



CINEMATIC SPACES OF EDUCATION  
FILM FESTIVALETTE  
APRIL 25–MAY 9, 2021

OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS



FESTIVAL SCOPE



# Empathy & Activism for Social Responsibility

*Where Are the Radical Monarchs*, directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton.



THROUGH FILM, WE EDUCATE, INSPIRE, AND MAKE CHANGE

***“Only radical empathy  
can save the world.”*** KING, 2015<sup>1</sup>

THE VIRTUAL FESTIVALETTE WILL LAUNCH APRIL 25, 2021,  
WHEN THE CIES CONFERENCE BEGINS, AND WILL EXTEND BEYOND  
THE CONFERENCE UNTIL MAY 9, 2021.

All screenings will take place online via the Festival Scope Platform. It can be accessed through a private link in the Conference Hub or via private mailing for CIES members and special guests. You can see the films during the time frame they are available. Most of the films can be accessed from anywhere in the world! All films have English subtitles, with additional subtitles in other languages when available.

Please note that access to the Festivalette is restricted and SHOULD NOT BE SHARED due to the films' distribution rights restrictions. Thank you.

## LIVE PANELS

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We will host four live panel discussions which include film director Q&As (when available), and explore the film's themes and their relevance to education with special guests.

The panels will take place the week AFTER the CIES Conference from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. PDT time:

- TUESDAY MAY 4:** Rural and Community Education in Mexico and Finland  
Films: *El Sembrador* and *When School Broke Out of Prison*.
- WEDNESDAY MAY 5:** Refugee Education in the United States and Beyond  
Films: *This Is Home: A Refugee Story* and *Mayor*.
- THURSDAY MAY 6:** Student Activism and Education  
Films: *We Are the Radical Monarchs* and *Espero tua Revolta*.
- FRIDAY MAY 7:** Empathy and Education  
Films: *Hikari* and *Wallay*.

Please check the website for details and updates. We hope to see you there to discuss the films' relevance for education!

All live panels will be recorded and uploaded to the private Festivalette site, where CIES members can access them during the festival.

<sup>1</sup> King, C. (2016). Empathic Activism: Only the Radical Power of Empathy Can Save the World, in the book: Promises, Pedagogy and Pitfalls: Empathy's Potential for Healing and Harm.

# vFESTIVALETTE 2021

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**I**n 2021, the seventh season (or seventh year) of the Comparative & International Education Society's Film Festivalette, created and funded by the Open Society Foundations Education Program, will showcase two feature-length fiction and six documentary films from around the world that explore the connections between empathy, activism and social responsibility.

It includes award-winning content from the Middle East, North Asia, West Africa, Europe, North America, and South America. While the program reflects a broad understanding of education as an undertaking that goes beyond formal schooling, these films raise questions relevant to teaching empathy and activism including: How can we promote empathy through our pedagogies? How can empathy translate from the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of society? Should educators be activists?

Empathy is critical for a deeper and expanded notion of social responsibility. As empathy develops so does awareness of our interdependence with fellow human and non-human species. There are different types of empathy. One form is cognitive and involves our ability to “put ourselves in another’s shoes”. This is often referred to as *perspective-taking*. Another form of empathy is affective and involves compassion or *feeling with and in* others’ joys and sufferings. Deeper more radical forms of empathy spur individuals to *take action* and advance the welfare of others. In many contexts, a combination of these forms of empathy (cognitive, emotional, radical) is necessary for a deeper and sustainable social responsibility.

