

America's Brutal Prisons

(48 minutes) USA

Director: Nick London

Reporter: Deborah Davies

Description:

The recent Abu Ghraib prison torture scandal shocked the American public. But they might be even more stunned to discover that strikingly similar violence occurs inside prisons throughout the United States, where prisoners are routinely abused, even tortured, by prison guards. *Torture: America's Brutal Prisons* visits correctional institutions in Texas, Florida and California, uncovering penal systems with deeply ingrained cultures of punishment, rather than rehabilitation. The film features actual videos recorded by prison surveillance cameras and correction officers that reveal incidents in which inmates are brutalized, often for minor infractions, with stun guns, tasers, dangerous restraining devices, attack dogs, chemical sprays, and beatings by guards. These disturbing scenes are supplemented by interviews with former prisoners, a warden, a prison doctor, inmates' relatives, attorneys, and footage from a California Senate inquiry and a murder trial of four guards. Although many prisons denied permission to film inside their facilities, a rare glimpse behind the walls is offered by interviews with former correctional officers who have broken the "green wall" code of silence and become whistleblowers. They testify about the regular practice of cover-ups of corruption and violence, as well as the brutality and vindictiveness of fellow guards.

Baghdad ER

(64 minutes) Iraq/USA

Directors/Producers: Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill

Description:

The hour-long verité documentary *Baghdad ER* offers a raw and rarely seen look at the day-to-day hardship, humanity, heroism, and sacrifice of the U.S. Military and medical personnel "just doing their jobs" in Iraq. Allowed unprecedented access over a two month period in 2005 to the 86th Combat Support Hospital, producers/directors Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill followed the doctors, nurses, medics, soldiers, chaplains, and others in the Army's premier medical facility in Iraq. Thanks in part to the skill and dedication of trauma center teams like the one depicted in the film, wounded troops in Iraq have a 90 percent chance of survival, the highest rate of war survivors in U.S. history. At times graphic in its depiction of combat-related wounds, *Baghdad ER* is a socially relevant account of war in our time—emotional, devastating, and honest.

The Blood of Yingzhou District

(39 minutes) China/USA

Director: Ruby Yang

Producer: Thomas Lennon

Description:

No one knows how old Gao Jun is. Four? Older? Younger? Whatever his biological age, he has none of the verbal babble, or ready tears, of a child his age. The film tracks this orphan for a year as his closest surviving kin - his uncles - weigh what to do with him. The older uncle's dilemma: if he allows his children to play with Gao Jun, who is HIV-positive, they will be ostracized by terrified neighbors. The younger uncle's dilemma: so long as Gao Jun remains in the house, the young man may not be able to find a wife. Gao Jun is one of just a handful of children we come to know in this film: Nan Nan who after her parents' death, was shunned by relatives and left to live without adult care, with "Little Flower," her teen-age sister; and the Huang siblings who vividly describe their ostracism at school. The result of misinformation about the nature of the disease, the suffering of these orphans is all the more devastating for being largely unnecessary.

Blowing Up Paradise

(60 minutes) France

Director: Ben Lewis

Description:

For thirty years, despite worldwide protests, the idyllic Moruroa Atoll in French Polynesia was used as a site for France's nuclear tests. Despite repeated assurances by the French government that the blasts posed no danger, today this once pristine locale is contaminated by radiation and many of its inhabitants suffer from cancer and other diseases. *Blowing up Paradise* uses archival footage to chronicle France's explosion of various nuclear devices, in violation of the international test ban treaty, from the first test in 1966 to the last in 1995. Interviews with former and current French government officials, scientists, and nuclear advisors illuminate France's political agenda of the era. They also demonstrate France's continuing denial of responsibility for the social devastation wrought, and its refusal to pay any compensation to former test workers. The film vividly portrays the protests of French nuclear policy in the region, including the actions of a Polynesian anti-nuclear terrorist group, riots in the streets of Moruroa, and years of anti-nuclear activism by Greenpeace environmentalists. *Blowing up Paradise* reveals that the Moruroa Atoll, having undergone a complete social transformation, is today a politically destabilized society. The area remains a militarized zone and has been described by scientists as a nuclear waste dump in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Even worse, it is predicted that radiation leakages will eventually occur. *Blowing up Paradise* thus becomes an atomic version of *Paradise Lost*, with the 'sins' of past nuclear tests wreaking potentially global catastrophe in the future.

