



HUMAN RIGHTS ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL

MEDIA KIT 2008

FESTIVAL DATES

Melbourne	12 – 30 November 2008
Canberra	20 – 22 November 2008
Perth	28 – 29 November 2008
Sydney	4 – 7 December 2008
Brisbane	6 - 7 March 2009

MEDIA LIAISON

Evelyn Tadros & Cecilia Condon

P. 9639 1121
M. 0402 137 182
E. media@hraff.org.au
W. www.hraff.org.au

WELCOME TO HRAFF

Welcome to the second year of Australia's freshest and most innovative cultural event, the 2008 Human Rights Arts and Film Festival! After the overwhelming success of HRAFF's debut last year, the event has continued to grow in leaps and bounds; one reason why our tag line 'feed the future' is so adept to our festival in 2008.

This year we are proud to announce a bigger and better line up featuring more than 65 films, of which 36 are Australian Premieres; 14 internationally acclaimed artists working in a range of mediums; 25 of Australia's most culturally diverse and talented musicians and performance artists; 20 organisations involved in our Action Hubs, and over 60 prominent speakers driving discussion at our forums and debates in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Canberra and Brisbane.

In only our second year, we received over 270 film submissions – a 65% increase from 2007 – and viewed over 400 films from countries such as Iran, Nepal, Turkistan, Netherlands and Solomon Islands, to bring audiences an incredible selection of films that engage people from all walks of life.

But this festival is not about numbers and statistics, it is about people – defiant, courageous and inspiring people – who have used film, art, music and poetry to tell their story. These are the people that put a human face to an otherwise abstract concept of human rights. Whilst these stories and the people behind them are unique, there is a common thread of humanity that weaves through them to reveal an inherent dignity that we all share. This is what we hope our audiences, regardless of their political and religious beliefs and social and cultural backgrounds, will take away from this festival.



Through a diverse range of creative media, this year's program explores issues from terrorism to homelessness, from the human impact of climate change to the meaning of an "Australian" identity with prominent guests such as *Rove Live*'s **Corinne Grant** and **Justice Kirby AC CMG**. While many films such as *Day After Peace* and *Angels in the Dust* highlight the difference that one person can make, HRAFF's Art Exhibition, *Collective Conscience*, featuring internationally renowned art groups **Long March Project** and **PVI Collective**, focuses on collaboration, dialogue and the power of collective action.



A new addition to the 2008 program, HRAFF's industry forums will draw on the knowledge and experience of Emmy-Award winning filmmaker **Lisa Jackson** and cross-media guru **Andrew Apostola** to develop story-telling skills and encourage creative engagement with human rights topics through different mediums. Meanwhile, HRAFF's community forums tackle the human rights implications of Australian two most favourite passions: food and sport with Lentil As Anything founder **Shanaka Fernando** and Australia's Homeless World Cup coach **George Halkias**. Another exciting development of HRAFF 2008 is the stellar line up of live music. Thanks to Multicultural Arts Victoria, our Festival Lounge, Red Violin will come alive with the global sounds and local flavour of hip-hop duo **Diafrix** and the multi-DJ multi cultural collaborative outfit **Uber Lingua**.

HRAFF has already made a unique and innovative contribution to the global human rights movement by dismantling traditional notions of human rights and creating awareness in the broader Australian community. The variety within the festival program speaks volumes about the growing trend away from a limited conception of what human rights are and who should be interested in them.

We are so excited to share HRAFF's extraordinary 2008 program of films, art, music and forums with you! So whether you live in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane or Perth, we hope you join us and enjoy this vibrant and inspiring festival! With art and film, we can grow a brighter future.



“...this festival is not about a political message. It is about a human message. A message of hope, courage and triumph against the odds.”
Festival Patron - Phillip Noyce, Director

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

FILM: Hip-hop rock, Yippies and good old Colin Friels: it's all part of a Human Rights Arts and Film Festival that breaks conventions!