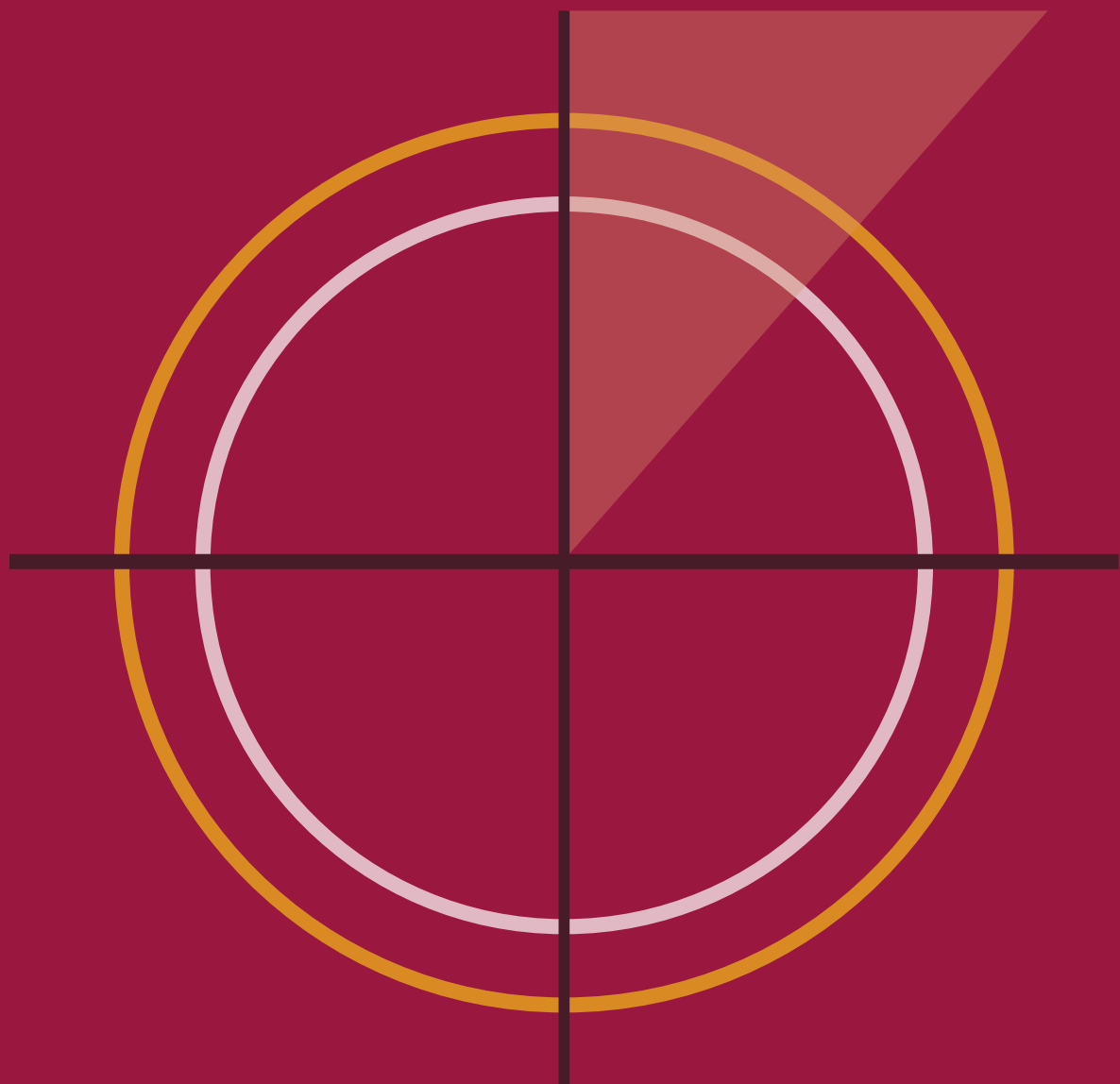
The romantic drama ***Hikari (Radiance)*** from master Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase conveys the difficult struggle to truly understand someone else’s experience. The movie reveals the lesson that in loss we can sometimes find a deeper, more profound beauty. In the documentary, ***This Is Home: A Refugee Story*** we witness the plight of Syrian refugee families in the United States as they assimilate the harsh realities and opportunities of the American dream. In the dramatic comedy ***Wallay*** we travel to Burkina Faso to witness the crucial role of family in shaping character and responsibility. In the authentic documentary ***El Sembrador (The Sower)***, we are immersed in the day-to-day transformative power of a compassionate teacher in a rural school in Chiapas, Mexico. In the inspiring documentary ***Kun Koulu Vapautui Vankilasta (When School Broke Out of Prison)***, we follow a community’s process to save a rural school from closing. In the documentary ***Espero tua Revolta (Your Turn)***, we are immersed in the Brazilian student youth movement to defend the right to education. In California, young girls of color are empowered in a troupe to promote social inclusion in the progressive documentary ***We Are the Radical Monarchs***. And in ***Mayor***, the leader of Ramallah supports the people of his city, peacefully resisting Israeli occupation and international policy, while working across national lines to foster empathy and compassion for their plight.

