

Jury report Activist programme | Movies that Matter 2020

The 2020 meeting of the jury had a slightly different approach. Due to the Corona virus pandemic spreading all over the world, the human rights defenders were not able to attend the Activist programme of Movies that Matter. Neither could the members of the jury. Technology enabled us to arrange an online jury meeting. This international five-person jury was composed of Leni Velasco, Roger Ross Williams, Patrick Farrelly, Paul Peters and Nenita La Rose (chair). Because of our different professional backgrounds and experiences, we were able to view the films from different perspectives, complementing our views and opinions. But at the same time, we were remarkably united in the final outcome.

The Activist documentary programme of Movies that Matters pays annual respect to human rights activists and shows the importance of the work they do to inform the world about human rights injustices. We salute them for that! Each of the eight documentaries that were selected were amazing and showed us the drive, passion and actions of the human rights defenders. Noticeable was the strength of women that was beautifully portrayed in these documentaries. The documentaries, although very different from each other, all touched upon themes that are relevant to the present and the future of our planet and societies. Climate change; forced migration; women's rights and discrimination; HIV/AIDS and health care; press freedom and freedom of speech and democracy. We had open discussions in good spirit and of course at times different views and arguments. This was always in admiration and respect for the work done by our brave and driven activists exposing these human rights injustices. We rated the films taking into perspective whether they had a clear narrative and context; their originality and artistic quality and cinematography. Important was also to see if the film could take the viewer on a journey.

The winning documentary is "really a monumental work" as one of the jury members described it. It is a sad and harrowing film but also a searing testimony to one woman's extraordinary bravery and resilience in standing up for the most marginalized and victimized members in a society. There's admiration for years long filming in hostile surroundings. The filmmakers beautifully captivated the perspective of the victim as activist for a smaller group and ever new friends. In this documentary poverty provides an extra layer of suffering and shows a link between the social right to health and civil freedoms. It is a compassionate exploration of an ignored public health issue and it shows the woman's humanity and heroism in the everyday mundanity of her life as a person living with HIV/AIDS. She is an amazing protagonist who not only keeps fighting for everyone but she is also sweet, funny and feisty. Every scene with her is a gem. The filmmakers followed her life for seven years and so it is very intimate. The woman is a wondrous character. Throughout the grimmest of circumstances and facing the most daunting obstacles, she maintains exemplary humanity and a wicked sense of humor. It is hard not to admire the filmmakers overcoming the obstacles they faced telling this story. This film is an indispensable and optimistic source of inspiration for all those who are suffering unacceptable government treatment.

Taking all this into account, the jury awards the Golden Butterfly for the Activist Documentary Award to..... *Ximei* directed by Andy Cohen and Gaylen Ross.