

Forward



The children who change the world

We need children to drive the message home, to eliminate the complications that we create for ourselves as we grow older, to force us to remember that which is truly important.

Their names are Kesz, Malala, Sandra, Om, Mayra, Memory, Craig, Baruani. They did not tell themselves that they were too weak, too young or too alone to stand up against injustice, violence or the destruction of the earth. By their strength of character they invert the course of things and pull many other children along with them. These are the exemplary battles of these boys and girls, of these icons both innocent and devoid of political agenda, who came from all corners of the earth, that we are going to film, as an example and form of hope for a better world.

MICAH SLENTZ, 13 YEARS OLD
LOS ANGELES, UNITED STATES
SOLIDARITY



The future depends on what
you do now. No excuse, no limit.
And these children know it.
— Gandhi

A feature length documentary in which we are going to follow the exceptional journeys of out of the ordinary children between 5 and 12 years of age who are fighting for a cause, who defend an ideal, who work to help others, to restore equality, to defend the weak, to save the planet, who wish to abolish that which should never have existed (slavery, forced marriage, child prostitution etc...), who have created associations, raised funds, caused unjust laws to be changed, alleviated suffering, soothed tensions and questioned those in power.

Everywhere in the world, children, however small they may be, recognize injustice or dysfunction within society, either because they themselves are victims, or they have been witnesses there of and have decided to act. They themselves carry their projects with strength and conviction towards and against all, with an Awhom nothing can stop and who are an example to all, for they take such concrete actions towards a humanitarian reality of which we should become aware.

JOSÉ ADOLFO, 13 YEARS OLD
AREQUIPA, PERU
DEFENSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Our children are our eternity. — Robert Debré

AN ESSENTIAL TESTIMONY

All these children who want so save the world are together writing a letter of hope to humanity. And if the film presents only a few, there are hundreds more, thousands everywhere in the world. You children, perhaps you are one of them. We hope that this film will invite you to become one.

You adults, we hope that this film will remind you not to trample on the child closest to you, he who survives the adults that we have become, for this child whispers promises of freedom and happiness to us. He is the utopist in us who only asks to stand up.

JOCELYN, 12 YEARS OLD
POTOSI, BOLIVIA
EQUAL RIGHTS



The impact on a child world

SEVERN CULLIS-SUZUKI – HER TESTIMONY

Everyone remembers this little 12-year-old girl, who had touched the entire world with her ecological speech at the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Revolted by the progressive destruction of nature, she created a small association and travelled to Brazil in hope of making the voices of children heard by the politicians of a united world. Today, 20 years later, Severn testifies.

“The speech that I gave at that time went around the world and has since been largely broadcast through the internet. Even 20 years later, the speech of a little 12 years old girls at the UN still has an echo. During my speech, many of the delegates were crying. Even the guards were listening carefully. It is a very powerful idea, that a child, without any political influence, represents the real reason why we should be present at such an assembly at the UN: to tell the truth to those in power.

I have done many things the last 20 years of my life, but that speech remains the one thing for which I am the most known. It was the most political act that I have ever made. Today, as a parent, I think I know the reason why this speech has remained: parents love their children and most adults are parents. They will do anything for them. This reminds them of their real role, not only as politicians but as parents, a guardian of the future. It is a difficult thing to ignore. And because a child speaks, we cannot blame them for having political intentions or for trying to use them.

Today there are many child activists in the world, they are incredible. You can see how well they express themselves and are energetic. I think it is the same power of truth and honesty that you can only express with great implication.”

HEENA, 11 YEARS OLD
NEW DELHI, INDIA
EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT



If only we listened to what these children have to tell us instead of quieting them, we would learn great lessons from them. — Anonyme

GILLES DE MAISTRE, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER – HIS VISION

For more than 30 years I have travelled the world so that I may tell its story, and nothing has ever touched me more profoundly than children.

I have filmed child soldiers, child slaves, children in prison, children in streets and, the pinnacle of horror, children dying of hunger. Nothing but destroyed, mistreated, ruined and stolen childhood. I have filmed these things because I wanted to denounce this abuse and this violence. I believed therein. I wanted people to realize and stand up against such madness. The task was so great and the quest without end!

My images shocked, upset and provoked emotions and pain. But more profoundly, it never really worked. Everyone returned to their own lives and their own problems. I was the first to do so. Even if, deep within my heart, all these pleas remained open – these inscribed images and these living experiences – daily life retook its role every time.

