

United Nations Film Festival Emphasizes Peace in the Wake of the Paris Tragedy

By Ivan Garcia

When you think of the United Nations, what do you think of? Do you conjure up the image of a crowd of powerful diplomats cooped up in some conference room in Manhattan? Do you envision Franklin Roosevelt rallying a group of international leaders to form a global force for good, while sneaky Joseph Stalin stands behind him cynically saying: "Yes, we are all comrades?" Or do you think of an organization whose sole purpose is to preserve peace for all, from the boy soldiers trapped in the conflicts in Congo to the young girls of Eastern Europe trafficked as sex slaves?

The United Nations, at its root at least, is an institution fighting for peace—and the idea that there will always be progress to be made was made especially clear, almost painfully so, during the 16th Annual International Documentary Film Festival this Friday, the 13th, an unlucky day for our nation's oldest ally.

I arrived at the Golden State Theatre 15 minutes before the festival was set to begin. The night breeze was cool, the bar hoppers along Alvarado were rowdy and loudly enjoying the early Friday night. Most of the event goers were already in the theater lobby waiting. They purchased popcorn or were pressured into signing up for email lists, like I was, for Amnesty International (I signed up for the free sticker, and because of their petition to urge the president to accept more Syrian refugees into America). As the start time approached we began entering the auditorium, I picked a rather lonely seat close to an emergency exit.

A man with glasses and a tan suit jacket stepped in front of the screen, behind the podium. He bobbed his head a bit to the soft-rock music coming from the theater's surround sound speakers, and commented on the track's catchy hook. The music was cut and the crowd became quite. The man on the stage introduced himself as Dr. Charles Fuller, President of the Monterey Bay Chapter of the United Nations Association.

Dr. Fuller's first words into the mic were, "The United Nations is a noble institution," and he urged the crowd to believe him using faith, acknowledging his own institution is "in need of reform."

Dr. Fuller briefly went over the

U.N.'s history; from its post World War II conception to its status today as a far reaching humanitarian organization which runs programs such as UNICEF and the World Health Organization. He touched on how a fun event like the film festival could be as significant as the U.N.'s more established efforts. These films encourage us to understand each other, and that is vital because it is more difficult to wage war with people once you feel compassion towards them, he pointed out.

Dr. Fuller trailed off from discussing the good deeds of the U.N.'s history to re-

That night, as we gathered at the Golden State ready to enjoy films that promote peace, several calculated attacks occurred across Paris almost simultaneously.

morsefully reference the evil of today. He said the festival had gone to a great start, made possible by the best crew he could ask for, but his happiness was wiped away when he received a call that afternoon—news from Paris.

That night, as we gathered at the Golden State ready to enjoy films that promote peace, several calculated attacks occurred across Paris almost simultaneously. 129 people were killed, and several hundreds injured in suicide bombings and shootings that hit the bustling city on a Friday night like a tidal wave—quick and chaotic.

The Paris tragedy was a brutal reminder that even though we are making strides in understanding our fellow human

beings, there are still malicious elements in the world whose mission is to kill the dream of peace by killing countless innocents.

We could never make sense of why these brutal attacks occur in public places that are supposed to be spaces where we separate ourselves from worry—a movie theater, a classroom, a church. We will never make sense of why vicious people voice their hatred with mass violence against everyday people, at home and across the globe. Perhaps our only means of lessening the pain is by acknowledging there is a wound, and if we feel it we can come together to heal it.

We had a moment of silence for the people of Paris, and with that, we were ready to dive into documentaries that follow people who face injustice, hopelessness, pain, but who also find courage, tenacity, and love within themselves.

First up was "We Are Fire," a beautiful but brief (eight minute run-time) Indian film that follows feminist group the Gulabi Gang, who are centered in the rural districts of Northern India where patriarchy runs deep. The women of the Gulabi Gang roam together in the countryside, wielding bamboo sticks they are ready to use, as the film showcases in a scene where women spar each other with the ferocity of fencers.

