

## DOCUMENTARY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: COMPANY PROFILE

Documentary Educational Resources is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1968 and incorporated in 1971 for the purpose of producing and distributing cross-cultural documentary film for educational use. We were early innovators in developing 16mm film and media based curriculum for the classroom. Our company focus then and now is to support filmmakers who have long-term commitments to the people that they film, filmmakers who work collaboratively with their subjects to produce media with integrity, and to distribute media that has the power to overcome barriers to cross-cultural understanding. Our archive is one of the most historically important resources in ethnographic film in the world today. In 1975 DER co-founders John Marshall and Timothy Asch were key figures in establishing the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian Institution and their bodies of work are among the most significant ethnographic collections within the HSFSA. We continue to collaborate with the Smithsonian on the use of our films for research. We also work collaboratively with the Harvard Film Archive on film preservation, collection management, and public programs. Our films have been screened from villages and refugee camps in Africa, on Native American Reservations to Museums and theaters in New York City.

### MISSION

DER's mission is to cultivate community engagement with the peoples and cultures of the world in which we live through media that is both entertaining and educational.

We address the need for tolerance and understanding of people who are different than ourselves. This need is universal and more evident in today's global political, social and cultural climate than ever before. Underlying the diversity of the films we produce and distribute is the conviction that documentary and ethnographic films can broaden and alter preconceptions of marginalized and underrepresented peoples and cultures within the United States' population and abroad. We also maintain an archive of historical significance and public interest. Our programs reach millions of individuals each year via broadcast, film festivals and classrooms throughout the world.

### RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through our role as a fiscal sponsor we currently support the work of 41 independent filmmakers whose subjects range from an examination of Native Alaskan sovereignty within historical, cultural, spiritual and political contexts to *The Mathare Project*, in which the filmmaker has been living in and documenting life in an orphanage in a Nairobi slum over a period of years. As a result of our support all these projects have raised funds moving them closer to completion, with "Standing Silent Nation" airing on PBS/POV in July. We acquired 47 new titles from the Brazilian *Video in the Villages* collection, the longest running indigenous film program in the world. In addition we are now distributing the entire oeuvre of important documentary makers from Canada to Japan. Our new releases represent people and cultures from Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina, India, Thailand, Cambodia Nepal, China, South Africa, Niger, Ethiopia, The Sudan, Kenya, Iran, Yemen, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, and North America. This broadened and enriched the content of our collection. We trained 14 interns to do research on the internet, to create web content and to be production assistants assigned to work with specific filmmakers. They became aware of the effort, planning and skill necessary to make successful documentary programs. We continue to release new programs from the *Screening Room* series by Robert Gardner. It featured interviews and films made by some of the most interesting and innovative artists working in the world of film from Jean Rouch, Ricky Leacock and Les Blank, early innovators in "Direct Cinema", to the experimental films of Stan Brakhage and animators like Robert Breer. This is the first time a selection (25 programs) from the original 100 broadcasts is available in DVD to general audiences.

September 2008 marked DER's 40th anniversary doing business world-wide. In 2005 we completed the daunting task of authoring our entire collection of over 900 Documentary film titles to DVD format. In 2006 we advanced to broadband and had a very successful collaboration with GOOGLE VIDEO. We also have streaming video for rent or purchase on Amazon via the

CreateSpace partnership. Our web site is currently undergoing a major upgrade to improve the shopping cart system and will provide every filmmaker direct access to their own account and sales records online.

## **GOALS**

Over the past several years we have been developing programs that connect DER with educational institutions. We plan to continue our work with educators to develop ways to utilize our collection and expertise to enhance media programs in the schools. As an example the head teacher at the Moccasin Community Day School requested video donations to be used by their disadvantaged student body. We donated programs from our collection that feature young people dealing with socio-economic and cultural problems in a wide range of environments throughout the world. In exchange we asked that the students write essays in response to the films. Submissions were judged and the winning students were allowed to pick a title of their choice from the DER film collection. In November 2006 - 2008 we were major sponsors of the national youth film festival, DO IT YOUR DAMN SELF, and sponsored a documentary film prize for their program that included a cash prize and distribution contract for the teen winner. We have made strides in reaching teachers at the k-12 level through workshops and presentations on integrating global issues in curriculum.

We continue to acquire the best documentary programs dealing with issues that affect our understanding of the world we live in and to make these programs available to as broad an audience as possible. We are leaders among our competitors in instituting the next technological change which has allowed us to offer our programs streamed over the internet directly to the end user. It is the future of distribution.