vFESTIVALETTE 2021

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# Festivalette Program

CINEMATIC SPACES OF EDUCATION  
FILM FESTIVALETTE  
APRIL 25–MAY 9, 2021





## 01 *Hikari (Radiance)*, 2017

**Feature Film: Fiction Drama, Japan. Directed by Naomi Kawase [101 minutes], in Japanese, with English subtitles. French subtitles are also available.**



Renowned Japanese auteur Naomi Kawase's lyrically beautiful film reawakens our sense of wonder at our human experience and our human connection to one another in a moving love story. The story revolves around the relationship between Misako, a young video transcriber of films for the visually impaired who meets Nakamori, a famous photographer who is losing his eyesight. She struggles to put herself in his shoes, and of those she writes for, failing often and having to try harder. He cooks for them in his apartment, and, as she grabs his salt and pepper shakers, she asks him: "How do you know which is which?" To which he replies: "Don't touch them!" Their relationship becomes closer as he pushes her towards deeper empathy and as they both struggle with loss and the challenge of reinventing their worlds. Kawase delicately encourages us to see and experience life in a different way. It's also an ode to impermanence, loss and love. While sand slips through her fingers, she thinks: "Nothing is more beautiful than what disappears before our eyes." This film escapes the confines of a traditional review. It is truly hard to describe and must be experienced. A film to see and resee.

### NAOMI KAWASE

GREW UP IN RURAL JAPAN. SHE WON THE GRAND JURY PRIZE AT CANNES FOR *THE MOURNING FOREST* (2007). HER OTHER HIGHLY LAUDED FILMS INCLUDE *STILL THE WATER* (2014) AND *SWEET BEAN*

### WINNER

ECUMENICAL JURY PRIZE, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL (2015).

### LIVE PANEL

FRIDAY MAY 7  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"A plea for empathy, the capacity and readiness to put oneself in someone else's shoes."* AWARDS DAILY

*"It is through poetry that this masterpiece inspires a broadening of the mind to understand others better."* ECUMENICAL JURY, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL PRIZE

## 02 *This Is Home: A Refugee Story*, 2018

**Feature Film: Documentary, United States., Directed by Alexandra Shiva**  
[91 minutes] in English and Arabic, with English subtitles.



How long would you need “to acclimate” if you started over with your family in a new country with a new language and new customs? This masterfully crafted documentary takes us into the fascinating day-to-day intimacy of the “re-education process” of four Syrian refugee families from their arrival in Baltimore, Maryland, through their eight-month journey to “self-sufficiency” with assistance provided by the International Rescue Committee. Though movingly conveyed, the trauma they bring with them is not at the centerpiece of their at times difficult, at times humorous, struggle to adapt. A female IRC worker tells them (stretching out her hand): “In America we always shake hands.” To which one of the Syrian men replies (in Arabic, to his friend): “I can’t. It’s forbidden.” The relearning of cultural norms needed to adapt and survive in America tests their hard-won resilience. The kids, too, must adapt and do well in their new school despite their nightmares (the school provides therapy support). This film offers us a bridge into the humanity of refugee families and, ultimately, reminds us of the power of friendship and community across cultural divides. The American dream is built from the ground up. Don’t miss it!

**ALEXANDRA SHIVA**  
IS AN AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER AND PRODUCER. HER FILM, *BOMBAY EUNUCH* (2001), WON SEVERAL AWARDS INCLUDING BEST DOCUMENTARY AT NEW YORK’S LGBT FILM FESTIVAL. HER FILM, *HOW TO DANCE IN OHIO* (2015), WAS NOMINATED FOR THE GRAND JURY PRIZE AT SUNDANCE. (2015).

**WINNER**  
AUDIENCE AWARD,  
WORLD CINEMA DOCUMENTARY,  
SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

**LIVE PANEL**  
WEDNESDAY MAY 5  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*“Stirring... makes a heartening call for open-armed empathy.”* **VARIETY**

*“An intense, yet uplifting documentary that shows refugees in a humane light.”* **THE ARAB WEEKLY**

## 03 *Wallay*, 2017

**Feature Film: Fiction Dramatic Comedy, Burkina Faso. Directed by Berni Goldblat [84 minutes], in French and Dioula, with English subtitles. French and Spanish subtitles are also available.**