The film opens with a close up of a bright pink sari being sewn, the garment each Gulabi Gang woman wears like a uniform. We hear the story of Champa Pal whose husband was killed by her neighbors so they could take his property, since women have no land rights and little influence. Champa went to the police, but she was shooed off due to her lack of money. With children to feed and no funds coming in, she contemplated killing herself. She was living as a dead woman in the making; "I felt as if I was doomed."

It was at the lowest point of Champa's life when she turned to Sampat Pal Devi, leader of the Gulabi Gang. Champa put on the pink sari, picked up the bamboo stick, and marched with her sisters to confront the men who had stolen her home. Champa demanded to be given what was hers, and she could see it their eyes, the men were intimidated.

"Gulabi Gang was formed to change the society, not just to fight against it."

founder Sampat said to a circle of women spanning generations. The Gulabi Gang walked through their tiny village talking of developments in their lives; the concerns, the stress, the hope that their empowerment will bring better days. Champa was alone, kicking up dust in her sandals and wearing her pink hood as she walked toward the camera. The camera pans out from Champa's content face, she says the film's final words: "I am not afraid anymore."

"Sea Change" centers around environmental activist Ikal Angelei as she rallies a group of Kenyan and Ethiopian natives to prevent the construction of a new dam that threatens to deplete the river they have depended on for thousands of years. Angelei left Kenya at an early age when both her parents died. She attended an American university, and although she felt sorrow for the plight of her people, she began to build resentment towards the leaders of her homeland.

Angelei felt obligated to return to Kenya when she learned about the construction of the GIBE III dam, a project that intends to provide power to the quickly developing Kenyan capital, Nairobi, by converting the waters of the Omo river into energy. Building of the dam is backed

See UN FILMS Page 7

TWO GIRLS FROM CARMEL
 Experienced • Professional
 Same Cleaner For A Personal Touch
 Bonded • 30 Year Track Record



SO MANY DUSTBALLS
 SO LITTLE TIME

HOUSECLEANING SPECIALISTS
 Let Us Do The Work For You
 (831) 626-4426
 TwoGirlsFromCarmel.com

Household services OFFERED IN TRADE for housing

Cedar Street Times ad sales rep seeks housing in Pacific Grove in exchange for household services. Non-smoker, mature, pet-friendly, compassionate, patient, experienced family caregiver, tutor, and computer trainer.

Services offered: overnight & evening care, errands, grocery shopping, dinner prep/cooking, baking, kitchen clean-up, laundry, organizing and tidying, packing & shipping, shopping & gift wrapping, pet and house sitting, tutoring, computer help, genealogy research.

Housing sought: small cottage, cabin, in-law apartment, studio, or room in a quiet congenial home.

Please contact Jolinda at Cedar Street Times office:
 Phone: 831-324-4742
 Email: ads@cedarstreettimes.com



159 Pacific Ave.
 Pacific Grove



Adorable cottage/bungalow one block from Lovers Point. 1 bedroom, 1 bath, 528 sq.ft. Easy walk to town, beach, park, restaurants, post office and hiking path to Cannery Row and the Aquarium. \$625,000

JEANNE SMITHER OSIO
 Lic. #01147233
 www.jeanneosio.com (831) 320-6382 jeanne.osio@cbrnocal.com



Winner of the 2010 PG Restaurant of the Year Award

Pizza My Way
 The Finest Gourmet Pizza

WE BAKE OR YOU BAKE
 Try the Peninsula's Best Gluten-Free Crust

15% OFF ENTIRE BILL
 Must present current coupon to get discount. Not combinable with other offers.
 EXPIRES 12/20/15

WE DELIVER! (831) 643-1111
 1157 Forest Ave., #D (across from Trader Joe's)
 Mon-Thu 4-9:30PM • Fri-Sat 11-10PM • Sun 12-9:30PM
 www.PIZZA-MYWAY.com



✓ UN FILMS From Page 3

by major international interests, among them the Chinese government, JPMorgan Chase, and—most recently—the World Bank.

