



PRESS RELEASE

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United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF) Wraps its 24th *MOVING FORWARD* Festival IN-PERSON PRESENTATION OF 60 GROUNDBREAKING DOCUMENTARIES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

PALO ALTO, CA – The United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF), wrapped up its very successful in-person annual event, which was held October 21-31, 2021. The 24th UNAFF presented 60 documentary films (64% directed/produced by women filmmakers and 60% filmmakers of color), accompanied by six panel discussions, over 11 days covering topics such as crossing borders, reforming criminal justice, youth action for climate, mental health and sports, censorship and press, technology, and our planet. This year's theme was MOVING FORWARD.

“After a troublesome year of lockdowns and fear about health and climate, and a year full of political and social upheavals, it is time to take stock of the situation that the world finds itself in and make decisive moves toward solutions,” said UNAFF Founder and Executive Director Jasmina Bojic.

The 24th UNAFF highlights:

The 24th UNAFF was opened with a welcome by Palo Alto Mayor Tom DuBois who presented UNAFF with the City of Palo Alto Proclamation. The Oscar Nominated Opening Night film HUNGER WARD documents two female health care workers fighting to thwart the spread of starvation against the backdrop of a forgotten war in Yemen with the multiple Academy Awards nominated director Skye Fitzgerald. The West invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to topple the Taliban regime with promises of democracy, freedom, and women's rights. It was a disaster. That was the topic for another Opening Night film by Canadian director, Julian Sher, in his powerful film GHOSTS OF AFGHANISTAN. Rounding out Opening Night was local filmmaker Abby Ginzberg's BARBARA LEE: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER about the only Congresswoman who was the lone vote in opposition to the broad authorization of military force following the September 11th attacks.

Other films with women's issues brought some diverse global stories, including THE RETURN: LIFE AFTER ISIS, a unique access portrait of a group of Western women who devoted their young lives to ISIS, but who now want to be given the chance to start over, back home in the West. LION ON

THE MAT follows a single Asian mother committed to martial arts, by local filmmaker Asali Echols. The story of a bold LGBTQ Muslim activist in Germany on sexual issues is told in SEYRAN ATES: SEX, REVOLUTION AND ISLAM. A Nepalese teen becomes a young woman as she reclaims her voice through filmmaking in I AM BELMAYA, and a 100-year-old park ranger in Richmond CA is celebrated in NO TIME TO WASTE: THE URGENT MISSION OF BETTY REID SOSKIN. Sexuality and sexism are the subject of DICKTATORSHIP, a view from Italy.

Another current events topic, immigration, was the theme in screenings and a panel discussion - with films FROM THESE HANDS, THE LIST, NANMIN and A HOME CALLED NEBRASKA, giving accounts of immigrants and refugees from Syria, India, Japan, and the U.S.

Switching to music, the inspiring FOR THE LEFT HAND reveals the story of an African American concert pianist discovered at age 78 (with filmmakers in person), and an acclaimed Brazilian jazz musician is featured in RESURRECTION! AIRTO MOREIRA & THE PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND, with local filmmaker and Stanford alumnus Dale Djerassi in person, accompanied by a performance by Airto's daughter, accomplished jazz singer Diana Purim, and her husband, hip hop artist, and bandmate Krishna Booker. The San Francisco program with the longtime UNAFF partner the Roxie Theater included two music-oriented features. Filmmakers Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider were in person to present THE BROTHERS (LOS HERMANOS), following the parallel lives in New York and Havana of musician Afro-Cuban born brothers. The rock documentary FANNY: THE RIGHT TO ROCK celebrates the untold story of a Filipina American garage band that morphed into the ferocious rock group Fanny, the first band of women with a major record label release, with Bobbi Jo Hart and musicians Brie Darling and Ruby Ibarra in person, for Q&A and unforgettable musical performance.

Based on his soon to be published autobiography, the film OLEG reveals the incredible life story of Oleg Vidov, considered the Robert Redford of Soviet cinema. Married into General Secretary Brezhnev's inner circle only to wind up blacklisted, he was threatened with death, and forced to defect to the West. The film was presented with the producer Joan Borsten Vidov and Hollywood actor Costa Ronin in person. In another focus on Russia, local filmmaker Ines Hofmann Kanna was in person to screen UNITED STATES VS. REALITY WINNER - a story of 25-year-old NSA contractor Reality Winner who disclosed a document about Russian election interference to the media, and became the number one leak target of the Trump administration.

On Sunday, October 24, UNAFF celebrated United Nations Day, with more global and local documentaries. The annual UNAFF & Kids Program presented a free afternoon screening to elementary students of the local film ZERO GRAVITY, with in person appearance by the filmmaker and the young students who competed in a nationwide tournament to code satellites aboard the International Space Station. Also, just one week before the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the highlight acclaimed YOUTH V GOV screened with an accompanying panel Youth Action for Climate. The event in East Palo Alto was partnered with Anamatangi Polynesian Voices, a non-profit focusing on environmental justice for the underrepresented Pacific Islander community.

Criminal justice took center stage with films including *BELLY OF THE BEAST*, that reveals illegal sterilizations in California's women's prisons; and *THE FIRST STEP*, with a special focus on Van Jones, a Black progressive activist known for calling Donald Trump's election a "whitelash" live on primetime TV, for controversially crossing party lines to win bipartisan support for criminal justice reform, and for his response to the addiction crisis.

