



26th UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL (UNAFF) WITH THEME OF “SOLUTIONS” ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS

Six award winners were announced to a packed house during the closing ceremony. Festivalgoers applauded filmmakers from around the world who brought visual *solutions* for human rights issues to UNAFF.

November 1, 2023—The [United Nations Association Film Festival](https://unaff.org) (UNAFF), one of the oldest documentary film festivals in the nation, concluded its **26th year** on Sunday, October 29, 2023 in Palo Alto after 11 days of programming. UNAFF took place **October 19-29 in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, San Francisco**, and at **Stanford University** with 60 documentary films discussing “[SOLUTIONS](#),” an emphasis on strategies and approaches offering remedies for the world's current burning problems. This year's theme continued UNAFF's enduring devotion to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which celebrates its [75th anniversary](#) this year.

Films presented at the festival included representation from **56 percent women filmmakers** and **60 percent filmmakers of color**. There were **3 World Premieres, 12 US Premieres, 20 West Coast Premieres**, and **10 Bay Area Premieres** this year.

UNAFF Founder and Executive Director Jasmina Bojic remarks:

“From digital misogyny directed at women leaders and athletes targeted to medically alter their bodies in the name of fairness to the effects of radioactive testing, climate change, antiwar demonstrations, and private equity impacting fundamental institutions like journalism, these filmmakers provide the opportunity for knowledge in the fight for democracy. We are so honored to be a platform for these stories and ‘solutions’ at UNAFF, as it continues our enduring devotion to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a foundation for the creation of the festival.”

The annual **UNAFF Visionary Award** honored Academy Award winner and United Nations Messenger of Peace, **Michael Douglas**. He was also featured in the festival's closing night film, [DOWNWIND](#), directed by Mark Samuel Shapiro and Douglas Brian Miller. The documentary reveals the fallout of 928 large-scale nuclear weapon detonations between 1951 and 1992.

Douglas joins previous Visionary Award recipients, such as Congresswoman Barbara Lee; human rights activist, actor, and singer Harry Belafonte; singer and human rights activist Joan Baez; Academy Award Nominee and women's rights advocate Dorothy Fadiman; philanthropist Juliette Feeney-Timsit; and Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki Mun.

The festival also presented awards to the following filmmakers:



Director of STRIPPED FOR PARTS: AMERICAN JOURNALISM ON THE BRINK, Rick Goldsmith, accepting his award.

Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary

[STRIPPED FOR PARTS: AMERICAN JOURNALISM ON THE BRINK](#)

Grand Jury Award for Best Short Documentary

[BY MY SIDE](#)

Award for Best Cinematography

Andrew Black, [BASEBALL BEHIND BARBED WIRE](#)

Award for Best Editing

Stephanie Mechura, [THE MOVEMENT AND THE 'MADMAN'](#)



Director of BRIEF TENDER LIGHT, Arthur Musah, accepting his award.

Youth Vision Award [BRIEF TENDER LIGHT](#)

A few highlights from the festival included:

Lydia Kou, Mayor of Palo Alto, opened the festival with a proclamation from the city on Thursday, October 19th. [STILL WORKING 9 TO 5](#), an Opening Night film, sparked an in-person discussion about the history of the Equal Rights Amendment, harassment in the workplace, pay gap, sexism, and discrimination with filmmakers **Camille Hardman**, **Gary Lane**, and **Larry Lane**.

Renowned experts spoke at **six free [panel discussions](#)** regarding climate change; racism and hate; criminal justice reform; solving health crises; the ways we look at art, creative space and history; making peace during the war; and issues of religion and state. Panelists included former Mayor of Palo Alto **Patrick Burt** and **Sebastian Kaempf**, Senior Lecturer in Peace and Conflict at the University of Queensland, Australia.

On United Nations Day, October 24, at the Stanford Medical School, filmmaker **Lisa Hepner** opened up about her search for a cure to type 1 diabetes, the subject of her documentary, [THE HUMAN TRIAL](#). Hepner introduced the audience to [Beyond Type 1](#), a nonprofit organization co-founded by Nick Jonas that unites the global diabetes community through peer support programs, global campaigns, and digital platforms.

While the conflict in the Middle East and Ukraine concern the entire global community, films that enlightened issues in both region were presented at this year's festival. In [KING LEAR: HOW WE LOOKED FOR LOVE DURING THE WAR](#), a small town Ukrainian director utilizes non-professional actors—displaced people—in bringing his dream to life by staging King Lear. The film was screened at the Anderson Collection at Stanford University and followed by Q&A from producer **Polina Herman**. [ISRAELISM](#) spoke to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and [WHEN THE BOMB DROPS](#) documented the 20-year anniversary of the war in Iraq as seen through the Dutch perspective.

UNAFF presented its annual award-winning program for elementary school children, **UNAFF & Kids**. The program challenges our youngest to expand their awareness of the world around them and offers activities for kids and parents. This free event showcased the short film, [LIGHT](#), directed by **Nicole Watson** and produced by **Beryl Omondi**, who were both present at the festival, and [HELLBENT](#), directed by Justin Grubb and Annie Roth.

[EVANGELICALS: FROM FAITH TO POWER](#), directed by French filmmaker **Thomas Johnson**, preceded the conversation about RELIGION AND STATE. The film is a fascinating research how a religious movement became a political weapon, bringing leaders like Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro to power. From the Cold War to present day, the episodic series traces the rise of Evangelical Christianity on all continents, mapping its growing influence in religious, social and political arenas.

Press assets are located at <http://www.unaff.org/2023/press.html>
For more information, visit <http://www.unaff.org/>

ABOUT UNAFF

Founded in 1998 by Jasmina Bojic, film critic and educator, UNAFF (United Nations Association Film Festival) is an international documentary film festival originally established to honor the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 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-five that were nominated. For more information about UNAFF, please visit http://www.unaff.org/2023/files/UNAFF2023_About.pdf.

The 26th UNAFF took place October 19-29, 2023, exploring the theme SOLUTIONS. UNAFF celebrates the power of films dealing with human rights, including environmental themes, women's issues, racism, child welfare, war and peace. Over its 26 years, UNAFF and its year-round programs have attracted a broad audience from around the Bay Area, with many finding the screenings to be a rare chance to engage with different cultures and see the state of human rights around the world and at home. UNAFF promotes education, awareness, and social change through images, dialogue, and action.

SUPPORT UNAFF

Donations are essential for UNAFF to continue providing valuable programs for the community.

UNAFF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization, fiscally sponsored by the International Documentary Association (IDA). Contributions in support of UNAFF are payable to IDA—with a memo stating “for UNAFF”—and are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

By supporting UNAFF, you will have the opportunity to play an active role in upholding human dignity, promoting empathy, and saving the arts. For more details, please visit <http://www.unaff.org/2023/support.html>