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Title	It Stays with You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti, by Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills
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Publication date	2019-06-01
Original Citation	Shand, R. (2019) 'It Stays with You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti, by Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills', Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media, 17, pp. 221-224. https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.17.17
Type of publication	Review
Link to publisher's version	10.33178/alpha.17.17
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Download date	2026-11-17 06:30:59
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/8232



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Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media
no. 17, 2019, pp. 221–224
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.17.17

It Stays with You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti. By Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills, 2017.

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It Stays with You (2017), a fifty-minute documentary film directed and produced by Cahal McLaughlin (Queen's University Belfast) and Siobhán Wills (Ulster University), presents viewers with underreported events of recent Caribbean history in a concerted effort to raise public awareness and activate an international investigation. Indeed, one of its interviewees, Sorel Eliasse, reflects that traumatic encounters such as these simply cannot be forgotten:

> A massacre takes place in an area and no one comes to find out how many victims there were, how many people were lost, how many cases there are. You know what you know, it stays with you.

This comment could describe the experience of survivors of conflicts in many countries, but here he is talking specifically about events that took place in Haiti between 2005–2007. Therefore, the documentary attempts to expose the potential malevolence of seeming benign international organisations such as the United Nations. This is a powerful account of controversial policing strategies, which ostensibly targeted gang members in one of the poorest districts of Port-au-Prince. The mission, officially dubbed "Operation Iron Fist", sanctioned soldiers in low hovering helicopters to shoot into the shantytown dwellings below. This resulted in a number of civilian casualties, but a puzzling lack of outrage from the international political community. After all, Haiti was a country largely at peace.

The filmmaking team, Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills, have a longstanding professional engagement in related research. Wills builds on her previous investigations into international law and human rights issues. Here, she is working in collaboration with McLaughlin, whose documentary projects explored similarly conflicted pasts. On the accompanying website they state:

> The aim is to use participatory practices with those most affected in order to produce a film that will raise awareness of the long term effects of the use of deadly force on Cité Soleil, within the UN and beyond, and to advocate for an investigation.

Therefore, *It Stays with You* can be seen as a test case for a cluster of ethical issues in relation to participatory practices within the filmmaking process. It attempts to spotlight the experiences of a community that has hitherto not been enabled to tell their side of the story.

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The majority of *It Stays with You* is structured around two complementary sections: those of the eyewitnesses and those of the experts. We are launched into the testimony of residents from the Cité Soleil area and their recollections of the hostile raids of the UN soldiers. The eyewitnesses frequently tell distressing stories of family members losing their lives. They often focus their accounts on the children who were injured or killed, and the trauma of not being able to help loved ones access medical treatment. The interviews are initially presented with only minimal context; as a result, the viewer confronts their testimonies on a direct emotional level.

The motivation behind these attacks only begins to be explored over twenty minutes into the film. The second section of the documentary dedicates itself to the testimony of a series of experts—medical, legal and academic—as they analyse the local and international factors that inflamed this situation. The contrast between the onscreen representation of the previous interviewees and those of the professionals is immediately apparent. While the eyewitnesses talk to an off-screen translator, here a doctor looks directly into the camera as he recounts his experiences of working at a local hospital. A number of experts also offer contextual perspectives on the events recounted at the beginning of the film. There is a discussion of international law, with a particular exploration of the so-called "use of force". The standout contributor is Professor Camille Chalmers who, along with Professor Ricardo Seitenfus, sheds light on the social and political ties between Haiti and Brazil. Between them, they explain that the UN troops were mostly made up of Brazilian soldiers. Chalmers claims that their actions were partially motivated by using Haiti as a training ground for similar operations in shantytowns located in Brazil.



Figure 1: Professor Camille Chalmers contextualises the actions of the Blue Helmets in Haiti.
***It Stays with You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti* (Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills, 2017). Screenshot.**

Overall, he argues that Operation Iron Fist can be seen as part of a wider reactionary tendency to "criminalise the poor". The final ten minutes of the film, which alternates between further interviews with both eyewitnesses and experts, focuses on the personal and political legacies. In reference to the universal application of human rights, the experts forcefully assert that the actions of the UN troops were violations of the "right to life". The contributors are also in broad agreement that an official investigation is both necessary and overdue.

