

A Global Multi-Media Initiative: Conversations About Democracy

- Broadcast in over 200 countries and territories worldwide.
- An international audience of more than 300 million viewers.
- 10 Films from independent award-winning filmmakers in China, India, Japan, Pakistan, Liberia, Egypt, Denmark, Russia, Bolivia and the USA.
- Simultaneous global broadcast in October 2007, to generate a contemporary conversation across borders, regions and continents.
- MySpace.com as a major partner – first ever online MySpace.com documentary premiere. Internet partners to support outreach, such as One World TV and Radio.
- 20 Short Films from young filmmakers around the world on democracy-related issues. Viewing through the project website.
- Regional Discussions through organizations concerned with democracy, human rights and civil society.
- National Forums through local TV, radio and print media, interviews with prominent social thinkers and actors, theme weeks at schools.
- '10 Questions About Democracy' print and TV interviews with prominent leaders and world figures.
- www.whydemocracy.net - a unique website run by young people from around the world all based in one house in Cape Town, the Why Democracy? House
- Online democracy debate - <http://whydemocracy.net/forum/>

**“What would make me start a revolution?
The possibility that it might succeed.”**

Margaret Atwood

**“Who rules the world? That would have
to be money!”**

Pelé

**Are women more democratic than men?
“It’s a great force, the woman.”**

Marie-Thérèse Nlandu

Can terrorism destroy democracy?

**“I think the idea of fighting terrorism
can destroy democracy”**

Moazzam Begg - ex-Guantanamo Bay detainee

**“President of the World? It’s easy to say
Nelson Mandela - he comes out of a situation
where his scars give him stars.”**

Rev. Jesse Jackson



Why Democracy?



...the largest factual broadcast event

Why Democracy? is the world's largest ever factual multi-media event. On television, radio and online in more than 200 countries and territories, with a potential audience of over 300 million people, we'll be sparking a debate which will really get the world talking.

At the heart of the season are 10 documentaries made by prestigious filmmakers from across the planet. With subjects ranging from US torture methods to the election of a class monitor in a Chinese primary school, from Che Guevara to the Danish cartoons scandal - the films take a wide-ranging and in-depth look at the world we live in today. The films will start to transmit to an audience of up to 300 million people on the 8th of October.

In addition we are creating 20 short films, dealing with personal, political and rights issues around the theme "what does democracy mean to me"?

Each of the more than forty broadcasters - an A-Z that includes everyone from Al Arabiya to ZDF - will be producing locally based seasons of film, radio, debate and discussion to tie-in with the series. These include the BBC World Service Radio and BBC World, the SABC African satellite channel and the Brazilian education channel Canal Futura.

But our ambitions have extended well beyond the broadcast media. In a groundbreaking collaboration, we have teamed up with Metro Newspapers worldwide to ask national leaders, celebrities and everyday people to answer 10 questions about democracy. Their answers will appear online, in the press and in a series of short films. The same questions will be part of a global opinion poll.

Yet, it's on the web that people from all over the planet can really join in. An unprecedented global film premiere on MySpace.com will launch the online debate. Then there is www.whydemocracy.net with discussion forums, chat rooms and wikis buzzing, interviews with democracy heroes, a huge collection of educational web resources and even a 'Why Democracy? House' - where young people from all over the world will keep the enormous web effort going.

All in all it's a staggering prospect. In the following pages you'll learn more about every aspect of this colossal venture. After three years in the making, it all starts on October 8th. Wherever you are in the world, join in!

10 Films

Documentaries have an unrivalled power to use human stories to make us think about much broader issues. The ten films at the centre of **Why Democracy?** do just that, with filmmakers across the world taking us into the heart of their countries to explore the complex questions of modern democracy.

Weijun Chen's comic but profound ***Please Vote for Me*** charts the election of the class monitor in a Chinese school, a rare example of democracy in action in China. At first all goes well, but soon the manipulation and dirty tricks start and we wonder whether democracy could ever exist without them.

In ***Looking for the Revolution*** Rodrigo Vazquez travels to Bolivia to see whether the idea of a revolution started by Che Guevara 40 years ago is still alive today. Evo Morales seems to be trying to keep revolution on the agenda, but the characters in the film wonder whether it can ever actually happen.

Taxi to the Dark Side tells the story of Dilawar, a young Afghani taxi driver arrested and tortured to death by US forces in Bagram. Oscar nominated director Alex Gibney provides a forensic account of how such abuses became possible, and traces the blame firmly to the door of the US White House.

Mahatma Gandhi's methods changed a country, and ***In Search of Gandhi*** follows the route of his famous salt march to see whether they can survive in a modern society. Can industrialized India still live according to ideals of non-violence and equality? Lalit Vachani's haunting film suggests not.

