

Unheard Voices for Peace
submitted by: Michael Shum

After winning this year's Nobel Peace Prize, Muhammed Yunus challenged "the world to look at the connection between peace and poverty". He described poverty as a source of conflict and the absence of peace. Poverty persists because the voices of those vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, natural disasters and war are not being heard. Some of these voices have been heard through the crashes of planes flying into buildings. People in power need to see that disregarding the marginalized has led to human consequences. More importantly, they must realize that peaceful action can have human solutions. Relieving the poverty of voice can be the first step to peace through strategies of empathy. Therefore, I am proposing to use \$10,000 to make documentary film an active method in lobbying issues for the relief of poverty and spreading awareness about these issues to the masses.

My drive to capture important voices first took shape with a grant to make my first documentary on poverty in the inner city of Chicago during the summer of 2005. Later that fall, showing the film on campus affected students in a way that empowered them to reevaluate their conceptions of poverty and even act on these feelings. The more people I showed the documentary to, the more people were volunteering at the on-campus community kitchen. By the end of the spring of 2006, I produced a documentary on economic development in Tanzania. The film's effect translated into numerous donations of books I collected for my host mother's school in a Tanzanian village. I now see film's ability to not only draw emotion from the viewer, but also empower people to think and act peacefully on important issues. I wish to explore this aspect of film's potential by making documentaries as a way of mediating between the suffering and those who can change that suffering.

Citizens for Global Solutions is an advocacy group that lobbies to politicians on issues ranging from water safety to nuclear proliferation. The director of communications

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has agreed to work with me to incorporate documentary film into their lobbying strategies. Due to the unpredictability of politics we decided that the filmmaking would be based on poverty as the broad concept as a way of addressing multiple issues. Filmmaking would begin in Colorado Springs, CO, focusing on working poor poverty and education. Issues surrounding domestic poverty will be discussed with the help of America's Family Inc. This is an organization that is working to provide access to a number of vital services for families who struggle at their current level of employment. Later, filmmaking would take place in Uromi, Nigeria, covering health and disease. I would be working with the Mercy Foundation to distribute medical aid to multiple villages from Lagos to Abuja. By the time these projects begin, I will have already collected footage with a Colorado College Sociology class studying the effects of development and underdevelopment in Sierra Leone. The details of film production will be determined by the current political atmosphere and input from Citizens for Global Solutions. The aim of these films is to spread awareness about those in need who are normally ignored.

Awareness will not only spread through documentary film's role in lobbying to politicians but also through the internet. A website will be made for easy access to the films as a way to see what is being lobbied and issues being discussed in political echelons. My expectation for future impact is the hope that this website will draw viewers to want to know what the politicians are watching, have more informed opinions, and the opportunity to relieve poverty of voice. This project is intended to be a grassroots movement that aims to promote peace through impacting and informing politicians and the masses on issues of poverty and the marginalized. Yunus acknowledged "that poverty is a threat to world peace." It is only a threat if we refuse to listen.