

## Introduction

**T**HIS VOLUME presents articles that discuss the use of films, theater and other forms of communication in order to convey human rights messages. There are also articles that present the state of human rights education in the formal education system – in terms of curriculum and teaching/learning methodology.

These articles constitute an important set of varied experiences that point to the reality that human rights education initiatives exist in different countries though they may not be explicitly named as such.

### Telling the Truth

Oprah Winfrey’s speech in accepting the Cecil B DeMille Award in the 2018 Golden Globe Awards ceremonies in January 2018 drew much praise for directly speaking about the burning issues of the day in the United States of America: discrimination, sexual abuse and violence against women. Her speech dealt with the impact of telling stories; real, truthful stories. She said<sup>1</sup>

What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have. And I’m especially proud and inspired by all the women who have felt strong enough and empowered enough to speak up and share their personal stories.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), a non-profit organization that established the annual Golden Globe Awards in 1944, has donated more than “29 million [US dollars] in the past twenty years to entertainment-related charities, as well as funding scholarships and other programs for future film and television professionals.”<sup>2</sup> HFPA provides financial, fellowship and institutional grants to promote “cultural exchange and understanding through support for major programs and exhibitions that utilize film to ignite critical dialogue and promote global understanding,” among several goals.<sup>3</sup>

The Golden Globe Awards, similar to many other film awards around the world, are meant for commercial films. Very few film awards cater to non-commercial or “independent” (also “indie”) movies that deal with truths that may at times be difficult to retell (such as tragedies and human rights

violations). Such “indie” movies may present the truth in its brutal form and may inspire rage or thinking or inspiration, or relieve feelings of loss of loved ones and also feeling of powerlessness.

Commercial movies that are based on true stories likewise have the power to evoke inspiration, thinking and resolve to take action.

Oprah also spoke of the power of hope despite tragic experience in the television and film productions<sup>4</sup> she appeared in:<sup>5</sup>

I’ve interviewed and portrayed people who have withstood some of the ugliest things life can throw at you, but the one quality all of them seem to share is an ability to maintain hope for a brighter morning, even during our darkest nights. So I want all the girls watching here now to know that a new day is on the horizon.

## Documentaries

Documentaries show realities that constitute challenges to human rights education. In using such documentaries as human rights education materials, there can be questions to ponder on regarding specific situations: How do you discuss human rights with people who do not see the need to address situations that violate laws and the international human rights norms? How do you tell workers that their labor rights are not respected? How do you relate to workers who refused to stage strike for the past twenty years?

These questions arise from the 2015 documentary entitled *Dollar City*. According to Amudhan R.P., the filmmaker, the documentary is about Tirupur<sup>6</sup>

a small town in south India [that] is well known for its thousands of export oriented garment hosiery units and millions of migrant workers from both within and outside the state of Tamilnadu. Once a small village now a city, Tirupur provides a development model where the state machinery, exporters, small and big entrepreneurs, commission agents, trade unionists and workers converge at a point where export, and welfare of the industry are the priority by sidelining, marginalizing and eventually breaking the laws that protect environment and workers’ rights.

The documentary raises another significant question: Should the point of convergence mentioned by Amudhan between industry and workforce be challenged or be seen as an opportunity for dialogue on issues that disadvantage the workers?

The documentary apparently invites the audience to think of the answer to this question.

Another documentary provides insights of the members of a discriminated group in Japan on the use of performing arts to address discrimination.

This is the documentary entitled *Angry Drummers: A Taiko Group from Naniwa, Osaka, Japan* made by Yoshitaka Terada of the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan. The documentary presents the role of the “performing arts in the identity reconstruction of a minority group”<sup>7</sup> in presenting the story of Ikari, a traditional drum (*taiko*) ensemble in a place in Osaka that is known as *Burakumin* (discriminated Japanese) area. Ikari, a Japanese word, means anger, and thus Ikari as the name of the *taiko* ensemble means angry drummers. The anger springs from the long history of discrimination against the Buraku people, which continues till the present. Ikari aims to “eradicate the persistent discrimination against Buraku communities and to educate people on human rights issues through drumming.”<sup>8</sup>

A review of the documentary cites its significance in highlighting the history of *taiko* and the discrimination related to it:<sup>9</sup>

In taiko history, there is a conscious disassociation of the production of the taiko, where handling of leather is considered ‘spiritually impure’ from the performance, which is often associated with ‘purifying’ religious rituals. Ikari’s performances exposed this broken history. Ikari’s use of music and performance is not supposed to be an ‘authentic’ cultural practice. Rather, Ikari mimic the Japanese taiko in order to politicise it. When playing, they draw the audience’s attention to antiBurakumin discrimination, which was previously ignored. In this way, a nonBurakumin, Japanese instrument is reappropriated, transformed and shared with the public. Concepts such as identity, nation and culture can be locally rewritten to empower both the Burakumin community and the nonBurakumin Japanese.

Terada explains that “performing arts (such as *taiko*) can play a significant role in areas where other means (laws, economic advancement, anti-discrimination slogans) tend to fail in the struggle against discrimina-

tion, as demonstrated by Ikari's performances, which have resulted in tangible changes in the lives of both Buraku and non-Buraku people."<sup>10</sup> *Angry Drummers: A Taiko Group from Naniwa, Osaka, Japan* is a must-see documentary for people who use art in human rights education.

## Film Festivals

Considering the power of movies to affect people, a number of film festivals in Asia are designed to make specific impact on the viewing public.