Among the screenings held on the Stanford campus, were a pair of films dealing with disabilities: *COVID-19: GROUNDED*, and *FULL PICTURE*; and films on mental health in the sports world: *MIND/GAME: THE UNQUIET JOURNEY OF CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW*, and *AULCIE*; followed by a panel with Stanford medical experts.

For almost 60 years it has been painfully difficult for U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba. The film *FRENEMIES* gives voice to talented but frustrated native Cuban artists living on the island with the conversation at the panel, with the film's director Mirella Martinelli expanding on the film during the following discussion panel. Also joining the panel was the famous editor Walter Murch, talking about *COUP 53*, the documentary he worked on with Iranian filmmakers Taghi Amirani and Ahmad Kiarostami, and actor Ralph Fiennes, about the 1953 Iranian coup d'état to overthrow Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh.

Other films tackled free speech, media, and censorship, in different countries: Myanmar in *STRIKE WITH THE BEAT*, Hungary in *HELLO, DICTATOR. ORBÁN*, THE EU AND THE RULE OF LAW, Israel and Palestine in *ISRAEL-PALESTINE: A SWISS MAN IN THE EYE OF THE STORM* and the U.S. in *THESE MOMENTS* and *TELL THE TRUTH AND RUN: GEORGE SELDES AND THE AMERICAN PRESS*.

As UNAFF 2021 wrapped, a special thank you was given to many local health professionals, who were invited guests to the medical care documentary *IN CASE OF EMERGENCY*. Closing night also featured an urgent report from the streets of Venezuela, *TO THE STREET (A LA CALLE)*, with a dramatic appearance by subject in the documentary, youth resistance leader and former political prisoner Nixon Leal, who was granted asylum in the United States just three days before. He was accompanied the film's co-directors/producers Nelson G. Navarrete and Maxx Caicedo; and producers Shawna Brakefield-Haase and Marcus Cheek. And the final Closing Night film echoes what we often ask of ourselves about the issues we face: are there solutions; in the intriguing film *SOLUTIONS*.

This year's UNAFF Visionary Award was presented to two people: the unique public servant Congresswoman Barbara Lee and legendary singer, songwriter, musician, and activist Harry Belafonte, recognizing their life-long unwavering commitment to human rights, their leadership, persistence, and vision, which inspired several generations to promote economic, racial, and social justice and move us forward to a better and more equitable society.

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

Best Documentary:

[IN CASE OF EMERGENCY](#)

Statement from the Director, Carolyn Jones:

"I was so impressed with all aspects of this meaningful festival - incredible that you pulled this off during the pandemic and it was truly an honor to be there. Thank you again for your warm welcome, incredible hospitality and of course this amazing award! The funds are very much appreciated and will help us continue our outreach program to bust through the preconceived notion of who nurses are, and help the public gain a better understanding of the role that nurses play in our society."

Best Short Documentary:

[THE SEED](#)

Statement from the filmmaker Helene Goupil:

"Thank you so much UNAFF jury and thank you Guy Clark! THE SEED is a project I started more than a decade ago when I first met Guy, the subject of my documentary, and I'm so honored to be able to share his story and receive this award!"

Best Cinematography:

Vicente Franco

[BARBARA LEE: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER](#)

and

[THE BROTHERS \(LOS HERMANOS\)](#)

Statement from the cinematographer Vicente Franco:

"What an honor to get any award really, from the UNAFF... but even more rewarding is to get the Cinematography award"

Best Editing:

Walter Murch

[COUP 53](#)

Statement from the editor Walter Murch :

"The goals of the UNAFF — fearless independence in the name of human rights across the globe — could not be more in tune with our goals in making COUP 53. At a crucial moment in world history, in August of 1953, the right of self-determination of the Iranian people was subverted by the secret services of the United States and Great Britain, with tragic consequences for the Middle East and beyond. The blowback repercussions of this MI6-CIA coup persist to the present day. Thank you to the UNAFF for giving COUP 53 the exposure that this topic needs, so that audiences can more fully comprehend the origins of the contentious history of Iran and the West. I also would like to thank UNAFF in the name of director-producer Taghi Amirani and associate editor Evie Franks. Granting us the award for best editing at this year's festival is icing on the cake!"

Youth Vision Award:

YOUTH V GOV

Statement from the filmmaker Olivia Ahnemann:

“We are honored to receive the Youth Vision Award at this year’s festival! Throughout history, social justice movements have required visionaries and activists, and some of the most meaningful social changes have been sparked by the actions of young people. We hope the story of these plaintiffs, fighting for their constitutional rights to a safe and stable climate, will motivate all of us to hold our government accountable on the climate crisis.”

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 surreal times. UNAFF continues to be motivated toward another successful UNAFF in 2022 when it will celebrate the 25th Anniversary, 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 program for the 24th United Nations Association Film Festival are online at:

http://www.unaff.org/2021/files/UNAFF2021_brochure.pdf

Press photos are available at:

<http://www.unaff.org/2021/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-two 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 Joan Baez, Alec Baldwin, Jeff Bridges, Peter Coyote, Lolita Davidovich, Danny Glover, Daryl Hannah, Susan Sarandon, John Savage, Zuccherro.

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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