Many contemporary human rights documentaries now ensure that their films and websites are working hand-in-hand. Indeed, the website for *It Stays with You* builds on the arguments implicitly presented in the film, explicitly stating that, "We are calling for an independent and transparent investigation into the use of deadly force by peacekeepers in Haiti". The filmmakers further encourage viewers to sign the *change.org* petition and to send an email to the United Nations. There is also a section devoted to the exhibition history of the film, which details its premiere at a community centre in Port-au-Prince, followed by a screening at a Haitian university. Since then, it has been circulated within the growing international network of human rights festivals, as well as showcases at nontheatrical screenings at universities and third sector organisations. *It Stays with You* was clearly intended to generate discussion, and appropriately videos of post-screening panels are also presented on the website.

This project is designed to engage with both its subjects and viewers in a participatory manner. Such a methodology is evidenced in both the production practices and distribution networks employed. These research strategies have varying degrees of success in this multiplatform project. The first-hand testimonies are often compelling and the participants seize the opportunity to tell those beyond their community what actually happened. From a formal perspective, the interviewees tend to be framed so that they are often alone within domestic surroundings, almost emphasising their isolation. This effect is both heightened and undercut by seeing children in the background of the frame, seemingly oblivious to the traumatic events being described. Throughout *It Stays with You*, images of local children, as well as contemporary footage of UN soldiers, are regularly employed as cutaways from the interview sequences. The implicit contrast between the vulnerability of children and the military power of the soldiers is perhaps intended to illustrate the asymmetrical power dynamics of this situation. However, there is an accumulation of oral testimonies that are similar in both content and presentation, although this repetition may have been intended to underline how a number of eyewitnesses experienced largely the same events. There are also relatively few onscreen interactions between the filmmakers and their interviewees. We rarely hear the questions being asked, or how the eyewitnesses initially respond to difficult topics being raised for the first time in many years. During these interview sequences there are also few visual reference points, such as photographs, drawings or personal mementos of the people being discussed. Supplementary materials of this sort would have heightened the emotional force of otherwise visually static exchanges. From a participatory perspective, the most significant part of this project is the Participant Updates section of the website, which showcases self-recorded interviews with those featured in the documentary. These short videos provide a welcome insight on how their lives have been changed by participating in the filmmaking process.

In conclusion, *It Stays with You* provides a sustained challenge to conventional media representations of UN troops as a largely benevolent peacekeeping force. In light of the evidence

presented in this documentary, it is something of a surprise to read that "for the UN the mission in Cité Soleil is regarded as a resounding success". This film provides a platform to those who inadvertently found themselves and their families in the firing line. They contribute powerful accounts of how the operations were experienced by those on the ground. The project forcefully argues that, when judged against the intention of curbing gang violence in this area, these actions were not proportionate. *It Stays with You* is therefore a timely reminder of the dangers inherent in the militarisation of policing. During one of the most telling moments of this documentary, Ricardo Seitenfus explains that the language gap between the residents of Port-au-Prince and the Brazilian soldiers was a cause of much misunderstanding. The lack of communication between residents and those tasked with policing troubled areas is a recurring feature of many contemporary mischarges of justice. Seen within this light, *It Stays with You* is a valuable filmic and online project that aims to bridge a stubbornly persistent cultural gap.

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Suggested Citation

Shand, Ryan. "*It Stays with You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti*, by Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills." Film Project Review. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 17, 2019, pp. 221–224. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.17.17.

Ryan Shand completed his PhD, titled *Amateur Cinema: History, Theory, and Genre (1930-80)*, at the University of Glasgow. He was a postdoctoral researcher on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded projects *Mapping the City in Film: A Geohistorical Analysis* at the University of Liverpool, as well as *Children and Amateur Media in Scotland*, at the University of Glasgow. He contributed chapters to the anthologies *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (2010), *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (2014), and *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs* (2018); article publications have appeared in *The Moving Image*, *Leisure Studies* and the *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*. Ryan is also the coeditor of *Small-Gauge Storytelling: Discovering the Amateur Fiction Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).