



Annual report

1 January - 31 December 2023

Introduction

The year 2023 has been a year of many changes. The first months, May Taherzadeh, the Director of the Foundation dedicated her time to producing and finalising the film, 'An Expansive Prospect' - which was commissioned by the Universal House of Justice and premiered at the 13th International Baha'i Convention. Soon after the film's release, May and Martijn with their 4 children relocated to Curacao (August 2023), an island in the Caribbean to carry out the work of the Foundation there.

Films for Baha'i World Centre

For the past 3 years, our Foundation has had the honour in creating two films commissioned by the Universal House of Justice; 'Glimpses of a Hundred Years of Endeavour' and 'An Expansive Prospect'. Writing, directing and producing these films have given us valuable experience for the creation of future films that the Foundation aspires to create.

Mercy's Blessing

The award-winning short film, 'Mercy's Blessing', together with the Workshop Questions continues has been used in over 100 countries, mostly in schools, universities and youth groups to inspire change. By following 'Mercy's Blessing' over the years we are continuing to learn how films contribute not only in advancing discourses in society but also how they can play a key role in social action. For example, over the past 9 years, Unity Foundation in Luxembourg has been using the film in high schools and with NGOs. They are now also training teachers in how to use the Workshop Questions with the film. In the Netherlands there is a university (Nyenrode) that has been using the film for the past 3 years with Master students. Also in Malawi, the Bambino Foundation continues to use the film in schools and communities.

May is continuing to accompany various NGOs and individuals that are using the film and she continues to give presentations and speeches when invited.

Scholarships

Over the past 9 years, we have supported a number of actors of the film, 'Mercy's Blessing' in the form of scholarships to complete their secondary and university studies in Malawi. We are happy to report that Mr. Allick Chavula (Blessings) and Ms. Tamandani Lihoma (one of the village women) have successfully completed their 4 year university degrees.

Next Door

In previous years, concerted efforts have been made to create a story about a Syrian refugee family and their Dutch neighbours in a rural village in the Netherlands. This project titled, 'Next Door' was placed on hold for the past 3 years because of the two films for the

House of Justice. We are happy to report that May has resumed work on this project. It is envisioned that the script will be completed by the end of next year.

Curacao and filmmaking

With the relocation of May and her family, there are many possibilities in Curacao in terms of film and how they can be used for inspiring social action and contributing to the various discourses in the island. Having a short film that resonates with the struggles in this part of the world and using it in schools (like 'Mercy's Blessing') will prove to be very useful to the island and the region at large.

Curacao is an island of approximately 150,000 people. There is a small film industry that aspires for further development in the coming years. May has built a good relationship with the president of the Film Association on the island and explored how film can inspire social change here. May is meeting on a regular basis with the president and filmmakers on the island, and together they are exploring ways to collaborate and support each other.

May has started to carry out interviews with people on the island in order to find a story to create a short narrative film in Curacao. She is researching and exploring questions such as, "What is the 'pain' on the island?" "What is holding people back from advancing?" "What healing is needed in order to progress materially and spiritually?" As a result of the interviews and research, May is acquiring deeper insights into how the history of slavery has an impact today on the social relations between people on the island.

Board

The Board has remained unchanged. It consists of Dr. Bert Kersten (Chairperson), Mrs. Dini Hilbron (Treasurer), and Mrs. Yolande van den Hoogen (Secretary).

14 March 2024