



Activist Competition Statement 2023

Good Evening, we are Anna Ramskogler-Witt and Peter Mudamba and we represent the Activist Award jury this year. We, the jury were very impressed and greatly motivated by the Activists selection of films. Through these films, we were able to interact with and get to know amazing activists from all over the world. We felt grateful and inspired by their conviction, their amazing dedication to their course and their kind and courageous acts. The films showed us not only how the activists stand up for their beliefs no matter what - but also allowed us to get to know their human side: we were able to laugh, cry and be outraged together with them.

The range of topics of the selected films was impressive: from sports fairness, gender and association rights to anti-racism, women's rights, environmental rights, human right freedoms and the fight for reparations and justice - all the selected films touched and moved us deeply.

But as a jury, we have the duty to award only one film and the liberty to also offer a special mention. Therefore, before we move on to announcing the winner of the Activist Prize, we felt we wanted to highlight one film in particular for a special mention: Through a well structured edit and the poetic use of images, this film highlights the personal struggle of an activist, who fights for a new history. The filmmakers take us with her on a journey to a small island and on a toil of this strong woman to reclaim and honor the neglected history of thousands of formerly enslaved Africans left in mass graves on the remote island of St. Helena. Despite the severity of the subject, the film found humor and levity, the activists left us hopeful for the future alongside a clear call to action. The jury honors A STORY OF BONES by Joseph Curran, Dominic Aubrey de Vere with a special mention.

The activist award goes to a film that left the jury speechless and deeply touched. It is a tough film to watch, but not because of the harsh brutality of the scenes - on the contrary it is a beautiful film buoyed by a sense of joy and love - but because of the incredible injustice the main subject experiences, her strength and resolve, and the unwavering support of her family. This film is a devastating work of profound global importance, yet moved us equally for its fight for humanity and justice. Despite the lack of tangible material and the extremely difficult production circumstances the filmmakers managed to create an immersive experience that allowed us to be enveloped by the story and brought the characters to life, even those who are not present in the film. As viewers, we felt deeply invested in the lives of its protagonists.

The main character pays the ultimate sacrifice for her beliefs and values - and yet she lives on through the people who knew her and the viewers who were lucky enough to get to know her story through this outstanding film.

At the same time the film gives us a better understanding of the thousands of activists who continue to uncompromisingly and bravely put themselves in danger on the streets protesting for their lives and freedoms in the face of harsh punishment or even death.

The winning film for the Activist Award is SEVEN WINTERS IN TEHRAN by Steffi Niederzoll.