



NEW RELEASES

Ultraviolence

Ultraviolence exposes state violence in a way that leaves a lasting, shocking impression. The documentary is a damning indictment of a racist system that has had fatal consequences. Director Ken Fero's investigation exposes police brutality in the UK, recounting the stories of Christopher Alder, Brian Douglas, Jean Charles de Menezes, Paul Coker, Roger Sylvester, Harry Stanley and Nuur Saeed. Though the details differ substantially, there is one common thread: all had interactions with the police that ultimately ended in death.

The film examines the circumstances surrounding these deaths, looking at cases between 1995 and 2006, and the surrounding campaigns for justice, tirelessly and lovingly carried out by the families.

The long-awaited follow up to *Injustice* (2001), *Ultraviolence* is Fero's second film in a trilogy about police killings from Migrant Media. This collective of radical filmmakers, with their social and political focus, are no strangers to controversy. *Injustice* was met with threats from the police, and attempts were made to bury the film.

Ultraviolence delves into the deaths of these men in upsetting detail, showing CCTV footage of both Paul Coker and Christopher Alder in their final moments, as they lay dying on the floor. This inclusion is controversial, the traumatising impact that a seemingly constant stream of police brutality videos can have on black people has been well documented.

We talked with Ken Fero about the decision to include the footage, and how this powerful film fits into the Black Lives Matter movement.

How does Ultraviolence relate to the current resurgence of the BLM movement?

In Migrant Media we've been saying 'black lives matter' since we formed in 1990, and lots of people have been saying 'black lives matter' for the past 400 years. So BLM's not a new thing. It's concretely come together partly I think to do with the younger generation becoming much more interested in these issues, which is a big change to what we've had in the past 15 years. The film was obviously being made and shot way before BLM, in the form it has taken, had come forward. We could have put this film out 10 years ago or we could have put this film out in 30 years. It's tied to the struggle, but the film would have been there whatever happened with BLM. But they are connected: we do work with BLM, we support BLM and they support us.

There's a strong focus on prosecuting the police throughout the film, but more recently there's been a growing movement for police abolition. How do you feel about this? Do you think it's a matter of reforming systems to hold police to account or is it necessary to dismantle these structures completely?

The whole thing about prosecution is that police officers who go out and are armed in different ways, whether it's physical force or guns or CS or taser – they have a duty of care. If they know that whatever they do, whatever action they take, they're not going to have to go to court, they're not going to have to defend their actions, then they're not going to be in control. Some police officers will be out of control, and that's what's happened. We've had police

officers who have gone out of control, because they know inside them that whatever they do, the state will protect them.

So until there are prosecutions, and this is what the families want, it really doesn't matter what critics or filmmakers or even the general public want. There's nobody that should be listened to apart from the families, because they're the ones that are experiencing it, they're the ones that are suffering it. If the families want prosecution of these police officers then that's what everybody will have to work towards, and if anyone has an idea different than that then they're against the struggle and not for it. It doesn't matter who they are and what their ideas are, the centre of the political struggle is at the hands of the families and nobody else.

There's been debate about showing videos of police brutality. Some black people have said that it's traumatising, and question why white people would need to physically see someone's death in order to be incited to action. Personally I found parts of the film really difficult to watch. Can you talk me through your decision to include footage of the deaths of Christopher Alder and Paul Coker?

With Christopher Alder and with Paul Coker, the decision to show the footage is not just our decision, it's ours and the families', and when the families of the people that die in the film make the decision that they want people to see it then we have to respect that. We could have talked against that, we could have said – 'We don't need to do it because some people find it disturbing and traumatic.' But we're talking about a whole community that's been in trauma for the past 50 years when it comes to deaths in police custody, and it's not so much the black people who are aware of it that need to see the footage, it's other people as well who are denying it.

For the people that know about it and feel it – don't look at the footage. For the people that are denying it – you have to look at the footage. I think if people want to deal with this action, they're going to have to suffer more than they are already, because if people are saying they feel traumatised by it then what are you going to do about it? It's pointless saying we don't need to see these images because we know about it already, because we haven't had any progress in this country around deaths in custody. We haven't had any prosecutions, apart from one out of 2000.