HRAFF's 2008 film program is littered with gems that will challenge peoples' expectations of what constitutes a human rights film. Alongside screenings of powerful documentaries, audiences will discover that comedy, animation and drama are equally powerful genres for telling compelling human rights stories. No better example is *Chicago 10*, our Opening Night selection and Australian premiere that will be hosted by **Corinne Grant**, a comedian with *Rove Live* and *The Glasshouse* in both Melbourne and Sydney. The film that opened Sundance in 2007, the world's biggest independent film festival, **Brett Morgen's** documentary is an adrenalin rush of creative documentary, mixing bold animation and compelling archival footage to capture the escalating tensions and full-scale pandemonium that overtook the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention.



Another intriguing offering is the acclaimed Australian drama, *The Nothing Men*, starring **Colin Friels**, **David Field** and **Martin Dingle Wall**. Set in the current climate of economic insecurity and workplace upheaval, the film charts the story of six hardened factory workers, struggling to stay sane as they attend work everyday with nothing to do but wait for their redundancy payouts. Revealing the corrosive impact of fear and anxiety, *The Nothing Men* is a film that tests the limits of tolerance, respect and human dignity. With an opportunity to see Australia's first feature film that has been filmed using the revolutionary Red One production cameras, and engage in a lively question and answer with the film's director **Mark Fitzpatrick** and producer/actor **Martin Dingle Wall**, this is one session that is not to be missed.



Also receiving its Australian premiere is the internationally acclaimed film *Bling: A Planet Rock*. The film features some of the world's biggest rappers and R&B artists, including **Raekwon** and **Kanye West**, as they make a life-changing journey into the heart of Africa to learn, first-hand, about the blood diamond trade and the true cost of 'bling'.

Presented by World Vision Australia and introduced by **Rev Tim Costello** and **Rod Hopping** from HM Film Distribution, HRAFF will be screening the award winning dramatic thriller *Trade* starring **Kevin Kline**. Inspired by a New York Times Magazine article on the US sex trade and based on a screenplay by Academy Award nominee Jose Rivera (*The Motorcycle Diaries*), the film is a devastating expose of one of the world's most heinous crimes.

With the 2008 Melbourne Homeless World Cup taking place from the 1-7 December 2008, there's no more appropriate film for Closing Night than the inspirational documentary *Kicking It*. Five hundred homeless players from 48 nations are selected to represent their countries including Afghanistan, Ireland and the US in the biggest game of their lives. Win or lose, it will be a journey of a life time. Sponsored by the Melbourne Homeless World Cup and with presenters **Rev Tim Costello**, World Vision, and **George Halkias**, coach of the 2008 Australian team, the final night of the festival will be an inspiring celebration of the triumph of the human spirit.

ARTS EXHIBITION: *Collective Conscience highlights the power of collective action*

In the arena of visual arts, HRAFF's exhibition curators **Romy Sedman** and **Andrea Bell** bring you *Collective Conscience*: A dynamic exhibition presenting a range of installations, visual art and performance art reflecting the recent shift in contemporary artistic practice away from individual experience towards art with an emphasis on participation, dialogue and collaboration. Encompassing a variety of perspectives, approaches and forms, *Collective Conscience* explores issues of human rights and the power of collective action.

"(HRAFF)... provides opportunities for us to understand, participate in and respond to the political, social and cultural realities of the world and to reconsider our potential to challenge injustices." Festival Patron - **Byrony Nainby, Senior Curator, La Trobe Regional Gallery Senior Curator**



One of the most exciting group of artists taking part in the exhibition is **Panther**, a performance collaboration between **Madeleine Hodge** and **Sarah Rodigari**. Over the past four years **Panther** have created works across documentary, performance, improvisation, video and site based intervention. Through their work they critique the idea of happiness as a cultural obsession and commodity in western society. They ask the question: why are our people who supposedly 'have it all' more miserable than those who don't?

The **Long March Project**, initiated in 1999, is a complex, multi-platform, international independent arts organisation and ongoing art project. The Project is a constantly changing mobile entity that seeks to challenge and move beyond fixed definitions of artistic practice between local

and international, and individual and collective, in the creation of new forms of production and consumption that are allowed and encouraged to interact. **Chen Qiulin, Yang Shaobin and Jiang Zhi** make up the **Long March Project** as part of HRAFF 2008.

