

BACKGROUND



AFI PROJECT:20/20 was an outgrowth of the “Symposium on Film, Television, Digital Media, and Popular Culture” convened by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) in Los Angeles in 2006. The Symposium concluded that a greater emphasis should be placed on international dialogue, exchange, and collaboration, using film, television, digital media, and popular culture.



“No other media come as close as film in helping share stories across cultures and nations. In fact, cinema has always been a universal medium and language, and the President’s Committee then took steps to develop the only international film and filmmaker program that is supported by all of America’s cultural agencies and the Department of State,” says PCAH Chairman, Adair Margo, said



Led by its private partner the American Film Institute (AFI), AFI PROJECT: 20/20 was conceived and supported by the President’s Committee, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Department of State (State). In the Fall of 2006 First Lady Laura Bush formally announced this new international cultural exchange effort as a part of the *Global Cultural Initiative*.



In its first year, AFI PROJECT: 20/20 invited 18 U.S. and foreign filmmakers to join together to share their films and filmmaking with their colleagues and audiences here and abroad. Making their U.S. debut at AFI’s International Film Festival, AFI FEST (November 1-12, 2006) in Los Angeles, it included seven American and 11 non-American films and filmmakers. After AFI FEST, 15 of the 18 filmmakers traveled to eight other U.S. cities including: Tucson (University of Arizona), San Francisco (University of California Berkeley and San Francisco State), Chicago (Facets, Moving Image), Silver Spring (AFI Silver), St. Louis (St. Louis International Film Festival), Athens OH (University of Ohio), Salt Lake City (University of Utah), and Seattle (Seattle International Film Festival and Northwest Film Forum).



Starting in March 2007, AFI and the U.S. Department of State sent U.S. filmmakers aboard under the Cultural Envoy Program. The first visit took place in Kuwait and a second in South Africa. For both the domestic and international tours, the filmmakers traveled in pairs or small groups to screen their films for audiences at universities, film archives, libraries or other institutions. In South Africa, for instance, filmmakers Jay Craven (U.S.) and Norman Maake (South Africa) screened their films for more than 100 university students at the Technical University of Tshwane (TUT), the University of Pretoria and the University of Limpopo in the northern part of South Africa. According to the U.S. Embassy staff that helped coordinate the delegation’s visit, “Both filmmakers connected with their young audiences, prompting far-reaching discussions on history, art, and current society. The

students at TUT's film school were particularly pleased to engage with Norman Maake on the challenges inherent in South African film production. This program provided another opportunity in the Embassy's ongoing efforts to engage with South African youth.”

In November 2007, AFI PROJECT 20/20 will begin its second year inviting seven new filmmakers to participate. Meanwhile, AFI PROJECT 20/20 filmmakers will continue to tour overseas with visits scheduled for Israel, Kazakhstan, China, Indonesia, and Malaysia.