

Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund: A 10th Anniversary Film Series

Filmmaker Testimonials

Jasmila Zbanic, filmmaker – RED RUBBER BOOTS

“It was a time when we did not have any film funds or other sources to produce movies in Bosnia. No sponsors wanted to invest in a film about mass graves. We were desperate, hearing again and again: ‘No, why are you not talking about the future, why do you need to talk about the past?’ The Soros Documentary Fund supported us in making *Red Rubber Boots*, *Do You Remember Sarajevo*, and *Birthday* (part of *Lost and Found* omnibus film) understanding that the future is not possible without knowing the past. Making these films, it was possible for my colleagues and me to continue in independent filmmaking and to create films from our hearts.”

Jonathan Stack and James Barbazon, filmmakers – LIBERIA: AN UNCIVIL WAR

“The truth is that without this funding, first from the Open Society Institute and then from the Sundance Documentary fund, I could not have made the films I made. These grants mean controversial work gets made, cable documentaries become feature documentaries, good work becomes better. Ideas that would only have remained as ideas, become projects that get funded... These grants have not only contributed to great work, but they've made it possible to turn great films into meaningful and substantial agents of change.”

Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelencic, filmmakers – CALLING THE GHOSTS: A STORY ABOUT WAR, RAPE, AND WOMEN

“The Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund was one of the single most important funding sources during the production and distribution of *Calling the Ghosts*. At the time (1994-1996) the funding climate for documentaries about human rights abuses in far away lands was very scarce. The SDF recognized the importance of supporting films that typically would not have received initial broadcast financial support. The SDF had the vision to also recognize that we have to reconsider our notions of successful documentaries as only being defined by broadcast ratings. *Calling the Ghosts* demonstrated that with the support and resources of a coalition of different sectors of society – from the human rights community to foundations like OSI to the corporate division at HBO with adequate resources – documentaries (about foreign lands) can get out in the world and mean something.

In September 1997, with support from the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund, *Calling the Ghosts* had its Bosnian premiere at the Sarajevo International Film Festival and on the national television network. This is another example of the visionary work of the SDF to support the distribution of documentaries, particularly in countries such as Bosnia that needed resources to ensure their audiences were also engaged in the issues that these documentaries raise.

With the assistance of the Soros Documentary Fund and the Open Society Institute, we created and toured the documentary around Rwanda to great interest and debate so that Rwandans could feel more included in the international dialogue on justice.”

Kate Davis, filmmaker – SOUTHERN COMFORT

“I remember exactly what I was doing when I got the phone call from Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund. It was a pivotal moment, after being in production for over a year with zero cash support. No one had believed in *Southern Comfort*, and when the grant came through, it suggested that maybe I wasn’t wasting my time. Since then, the film won Sundance, opened at Film Forum, was featured on HBO and traveled the world. The experience permanently altered my career, and I feel hugely grateful that SDF was willing to jump in and help me tell an unlikely, challenging story.

Sandy McLeod and Gini Reticker, filmmakers – ASYLUM

“The support of the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund was absolutely essential to *Asylum*. The late Arthur Helton championed the project from its inception and Dianne Weyermann maintained faith in the film as the process took many unexpected twists and turns. For me, their support was literally a beacon of hope on the long road to completion. I am thrilled to be part of this festival.”

Steve Goodman, Executive Director (and founder), Educational Video Center – STILL STANDING produced by the 2005/06 EVC youth producers

“*Still Standing* reflects the ability of EVC’s young filmmakers to take full ownership of current critical issues, exploring and broadening their own viewpoints as they add their voices to the public debate. Their perspective is important. Representing diverse neighborhoods in New York City, the crew members draw from their own experiences to demonstrate the importance of building strong communities as well as becoming active within one’s own community.”

Shari Robertson & Michael Camerini, filmmakers – MY AMERICAN DREAM: HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS NOW

“For a documentary filmmaker who wants to change the world the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund has become a beacon of inspiration and support on what can surely feel like a pretty dark road. And it’s doing that by creating the conditions for a lot of very good films to be made and seen, but just as much by nurturing a community of filmmakers and audiences who become more sophisticated as the body of work grows.

The Documentary Fund itself is changing the world, one screening or conversation at a time. And that change is more profound than any single movie can make – but every documentary (and documentary filmmaker) benefits from it. How great is that? We’re honored to be a part of the community, and very proud of the work the fund does.”

Stephanie Black, filmmaker – LIFE AND DEBT

“As a filmmaker, I am forever grateful for the trust and support that the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund and the Open Society Institute gave *Life and Debt* in its early pre-production stage – and as a film-lover, for the critically needed grants so many great documentaries have received from the foundation assuring their realization.”

Ra'anan Alexandrowicz, filmmaker – THE INNER TOUR

“Though I live and work thousands of miles away – the Sundance Documentary program is the cinematic institute in which I feel most ‘at home.’ I first experienced its support when I made *The*

Inner Tour in 2001. In 2005 I had the privilege to participate in one of the Documentary Edit Labs, which was one of the most inspiring collective filmmaking events I have ever taken part in. I think that the way this fund operates – supporting the work, but not trying to influence it, demanding results, but trying to develop tools in order to be a serious partner in reaching them – is an example of what we as filmmakers need as funding partners.”

Edet Belzberg, filmmaker – CHILDREN UNDERGROUND

“My filmmaking career would not be possible without the support I received from the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund....If it weren’t for that initial recognition and support, I would still be raising money to complete the film.”

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