Through my travels I slowly but surely discovered that it was hard to change the world with a camera, and almost impossible to really tell what I had seen once I had returned.

HUNTER MITCHELL, 11 YEARS OLD
JOHANNESBOURG, SOUTH AFRICA
PRESERVATION OF WILD ANIMALS



KEVIN, 14 YEARS OLD
POTOSI, BOLIVIA
EQUAL RIGHTS

Throughout all these years, however, one meeting has marked me more than anything and had planted a little seed in my mind whilst I was filming child soldiers in the Colombian guerrilla. I approached one of them, Fidel, a little boy scarcely 10 years old. To me he was “disguised” as a soldier, dressed in military camouflage too big for him, carrying a rifle and ammunition.

It was a very violent image and I asked him: “Do you believe this is the place for a small boy like yourself to be? To wage war?” And he replied with an aplomb that left me speechless, “and who are you to ask me such a question? The life of children in my country is one of misery, begging, prostitution or labour, so let me fight so that I may change my future.”

I have never stopped thinking about this child and the seed which has sprouted in my mind. The deep meaning of his words resounded in me until I understood... The heart of a child is the deepest, most authentic, loving and creating thing in itself. It is the spiritual essence beyond all external influence.

So at last today I want to seek out and highlight all these little hope – givers to the 4 corners of the earth and finally make my camera useful. I want so positive seeds in the minds of the audience and tell them that yes, these children change and save the world. Some work some in anonymity in a small village deep in Malawi, others climb to the platform of the UN, but they all have the same fervour.

They are the future.

They are their own spokesperson. I want to give them the place they deserve. And, alone with my camera, closest to them, I will be content to climb to their level to bring their message to light.’



Film treatment

8 EXEMPLARY CHILDREN

We are going to conduct a very thorough journalistic investigation throughout the world to find eight exemplary children whose battle is particularly spectacular, touching, engaged and emblematic of the essential problematic in our society.

We will follow them in their journey and will discover the difficulties bound to their age, the harshness of the road they have chosen and the courage required to carry on to the end. We will evoke the strength, fervour and sincerity of their engagement.

Are they going to succeed? How? What are their ideas? We will share their success but also their failure with as much emotion and involvement as we have invested in their daily lives throughout one year. We will follow them, camera in hand, in their battles but also in their daily lives. Day after day, we will create a complicity between them and the audience so as to share their passion and the strength of their young experience. The director will be alone with them, which will create an exceptional intimacy with our heroes and will involve us as much in their battles which, by consequence, will inevitably become ours as well.

Finally, in the narration of the film, these stories will be interwoven, the idea being to create a great chain of solidarity, a type of virtuous circle, where children of a better world answer each other. The film will be without commentary, only the children's voices will have their place. A sincere dialogue will settle itself in. The children will present themselves and we will film their reactions on the spot.

This film will be a year of the militant children of a better world.

PETER, 10 YEARS OLD
POTOSI, BOLIVIA
EQUAL RIGHTS



I believe that we should start learning from children, I want to give voice to children.

ADORA SVITAK'S TED, 12 YEARS OLD

'For children, to be treated as "toddlers" is not unusual. Every time they make an irrational demand or behave themselves in an irresponsible way, they are treated as "toddlers".

But let us have a look at these events: Imperialism and colonisation, world wars and dictato rships. Ask yourselves whose fault is this? The fault of adults... Now, what have children done?

Anne Frank touched millions of people with her powerful account of the holocaust. Ruby Bridges helped to put an end to segregation in the United States. At the age of 15, Claudette Colvin refused to stand up to give her seat to a white man. Charlie Simpson raised \$120 000 for Haiti on his little bike.

Who can say that certain types of irrational thought is not exactly what the world needs? Perhaps you have already had grandiose ideas but you stopped yourself, thinking that it will be impossible or that it will be too expensive or that it will not mean anything? For better or worse, children are not so embarrassed when they think of reasons not to do something. How many of us still have dreams and believe that they are possible?

Sometimes, the knowledge of history, failures and passed utopic ideas could be a burden. But children still dream of perfection and it is a good thing for, to make something real, one first has to dream it. In many ways, the audacity of their imagination helps to push the limits of that which is possible.'



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