In India, a "one-minute film contest titled 'National Freedom Film Festival' to commemorate India's 70 years of Independence" was held in Chennai in 2017 "to explore the challenges overcome by women or challenges that remain in front of them." Twenty short films were submitted in the competition mostly by the youth especially college students from six Indian states (Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana).<sup>11</sup> This film festival is unique for showing one-minute films on a very specific theme. The film festival organizer (Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation [HRF]) plans to hold this kind of film festival every year on different themes.

HRF sees the need to reach out to the millennials who have the<sup>12</sup>

passion, energy, opportunity and tools for social change as never before. They use social media with audacity, brevity and creativity.

The film festival is meant therefore to provide a venue for the millennials to express their views on what they see as the situation in India seventy years after independence.

The International Children's Film Festival Bangladesh, an annual film festival that started in 2008, showcases full-length features, shorts, experimental films made for and by children, including fiction animations and documentaries, from around the world. It is the biggest and also the only international film festival for children and young adults in Bangladesh.

This film festival aims to open<sup>13</sup>

a new world of movies to the children of Bangladesh and expos[e] them to a diversity of cultures and traditions from various nations through cinema. One of the primary missions of the festival is to provide the youth with a platform to showcase their

talent in media and to understand its role in bringing attention to various social issues and in learning through entertainment.

The Children's Film Society Bangladesh (CFS), a youth-led organization working for children on the issue of film, organizes the annual film festival in different venues in the country. It considered film the "most powerful media of art of the present time [that] was not being [properly] used ... as a strong tool of learning and entertainment [for children]." It thus aims to make an "impact on the entire film industry of Bangladesh by inspiring the upcoming generation of filmmakers, and offering them bigger platform to exercise and exhibit their talent."<sup>14</sup>

CFS organizes the Teen Film Workshop 2.0 during the film festival, which is an "intensive and advanced training program for the aspiring filmmakers aged between 15 and 19" and designed to "equip the teen filmmakers with relevant filmmaking skills and techniques." The workshop was started in August 2017 and produced five short films, one of them (*Amenar Golpo*) focused on gender discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

## Contents of the Current Volume

Volume eight presents three articles on film festival as means to raise awareness and action on human rights. Each of the film festivals has unique character, but there is a common ground in terms of objectives and involvement of the audience in discussing the social significance of movies and filmmaking. The articles from India, Malaysia and the Philippines provide examples of "socially-engaged film festival."

There are articles that highlight participatory methodologies in engaging the participants in the educational activities. They can be in the form of theater, field trip, community field work and competition, among others. The articles on peace and human rights education from Japan, on training for journalists and journalism students from Mongolia and India and the model Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations competition from South Korea provide examples of such participatory methodologies.

Finally, there are research reports on human rights education programs in the school system and on education against cyberspace bullying that provide important suggestions on content as well as method of teaching and learning human rights.

Indeed, these articles point to the variety of initiatives and experiences on human rights education in the Asia-Pacific region.

Editor

## Endnotes

1 Oprah Winfrey's full Golden Globes speech, ABC NEWS, 8 January 2018, <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/oprah-winfreys-full-golden-globes-speech/story?id=52209577> (accessed on 10 January 2018).

2 Hollywood Foreign Press Association [www.goldenglobes.com/hfpa](http://www.goldenglobes.com/hfpa) (accessed on 6 March 2018).

3 This grant prioritizes activities and events in the Los Angeles area, in California, [www.goldenglobes.com/grant-applications](http://www.goldenglobes.com/grant-applications) (accessed on 6 March 2018).

4 Oprah Winfrey's full Golden Globes speech, *op. cit.*

5 Oprah Winfrey acted and also produced movies that deal with racism in the U.S.A. such as the *Color Purple* (1985), *The Butler* (2013), *Selma* (2014) and *Wrinklein Time* (2018).

6 Amudhan R.P., <http://amudhanrp.blogspot.jp/2015/04/amudhan-rp-film-mograhpy.html> (accessed on 12 December 2017).

7 Yoshitaka Terada, "Angry Drummers and Buraku Identity: The Ikari Taiko Group in Osaka, Japan," in Rosemary Stelova, Angela Rodel, Lozanka Peycheva, Ivanka Vlaeva and Ventsislav Dimov, editors, *The Human World and Musical Diversity*, Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2008, page 309.

8 Terada, *ibid.*

9 Andrew Small, "Drumming out resistance in Japan: writing back Burakumin identity through music", London School of Economics and Political Science, 4 March 2015, [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/80258/1/Drumming%20out%20resistance%20in%20Japan\\_%20writing%20back%20Burakumin%20identity%20through%20music%20\\_%20LSE%20Human%20Rights.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/80258/1/Drumming%20out%20resistance%20in%20Japan_%20writing%20back%20Burakumin%20identity%20through%20music%20_%20LSE%20Human%20Rights.pdf) (accessed 20 October 2017).

10 Terada, *op. cit.*, page 314.

11 One Minute Films on Women and Freedom, <http://hrf.net.in/fff2017/> (accessed on 8 August 2017).

12 Call for film entries by the Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (HRF) on 1 May 2017, <http://hrf.net.in/2158-2/>.

13 International Children's Film Festival Bangladesh, [www.cfsbangladesh.org/festivals](http://www.cfsbangladesh.org/festivals) (accessed on 8 August 2017).

14 International Children's Film Festival Bangladesh, [www.cfsbangladesh.org/about](http://www.cfsbangladesh.org/about).

15 See a video of the film festival on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cfsbangladesh/videos/10155331721259021/](http://www.facebook.com/cfsbangladesh/videos/10155331721259021/) (accessed on 8 August 2017).