The dam will not only negatively affect the ecosystem, but is already causing armed conflict amongst neighboring tribes. Those who raise goats must move further up the coast to graze, entering the territory of other communities, leading to fire-fights that leave many dead. Angelei worries that if the construction continues, her former home will become yet another hotbed of conflict in a continent riddled with wars over resources.

The odds seemed stacked against Angelei and the indigenous people of Kenya and Ethiopia, but they believe there is too much at stake to simply give up and let their way of life slip away. The final moments of the film depict Angelei talking to a council of elders—men who respect her because of her willingness to stand up against world powers, but are fearful that her fighting spirit will be no match against the government. We see tribe members in traditional clothing, colorful headscarves and beaded necklaces that bounce as they dance together. Amidst all the anxiety they feel for their future, they find solace and knowing they can partake in the customs of the past, and as long as they can—they'll know there is still good to be found within each other.

The final film of the night, "Abrazos," tells the story of American families struggling to keep touch with their relatives when several borders, and countless visitation restrictions, keep them apart.

The film was introduced by Lisa Kramer, executive producer and the woman who made the journey possible for a few children to visit their grandparents in Guatemala. Kramer said that in the past decade, Minnesota has seen an influx of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Kramer got close to some of these families at her church, she found that many of the adults felt guilt over not being able to visit the family they had left behind back at home.

The adult migrants could not visit their families because their lack of documentation would lead to deportation. The law wasn't on their side, but they were desperate for reconnection with their relatives, just to let them know the risk coming to America was worth it.

Fortunately, they found a solution. Although the adults couldn't travel outside of the country, their children—born U.S. citizens—are able to leave with little difficulty. Kramer and the kids began fundraising, and soon enough plans were made for a few children to fly to Guatemala where they would stay with their grandparents for a week.

The journey those grade school-aged children took was much more meaningful than a typical spring break vacation. When

their bus pulled up to the village plaza and they ran to their grandparents who were gripping welcome home balloons, it wasn't just two cultures coming together, it was two generations with two distinct upbringings coming together at last—the parents too old to leave poverty and the children born into a better life.

With the first night of the festival done, the crowd stood up from their seats and made their way back to their lobby where they could talk and try to make sense of each film, try to make sense of what happened across the Atlantic in France that day.

As I left the Golden Gate Theatre, the air was even colder, the sky more black, but the streets of Monterey were as hustling as ever on a Friday night, like it's supposed to be.

The world has always had cases where cruelty is committed against the defenseless, where acts of violence are done so shockingly we can do nothing but wonder, why does it continue?

It seems that these terrible instances of mass violence happen more frequently in our lifetime. And make no mistake, there is a problem. But it's important to note that we've always had those problems, and it hasn't broken humanity yet. In the same way that oppression based on gender hasn't broken the women wearing pink of Northern India. In the same way that a dam that could destroy an age old culture hasn't destroyed the life loving spirit of the tribes along the Omo river. In the same way being deprived of seeing your parents, siblings, and homeland hasn't ruined the persistence of millions of migrants who now call America home. In the same way that the constant conflicts of the world have not discouraged the U.N. from attempting to preserve peace.

Sinister people do terrible things to our fellow humans, but we should never fall prey to their objectives and believe the world can only be terrible from now on. We saw that in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks, and soon enough the people of Paris will mourn and then move on as best they can.

The world may never be a perfect place to live, but truly trying to make it even a bit better is what makes it all worth it. It's why the United Nations Monterey Bay chapter is among the most active in the nation, they know the work is worth it. It's why the noble and fearless figures featured in the films fight when they know it's so easy to give up and let the badness of the world consume them, the work it worth it. It's why I know that even as our world suffers tragedy after tragedy, we will come together and somehow get through the pain, it's always worth it. Even if it means preserving what people are supposed to be one film festival at a time.

Cop Log

Cop Log 11/07-11/13

Garage Theft

A burglary from an unlocked garage took place on Pico Avenue.