Next door to India's sixty-year-old democracy, President Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan is still very much a dictatorship. ***Dinner with the President*** sees director Sabiha Sumar discuss Musharraf's rule with him (and his mother) over dinner. She then goes on the road around Pakistan to see whether his nation agrees with him.

Dictatorship of a rather different kind is evident in Dukovo, the 'Village of Fools' in Russia where Mikhail Morozov has created a community that follows his every word. His ideals are ***For God, Tsar and Fatherland*** – his community harks back to the days before Perestroika, the director Nino Kirtadze spent months seeing whether it could work.

At the other end of the spectrum, Liberia is reveling in a rejuvenated democracy, led by the indomitable Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Daniel Junge and co-director Siatta Scott-Johnson spent a year with President Sirleaf as she and her coterie of ***Iron Ladies of Liberia*** battle to rebuild a shattered country. After an hour in her company, you believe that if anyone can do it, she can.

Democracy is nothing without fair elections, and Egypt's record of controlling votes is universally criticized. Rather than just complain, the three women who founded Shayfeen.com (***Egypt: We Are Watching You***) started to do something about it. Leila Menjou followed them as they risked life and livelihood for democracy.

Life and livelihood were heavily at stake when a small Danish newspaper chose to print a selection of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammed. Karsten Kjaer takes us through the events that followed, and travels the world to question the protesters and explore their motivations. Could a few ***Bloody Cartoons*** have affected the future of free speech?

Of course democracy is no good at all if you don't have the right people to elect. ***Campaign! The Kawasaki Candidate*** suggests that sometimes anyone can make it into positions of power. Kazuhiro Soda went on the campaign trail with a candidate critically short on knowledge, skills or charisma. When he fails to even turn up at the count, you truly begin to wonder – Why Democracy?

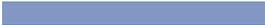


10 films/10 questions

Each of the films prompts a question (which appears at the beginning of the film). These ten questions permeate the Why Democracy? season. Together with Metro newspapers, we'll be interviewing world leaders, celebrities, intellectuals and everyday people to find out what their answers are. Their responses will appear daily in Metro, form 10 short films, and be available on the web. Previews available at www.whymetro.net

-  *Please Vote for Me*
-  *Looking for the Revolution*
-  *Taxi to the Dark Side*
-  *Iron Ladies of Liberia*
-  *Dinner with the President*
-  *For God, Tsar and Fatherland*
-  *Bloody Cartoons*
-  *Egypt: We are Watching You*
-  *In Search of Gandhi*
-  *Campaign! The Kawasaki Candidate*



- Who would you vote for as president of the world?* 
- What would make you start a revolution?* 
- Can terrorism destroy democracy?* 
- Are women more democratic than men?* 
- Are dictators ever good?* 
- Who rules the world?* 
- Is God democratic?* 
- Why bother to vote?* 
- Is democracy good for everyone?* 
- Can politicians solve climate change?* 

Please Vote for Me

Director: Weijun Chen; China 2007



Who would you vote for as president of the world?



SYNOPSIS: Wuhan is a city in central China about the size of London, and it is here that director Weijun Chen has conducted an experiment in democracy. A grade 3 class at Evergreen Primary School has their first encounter with democracy by holding an election to select a Class Monitor. Eight-year-olds compete against each other for the coveted position,

abetted and egged on by teachers and doting parents. Elections in China take place only within the Communist Party, but recently millions of Chinese voted in their version of Pop Idol. The purpose of Weijun Chen's experiment is to determine how, if democracy came to China, it would be received. Is democracy a universal value that fits human nature? Do elections inevitably lead to manipulation? *Please Vote for Me* is a portrait of a society through a school, its children and its families.



Director's Biography

WEIJUN CHEN is a documentary director and producer living in Wuhan, China. After graduating in Journalism from the Sichuan University in 1992 he joined the documentary production department of the Wuhan regional TV station. His first film *My Life Is My Philosophy* was nominated for the best documentary of the year by the Chinese National Association of Broadcasters. In 2003 he completed *To Live Is Better Than To Die*, which was awarded a Peabody and Grierson award, as well as the Rodf Vrfba Award from the One World Festival. *Please Vote For Me* won the Sterling Feature Award at the Silverdocs Documentary Festival (2007).



Looking for the Revolution

Director: Rodrigo Vazquez; Bolivia 2007



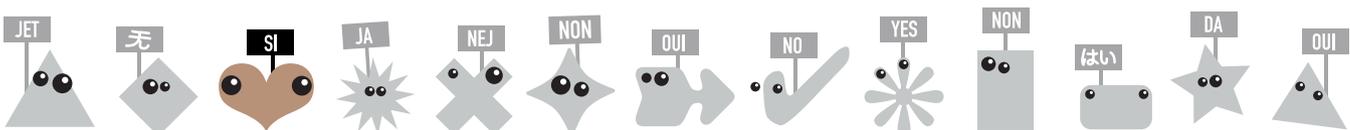
What would make you start a revolution?

