

WHY DEMOCRACY?



Welcome to the world's largest ever factual multimedia event.

OCTOBER 8th 2007 marks the start of the most ambitious factual media event in broadcast history. More than 40 broadcasters worldwide, a global web presence and an international newspaper are working together for the first time ever to debate the dominant political issue of our time. They are asking the question: **Why Democracy?**

The season will start with an unprecedented global premiere on **MySpace.com**. Then 10 documentaries from all over the world will screen simultaneously in 200 countries and territories to a potential audience of over 300 million people.

The films span the multi-faceted themes of democracy: from examining the thorny issue of US torture to a fun but telling story of the election of a class monitor in a Chinese primary school; from interviewing President Musharraf on his idea of how to rule a country, to exploring the machination behind the Danish cartoons scandal; from spending a year with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her office, to a year with Shayfeen.com, a three-women movement in Egypt raising awareness on democracy; from revisiting Gandhi's famous salt march, to looking for the revolution in Bolivia; from Russian patriots, to the comical candidate of Kawasaki.

A **global dialogue** is taking place in the unique pages of **whymocracy.net** where a group of young people from across the world are running a website for everyone to get involved. Forums, chatrooms and blogs are open to all, and users can even upload their own films. There are also world-wide polls – including 'Who would you vote for as President of the World?'

Metro Newspapers in 28 countries will be replacing the '60 Second Interview' with '10 Questions About Democracy' – with interviewees ranging from Pelé to Metallica. These will also be filmed and made into a series of short films, as well as posted online.

Join the discussion at www.whymocracy.net/house

All this, plus the wide-ranging plans of each of the broadcasters (some are even theming their quiz shows around Why Democracy?) is just the beginning. There are **20 short films** from young filmmakers across the world, public launches with the UNDP, the Bolivian Government (as well as in Paris, London, Berlin, and Cape Town) and a global outreach campaign.

Why Democracy? is driven by a group of public broadcasters including: BBC (UK), DRTV (Denmark), YLE (Finland), SABC (South Africa), SBS (Australia), Arte (France and Germany), NHK (Japan), MDR and ZDF (Germany). The event is produced by **STEPS International** - a non-profit organisation.

Other broadcasters are from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Mexico, the Middle East, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the USA.

This initiative is supported by EuroVision TV, the Danish Film Institute, the Danish Ministry of Education, Danida, the Ford Foundation, the Goethe Institute, Independent Television Service (ITVS), the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jan Vrijman Fund, VIKES Foundation, Sundance Institute, Berlinale Talent Campus, and Department of Education and Children's Services (South Australia).

This is a world first – international public broadcasters working together to explore one of the great issues of our time. On screen, in print and online, make sure you stay tuned.

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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.



The White House, of course, is keen on promoting democracy. Yet one of their key allies - President Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan - is, for a while at least, very much a dictatorship. *Dinner with the President* sees director Sabiha Sumar discuss Musharraf's rule with him (and curiously 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 Durakovo, 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, 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 Sirleaf Johnson. 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 Muhammad. 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?



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 industrialised India still live according to ideals of non-violence and equality? Lalit Vachani's haunting film suggests not.



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?*

