah.	
		Ethan OS: How many minutes is that?	
		It's like an hour, each video. 8 hours, yes! [laughs] It's to understand I really well it was really useful for me because I saw all of them several times because I as I said I didn't know anything [01:47:58.15]	
Smash cut to: 40DFL graphics: prayer and fasting		40DFL music. CARD: prayer and fasting	
40DFL graphics:		40 DFL music. CARD: peaceful vigil	
40DFL graphics:		40 DFL music. CARD: community outreach	
		DB: So let's dive into step #1. We are here because we are faced with an epidemic in our world. The epidemic of abortion has become the leading cause of death in our entire world. More lives are lost to abortion than to cancer, than to cardiovascular disease, than to hunger, than to war. Abortion is a	

		plague	
SMASH CUT TO:			
Lourdes walking into church room with her sister, introduces pope cutout to Mauricio and LuzMa			
Enter the room		Lourdes: Look who we brought!	
Lourdes and Luzma pose with Pope cut out			
Mauricio		Mauricio: Every year, it's 52 million. It's horrible, we are the worst generation, the worst. // If you kill babies, you kill whatever. Whatever. The society lose all the conscience, then the violence starts, and then the drugs goes stronger. Everything goes wrong wrong...	
Marchers carry on through Roma restaurant			
Marchers arrive at clinic		"Viva Cristo Rey!" "Viva Mexico!" "Viva La Vida!" "Viva La Vida!"	

Lourdes holding pope cut out.		Lourdes: // we believe that as human beings, we will never be able to end crimes in general. // now it is of the unborn, but in history, it has been in slavery, in the holocaust against the Jews, against women. And now, against the unborn. But also, there are others that continue. How, humanly, do you end these crimes? It's practically impossible. So at 40 days, we decided to do it through prayer. Because we believe that god can	
Lourdes alone outside clinic		Lourdes OS: Sometimes it seems like the problem of abortion is so large	
Lourdes alone outside clinic		Especially when we consider the 50 million babies killed, year after year, and we feel so small	
Lourdes alone outside clinic		Sometimes we feel desperate, like we can no longer stand to fight,	
Lourdes alone outside clinic		But even now the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe stands outside the abortion clinics of Marie Stopes	
Lourdes alone outside clinic		And prayer continues for the babies condemned to die, and for their mothers.	
Morning comes, birds			
Guard is smoking, looking at virgin			
Guard rejoins Lourdes		Lourdes: They left you outside	
		Guard: I got here too early	
		Lourdes: Come over here, then	
		A Lord's Prayer while we wait for them to open?	

Looking at virgi		Guard: sure, let's pray	
		Together: Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil	
Truck arrives		Amen	
		Lourdes: Has he come to take the bodies of the babies?	
		Guard: Yes. The first day I worked here— [stops/unintelligible]	
Guard approaches camera, speaks to us		Guard: I'm not happy to say this	
		But the man that just pulled up	
		He's here to take out the bags of babies	
		That's the truck that picks up the bags	
		I am against this, too	
		But this is the job I've got	
		I don't feel good about it	
		You'll see he's about to take out the bags	
Guard approaches garbage man, they shake hands		Guard: I already knocked, they won't open	

		Garbage man: They haven't arrived?	
Guard Sweeping			
Lourdes praying			
Virgin			
Guard gets 2 coffees			
Guy comes up to get in, guard treats him poorly			
Couple goes in			
Garbage man comes out, throws bag into truck			
Gets cup of coffee			
Cyclist goes by		"freedom of choice!"	
		Ranchera music starts	
Shots of Sanctuary in Cemetery		CARD: SANCTUARY FOR THE VICTIMS OF ABORTION	
		CARD: LOURDES'S 2014 CAMPAIGN WAS THE FIRST 40 DAYS FOR LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA.	
		CARD: THERE ARE NOW 37 ACTIVE CAMPAIGNS AROUND MEXICO	

		CARD: ABORTION REMAINS A CRIME, PUNISHABLE BY PRISON, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF MEXICO AND LATIN AMERICA	
		CARD: AND COMPLICATIONS FROM BACK-ROOM ABORTIONS ARE A LEADING CAUSE OF MATERNAL DEATH	
Panteon			“Mexico lindo y querido”
Graveyard, dolly out			
		<p>A FILM BY ETHAN BIEN CAMERA: Romin Johnson, Melina Tupa ADDITIONAL CAMERA: ETHAN BIEN SOUND: ETHAN BIEN</p> <p>FIXERS AND INTERPRETERS Melina Tupa Julia Larson</p> <p>TRANSLATORS Angelica Casas Julia Larson Melina Tupa Zoe VanGelder</p> <p>DRIVER Raquel Larson</p>	

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		<p><u>COLOR CORRECTION</u> Chris O'Dea</p> <p><u>Made possible in part by grants from</u> David Eckles' and Minette Nelson's Filmmaker Fund Andrew Stern Fund for Documentary Simone Coxe Traveling Scholarship The UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism Blackmagic Design Canon USA</p> <p>Accordion: Jose Alfredo Jimenez Silva Jr. Guitar: Salvador Chavez Valencia</p>	
		<p>Special thanks</p> <p>Robin Hessman Lourdes Portillo Zoe VanGelder Raquel Larson Daphne Matziaraki Deana Mitchell James Pace-Cornsilk Dan Steiner Shawn Baldwin Heidi Piironen Alsanosi Adam</p>	

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