## **STRATEGIES**

We make extensive use of the internet to inform all targeted communities about our services and to provide curriculum support material to enrich the understanding and use of our films. These resources are free. This material as well as new media programming is available on our DER on iTunes U page. We train an average of 3-6 interns a year. Our internships help students from a variety of backgrounds to realize their potential and define career goals. Through the vehicle of fiscal sponsorship we assist independent filmmakers whose work is focused on cross-cultural understanding. We run low cost workshops in documentary film funding and distribution strategies for independent filmmakers. We offer access to our archive free of charge to filmmakers doing research on communities experiencing cultural change and to teachers in k-12 schools.

Media is one of the most powerful tools for informing and influencing opinion. All our filmmakers have collaborated with the communities they portrayed to ensure that their work is ethical and authentic. Many communities have learned the lessons of the power of the media and have used it not only to document such things as the last remaining speaker of a Native language, but also to inform governments of indigenous rights to land. We have been working on projects such as these since 1968. This constructive use of media shows no signs of decline. Interest in documentary film for both international broadcast and as a focus of major film festivals continues to grow.

## **CONSTITUENCY**

We serve general audiences worldwide through progressive educational television broadcasts on PBS, HBO, Showtime, CBC Canada, SVT Sweden, YLE Finland, BBC & Channel 4 UK, ZDF/Arte Germany/France, Al Jazeera, DK2 Denmark, SABC South Africa, Free Speech TV, and PrideVision. Our films are also seen by film festival audiences, students and educators from 5th grade to adult, native communities and classrooms and independent documentary filmmakers worldwide. This includes all socioeconomic levels, races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, gender, age and physical abilities. Many of our films are closed-captioned, some deal with disability as experienced in different cultures. Because we often work collaboratively with the

communities filmed, this ensures that their needs are addressed. We respond to current events and our archive is historically important. For example, following 9/11 we focused attention on our films made in Afghanistan from 1970 to the 1980's to offer in depth information on the geography, people and culture beyond the sound bites of network TV.

## **DIVERSITY**

Our 9-member board currently includes 5 women and 4 men of which 2 are African Americans and one is Indian. Our full-time staff includes 4 women, and 2 men. Part time staff is culturally diverse. We also have adjunct staff in Cambridge, New York and Washington DC. Our many interns represent a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic group. They bring energy and a changing perspective to our work. Our filmmakers and the content of our films represent many ethnic, economic and cultural groups.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

Our board represents the fields of education, art, technology, anthropology, sociology, publishing and media. They meet several times a year to review the organizations finances and activities. They are available to assist staff as needed. They act in an advisory capacity and are not involved in day-to-day decision making. Our past president and founder brought integrity and experience to the organization. His 52 years of filming and development work in Africa and the U.S. stand as a model for succeeding generations whose work is driven by a desire to cross cultural boundaries. The Executive Director is involved in administration and planning. She reports directly to the board of directors. Staff meets regularly with the Executive Director. Duties are clearly defined and there are daily opportunities for creative input from all staff members and interns. Interns are hired by the Executive Director and supervised by her and by staff.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

We develop programs in conjunction with urban and rural public schools with diverse student bodies. We have a long standing partnership with the Smithsonian Institution. We had administrated a touring film program for several years with the American Museum of Natural History in NYC. We provide programming for many local community cable access stations across America, as well as libraries, colleges and other educational institutions worldwide. We collaborate on public programs with organizations like SILVERDOCS, Primary Source and Earthwatch. We have partnered with the National Film Board of Canada on production and distribution. We have worked with Filmmakers Collaborative on several conferences targeted to filmmakers. We are members of IFP (Independent Feature Project), AAA (American Anthropological Association), WIFVNE (Women in Film and Video New England), LASA (Latin American Studies Association) and EDN (European Documentary Network).

## **FINANCIAL CONDITION**

We have a robust revenue stream from sales and rentals of our films, licensing for broadcast, workshops and fiscal sponsorships. We solicit grants and donations only to support special projects, new film productions and technology up grades. We have faced a technology challenge, and have made the transition from videotape to DVD and are moving toward HD technology on the high end and digital downloads on the lower end. Key institutional funders have been the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the National Film Preservation Foundation, the Corporation For Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Sloan Foundation, Native American Television Service, The Wenner Gren Foundation, The LEF Foundation, the Rhode Island Council on the Humanities, the Rock Foundation, Fidelity Investments, Merrill Lynch, The Mary Wohlford Foundation, the Handleman Charitable Trust and many other private family foundations and individual donors.