In this fictional, documentary style coming-of-age story, Ady, a rowdy, rule breaking 13-year-old growing up in France, is sent on vacation to Burkina Faso, his father's homeland. In this unique West African, rural and Muslim cultural context, Ady's expectations of daily life (like electricity and hot water) are challenged. His beliefs of what becoming a man entails are deeply shaken and he is pushed to repair past wrongs to his own family. His grandmother's love is a comforting and transformative haven from his uncle's severity. His attractive cousin of similar age, translates into French what his grandmother says in Dioula: "She wants to throw the cowry shells for you, look into your heart. You have to think about what you want, real hard." His grandma continues: "My Little Hubby, one day you'll be a man of your word. And you'll shine like the sun." This film provides a perceptive, often humorous, window into the dynamics and tensions of a multicultural, multigenerational family and its crucial role in shaping character and responsibility. Swiss director Berni Goldblat's admiration for his adopted homeland, Burkina Faso, comes alive in every frame.

### **BERNI GOLDBLAT**

HAS BEEN DIRECTING FILMS, MOSTLY DOCUMENTARIES, SET IN WEST AFRICA, SINCE 1999. IN 2009, HIS FILM, *HILLSIDE CROWD*, ABOUT WORK CONDITIONS IN A GOLD MINE IN BURKINA FASO, WON BEST DOCUMENTARY AT THE BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL. *WALLAY* IS HIS FIRST FEATURE FILM.

### **WINNER**

BEST EUROPEAN YOUTH FILM  
EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS,  
2018 (VOTED BY OVER 2,000  
EUROPEAN 12- TO 14-YEAR-  
OLDS IN 43 CITIES ACROSS  
EUROPE AND BEYOND)

### **LIVE PANEL**

FRIDAY MAY 7  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"A moving tale of personal growth and redemption."* **HAMMER TO NAIL**

*"A real tenderness and a beautiful invitation to travel in this dramatic comedy."* **LES FICHES DU CINÉMA**



## 04 *El Sembrador (The Sower)*, 2018

**Feature Film: Documentary, Mexico. Directed by Melissa Elizondo**  
[85 minutes], in Spanish and Tzeltal, with English subtitles.



Melissa Elizondo's beautifully observant first feature film follows Bartolomé, a Tzotzil teacher who runs a multigrade one-classroom rural school by himself in Monte de los Olivos, in the high mountains of Chiapas, Mexico. The preschool to sixth grade Tzeltal kids, study mostly independently, with help from each other. "The bigger ones support the little ones... the best teacher for a child is another child, not the teacher. The teacher is there for the most difficult, or for what's new" (Bartolomé says). But it's not academics that matters most here. "The most important thing to me is that whatever they learn, they do so enjoying it and playing." It's this teacher's love for his students autonomy and his respect for them that fosters their integral development and connection to nature (they harvest, swim, hike). His inspired philosophy and, more importantly, his day-to-day practice is brought to light with lovely cinematography. This beacon of hope, however, is surrounded by a community in poverty and social decay. Worrisomely, we're not sure if the kids at his school will continue to graduation after possibly transitioning to the "telesecundaria" (high school in which they are educated by video programs). The children's testimonies are especially endearing and their desire to keep studying is a heartfelt call for support.

### MELISSA ELIZONDO

THE MEXICAN DIRECTOR'S FIRST FEATURE FILM IS *EL SEMBRADOR*. HER ADMIRATION FOR RURAL TEACHERS INSPIRED HER WORK, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATION REFORM IN 2013. SHE STARTED A CAMPAIGN TO FUND THE CONTINUED EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN FEATURED IN THIS DOCUMENTARY.

### WINNER

AUDIENCE AWARD MEXICAN FEATURE-LENGTH DOCUMENTARY, MORELIA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (MEXICO)

### LIVE PANEL

FRIDAY MAY 4  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"It opens our eyes to a hidden reality, and invites us to be part of the needed change to provide equal opportunity to all Mexican kids."* CINE SIN FRONTERAS



## 05 *Kun Koulu Vapautui Vankilasta* (When School Broke Out of Prison), 2017

**Feature Film: Documentary, Finnish. English subtitles available. Directed by Päivi Kapiainen-Heiskanen [60 minutes], Finnish, with English subtitles.**