A collaborative project between artists from Australia, Indonesia and East Timor, *Recovering Lives Across Borders*, by collaborative art group **Culture Kitchen (AUS), Gembel (East Timor) and Taring Padi (Indonesia)**, confronts viewers with issues such as poverty, environmental degradation, the depletion of resources, affluence and ignorance – the ugly realities which underpin the economies of all three nations, although affect their citizens very differently.

A Festival first, HRAFF will be hosting an Artist Talk in the Carlton Studios on Sunday 23rd November 2:00pm with participating artists: Helen Johnson, Alex Martinis Roe, Panther, Freedom Burmese Artists, Festival Patron, Bryony Nainby, Senior Curator, La Trobe Regional Art Gallery and the Curators Romy Sedman & Andrea Bell



“(HRAFF) presents us with the rare opportunity to participate and contribute in this inter-cultural platform. Let's not forget that collective empowerment sends a very clear message to human rights violators”. Festival Patron - Magdalena Moreno, Director of The South Project

AUSTRALIAN CONTENT

HRAFF shines a spotlight on our own backyard

One of HRAFF’s key aims is to show audiences that human rights is not some abstract concept that are only relevant to people in third world countries. “It is easy to become complacent but it is important that Australians are aware of the human rights issues that are taking place on their doorstep”, said founder and co-director of the festival, Naz Mantoo.

SHORT FILM PROGRAMS

Sometimes it’s the smallest stories that make the biggest impact. Sitting along side our internationally renowned feature films is a hand picked selection of compelling short films proving that size really isn't everything.

‘In Our Backyard’ is the festival's stunning collection of nine Australian short films. From the Vietnamese outworkers behind the “Made in Australia” label to the story of Australian soldiers returned from Iraq; from dumpster-diving aficionados to refugee chickens in search of their roost, HRAFF’s showcase of award-winning Australian shorts will introduce you to some of this country’s most exciting new talent while highlighting some very real human rights problems facing the ‘lucky country’. Sometimes very visible, other times existing on the periphery, these issues affect all Australians and the films bring about an awareness of our shared history and remind us of our shared future.

One of the short film highlights is *Storm in Words*, which profiles **Little G**, an up and coming musician with a message of strength, tolerance and acceptance- all to a beat that is sure to get your

hips a shakin'. Half-Greek, half-Aboriginal, **Little G** is a Melbourne MC who is ready to take on the world through words.



Ever wondered why those chickens crossed the road? Officially selected for the 2008 Split International Film Festival and winner of the OmniLab Media Award for Best Script in 2007, **Robin Geradts-Gill's** *The Other Side* tells the story of two chickens in search of a hen house. Escaping the horrors of bird-flu, the two take flight to Australia with a dream of a life of free range freedom, but only to find their treacherous journey has just begun.

Also making its world debut is OPEN CHANNEL's Short and Sharp Pitching Competition winner **Agatha Yim** with her film, *When I Grow Up I Want to be White*. Co-directed by **Ian Dixon** from OPEN CHANNEL, this film is an ode to the trials and tribulations of being a second generation Chinese-Australian, lost in a strange identity predicament of being a 'banana' – yellow on the outside, white on the inside.

Make Poverty History and HRAFF have joined forces this year to present *Reel Change*: Short films on the human impact of climate change. Receiving close to 70 submission within only a few months, the final selection is an eclectic and delightful mix of documentary, drama, animation, experimental comedies and stock motion which deals with the first climate refugees on the Carteret Islands, the impact of the drought on Aussie farmers and Mr Pipik's sceptical view of Climate change.