SYNOPSIS: Che Guevara died in southern Bolivia 40 years ago while trying to ignite the sparks of revolution throughout South America. His death at the hands of Bolivian Rangers, trained and financed by the US Government, marked the beginning of the cocaine era in Bolivia. Pressed by the masses who gave him a massive mandate the first indigenous president, ex-coca leaf farmer Evo Morales, has nationalised the oil industry and passed laws on agrarian reform. All the election speeches, which resulted in his landslide victory, sounded quite revolutionary, as did the iconography. But a closer look reveals that the old system is pretty much alive inside the new one. Corruption, nepotism and old-fashioned populism are at the core of this movement. The more Evo does to create employment, the more the landowners conspire against him and paralyse Bolivia's economy. As a result, no jobs are created and the poor press Evo even harder. Thus a cycle of tension threatens to crush the country and the indigenous revolution as well. **Looking for the Revolution** is about the inner workings of that tension as witnessed by the characters of the film. The landowners and the indigenous movement are still wrestling for power and neither has claimed victory yet. Ultimately, the search for the revolution that Che Guevara tried to start in Bolivia is now in Morales' hands.



Director's Biography

RODRIGO VAZQUEZ has trained at the National Film and Television School in the UK where he qualified in both Director and Camera in Documentary Studies. He has also obtained a BA degree in Film Direction and Theory from the Universidad del Cine in Argentina and holds a Film Production Diploma from Argentina's National Film School. As a director and cameraman, Rodrigo has completed numerous feature films and documentaries including *Condor: The Axis of Evil* (2003) which had its world premier at the Cannes Film Festival. He has also directed documentaries for the UK's Channel 4 including five for the channel's acclaimed Unreported World Foreign Affairs series.



Taxi to the Dark Side

Director: Alex Gibney; USA 2007



Can terrorism destroy democracy?

SYNOPSIS: Over one hundred prisoners have died in suspicious circumstances in U.S. custody during the war on terror. *Taxi to the Dark Side* takes an in-depth look at one case: an Afghan taxi driver called Dilawar, who was considered an honest and kind man by the people of his rustic village. So when he was detained by the U.S. military one afternoon, after picking up three passengers, denizens wondered why this man was randomly chosen to be held in prison, and, especially, without trial? Five days after his arrest Dilawar died in his Bagram prison cell. His death came within a week of the death of another detainee at Bagram. The conclusion, with autopsy evidence, was that the former taxi driver and the detainee who passed away before him, had died due to sustained injuries inflicted at the prison by U.S. soldiers. The documentary, by award-winning producer Alex Gibney, carefully develops the last weeks of Dilawar's life and shows how decisions taken at the pinnacle of power in the Bush Administration led directly to Dilawar's brutal death. The film documents how Rumsfeld, together with the White House legal team, were able to convince Congress to approve the use of torture against prisoners of war. *Taxi to the Dark Side* is the definitive exploration of the introduction of torture as an interrogation technique in U.S. facilities, and the role played by key figures of the Bush Administration in the process.



Director's Biography

ALEX GIBNEY is the writer, producer and director of the 2006 Oscar-nominated film *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, which also received the Independent Spirit Award and the WGA Award. A graduate of Yale University (B.A.), Gibney also attended the UCLA Graduate School of Film and Television. In 2003, Gibney served as the Series Producer for *The Blues*, an Emmy-nominated series of seven films in association with executive producer Martin Scorsese. In 2004 Gibney produced *Lightning in a Bottle*, a film directed by Antoine Fuqua, which premiered in 2004 at the Berlin Film Festival and which was released by Sony Classics. *Taxi to the Dark Side* won the Best Documentary Award at the Tribeca Film Festival (2007).



Iron Ladies of Liberia

Director: D Junge; Co-Director: S Scott Johnson; Liberia 2007



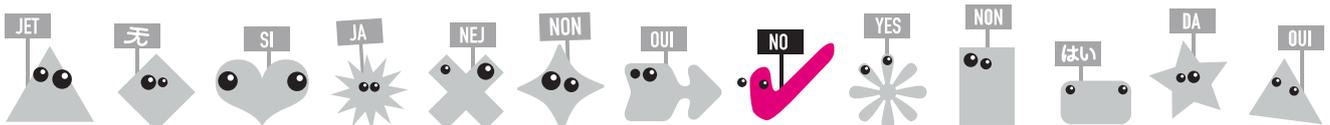
Are women more democratic than men?

SYNOPSIS: After fourteen years of civil war, Liberia is a nation ready for change. On January 16, 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated president. She is the first ever elected female Head of State in Africa, winning a hotly contested election with the overwhelming support of women across Liberia. Since taking office she has appointed other extraordinary women to leadership positions in all areas of government, including the police chief and the ministers of justice, commerce and finance. Can the first female Liberian president, backed by other powerful women, bring sustainable democracy and peace to such a devastated country? *Iron Ladies of Liberia* gives the viewer a behind-the-scenes access to Sirleaf's first year in government, providing a unique insight into a newly elected African cabinet.



