

## **Ellie Bernstein's Biography**

I came to documentary filmmaking later in life - as I am a trained painter and college art instructor - with years of exhibiting. My interest in directing documentaries emerged in the 1980s, after spending years working, traveling, exhibiting and teaching art in Nicaragua and Cuba.

### **Biographical Information**

I completed my first feature-length video documentary in 2001, titled "*Closing the Open Door-The Fight for a College Education.*" It is a film about the 30-year history of the Open Admissions policy at the City University of New York, the third largest university in the United States. It was featured at the annual meeting of the American Association of University Professors in July 2001, where they stated "The students discuss how the college's Open Admission's policy gave them a chance to overcome poverty."

### **Exhibition Record**

*Closing the Open Door* is being distributed by the Cinema Guild. It received funding from the; North Star Fund, Puffin Foundation, Yip Harburg Foundation, Open Meadows Foundation, DCTV Equipment Grant, City University Faculty and Student Government, private donations and the Grandmother Winifred Foundation. It has been shown on Manhattan Neighborhood Network, WXXI in Syracuse, WRPI, Troy, New York, Free Speech TV, and Tampa Educational Cable Television. It has been purchased by all of the campus libraries of CUNY and is in the Yip Harburg Political Documentary Collection of the Donnell branch of the New York City Public Library.

### **We are Still Standing-The Story of Women in Black**

Using documentary material from conferences, vigils and testimonies as well as archival footage and photos, I tell the story of the 20 years of constant struggle of the International movement of Women in Black. From its inception in Israel in 1988, when Israeli activists took to the streets to oppose the Military Occupation of Palestine and to stand in solidarity with their Palestinian sisters, the Movement has been active in women's resistance to war, militarism, fundamentalism and discrimination. To this day, women throughout the world struggle to build ties of solidarity across the confines of social, ethnic and religious boundaries.

My passion to film international Women in Black has taken me to Israel on two separate occasions –in 2003 and in 2006 – the second time, after the Israel Lebanon war, when I filmed the Women in Black of Haifa and Nazareth. I filmed the Women in Black of Belgrade and traveled with them on their fantastic bus ride to the 12th International Women in Black Conference in Italy. In Colombia, I traveled with the courageous Women in Black of the Ruta Pacifica as they made their way through dangerous roads to support the women in Choco. I also filmed the “Wheel” Women in Black in Seattle Washington, in their incredible support for homeless women and men and I have just

returned from filming the inspiring conference in Valencia. This project has received funding from the Puffin Foundation, Eastman Foundation, Eve Ensler, and others.

### **The Case against Musharef Hossain and Yassin Muhidden Aref**

I began this project in 2006 after moving to Albany and becoming a member of the Muslim Support Committee. The Muslim Support Committee is an example of the best of grass-roots activism-supporting the families both financially and emotionally; after the government has abandoned them and left them without their husbands and fathers.

As a member of the MSC and filmmaker it gave me the opportunity to intimately learn about the case, know the lawyers and the families. I began filming in January 2006 and have covered the different aspects of the trial, legal issues, constitutional issues and the continuing emotional crisis within the families, the film was completed in 2009.

### **Ghost Town-The Hebron Story**

Narrated by Martin Sheen, the film tells the story of Hebron, Palestine considered the most violent city in the Occupied Territories. Al-Jazeera Film Festival 2016.