A real highlight of this year's festival is 'Screen Dreaming – Indigenous Stories Session'. Five dynamic and insightful short films by award-winning Indigenous film-makers begin this session covering subjects ranging from the 'Yolngu Zorba Chooky Dancers' to Nana's delicious Kangaroo Stew. Another impressive indigenous filmmaker is **Angie Abdilla** whose film *Wanja* has recently been officially selected as part of one of the world's biggest festivals, the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam. Screening before the Aussie feature *Playing in the Shadows*, *Wanja* is Redfern's police-sniffing extraordinaire and four-legged guardian angel. Told through the eyes of Auntie Barb and her faithful blue-heeler, *Wanja* watches over the residents of 'The Block' as escalating police tension threatens to unravel a community.

'When we're confronted with the denial of human rights... up there on the big screen, it's very hard not to feel outrage and hopefully that outrage will galvanise many of us into action.'
Festival Patron - Margaret Pomeranz, ABC's At The Movies



ART EXHIBITION

Collective Conscience

Collective Conscience is host to the works of Australian artists **Helen Johnson** and **Christian Thompson** (as MHUL), **Alex Martinis Roe**, **PVI Collective** and **Richard Bell**. The PVI Collective were founded as an independent artists collective in Perth in 1998. The group have a long standing pre-occupation with producing artwork that investigates issues of privacy, surveillance and its impact on social codes of behaviour in the public realm. *Resist*, a public tug of war match, aimed to test the notion of conflict in Chile by inviting seven citizens to step forward and go head-to-head with PVI, to investigate the relevance of people power in contemporary society.



Richard Bell is a well known indigenous artist famous for his many 'theorems' including 'Aboriginal Art – it's a white thing'. His works exhibited as part of Collective Conscience challenge stereotypes and invoke a re-thinking of how we perceive ourselves and others.

MHUL is a Bidjara word from central Queensland meaning 'idea' or 'concept'. The posters included in Collective Conscience are the product of a one-day workshop facilitated by **Helen Johnson** and **Christian**

Thompson with a group of emerging indigenous artists from across Australia. The politics of personal and cultural identity were strong themes for all the artists involved.

Sydney Big Issue Art Project Exhibition

Meanwhile, the HRAFF Sydney team, in conjunction with The Big Issue, is holding a free public art exhibition and Festival Launch on Saturday 1 November 2008 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The exhibition will feature more than 20 photographs from an intensive photography workshop held with Big Issue vendors in September and October. The workshop offers those who have experienced homelessness and long-term unemployment a unique opportunity to express themselves through the medium of photography.

The exhibition and Festival Launch will be held at the TAP Gallery, 278 Palmer Street, Darlinghurst, from 11am-4pm. Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP, will open the exhibition, which will feature a live performance by Fergus Brown and a community BBQ. The event will also officially launch HRAFF's Sydney program and provide an opportunity to purchase early bird Festival tickets.

SPEAKERS

This year's festival features over ten discussion forums immediately following film screenings, three film introductions/director Q&As and, in an exciting first, the introduction of Community and Industry Forums that will build on the Festival's work of presenting human rights issues in an engaging and entertaining format.

HRAFF's Speakers Forums are a wonderful way of bringing the human rights issues explored in our Festival into the here-and-now', says Paul Martin, HRAFF's Speakers Coordinator. 'Human rights issues often present as vast and overwhelming, whereas what our Festival does is show that these are actually very everyday topics – our speakers play a key role in this process', Mr Martin said.



Headlining the 2008 speakers line-up in Melbourne is the opening night trio of **Corinne Grant**, **Waleed Aly** and **Anthony Kelly**. Ms Grant, a well-known comedian who has featured on network hits including *Rove Live* and *The Glasshouse*, will host the forum to follow the Australian premiere of blockbuster *Chicago 10*, with Mr Aly, a frequent media commentator on civil liberties issues and Mr Kelly, who led human rights monitoring teams during the large-scale protests at the G20 and World Economic Forum meetings, rounding out the panel.

Headlining the Sydney leg of HRAFF is comedian **Corinne Grant**, HRAFF patron, High Court judge the **Hon. Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG**, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia **Paul Power** and Executive Director of GetUp! **Ed Coper**.

