

Voces Inocentes (*Innocent Voices*)

Release Date: May 6, 2005 (USA)

Genre: Drama, Crime, Thriller

Directed by: Paul Haggis

Featured: Don Cheadle, Sandra Bullock, Thandie Newton, Ludacris, Terrence Howard

Length: 1 hour and 52 minutes

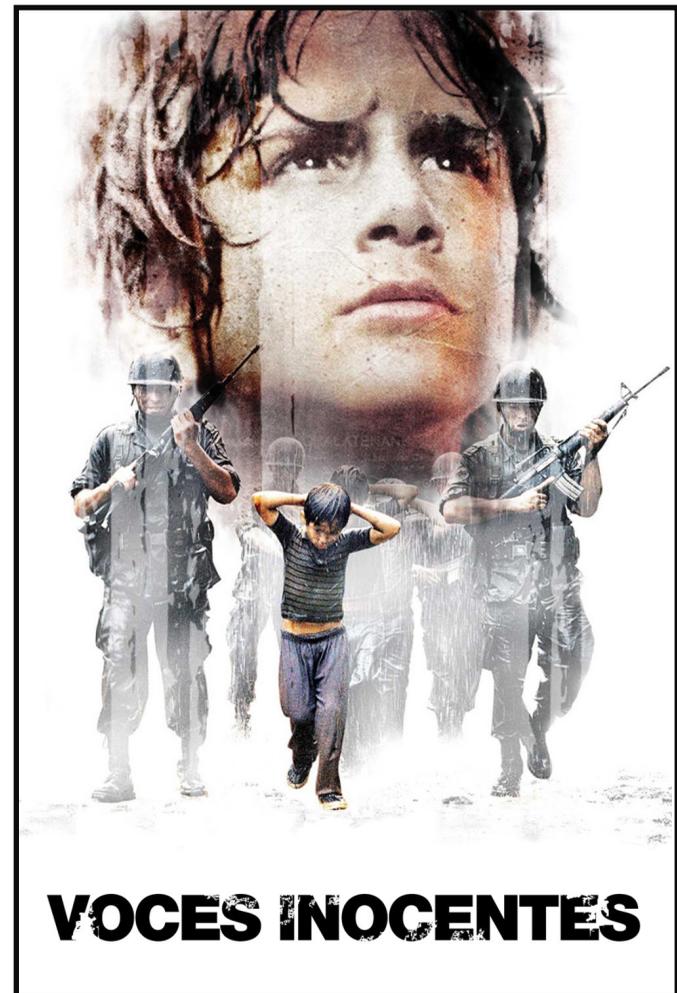
Rating: R (language, sexual content and some violence)

SYNOPSIS

Voces Inocentes (*Innocent Voices*) takes place in the 1980s at the height of the civil war in El Salvador and is based on the childhood of writer Óscar Torres. The young protagonist, Chava, lives with his grandmother, mother, and two siblings in the small town of Cuscatancingo. This area is fought over by the Salvadoran Army and the Salvadoran guerrillas. When Chava turns twelve, he will be recruited by the Salvadoran Army to fight against the guerrillas.

While the plot of this film is centered around random bouts of shooting and violence against Salvadoran citizens, the ordinary life of Chava is also shown when he falls in love with a girl, plays with his siblings and friends, and rebels against his mother. Chava is torn between joining the guerrillas with his uncle Beto and hiding from the Salvadoran Army when they come to recruit so he can continue to support his mother and siblings.

This film is a heartfelt masterpiece that offers commentary on the injustice against innocent people, especially children, during the civil war in El Salvador. *Voces Inocentes* is a critique on the military's use of children and the senseless violence of war.



CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT THEMES IN THE FILM

- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor
- Respect for Life
- Human Dignity
- War and Peace
- Child soldiers

OFFICIAL FILM TRAILER

<http://bit.ly/1qQWZU8>

DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which scene in the film that stood out to you? Why?
2. Why or how does *Voces Inocentes* explore whether violence can be justified in the effort to eliminate injustice and insure basic human rights? What do you think about using violence to bring peace?
3. In this film, we learn that over 300,000 children are recruited by both the military and rebels in 40 countries around the world. Think of two examples in countries other than El Salvador where youth become child soldiers and are torn from their families.
4. What factors created the breeding grounds for violence like the civil war in El Salvador during the 1980s? Think of economic, political, religious, and social factors.
5. Catholic social tradition dictates that there is a right and a duty to participate in society to work for the common good and eliminate injustice toward the poor and vulnerable. How can this teaching be lived out in relation to the poverty, corruption, and injustice in many Central American countries? How has your country responded (either positively or negatively) to the needs of our sisters and brothers in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and so many other Latin American countries?
6. Think of the two feet of love in action: both charity and justice are called for to respond to the cry of the poor. To what extent can government policies change unjust structures? How does the private sector, like faith-based organizations, play a role in assisting the poor and creating systemic change?
7. At the end of the film, to escape the violence of his home country, Chava leaves his family to travel to the United States. Six years later, he is reunited with his family. Do you know any other stories similar to this one, where a family was reunited after being separated by violence? What does Catholic social tradition say about the call to family?
8. What role did United States soldiers play in this film? What was the perception of these Americans by Kella, Chava's mother, and other Salvadorans? Do you think it is just that the U.S. government sent troops to train the Salvadoran army and gave them over one billion dollars in military support? Why or why not?
9. Pope Francis calls us to combat "the globalization of indifference." Over the 12 years of the Salvadoran civil war, over 75,000 people died and there were around one million people exiled. If you don't already know the personal story of one of these individuals who either died or was exiled, learn their story and share it with others.
10. How has violence in El Salvador increased or decreased since the 1980s civil war? What are the new forms of violence and sources of injustice in this country?

For more information about child soldiers, learn about the United Nations's Initiative "Children, Not Soldiers":

<http://bit.ly/1Tjkj47>.