Directors' Biographies

DANIEL JUNGE was named by Filmmaker magazine as one of 25 up-and-coming filmmakers in 2003. Junge had his feature-length directorial debut with *Chiefs*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the award for Best Documentary, and subsequently received national airing on PBS. He also won four regional Emmys for *Common Good* (2005), a six-part series on social entrepreneurs. Co-Director **SIATTA SCOTT-JOHNSON** was born in Buchanan, Liberia, 1974, and raised in rural Grand Bassa County. She has five years of experience as a reporter and producer at DCTV, one of Liberia's few broadcast television stations, and is a founding member of Omuahtee Africa Media.



Dinner with the President

Director: Sabiha Sumar; Co-Director: Sachithanandam Sathananthan; Country: Pakistan 2007



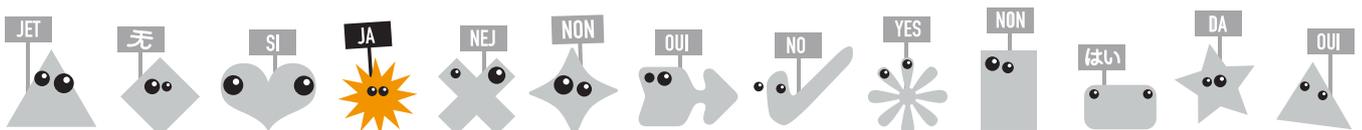
Are dictators ever good?

SYNOPSIS: What are the implications for democracy in Pakistan when secular political parties have succumbed to the Islamic agenda? What does it mean when the army appears to be the only force able to contain the opponents of democracy, the armed Islamists? President Musharraf agrees to explore this apparent contradiction over dinner at his official residence - the Army House. As the discussion moves in and out of the different worlds in Pakistan, a complex tapestry emerges, revealing a society unique yet universal. The filmmaker talks to diverse individuals, from labourers to intellectuals, from street vendors to religious right wing political party members, and from journalists to industrialists. What is their idea of democracy in Pakistan? What is their idea of President Musharraf's vision of a modern Pakistan? ***Dinner With the President*** questions the role a military leader can play in guiding a state towards modern democracy.



Directors' Biographies

Born in Karachi, **SABIHA SUMAR** studied Filmmaking and Political Science at Sarah Lawrence College in New York and then read History and Political Thought at the University of Cambridge. *Who Will Cast the First Stone* (1988) was her first film (for Channel Four Television, UK). It won the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival and was also screened at In Visible Colors, Vancouver. She has gone on to direct many other films including *Khamosh Pani* (Silent Waters 2003), a feature film which received the Silver Grand Balloon for Second Best Film at the 3 Continents Festival, France, and the Golden Leopard for Best Film at the Locarno International Film Festival. In 2003 she also documented her personal journey through the Islamisation process in Pakistan in *Hawa Kay Naam* (For a Place Under the Heavens). Both these films were produced by co-director **SACHITHANANDAM SATHANANTHAN**, who holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, UK, and has produced *Where Peacocks Dance* (1992), *Of Mothers, Mice And Saints* (1994), and *Suicide Warriors* (1996).



For God, Tsar and Fatherland

Director: Nino Kirtadze: Russia 2007



Who rules the world?

SYNOPSIS: Mikhail Morozov is a Russian patriot, good Christian and successful businessman. He owns Durakovo - the "Village of Fools" - 100 km southwest of Moscow. People come here from all over Russia to learn how to live and become true Russians. When they join the Village of Fools, the new residents abandon all their former rights and agree to obey Mikhail Morozov's strict rules. "What

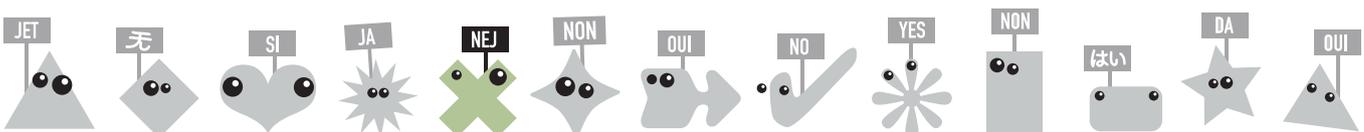


we have here is a society that respects the vertical of power, this is what our country needs most of all," says Morozov quoting his idol, President Vladimir Putin. The whole spectrum of state power - political, spiritual and administrative - gathers in the village for semi-private meetings with Morozov. They discuss the future of Russia, their ambitions and their goals. **For God, Tsar and Fatherland** shows what drives Russian patriotism today and why they are against democracy.