HRAFF is also proud to be hosting **Vincent Lamberti**, the director of *Intervention*, and **Chloe Hooper**, author of *The Tall Man: Life and Death on Palm Island* which will receive its world premiere during the 2008 Festival. Showing as part of the Screen Dreaming session, *Intervention* is Australia's first feature-length film to chart the human rights impact of the Federal Government's policy response popularly known as 'The Intervention'.

Well known barrister and human rights advocate **Julian Burnside QC** will join forces with **Rob Starry** who recently represented the defendants in the *R v Benbrika* trial will drive an engaging and important discussion forum following the film *USA vs Al-Arian* which follows the show puppet trial of a pro-Palestinian civil rights activist and university professor **Dr Sami Al-Arian**.

George Halkias, coach of the Australian Homeless World Cup Team will also participate in HRAFF's Community Forum, 'Sport and Human Rights'. Hosted by award-winning journalist **Martin Flanagan**, Mr Halkias will also be joined by **Matt Norman**, director/producer of highly praised docu-drama *Salute*, which charts the events surrounding the 'Black Power' protest following the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games 200m final. Matt's uncle **Peter Norman** was the race's silver medallist.

'Media and popular culture play a huge role in raising human rights consciousness. They make other people's injustices our own.' Festival Patron - Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG



Finally, the Australian premiere of *The Unwinking Gaze*, which investigates the daily life of exiled Tibetan leader The Dalai Lama, will feature a discussion forum hosted by **Anna Saulwick** of GetUp! Action for Australia, with panel members **Dr. Simon Bradshaw** of the Australia Tibet Council and Senator **Sarah Hanson-Young** of the Australian Greens. Ms Hanson-Young is the youngest woman ever elected to Australian Parliament.

MUSIC

RHYTHM AND RIGHTS

What is a festival without music and a place to party? Fear not, HRAFF 2008 features an astonishing collection of world music and a vibrant, friendly atmosphere at the Festival Lounge, the Red Violin. With 12 different acts over eight nights, HRAFF's music series *Rhythm and Rights* includes DJ's, live Gambian drumming, Sitar music of Hindustan and Afghanistan as well as musicians from Ethiopia, Colombia and local Melbourne artists. HRAFF's entertainment program also features a special Slam Poetry event on November 19 at the Festival lounge with more than five slam artists battling out human rights issues in rhyme.



With the support of Multicultural Arts Victoria and the City of Melbourne, the Festival has put together a music line up showcasing a number of renowned musicians. **Diafrix, King Marong, Uber Lingua, Black Roots, Afro Habesha, Muhanamwe, Rosaline Yuen and Jungal** are some of the premier artists performing in this year's event.

The musical aspect of the festival seeks to promote acceptance and understanding in Australia by showcasing what is positive and endearing about cultures from around the world. Africans, Afghanis, Colombians and Indians will fuse Hip Hop, Reggae, Soul, Electronica, Drumming, RnB and Roots into an astonishing musical celebration.



INTERSTATE FESTIVAL TOURS

HRAFF has been picking up momentum continuously since the success of the first festival in 2007. This year, we are thrilled by the amount of interest in human rights from all angles of Australian society. This groundswell of support and enthusiasm has allowed HRAFF to expand across Australia with festival screenings in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth. These 'HRAFF Seeds' have enabled whole new audiences to participate in the dialogue, to engage with human rights issues both local and global, and to enjoy films, arts and music that challenge and delight.

Having travelled to Sydney and Perth in its first year, HRAFF has dramatically expanded its reach in 2008 being brought to audiences in Brisbane as well as Canberra. Only Hobart, Adelaide and Darwin to go! The HRAFF Seeds feature select parts of the Melbourne program including feature and short films, forums, speakers, live music and opening and closing night events.

The 2nd annual NSW Human Rights Arts & Film Festival will be held from Thursday 4 December to Sunday 7 December 2008 at The Chauvel Cinema in Paddington. The Festival will feature a selection of Australian and international films on issues ranging from climate change to refugees; performances by The Sydney Street Choir and The Isabel Fire; Action Hubs by AID/WATCH,

Amnesty International, The Edmund Rice Centre, Oxfam/Make Poverty History; and speakers including comedian Corinne Grant, High Court judge the Hon. Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia Paul Power and Executive Director of GetUp! Ed Coper.

