

NPS Co-Hosts First Educational Film Symposium

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To promote global awareness among the military and local community, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) recently partnered with the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Rep. Sam Farr (D - Calif. 17th District) discusses the importance of cultural awareness programs at the Windows to the World screening of “Iron Ladies of Liberia.” (DLIFLC) and the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) to host “Windows to the World,” an educational film symposium that showcased 15 documentaries from more than a dozen countries.

The four-day symposium, hosted by a different institution each day beginning Oct. 16, highlighted international themes of political activism, democracy, cross-cultural conflict and economic struggle through documentaries provided by the Independent Television Service International’s Global Perspectives Project. Under the leadership of Windows to the World Executive Director Paula Jordanek and NPS Provost Leonard Ferrari, committee members from DLIFLC, NPS and MIIS selected and screened films that covered a myriad of political and social topics ranging from child labor in Bolivia to multi-party elections in Egypt.

Retired Navy Capt. Bill Shewchuk, the Executive Assistant to the Dean of the NPS School of International Graduate Studies, said the symposium was intended to enhance the educational experience students receive while at NPS, DLI and MIIS, and to share a cultural learning program with the local community.

“A major emphasis from the Department of Defense today is increasing partnership capacity, and the way to do that in a more effective manner is to be aware of the culture and language in the environments which you’re operating,” he said. “And cultural awareness is important for everybody, not just to the military community.”



On Friday, Oct. 17, Windows to the World hosted a community screening of “Iron Ladies of Liberia” at the Golden State Theater in Downtown Monterey. Filmed in 2006, the documentary followed the inaugural year of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first female president ever to be elected in an African nation, and the challenges her predominantly-female administration faced as they worked to rebuild the war-torn country of Liberia. Immediately following the screening, Army Col. Sue Ann Sandusky, Commandant of DLIFLC, moderated a discussion with Jonathan Stack, the film’s Emmy award-winning executive producer.

Sandusky said the film presented an important view into the realities of governing a failed state – a concept unfamiliar to most Americans. “The phrase ‘failed state’ is frequently used in the press and foreign policy discussions, and I think that seeing ‘Iron Ladies’ was important so American audiences could get a little glimpse of what it means to be a failed state and all the difficulties that the president had to face – lack of

institutions, a government that can't govern for all the various reasons depicted in the film, the problems of poverty, and the difficulty of having to handle constituents when you don't have resources," she explained.

Stack said he was excited to bring the film to a new audience, particularly one with such a significant role in global matters. He believes that understanding international affairs and the reality of life in other cultures is important for all Americans, "because the country cannot claim the mantle of world power if it does not know what is going on."

Rep. Sam Farr (D - Calif. 17th District) showed his support for the symposium and also emphasized the greater need for cultural awareness programs. "In Congress, we heard testimony from General Abizaid, who was the CENTCOM [Central Command] commander in the Middle East, and he indicated that he would never have been successful in that command position had he not learned Arabic at the Defense Language Institute," Farr said. "More importantly, he told the committee that America will never be able to achieve peace unless we learn to cross that cultural divide."

Farr called the event a valuable opportunity for both the military and local community to enhance their awareness of other cultures and learn more about each other. "This film festival is exactly what's needed for the military to interrelate with the community," he stated. "If we can't cross the cultural divide on the Monterey Peninsula with the civilian and military communities, how can we ever expect to cross the cultural divide in another country?"

NPS held its portion of the film symposium on Saturday, Oct 20. Each of the films was presented by a subject matter expert on the region depicted in the film, and each was followed by a question and answer period with the presenter. For the Columbia film, Dr. Thomas Bruneau, Distinguished Professor in the Department of National Security Affairs (NSA), discussed "ABC Columbia," a portrait of a rural community in the cocaine growing field in Columbia as shown through the eyes of two boys. Dr. Mikhail Tsyarkin, also in NSA, is a subject matter expert on Russia and the Soviet Union. He presented, "Story of People in War and Peace." This film was about the 1989 through 1994 Karabagh War, a war that many believe was one of the first signs of the Soviet Union's collapse. For the film "Iranian Kidney Sale" Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies in NSA, Dr. Abbas Kadhim, was the presenter. In Iran, the sale of kidneys is legal and it is regulated. In the film, the story is told by two young Iranians who had each decided to sell a kidney.

"Shadya" focused on an Arab Israeli teenage girl who is a karate champion, and told of what she faces in terms of family dynamics, independence and religion, among other things. The presenter of this film was Dr. Anne Marie Baylouny, who is an NSA Assistant Professor who specializes in Middle East politics, social organizing and Islamism.



Baylouny also presented the evening's final film, "Bridge Over the Wadi," a poignant documentary about the first year of operation of a bi-national, bi-lingual school in the Wadi Ara village where Arab and Israeli parents established the school to attempt to create a positive model of co-existence. Afterward, all participants were invited to a reception in the Glasgow Hall Courtyard where visitors nibbled on finger foods and discussions on the films continued. Sandusky reflected on the symposium's significance and said the educational event helps Monterey solidify its reputation as the leading destination for language and cultural learning. "With this effort where MIIS, DLI and NPS are cooperating in an event that has so much foreign language and culture content, I think that has to send the message to people here on the Monterey Peninsula and the wider community that indeed, very exciting and cultural things are happening here, and we have every right to claim the title, 'Language Capital of the World.'"