In the film Leslie Thomas QC says that the tools for the prosecution of murderous police are there but the political will isn't. Do you think this has changed since filming?

While we filmed a lot of the footage in 2005, the narrative and the editorial direction is all very current. The statement that Leslie Thomas made is still very relevant; the evidence for that is that there's been an increase in deaths in custody. More people are being killed by the police and less is being done about it. There was an inquest into the death of Kevin Clarke, which ended a week ago [9 October]. Kevin Clarke was seen and heard being restrained by the police, using the words 'I can't breathe'. The judge in the coroner's court did not allow the verdict of unlawful killing to be considered by the jury. So that tells me, yes, the political will is still not there.

Ultraviolence is addressed to your son and the next generation; are you hopeful about the change that young people can bring?

It's a very traumatic film. The images are traumatic, the stories are traumatic, but the film is also full of resistance. The images and the words that we use

are trying to give people hope. Certainly when we were making the film, and when we were looking around at the younger generation... what's happening in the younger generation, the fact that people are going on the streets about the environment, they're going on the streets about gender, they're going on the streets about racism, about violence, about war. That's what fills us with hope, and that's why we wanted to make the film, so that people can look at it and make connections between international struggles and local struggles.

There are all these lessons in history that can fill young people with hope, and so that's what we wanted to do, to say to young people, 'Don't give up, the struggle is endless.'

Ken Fero interviewed by Flora Spencer Grant, bfi.org.uk, 22 October 2020

ULTRAVIOLENCE

Director: Ken Fero

©: Migrant Media

a Migrant Media production

Presented by: Migrant Media

Producer: Ken Fero

Production Accountant: Nigel Wood

Written by: Tariq Mehmood

Texts: James Baldwin, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Susan Sontag,

Malcolm X, Wim Wenders, Mao Tse-Tung

Cinematography: Koutaiba Al Janabi, Souleyman Garcia

Verite Camera: Ken Fero

Animation: Ryan Potter

Editor: Steve Morris

Sound Engineer: Paul Adkins

Editorial Consultant: Tariq Mehmood

UK 2020

75 mins

A Migrant Media release

NEW RELEASES & RE-RELEASES

After Love From Fri 4 Jun

Fargo From Fri 11 Jun

The Reason I Jump From Fri 18 Jun

In the Earth From Fri 18 Jun

Nashville From Fri 25 Jun

Ultraviolence From Fri 25 Jun

Sat 26 June 14:20 + Q&A with director Ken Fero and contributor Janet Alder

Supernova From Fri 2 Jul

Another Round From Fri 9 Jul

Jumbo From Fri 9 Jul

Deerskin From Fri 16 Jul

Girlfriends From Fri 23 Jul

Mandabi From Fri 23 Jul

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

Censor + Q&A with director Prano Bailey-Bond

Thu 1 Jul 20:45

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI Mon 5 Jul 18:00

African Odysseys Present: European Premiere:

The Milkmaid + Q&A with writer-director Desmond Oviagele

and producer Oluseun Sowemimo

Sat 10 Jul 14:00

Black Lens Festival Opening Night: UK Premiere:

How to Stop a Recurring Dream + Q&A with director Ed Morris

and actor Ruby Barker Fri 16 Jul 18:00

Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: Girlfriends

Fri 16 Jul 18:15

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Member Picks: Rumble Fish Fri 2 Jul 17:30

Projecting the Archive: Trottie True (aka The Gay Lady)

+ intro by BFI Curator Josephine Botting

Tue 6 Jul 18:00

Silent Cinema: Nell Gwyn + intro by BFI Curator Bryony Dixon

Sun 18 Jul 15:30

Seniors' Free Archive Matinee: Cabin in the Sky

+ intro by writer Marcus Powell

Mon 19 Jul 14:00

Experimenta: Born in Flames + discussion Thu 22 Jul 18:00

Relaxed Screening (tbc) Tue 27 Jul 18:00

Terror Vision: Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things

Thu 29 Jul 21:00

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