In addition to the Melbourne festival dates 12 – 30 November 2008, the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival will be travelling to the following locations:

Canberra, Finkel Theatre, ANU 20 – 22 November 2008

(Screening: In Our Backyard: Australian Shorts, The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo, North Korea: Day in the Life/Please Vote for Me)

Perth, Film and Television Institute 28 – 29 November 2008

(Screening: The Other Side, Playing in the Shadows, Reel Change, Different Kind of Gun and Day After Peace)

Sydney, Chauvel Cinema 4 – 7 December 2008

(Screening: Chicago 10, I Don't Feel Like Dancing/Behind Forgotten Eyes, Indigenous Shorts, Playing in the Shadows, Bi'lin My Love, The Unwinking Gaze)

Brisbane, Brisbane Powerhouse 6 - 7 March 2009

(Screening: Reel Change, Different Kind of Gun and Day After Peace, Days and Hours/Kicking It)

For up to date information about events and activities in these states, visit www.hraff.org.au



THE HRAFF STORY

With all its energy and confidence you'd be forgiven for thinking that HRAFF is older than it really is! But HRAFF is merely wise beyond its years. Inspired by similar festivals around the globe, HRAFF was born only last year with the passion and dedication of a group of wide eyed volunteers. Festival founders and directors, Evelyn Tadros and Naziath Mantoo are thrilled to be at the helm of a festival which has grown from strength to strength thanks to the generous support of the festival's sponsors and patrons together with the hard work of a dedicated volunteer base who truly believe in

the power of art not only to broaden the awareness of human rights within the general Australian community, but to engage and inspire action and positive change in our world.

Q&A WITH THE FESTIVAL CO-DIRECTOR: NAZ MANTOO

What prompted you to get involved in HRAFF?

I got involved with HRAFF predominately because of the idea. HRAFF was fresh and raw, nothing like anything that had been done in Australia. There was a lack of creative and enticing human rights events in Melbourne or even Australia and I believed that HRAFF could be an answer to this. HRAFF united art and human rights, something I am completely passionate about. I wanted to share this passion and make human rights 'fun' and important to all Australians. I saw HRAFF as the perfect way to introduce human rights into our culture and to introduce audiences to the relevance of human rights to their own lives.



The concept of an entirely youth run and passion driven festival was also particularly inspiring and invigorating. HRAFF was a concept that would be formed and developed by its volunteers, which I found a hard to resist experiment! A month before I joined, I vowed to stay clear of volunteering as I was burnt out by other projects, but two years later I have happily devoted my life to HRAFF!

What sparked your interest in human rights?

Definitely my background. I am a third generation Australian but am originally from Indian occupied Kashmir. My family and I have experienced first hand accounts of human rights violations from the war and also by virtue of our Muslim roots - with the latter becoming an increasingly controversial subject. Growing up and living with the physical and emotional side effects of war, as well as experiencing racism and intolerance, is something which has become quite normal for me.

Though I have never lived in Kashmir, its impact on me introduced me to human rights early in my life. Kashmir is now a 'country' that is devoid of its language and culture, and has seen many lives disregarded for things such as pride or land. It has become a country of empty souls and vanishing strength, where the fight for peace is consistently forgotten by the international media and is now also fading from its people's imaginations. By having experienced 'Kashmir', I am determined to stand for change.

My interest in speaking for human rights has sparked also because of my family. Given where our roots and background stem from and the 'lucky' position we were in compared to people back in Kashmir, our parents had bought me and my siblings up to be compassionate, generous and to speak up for human rights. Both my parents are advocates for human rights and my mother has particularly encouraged her daughters to be active in working for change.