Director's Biography

NINO KIRTADZE holds a degree in Literature. She has worked as a consultant to the President of the Republic of Georgia and as a journalist covering the war in Chechnya, and other armed conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. She made her first documentary *Les Trois Vies d'Edouard Chevardnadze* (The Three Lives of Eduard Shevardnadze), which showed at the Toronto Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival and the Biarritz FIPA International Festival of Television Programmes. In 2005, she made *Un dragon dans les eaux pures du Caucase* (The Pipeline Next Door), which was awarded the Best Documentary Award by the European Film Academy.



Bloody Cartoons

Director: Karsten Kjaer; Denmark 2007



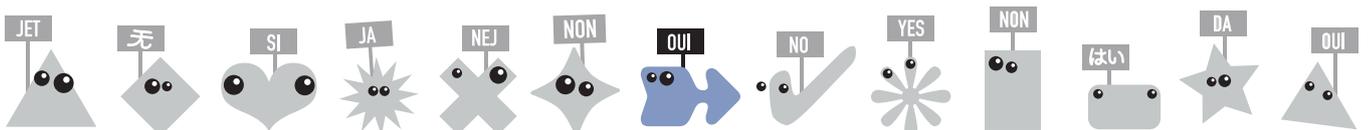
Is God democratic?

SYNOPSIS: What do Danish cartoons tell us about contemporary democracy? A lot it seems. Freedom of expression has always been a core principle of democracy. Imagining one without the other is unthinkable to most people. But what happens when one democratic right infringes on the rights of others? Since the furore of the Danish cartoons it is clear that not everyone agrees with the idea of limitless freedom. The director films in Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Qatar, France, Turkey and Denmark, talking to some of the people that played key roles during the cartoon crisis. **Bloody Cartoons** is a documentary about how and why 12 drawings in a Danish provincial paper could whirl a small country into a confrontation with Muslims all over the world. He asks whether respect for Islam combined with the heated response to the cartoons is now leading us towards self-censorship. How tolerant should we be, he wonders, of the intolerant? And what limits should there be, if any, to freedom of speech in a democracy?



Director's Biography

KARSTEN KJAER is a Journalist, Director and Producer who worked as a foreign correspondent for World Media before turning to television. He has produced more than 200 programmes for Danish and European television as well as numerous specials on world affairs, especially in the Middle East. Karsten is the founder and owner of the independent production company Freeport Film in Copenhagen. He is best known for his use of satire, humour and extraordinary methods in the coverage of sensitive political and cultural issues.



Egypt: We are Watching You

Director: Leila Menjou and Sherief Elkatsha; Egypt 2007



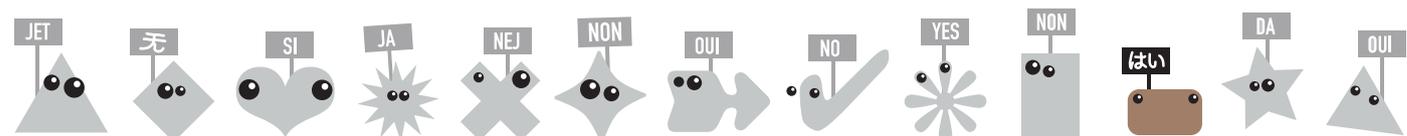
Why bother to vote?

SYNOPSIS: In his 2005 State of the Union address President George W. Bush cites Egypt as the country that will pave the way for democracy in the Middle East. Three women, unable to sit by while their country is on the brink of drastic change, start a grassroots movement to educate and empower the public by raising awareness about the meaning of democracy. They name their campaign *Shayfeen.com*, which means to “we are watching you.” This film follows the highs and lows of the first year of their movement in Egypt. Insisting that only the people can make change happen, their goal is to educate the Egyptian public on what it takes to build the most basic pillars of democracy: demanding basic human rights, freedom of speech and the establishment of an independent judiciary. ***Egypt: We are Watching You*** shows the role ordinary citizens can play in shaping and securing their democracy.



Directors' Biographies

SHERIEF ELKATSHA was born in the USA, but raised in Cairo, Egypt. Graduate of Boston University, with a BA in Film Production, he has worked on numerous television productions, from music videos with Wyclef Jean and The Roots, to Comedy Central shows, such as *The Dave Chapelle Show*, to Discovery Channel's *Eco-Challenge*. His documentary *Butts Out*, which follows smokers and their difficult and comical struggles to quit, won the Best Documentary Award at the 2006 New England Film and Video Festival. In 2006 he was selected to attend the Berlinale Talent Campus. Born in Cairo, **LEILA MENJOU**, has a degree in directing from the Cairo Film School. Leila Menjou has worked on many movies, amongst others the acclaimed *Mothers of the Desert*, which opened at IDFA and won 1st prize at the Timbuktu Film Festival.



