

Human Rights Issues in Documentary Cinema

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Concepts and definitions of Human Rights

- The Twelve Articles of the Black Forest (1525) are considered to be first record of human rights in Europe
- The term *human rights* came into use in Wiliam Lloyd Garrison's 'The Liberator' (1831)
- Establishment of International Committee of the Red Cross and Geneva Conventions in laid the foundations of humanitarian law (1864)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted (1948)

Concepts and definitions of Human Rights

- Integrity rights, political and civil rights, and social, economical, and cultural rights
- Universalism and cultural relativism

Human Rights Documentary Films

- Human rights are films that reflect the actual state of human rights violations, or the visions and aspirations as to the ways to redress those violations
- Primary condition of HR films: Being Truthful and Understandable

Human Rights Documentary Films

- *Genocidal armies. Fascist gangs. Concentration camps. Dithering statesmen. Refugee throngs. Closed borders. Besieged cities...New Europe: What New Europe? Same old, I'd say.* – Robert Hunter
- *Communication intended to convey the truth must first of all correspond to the facts* – Jürgen Habermas
- *The effect of 'shocking' pictures is very hard to predict and varies greatly with individual, societal and cultural characteristics* – Susan Sontag

- **The Battle of the Somme** – Geoffrey Malins and John B. McDowell (1916)
- documented the British Army's preparation for the battle
- the single bloodiest day in British Army history
- some of the most iconic images during entire war

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- **Spanish Earth** – Joris Ivens (1937)
- illustration of background to and causes of the Civil War
- around 500,000 people killed, executed, or displaced
- narrated by John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway

- **Night and Fog (Nuit et brouillard)** – Alain Resnais (1955)
- among the first documentaries about Nazi concentration camps –Auschwitz, Birkenau, Majdanek, Struthof, and Mathausen
- made in collaboration by two survivors of the Holocaust including writer Jean Cayrol and composer Hanns Eisler
- film censored by French and Germans

Human Rights Documentary Films

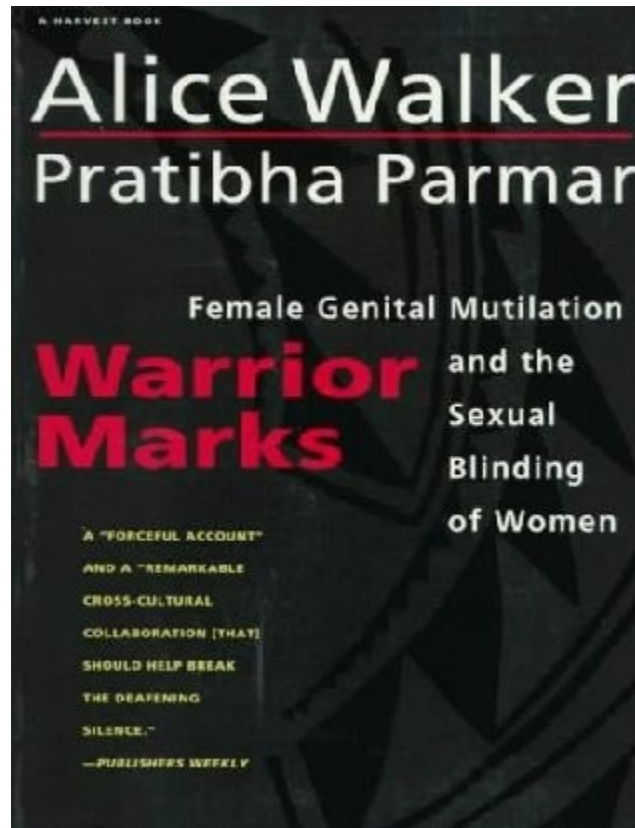
- **The Hour of the Furnaces (La Hora de los Hornos)** – Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas (1968)
- epic documentary and scathing indictment of imperialist capitalism in Argentina
- in some critics represented as film on social genocide in Argentina
- The first embodiment of a self-declared ‘Third Cinema’ that would put the politics of production, distribution and presentation ahead of ‘mere’ aesthetics

- **A Grin without a Cat – Chris Marker (1974)**
- newsreel footage, television clips, television news reports, found footage, and sarcastic commentary, the rise and the fall of the New Left movement of post-colonial struggle
- documentary had its first incarnation in 1977, which director later re-cut in 1993 after the fall of the USSR, and then again in 2008
- three-hour opus

- **Abortion Access (1990) & Motherhood by Choice (2000) – Dorothy Fadiman**
- history of the struggle for women's reproductive rights in the U.S.
- director widely discussed about women's rights on abortion, interviewing women, including her own experience

- **Warrior Marks** – Alice Walker and Pratibha Parmar (1993)
- political documentary about female genital mutilation (FGM)
- interviews with women from Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, the United States, and England who are concerned with and affected by genital mutilation
- according to the Amnesty International, as estimated 135 million girls and women have undergone genital mutilation which is predominantly practiced in North-African countries

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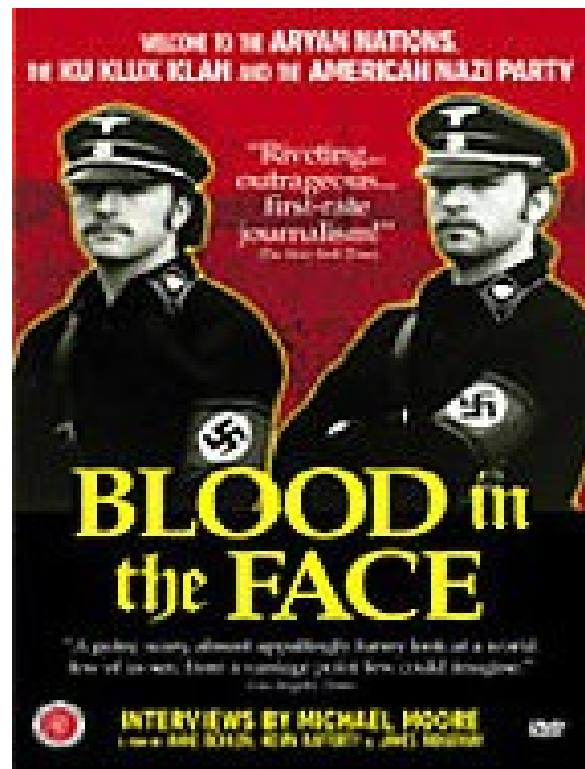
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- **Shoah** – Claude Lanzmann (1985)
- nine-hour documentary about the Holocaust
- consists of interviews with people who were involved in various ways in the Holocaust , concerning four topics: Chelmno, camps Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the Warsaw Ghetto

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- **Blood in the Face** – Anne Bohlen, Kevin Rafferty, and James Ridgeway (1991)
- documentary about various white supremacy groups in the U.S., largely shot in Michigan
- film contains interviews shot during one single day in the collective life of American neo-Nazis, racists, and other radical right groups

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Thank you for your attention!