Being brought up in a Muslim family of three girls, we have been prone to racist remarks of how our father is a 'wife and daughter beater'; that he is going to marry us off on our 15th birthday to an Arab man with six other wives; that we are going to get stoned by him if we have a boyfriend; or that we ourselves are terrorists and 'white hating fanatics'. We have, like our mother, come to detest these stereotypes and have been driven to fight against their perpetuation. By growing up during the Gulf War and experiencing intolerance in so many aspects of my life because of this, it is easy to

see that it was hard for me to avoid having an interest in human rights when it was something we dealt with on a daily basis!

As a filmmaker, what do you see is the role of film in human rights?

I do not see the role of a filmmaker to be a missionary or savior-like. Film and art communicate to audiences beyond language, culture, religion or politics. No matter what you set out to do, 'meaning' in your film will be created and influenced by all sorts of factors that you can control it, nor should you aim to. I suppose the role of the filmmaker, as I see it, is to be the catalyst for this process. We shouldn't look to create conclusions, or 'perfect' responses to human rights issues in our films, because these will constantly evolve and apply differently in every new situation. We should not seek the definite, but should look to challenge what our idea of the definite is based on: to break open, to question and to inspire the idea of human rights. That is, to create and contribute to the human rights arena in new ways.

What are the major challenges for using film to promote human rights?

One of the major challenges is the difficulty in developing a definable market and audience to access human-interest films. This is largely based on the fact that there is a limited number of outlets and opportunities to screen a 'human rights' related film in Australia. Human rights films remain largely restricted to non-commercial channels such as ABC or SBS. There are a number of small competitions and festivals that take an interest, but these are limited and small.

A majority of filmmakers seek more innovative methods to get their work out there such as via online video blogging services and via new marketing and distribution methods. Human rights films are not 'sexy' enough - they rarely have a large commercial appeal and will always predominately be docos. Human rights filmmakers do not seem to challenge their human rights stories in ways beyond docos, to experiment with other genres like Thrillers or Sci Fi! Experimenting will by far open up more than just a few doors for human rights filmmakers and to the human rights arena. I hope that HRAFF is able to encourage this experimentation and expand the boundaries and definitions of what a human rights film is.

Q&A WITH THE FESTIVAL CO-DIRECTOR: EVELYN TADROS

What prompted you to establish the festival in 2006?

I had been studying human rights law and international law at Copenhagen University in 2005 and 2006. While I was there, it became apparent to me just how behind Australia is in terms of both human rights protections and general awareness. People I spoke to from all over the world couldn't believe that Australia didn't have a human rights act, or a human rights court or any type of comprehensive human rights protection. For most people in Western Democratic countries, human rights are, regardless of ones' political beliefs, part and parcel of their society. By contrast, most people in Australia would find the language of human rights completely unfamiliar and foreign, confined to the academic and legal world.

When I returned to Australia, I felt that more had to be done here to broaden the discourse of human rights beyond the law, beyond academia and beyond abstract rhetoric. I discovered that human rights festivals had taken place all over the world, including New York, Paris, London and Auckland but never before in Australia. I needed a project to soothe my itchy feet and keep me in Melbourne,

so I just decided to jump in the deep end and start the ball rolling on establishing Australia's first ever Human Rights Arts and Film Festival.

When a call out was put out there, I was overwhelmed with responses from people not just in Melbourne, but also in Perth and Sydney. Through this process, I also met Naz Mantoo, a budding young Melbourne filmmaker. Originally from Kashmir, Naz's family has experienced first hand the challenges and difficulties the lack of human rights protection brings. Having been involved with major film festivals already, I knew that we would work together really well to put on this exciting new event.

This event however has really been a team effort – it could not have happened without the countless hours and serious hard work of our 30 or so core HRAFF members across the nation.

In what ways is film, and in particular your film festival, able to create positive change and provoke action?

Film is a powerful tool. It is able to make human rights human and give these rather abstract issues a human face and human story. The beauty of film is that it is accessible, it is popular and it can communicate across borders and across cultures and so reach audiences that you wouldn't otherwise be able to reach. Film is able to touch people and inspire people. It has been incredible to see the responses of people to our festival. They have been compelled to act. After we screened *A Walk To Beautiful* last year at our Opening Night, we had so many people tell us how much this film really impacted them and spurred them to act. These actions ranged from just donating money to the Fistula Foundation to actually wanting to go and visit the hospital. We see our role as a facilitator – to bring people, organisations and issues together so that we can create positive change together.