In Search of Gandhi

Director: Lalit Vachani; India 2007



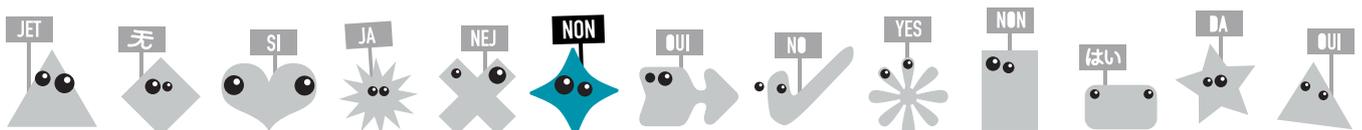
Is Democracy good for everyone?

SYNOPSIS: In the early decades of the twentieth century Mahatma Gandhi's legacy of non-violent revolution or *Satyagraha* inspired a mass movement of millions of Indians to rise up against the British colonial state and successfully agitate for the establishment of a democratic and free India. In 2007, the country is preparing to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of its existence as an independent nation. But what kind of a democracy does India have today? What does it actually mean to live in the world's largest democracy? In road-movie style the film crew travels down the famous trail of Gandhi's salt march, the remarkable mass campaign that galvanized ordinary Indians to join the non-violent struggle for democracy and freedom almost a century ago. Stopping at the same villages and cities where Gandhi and his followers had raised their call for independence, the film documents the stories of ordinary citizens in India today. Although inspired by a historical event *In Search of Gandhi* is not a journey back in time. Instead it is a search for the present and future of democracy in India.



Director's Biography

LALIT VACHANI is director of the New Delhi based Wide Eye Film. He studied at St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, and at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, USA. His previous documentary films have been on the star-system and the social worlds within the Bollywood film industry (*The Academy*, 1995; *The Starmaker*, 1997) and on the indoctrination, ideology and the politics of Hindutva propagated by the Hindu fundamentalist organization, the RSS (*The Boy in the Branch*, 1993; *The Men in the Tree*, 2002). His most recent work is *The Play Goes On* (2005), a documentary about JANAM, a socialist street theatre group in India.



Campaign! The Kawasaki Candidate

Director: Kazuhiro Soda; Japan 2007



Can politicians solve climate change?



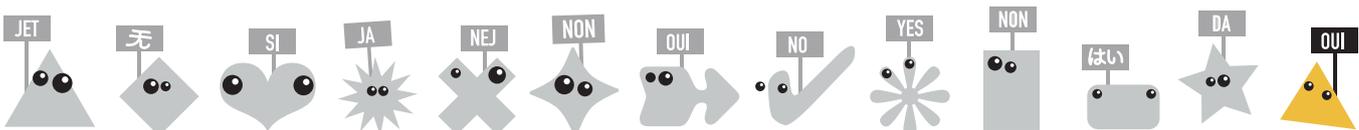
SYNOPSIS: Can a candidate with no political experience and no charisma win an election when the political giant Prime Minister Koizumi and his Liberal Democratic Party back him? In the fall of 2005, 40-year-old, self-employed Kazuhiko “Yama-san” Yamauchi’s peaceful, humdrum life was turned upside-down. Koizumi’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chose him at the last moment as their official candidate to run for a vacant seat on the Kawasaki City Council. Yama-san had zero experience in politics, no charisma, no supporters, no constituency, and one week to prepare for the impending election. The election was critical for the LDP: Yama-san’s loss would automatically oust the LDP from its position as the dominant political party on the council. Adhering to the campaign tactic of “bowing to everybody, even to telephone poles,” Yama-san visits local festivals, senior gatherings, commuter train stations, and even bus stops to offer his hand to every one he sees. Can Yama-san win this heated race? In *Campaign! The Kawasaki Candidate*, canvassing for a single seat in the city council becomes a microcosm of Japanese democracy.

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Director’s Biography

KAZUHIRO SODA was born and raised in Japan and has lived in New York since 1993. He holds a BFA in Filmmaking from the School of Visual Arts and a BA in Religious Studies from Tokyo University. While he was still a student, his short fiction film *The Flicker* (1997) competed for a Silver Lion Award at the Venice International Film Festival in Italy, and *Landscape Without Mother* (NHK) won a Telly Award in 2001. He has directed numerous fiction films and TV documentaries, but *Campaign! The Kawasaki Candidate* is his first feature documentary.



Why Democracy? House & whydemocracy.net

Seven young and dynamic people from around the world, from Brazil to China, from Nigeria to Finland, live and work together, creating and managing the online platform for the global debate on democracy. Enter the Why Democracy? House online and you can join in polls, comment in forums, add your own films and blogs about democracy, watch exclusive online footage, and even follow the daily activities of the real house in Cape Town.

