Human Rights Award Goes to Australian Documentary on Afghanistan

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), and SIGNIS (the World Catholic Association of Communication) have announced their joint Human Rights Award for 2010. Unanimous in their decision, the award has been given to the documentary *The Garden at the End of the World*, produced and directed by Australian filmmaker Gary Caganoff.

The Garden at the End of the World is a confronting documentary on Afghanistan illustrating the tragic consequences of war and the widespread hunger, homelessness and lawlessness that it causes. The film portrays the lives of the hardest hit, the widows and orphans, who number in tens of thousands and follows two Australian women: humanitarian, Mahboba Rawi (OAM), an Afghan refugee and internationally recognised permaculturalist Rosemary Morrow, a Quaker, who both offer alternatives to the ‘reconstruction’ efforts that have not worked.

Through these two remarkable women, Caganoff elicits stories and images of Afghanistan rarely seen before. Neither sentimental nor sensational the film is remarkable, reaching into the depths and complexities of war torn Afghanistan.

Philip Lee, Deputy Director of Programmes for WACC commented, “While there are now many feature length films on Afghanistan, it is much rarer to find a sensitively crafted documentary that shows ordinary people trying to rebuild their lives and those of others. WACC works to promote communication for social justice and the right to communicate and SIGNIS aims to promote a culture of peace. As such, the programmes and projects we support take a rights-based approach.”

Asked to explain the documentary’s relevance to people of faith, Lee said, “*The Garden at the End of the World* is wonderful in that it shows how many people of different beliefs can work together for the common good.”

Excited by the award, Caganoff (who describes himself in the film as “Jewish with Buddhist tendencies”) explains, “The film is not religious, nor is it political. It manages to fly under the radar of both and focus on basic human rights issues. Rosemary, Mahboba and Mahboba’s Uncle Haji, who also features in the film, are true heroes. They work with passion and humility to help the Afghani women and children re-build their lives. This award is a wonderful recognition of their inspiring work.”

Caganoff thanks SIGNIS and WACC for the award, which is honourable acknowledgment of his own passion and dedication to Afghanistan over the last seven years.

The production of the The Garden at the End of the World was mainly funded by Caganoff with the support of Screen Australia, The Documentary Foundation Australia and generous private donations.

ENDS

*Please contact Gary Caganoff for more information and interviews on +61 (0)41 99 72 427 or gary@lysisfilms.com Photos from the film also available for publication to print or web.*
Mahboba Rawi, a refugee from the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, lives in Sydney. In 2001 she established a not-for-profit organisation, Mahboba’s Promise, and began intervening and assisting thousands of homeless widows and orphans. Mahboba was recently honoured with an OAM for her outstanding work.

http://www.mahbobaspromise.org/

Rosemary Morrow, based in the Blue Mountains, is a permaculturalist who has spent the last 30 years working with war torn communities, helping them to re-establish their lives centred on the self sufficiency and resilience they once enjoyed. Highly respected in the global permaculture community she is considered one of the pioneers of permaculture along with founders Bill Mollison and David Holmgren.

http://www.thegardenattheendoftheworld.info/?page_id=368

Gary Caganoff has spent 20 years making environmental and social justice films as an independent filmmaker. His first broadcast documentary ‘The Second Step’, featuring double above-knee leg amputee Warren Macdonald on his epic 28 day journey to climb Federation Peak in the Tasmanian wilderness, was the first Australian film to ever win the Grand Prize at the prestigious Banff Mountain Film Festival in 2002. The film screened on the ABC (Australia) and National Geographic channels around the world.

Caganoff is a minimalist filmmaker and carries only a small indiscreet camera with a microphone mounted on top. He was one of the pioneers of the single camera technique in the early 90’s when cameras were miniturised, enabling him to pack his gear into a backpack and film in remote locations for weeks on end using a small solar panel to recharge batteries.

On *The Garden at the End of the World* Caganoff was producer, director, director of photography, writer, editor and narrator. Ex ABC editor Michael Norton was his mentor for the project.

With a Quick Response grant from Screen Australia, Caganoff followed Rosemary Morrow (his landlord in the Blue Mountains, Australia) to Afghanistan, where they spent two months living and working in the Kabul orphanage of aid organisation Mahboba’s Promise. Caganoff finished the film with generous private sponsorship.

http://www.lysisfilms.com
http://www.TheGardenAtTheEndOfTheWorld.Info

Documentary Synopsis
http://www.thegardenattheendoftheworld.info/?page_id=368

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