What is also impressive about many of the films that we screen is how the actual process of filmmaking has already made a huge impact on individuals and communities. Some of our short films such as *A Different Kind of Gun*, *An Uncertain Future*, and *Yolngu Guya Djamamirr* have involved teaching young indigenous people from Sudan, Tuvulu and Australia respectively how to use film equipment and to make a film. This process has had a cathartic effect, empowering these young people to tell their story and make their voices heard.

Who is the target audience of the festival?

One of the key aims of this festival is to embed human rights into our culture and everyday life. This is why we use film, art and music; they are accessible mediums and can communicate beyond language, beyond boundaries. Everyone, regardless of your political or religious beliefs, your cultural or social background, your age or socio-economic status, can watch a film, listen to music, or appreciate a piece of artwork.

Our message is that this festival is for everyone. You don't have to have a degree in law or politics to understand or learn about human rights. You don't have to have dreadlocks or don a pin-striped suit. You don't have to be part of a particular political party or share in any type of ideology. You just have to be human.

Evelyn Tadros and Naz Mantoo are available for interviews on request.

STORY ANGLES

Film Reviews

Press kits and 300dpi high resolution images are available for all feature films. Screeners of films are also available upon request.

Arts Reviews/Art Exhibition

Press kits and 300dpi high resolution images are available for all artwork. Interviews with curators and artists can be arranged upon request.

Profile a local artist/filmmaker

HRAFF's program has a large portion of Australian content. HRAFF aims to support emerging Australian filmmakers and artists and awards and prizes to aid upcoming filmmakers, including indigenous filmmakers. Please contact us if you would like to profile one of our local filmmakers and we will arrange interviews.

International filmmakers

We are privileged to have Emmy-award winning filmmaker Lisa Jackson arrive on our shores. If you would like to arrange interviews with her, or any of the other international filmmakers, please contact us and we will endeavour to arrange something.

Youth based and volunteer run

HRAFF is entirely a youth initiative made up of volunteers mainly between the ages of 20 – 30. HRAFF's success each year is based on collective action and the strength and diversity of the group. Any of our team members across the country would be available for interviews.

Creative ways to tackle climate change

The Reel Change partnership with Make Poverty History provides the impetus for filmmakers to tackle climate change issues as they intersect with human rights issues. Campaigns involved in the Make Poverty History Campaign as well as the local filmmakers would be available for interviews.

The role of sport in tackling human rights problems

Sport plays an integral role in bringing together people, regardless of your background. The Homeless World Cup is coming to Melbourne in 2008 and there would be plenty of opportunities to interview people involved in this great event.

High profile speakers/Patrons

There may be opportunities, pending availability, to interview Corinne Grant, Margaret Pomeranz, Rev Tim Costello, Julian Burnside QC, Magdalena Moreno, Byrony Nainby and other speakers involved in our event. Please contact us for enquiries.

FESTIVAL MEDIA PASSES

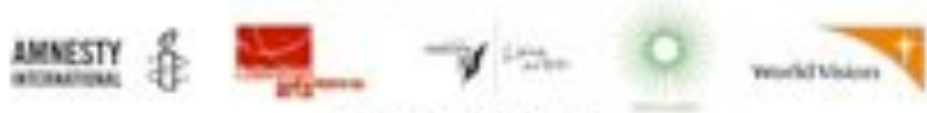
To apply for a media pass to the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival 2008 contact Evelyn Tadros (P. 0402 137 182 E. media@hraff.org.au) or visit our website www.hraff.org.au. Media passes are valid for the entire festival program including films, arts, music and forums.

THANKS TO ALL OF OUR SPONSORS!

NATIONAL PARTNERS



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



INDUSTRY PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



DOVE SPONSORS



OLIVE BRANCH SUPPORTERS