It all happens on whydemocracy.net. Choose to read about it - go left for details about the films, filmmakers and transmissions. Or go right and enter the exciting world of the Why Democracy? House, an interactive space to think about **Why Democracy?** and respond.

Visitors can learn about the background to our documentaries, watch everyone from Pelé's to Margaret Atwood's answers the 10 questions and vote for the President of the World (though they may not then take power).

Besides running the site, the Why Democracy? House is organising University screenings and debates, running online short-film and photo competitions and putting the audience in touch with the film directors and other influential figures.

whydemocracy.net is new and experimental, interactive and fresh, and filled with information. It's really a democracy in action.



Why Democracy? Online

Home of a global debate, Why Democracy? has a wide-ranging presence online. In addition to our unique homepage, we have an unprecedented collaboration with **MySpace**, who will give their first ever global premiere of a documentary to launch the season, **YouTube** is hosting a wealth of additional film material, we've even joined the **Facebook** revolution, **Joost** will be screening our films, and there's more to come.

Our presence on MySpace, which has over 180 million users worldwide, provides another platform for debate and discussion. Launched with the online premiere of **Please Vote for Me**, the MySpace pages will host clips from each of the films, as well as versions of the short films and the 10 Questions about Democracy.



THE SHORT FILMS (5 to 12 minutes)

RUNNING ALONGSIDE THE TEN DOCUMENTARIES, AND INTEGRAL TO THE OUTREACH COMPONENT OF **WHY DEMOCRACY?**, IS A SERIES OF SHORT FILMS MADE BY EMERGING FILMMAKERS ACROSS THE PLANET. SHORT, INNOVATIVE AND SHARP, THEY TAKE A SIDEWAYS LOOK AT OUR WORLD. WHETHER IT'S THE LAST SHAMAN CASTING HIS VOTE IN SIBERIA, OR AN INTERNET CAMPAIGN BRINGING ABOUT JUSTICE IN KINSHASA – THEY'RE BOUND TO GET YOU THINKING.

SPAIN - Virginia Perez

A beauty contest to find the most democratic country in the world is defeated when the jury is forced to choose a man with a gun.

PAKISTAN - Petr Lom

A New York taxi driver who wins the lottery returns to his native Pakistani town to buy his way into winning the mayoral elections.

IRAN - Sadaf Forough

Equal rights for women in Iran mean that the first female bus driver can only drive a bus when women are on board.

RUSSIA - Ivan Golovnev

The last Shaman of the Kazym River in NW Siberia votes in each election. This has not helped to stop the destruction of his culture through massive oil extraction.

CROATIA - Vanja Juranic

The changing political structure of SE Europe ignores the opposition of one individual.

UK - Avril Evans

On the underground a Muslim woman whispers 'Allah Akhbar' when she sees a possible future with an attractive young man.

INDIA - Kanu Behl

An elephant ridden down Parliament Street represents different experiences to three blind men, as does their experience with democracy.

ITALY - Zoe D'Amaro

The pirate TV station Orfeo challenges all we have come to take for granted about television.

CUBA - Diego Arrendondo

Young boys practice real democracy while sorting out conflicts during a baseball game.

CONGO - Teboho Edkins

An Internet campaign helps in the release of a presidential candidate jailed for treason in Kinshasa for talking openly about the lack of democracy.

ZIMBABWE - Tarai Sevenzo

A filmmaker finds himself in the midst of an economic and political meltdown, and attempts to document the absence of democracy in spite of state harassment.

SOUTH AFRICA - Lucille Blackenberg

In South Africa everything has changed but one thing has stayed the same - the evening Afrikaans newsreader has been on screen from the start of television in 1976 when students rebelled, through the states of emergency and then the dawn of the new South Africa – what does he feel now looking back, did he and does he believe the news he reads?

KENYA - Judy Kibinge

A girl comes of age telling of the quirky optimism that came with independence from colonialism, then the dark days as an adolescence under dictatorship and now the new promise of multi-party democracy.



MEXICO - Hanne Jiménez

School children in Oaxaca give their views about democracy during a six-month strike by teachers that had closed their schools.

MEXICO - Bruno Madariaga

A traditional market loses space to a new housing project, but not without resistance.

INDIA - Kavita Joshi

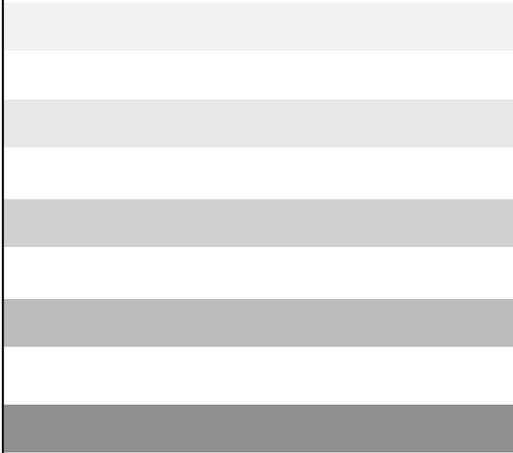
A woman in northeast India will fast unto death for human rights unless the special powers given to the Indian Army in her state are revoked.