Not-So-Neighborly

A woman on Melrose Place complained that her neighbor regularly harasses and intimidates her by driving by and staring at her. In the past, he has complained about her smoking on her front porch because he says it gets into his infant's bedroom. He has also installed surveillance cameras around his property, which she believes is an action directed at her because her children, against whom she has filed a restraining order, are addicted to meth.

Spitting Mad

On Pine Avenue, a woman filed a complaint after her neighbor spit in her direction while she was walking her 5-year-old son. The neighbor was apparently angry because he believes her to be responsible for calling the police the previous night regarding a disturbance from his apartment.

Garbage Truck Arm Grabs Resident Instead of Bin

A driver of a waste disposal truck was trying to pick up a can with the mechanical arm when a well-meaning resident attempted to help by picking up the can. The driver extended the arm and had intended to open it, but closed it by accident, catching the resident's leg. The injured individual was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Crunch

A city vehicle backed into a parked vehicle at the city yard.

Past Curfew and In Trouble

Two juveniles were found in a vehicle on Ocean View Blvd doing what one might imagine they were doing parked at midnight. They were given curfew warning citations and allowed to drive home where their parents were contacted. The remainder of their weekend was likely far less eventful.

The Boat Fought the Wave and The Wave Won

A boat capsized after being struck by a large wave. The 3 men managed to make it to shore without injury and their boat was retrieved from the water by authorities.

Driver Crashes into Stationary Object

A driver hit a parked, unoccupied car on Congress Avenue, damaging both vehicles so badly that they had to be towed from the scene.

Beware of Craigslist Scammers!

A victim lost money through a Craigslist vacation rental scam on Siren Street.

Skate Park Drama

A man reported receiving threatening text messages from a former friend with whom he recently had a fight. The messages told him to meet at the Skate Park in order "to settle things," like something out of an '80s teen drama.

A Little Too Trusting

A man was giving a woman he did not know very well a ride home and left her in his vehicle while he went into a store on Lighthouse Avenue. To his surprise, the woman and the car were gone upon his return.

When A Minor Infraction Leads To Arrest

An officer saw a vehicle make an infraction on Sloat Avenue and approached the driver once he had stopped in a parking space. It turns out the driver had warrants for his arrest... and illegal drugs in the car.

... and Again!

Same story, this time on Central Avenue.

Bark Bark Bark Report

The Barking Dog Who Does Not Bark

On Benito Avenue, a man complained that his neighbor's dog barked at him through the fence while he was working in his yard until it was brought inside the house. The dog's owner, on the other hand, says that the dog is not left outside unattended and is not a barker.

Lonely Dogs Bark at Traffic

On Pacific Avenue, a woman complained that her neighbor's two dogs bark frequently when their owners are out. They live in an area with a lot of traffic and activity, so the dogs bark at various noises regularly. The woman has approached the dogs' owners about it, but says they have done nothing to curb the barking problem.

Lost and Found

A cell phone was lost.
A cane was found on Ridge Road.
A wallet was found on Ocean View Blvd.
A passport was lost somewhere between the San Jose Airport and Pacific Grove. Someone has a lot of backtracking to do.
A wallet was lost somewhere in Pacific Grove.
A cell phone was left in a taxi on Bentley Street.
A bank card was found on Forest Avenue.

Fire at Homeless Encampment

On November 11, 2015 at approximately 11:09 a.m., Monterey Fire Department personnel responded to a fire at a homeless encampment located in a hillside area at the end of Playa Avenue just off the beach in Sand City.

The fire was believed to have been started by a homeless man who has also made bomb threats in the past. This triggered the need to contact the Monterey County Bomb Squad to respond to the scene. A unified command was established with the Sand City Police Department while a remote camera was used to clear the area and the fire was extinguished with a 500' hose lay across the beach.

**COMMUNITY
THANKSGIVING
DINNER
NOVEMBER 26, 2015
THURSDAY @ 10 am - 1 pm
ROCKY HAN COMMUNITY CENTER
211 HILLCREST AVE, MARINA, CA 93933**

FREE!