Bystander

(32 minutes) USA

Director/Producer: John Reilly

Description:

Why have there been so many bystanders to genocide and war crimes? *Bystander* portrays three individuals who intervened to thwart the mass murder of innocent victims as the crimes were unfolding, and frames these portraits with riveting psychological experiments that demonstrate the scarcity of moral courage.

Epitaph

(13 minutes) France/USA

Director/Producer: Mikael Lubtchansky

Description:

Epitaph is a visual and musical memorial to the victims of September 11. With seventy-one "digitally painted" press photos, one short video, and a music track by King Crimson, the film leads us through the experiences of that tragic sunny day. From candles lighting New Yorker's faces and smoke billowing up from the lower Manhattan to the sound of the first plane flying low over the city, *Epitaph* is a voyage through time, questioning the moment, the past, and the future. Only to be screened in festivals, exhibits and schools, this non-commercial and nonprofit film project was made possible with support from numerous photographers and from the musicians.

In the Tall Grass

(57 minutes) Rwanda/USA

Director/Producer: J. Coll Metcalfe

Description:

In the Tall Grass tells the story of Rwanda's search for redemption as the country sits down to reckon with the genocide using a network of traditional community courts called gacaca. The film follows a genocide survivor named Joanita Mukarusanga through this historic process as she confronts the neighbor she says killed her family, and the community that sanctioned their murders. That neighbor, Anastase Butera, admits to witnessing the murders, but denies any further participation. With unprecedented access, *In the Tall Grass* explores universal themes of justice in post-conflict societies and the challenges countries like Rwanda face in attempting the transition from violence to peace. Through the experiences of Joanita and Anastase, the film illustrates how the genocide and the ideology it propelled continue to play a dangerous and destabilizing role that, if left unaddressed, threaten to one day plunge Rwanda back into chaos. Both Joanita and Anastase view the process of gacaca with a mixture of hope and apprehension. Joanita does not expect much, but hopes to learn where the killers put the bodies of her children. For Anastase, who grew up with the ideology of exclusion and violence, the experience is just the latest in a world that's turned upside down. The new Rwanda is one he is not entirely prepared for.

Independent Intervention

(75 minutes) Iraq/USA

Director/Producer: Tonje Hessen Schei

Description:

Independent Intervention is an award-winning documentary about the U.S. media coverage of the war in Iraq. Focusing on the human costs of war, it contrasts the mass media's coverage of the invasion of Iraq with independent reports of the brutal realities on the ground. As the major U.S. networks remove human suffering from their presentation of war, Operation Iraqi Freedom is portrayed as a success for the spread of democracy and freedom. This film brings awareness to the disparity between the war the American people see through the corporate controlled media and the realities on the ground in Iraq. *Independent Intervention* explores how the growing media democracy movement in the U.S. works to challenge the mass media. The film features Amy Goodman, Noam Chomsky, Dahr Jamail, Danny Schechter, Norman Solomon, David Barsamian, Kalle Lasn, James Zogby, and Jim Hightower. It also includes the voices of Howard Zinn, Michael Moore, Bill Moyers, Arundhati Roy, Jeremy Scahill, U.S. Senators, and Iraqi people.

Interview with an Executioner

(13 minutes) USA

Directors: Ken Russell and Nancy Brown

Producer: Terry McCaffery

Description:

Interview with an Executioner gives us Don Cabana, from his days as a warden at Parchman Penitentiary in Mississippi to his anti-death penalty work thirty years later. Cabana describes the emotional pain of carrying out executions, and in one particular case, the near-certainty that he executed an innocent man. While Cabana was a prison warden, the BBC filmed a documentary about the inmate Edward Earl Johnson. That documentary went behind the scenes in the penitentiary to the mysterious, secretive world of the execution process. Warden Cabana appears in the '70s BBC film as an earnest and hardworking man doing his job. In the present day, Interview with an Executioner reveals the feelings we didn't know were under the surface. It allows us to consider that in the executioner's mind there can be doubts, remorse, and a questioning of the fairness of executions. Cabana reveals how he could not reconcile his Catholic faith with the dirty work of an executioner.