INDIA - Deepa Bhatia

P. Sainath, a journalist and sharp voice from India speaks in three short films about the western concept of democracy, development, and media.

NEPAL - Kesang Tseten

As Maoists enter formal politics in Nepal - the 'last Hindu kingdom' - democracy becomes a kaleidoscope from Buddhism to Maoism.



Why Democracy? Why Now?

We commissioned these films because the question of democracy seemed to us to be the single most important political issue of our time. We, and our filmmakers, have a lot to say about democracy, but don't think of what we present here as a single, linear argument. Look for variety and inconsistency, enjoy incompleteness. In a true state of democracy, everyman is a philosopher. Our films begin with questions. Not all of these are answered, and they most often lead to more questions. This is a feature, like it or not, of the practice of democracy.

And think of the beginning of this century. Democracy appears to hold sway – outside China and North Korea, more than lip service is paid to the way in which people must be allowed to choose their governments, and govern themselves. Wars are fought, and democracy is established afterwards. Problems as diverse as the heating of the planet and the avoidance of famine are presented as having to do with individual rights – we assume that democracy will get us out of any jam. Faintly, the concept of global citizenship exists – reflected in a renewed interest (among the young, most of all) in the international rule of law, the idea that the planet is ours to ruin or save, and that what happens depends on the wishes and actions of all of us. In that sense, the world of our new century, however imperfectly, can be said to be 'democratic.'

But it's more complicated, isn't it? We applaud the arrival of democracy in places where it didn't exist. Yes, it's good to see a real elected government after so many years of civil war, as is recorded in our film from Liberia featuring our heroines led by Ms. Johnson Sirleaf. It would be foolish not to acknowledge so many victories, often against the odds. But we can also reflect on places where the 'transition' has been difficult, or where, perhaps, it hasn't happened at all. The burden of our film from Egypt is this: good people struggle for democracy, but the outcome is uncertain.

And what are we to make of the contradictory signals from Europe, in which cynicism directed towards politicians – now at levels never seen before in some countries, such as Britain – goes with the highest rates of voter participation. This may simply mean that people love the idea of democracy, while remaining disappointed by its practitioners. Or it may reflect the way in which democracy itself can be differently read, depending on the citizen's mood – as a civic religion and then as an item of convenience. Well, which is it? Something of an answer may be supplied in our wry, ironical film about the tribulations of a Japanese Mr. Bean as he runs for office. The same themes recur in a European film about the fate of the Danish cartoons depicting Muhammad. There were those, our film reveals, who thought



that free speech was no more than a consumer option – something to be jettisoned as soon as it appeared dangerous. But there are true believers on both sides. Is there really any middle ground here?

From the USA and Russia come two contrasting warnings. In an age of fear it's easy to undo the stitching of the rule of law. This is what has occurred in post-9/11 America. In Russia no stitching was ever completed. There are old hatreds newly expressed. A hatred of democracy – its messiness, its irredeemable foreignness, the lack of security it offers in a period of violent change – stalks the land. Here are its exponents. In Pakistan we visit, through the eyes of a young filmmaker, the twilight between authoritarian rule and democracy. Is it possible to have real democracy in places like Pakistan? But what is real democracy anyhow?

No series about contemporary democracy would be complete without its share of gurus. Gandhi inhabits our Indian film and Ché stalks the Altiplano of Bolivia, as we go in search of revolution. Nevertheless, the Bolivian government, lead by an ex-coco farmer, does not seem to deliver the promised revolution. Maybe we'll also create our own gurus - in the years to come perhaps President Sirleaf, even Musharraf, will become the icons for a new generation.

There are many books chronicling the horrifying failures of democracy in the last century, and many who say that such failures are likely to recur. Is our belief in democracy shallow? Is it therefore doomed to fail? While leaving the argument open, we tend to be optimistic. These are films designed to offer no single argument pro and con. They observe rather than analyze. We leave the philosophy to viewers. We want to start a conversation. We've approached people to make films about places from which they come, or from which they have escaped. Brilliant, mostly young filmmakers – people with a sharp eye, able to spot whatever is unusual in our troubled, strangely optimistic age.

But, of course, *Why Democracy?* is more than these ten films, it's also a media event. We work as broadcasters, and want to reach as many people as possible.

No one has ever organized the simultaneous transmission of factual television in so many countries, nor reached the hundreds of millions of viewers that we will. Then, for people to join in, there's the web – where our unique website, run democratically by young people from across the world, will host a debate that spans the globe. But above all, there'll be a chance to think about Democracy. Enjoy it.



Nick Fraser
Series Editor

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