



## **PRESS RELEASE**

October 26, 2020

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## **United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF) Completes its 23rd Festival in online format**

PALO ALTO, CA – The United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF), wrapped up its very successful annual event, which was held October 15-25, 2020. The 23rd UNAFF presented 60 documentary films (53% directed/produced by women filmmakers and 60% filmmakers of color), accompanied by panel discussions, over 11 days. As one of the oldest and largest documentary film festivals in the US, in the previous 22 years UNAFF has served its audience in the Bay Area (Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, San Francisco and Stanford University), but this year, because of COVID-19 the event moved online and connected with audiences across all of California. During the daily online panels, filmmakers, film subjects and experts presented discussions covering topics such as public health and safety, racial justice, minority women entrepreneurs in tech and agriculture, climate change and wildfires, creativity and disability, the future of borders and military spending and the power of art to inspire social change. This year's theme was THE POWER OF EMPATHY.

“When we chose the theme 'The Power of Empathy' more than a year ago, we could maybe anticipate the tensions of a crucial election year, but could not have known how a virus would upend everyone's lives and, in doing so, both unite and divide us, bringing the word 'empathy' into everyday use,” said UNAFF Founder and Executive Director Jasmina Bojic.

The theme continued UNAFF's two decade long celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and marked the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations by presenting world and US premieres of groundbreaking documentaries spotlighting current events from all over the globe.

The UNAFF Visionary Award was presented to legendary singer, songwriter, musician and activist, Joan Baez, recognizing her life-long unwavering commitment to human rights, and her leadership, creativity, persistence, and vision, which inspired several generations to promote peace and a better future for all.

The following films receiving this year's UNAFF [juried awards](#):

Best Documentary: WAGING CHANGE

Statement from Director Abby Ginzberg: “We are particularly grateful for the award because it was given in part because of the importance of the issue we cover in the film – the fact that millions of restaurant workers in 17 states still earn a subminimum wage of \$2.13 an hour, which is being challenged by the movement for One Fair Wage. “

Best Short Documentary: A NORMAL GIRL

Statement from film's Director/Cinematographer Aubree Bernier-Clarke: "On the eve of Intersex Awareness Day, I encourage everyone to stand up for the rights of intersex people today and every day. Thank you, UNAFF, for furthering our mission and shining a spotlight on this important human rights issue through giving our film this incredible platform."

Best Cinematography: PICTURE OF HIS LIFE

Statement from Co-Director Yonatan Nir: "It was our privilege to tell the story of one of the most inspiring visual storytellers of our time, and to bring to the big screen, our love and respect to the natural world and share our belief in the healing powers of art and of nature."

Best Editing: THE GREAT AMERICAN LIE

Statement from Editor Jessica Congdon: "Thank you. This film weaves together the storylines of the five featured subjects alongside the interviews of 21 diverse experts to bring Director, Writer, and Producer Jennifer Siebel Newsom's vision and timely message about our values as a nation to life."

Youth Vision Award: FAITH'S WORLD

Statement from the Director and Subject of the Film Faith Guilbault: "- I wanted to thank you so very much from the bottom of our hearts. What an honor and privilege it was to have "Faith's World" chosen to be viewed for this year's 2020 UNAFF, then to get the Kids Vision Award on top of that!! We are very grateful to have been able to share just a glimpse of our lives with you all. It is so key to spread awareness for the differently abled community."

For the twelfth year, UNAFF presented its very popular matinee program "UNAFF and Kids," a recipient of the prestigious Academy Foundation Grant. UNAFF also celebrated fifteen years of "UNAFF in Schools" in collaboration with the Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto. Both events were free for students and teachers.

UNAFF is grateful to all its contributors and supporters, including filmmakers, distributors, sponsors, staff, volunteers and audiences. Together all these constituents allow UNAFF to create something so unique, so important and so humane, that educates communities and gives hope through documentary filmmaking in these difficult times. UNAFF continues to be motivated toward another successful UNAFF in 2021, in addition to year-round events – UNAFF Traveling Film Festival, UNAFF Café, UNAFF in Libraries, UNAFF for Seniors, UNAFF Women's Salon and UNAFF with Veterans.

The film programs for the 23rd United Nations Association Film Festival are online at:

<http://www.unaff.org/2020/films.html>

Press photos are available at <http://www.unaff.org/2020/press.html>

The award-winning United Nations Association Film Festival has grown to be one of the oldest and most respected documentary film festivals in the United States. UNAFF was originally conceived to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was founded by Stanford educator and film critic Jasmina Bojic. In addition to providing early outlets for films, many of which have gone on to win major awards and accolades, UNAFF takes pride in creating a community forum for discovery and dialogue about different cultures, social issues and solutions. Over the years UNAFF has screened some of the most awarded and talked about documentaries in the industry, including eight that went on to win Academy Awards and thirty that were nominated. In 2014 the ICFT (International Council for Film, Television and Audiovisual Communication of UNESCO) presented the

UNESCO Fellini Medal to Jasmina Bojic, Founder and Executive Director of UNAFF, in recognition of her exceptional contribution in promoting the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through the art of documentary film.

UNAFF is extremely proud of the list of its Honorary Committee members, whose high-profile international reputations lend it an additional dimension of prestige. They include businessmen like Ted Turner and William Draper III, Hollywood producer and Stanford alumna Gale Anne Hurd, documentary filmmakers like Academy Award winner Barbara Trent, Academy Award nominee Erika Szanto, as well as famous actors and music stars known for their human rights involvement Alec Baldwin, Jeff Bridges, Peter Coyote, Lolita Davidovich, Danny Glover, Daryl Hannah, Susan Sarandon, John Savage, Zucchero.

UNAFF's mission has expanded to broad, year-round programs that augment its reach. In addition to the annual film festival, UNAFF organizes panel discussions, initiates programs that engage children, students, seniors, veterans, hosts a traveling festival which keeps the films alive well beyond their initial festival showings and opens its doors to documentary film students and researchers.

More details on the United Nations Association Film Festival are at:

<http://www.unaff.org>

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