Lessons in Fear

(52 minutes) Israel/Palestine

Director/Producer: James Cullingham

Description:

Does the solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians rest in the classroom rather than in the angry, fearful streets of the region? Can better answers be found in schools rather than political conferences? *Lessons in Fear* explores Israeli and Palestinian

education from the ground up. In a media world obsessed with conflict, *Lessons in Fear* takes a humanized, behind-the-scenes look at how ordinary kids are educated in one of the world's trouble spots. The film looks carefully at the lives of students and teachers, who find themselves on the front lines intellectually and physically. Their battleground is one of knowledge and self-examination. Their challenges are a deeply engrained culture of violence, the denial of history and legacies of hatred, propaganda and segregation. *Lessons in Fear* is not a litany of wrongs. The film is a character driven portrait of courage in action as it presents an unvarnished look at the struggle to make education a positive force in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Lima's Streets

(13 minutes) Peru/Spain
Director: Marcelo Bukin

Description:

The cruel reality of the children living on the streets of Lima, Peru and struggling to survive by means of begging, consuming drugs, and stealing is brutally depicted in this short but powerful film. While shooting the documentary amidst fights, police raids and disputes, the film crew itself fell victim to the physical abuse of Lima's violent gangs.

The Man Who Saved a Million Brains

(26 minutes) Australia/Tibet
Director/Producer: Kate Riedl

Description:

Imagine a disease so bizarre it curses entire towns with cretinism. Imagine a condition that causes the IQ of entire nations to plummet from 110 points to a mentally retarded 85. Imagine that the same medical nightmare creates deafness, shrunken and deformed skeletons, and manufactures monstrous growths that protrude from its victim's bodies. It is a disease that is re-emerging in Australia. Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD) is such a disease. Although it is one the world's most common preventable causes of brain damage, 2.2 billion people worldwide suffer from it. *The Man Who Saved a Million Brains* looks at the work of Professor Cres Eastman, a world-renowned endocrinologist, who has spent the past twenty years fighting Iodine Deficiency Disorder in the remotest parts of Tibet. This is the story of a doctor's crusade to save children from a destructive disease. The cure is effective, cheap and simple but is the message getting through?

The Peacekeepers

(83 minutes) Congo/USA
Director: Paul Cowan
Producer: Adam Symansky

Description:

With unprecedented access to the UN Department of Peacekeeping, *The Peacekeepers* provides an intimate and dramatic portrait of the struggle to save "a failed state" The film follows the determined and often desperate maneuvers to avert another Rwandan disaster,

this time in the Democratic Republic of Congo (the DRC). Focusing on the UN mission, the film cuts back and forth between the UN headquarters in New York and events on the ground in the DRC. We are with the peacekeepers in the "Crisis Room" as they balance the risk of loss of life on the ground with the enormous sums of money required from uncertain donor countries. We are with UN troops as the northeast Congo erupts and the future of the DRC, if not all of central Africa, hangs in the balance. In the background, but often impinging on peacekeeping decisions, are the painful memory of Rwanda, the worsening crisis in Iraq, global terrorism, and American hegemony in world affairs. As Secretary General Kofi Annan tells the General Assembly at the conclusion of *The Peacekeepers*: "History is a harsh judge. The world will not forgive us if we do nothing." Whether the world's peacekeeper did enough remains to be seen.

Pilgrimage

(52 minutes) Iran/Iraq/USA

Director: Bahman Giarostami

Producer: Bahman Giarostami and Marjaneh Moghimi

Description:

Despite the threat of mines, assassination, and death by dehydration and starvation, determined Shiite Muslims - as many as 3,000 a day - have been pouring across the Iran-Iraq border since the fall of the Iraqi government. They risk their lives for only one reason: to visit the holy city of Karbala, fifty miles south of Baghdad. This city houses the magnificent shrine of seventh-century leader Imam Hussein, grandson of the prophet Muhamed. Hussein died in a battle in 681, a martyr to the Shiite faith. The intense devotion of these pilgrims to Imam Hussein and Karbala astounds outside observers at the same time that it puts the Iranian government in a major predicament. Torn between bureaucracy and allegiance to Islam, Tehran is continually revising its emigration policies, periodically opening and then closing its border. Meanwhile people are dying, and chaos reigns at crossing points.

Rights on the Line: Vigilantes at the Border

(25 minutes) Mexico/USA

Director/Producer: WITNESS

Description:

Rights on the Line: Vigilantes at the Border exposes the ugly anti-immigrant politics that lurk behind the Minuteman Project and shows the continuum between official border militarization and vigilante action. This video was shot by human rights activists and residents of border communities. It tells the story of border tensions from the point of view of those affected and reveals the underlying motivations of the vigilantes through interviews and disturbing footage of their nighttime patrols.

Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars

(80 minutes) Sierra Leone/USA

Directors/Producers: Zach Niles and Banker White

Description:

Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars are a band of six Sierra Leonean musicians who have been living as refugees in the West African nation of the Republic of Guinea. A brutal civil war (1991-2002) forced them from their homes in Sierra Leone. Many of their family and friends were murdered in the violence, leaving them with physical and emotional scars that may never heal. Despite the unimaginable horrors of civil war, they were saved through their music. Through music, *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars* have found refuge, purpose, and a source of power by giving a voice to the experiences of so many struggling to survive. *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars* is a character driven film that chronicles the band over three years, from Guinean refugee camps back to war-ravaged Sierra Leone. Amidst the tragedies of their incredible losses, the band triumphs by realizing the dream of recording their first studio album. *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars* reveals unique and inspiring personal stories of survival and rebirth through the universal language of music. As violent conflicts multiply around the globe and the worldwide refugee crisis deepens, this film is a humanizing tribute to all the innocent survivors of war whose brutal realities are often dismissed by surface mass media sound bytes.

True Whispers

(59 minutes) USA

Director: Valerie Red-Horse

Producers: Valerie Red-Horse and Gale Anne Hurd

Description:

True Whispers tells the moving and personal story of the World War II Navajo Code Talkers. Recruited as teenagers from harsh government and mission schools where they were forbidden to use their native language, they served as U.S. Marines and used that very language to transmit vital coded messages that were key to victory in the Pacific. The wartime contributions of these Native Americans went unrecognized for over fifty years. This documentary, uniquely positioned from their point of view, including cultural, personal and intimate moments, provides a part of the long overdue tribute they deserve. The film is narrated by noted actor William H. Macy, and features original Navajo music.

The Tsunami Generation

(52 minutes) Germany/Indonesia

Director/Producer: Folke Ryden

Description:

This is the untold story of the Aceh province in the wake of the Tsunami disaster in which 200,000 people perished and half a million became homeless. In the ensuing turmoil, the Indonesian government, religious organizations, and the GAM guerrillas all aspired to gain in some respect from the new situation with promises of rebuilding Aceh.

At the same time hundreds of NGOs descended upon the province with more donor money than ever before. Through compelling stories of remnants of families, this film is an emotional account of how the year following the tsunami came to be almost as turbulent as the tsunami itself. Aceh is an isolated, devoutly Muslim, and embattled province in northern Sumatra, Indonesia. In the mountains, the guerrilla organization GAM has been fighting the government for independence. On December 26, 2004, the killer tsunami changed everything. Having suffered through one of the worst natural disasters in living memory, remnants of families are waiting for a place to stay and a life to live. They are *The Tsunami Generation*. A generation of people with a glimpse of hope in their eyes, despite the overwhelming struggle that remains to get life back to normal.