What would you do if the school close to home was closing because there weren't enough students? This inspiring, suspenseful documentary immerses us in a rural community in eastern Finland as it tries to save its 100-year-old school (many traditional rural schools were being closed in Finland in the early 2000s). One of the first steps the community takes is to put an ad in the paper asking families to help save their school by moving to their town. The ad notes that "families with under four kids need not apply." Many large families do respond, with interest in moving. This story exemplifies the Finnish "talkoot" tradition, meaning working together for the common good without pay. Experienced educator Juha Juurikkala, becomes the principal and a teacher at the Halmeniemi Free Village School, without remuneration, accepting to do this during his paternity leave, only "if someone can take care of my daughter". He applied a model of pedagogy of joy leading to a more experiential and participatory learning experience for the children, families and community members. But for how long can the community succeed in keeping their school—run on goodwill and no salaries—open? An extraordinary tale of small community activism carried out by ordinary people to fight to preserve their vanishing way of life. Don't miss it!

**PÄIVI KAPIAINEN-HEISKANEN** IS A FINNISH JOURNALIST AND FILMMAKER. SHE RECENTLY WROTE AND DIRECTED THE AWARD-WINNING FEATURE DOCUMENTARY "TOYOTA AND WINDBREAKER" (2019), ABOUT AN ENTREPRENEUR BATTLING CORPORATE TAKEOVERS.

**WINNER**  
BEST EDUCATIONAL FILM,  
HELSINKI EDUCATION FILM  
FESTIVAL, 2020

**LIVE PANEL**  
TUESDAY MAY 4  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"Finland has been closing its village schools since the 60s and there are no signs this process will end. Meanwhile, the Finnish educational system is glorified globally."* **HELSINKI EDUCATION**

## 06 *Espero tua Revolta (Your Turn)*, 2019

**Feature Film: Documentary, Brazil. Directed by Eliza Capai [99 minutes], in Portuguese with English Subtitles. Versions with Spanish, French, German and Italian subtitles are also available.**



This vibrant, explosive documentary follows the Brazilian student movements from 2013 to 2018. Their struggle is narrated by three high-school students who are key activists within the movements. The movie narrative structure and footage is inspired by the language of the student movements (decentralized, without hierarchy and leaders, organic and self-organizing) and gives it a unique visceral energy. As we jump back and forth in time, the narrators connect student protests to various social issues (from high fees for public transport, to budget cuts in public education, to the shutting down of schools, to connections between schools and prisons, and systemic racism). One of the narrators reflects: “I realize that schools don’t teach us how to organize ourselves politically. Schools don’t teach about social movements. Schools don’t promote debates on how to question, how to transform society. And I don’t think it’s random.” The movie also provides a unique inside view of the internal decision-making process of the student movement with its tensions and complexity. Throughout, we are witness to the often brutal and violent responses by the police and Brazilian state. As the movie ends, Jair Bolsonaro is elected president in 2018 and declares that all activism in Brazil will end. And yet, the students’ fight for a free, quality, and critical education must go on; we are inspired by their political energy, courage, and dreams.

### **ELIZA CAPAI**

WAS BORN IN BRAZIL AND IS AN INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER FOCUSING ON SOCIAL TOPICS. HER DEBUT FEATURE *TÃO LONGE É AQUI, HERE IS SO FAR*, (2014), WAS FILMED IN AFRICA. IN *O JABUTI E A ANTA, THE TORTOISE AND THE TAPIR* (2017), SHE EXAMINED ENORMOUS HYDROELECTRIC PLANTS IN THE AMAZON.

### **WINNER**

THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARD AND THE INDEPENDENT PEACE FILM PRIZE, 2019 BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL

### **LIVE PANEL**

THURSDAY MAY 6  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*“This dizzying political doc offers a participatory glimpse at the student movements that rippled throughout Brazil during the past decade.”* **POINT OF VIEW MAGAZINE**



## 07 *We Are the Radical Monarchs*, 2018

Documentary, United States, Directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton [86 minutes], in English and Spanish, with English subtitles as well.



What should 8- to 10-year-old girls be learning outside school? Anayvette Martinez and Marilyn Hollinquest, two women of color in Oakland, California, didn't feel the traditional Girl Scouts organization spoke to their experience. Anayvette wanted another path for her daughter: "I wanted her to have a troop that centered her identity around a girl of color. It was like, no, you are at the center of this conversation. You know, beyond service learning and volunteering, what does it mean to be radical and actually stand up for something." They created "The Radical Monarchs," a girls of color troop that they led to defy social stereotypes (such as what is "appropriate" to teach young women), create opportunities for empathy with marginalized groups (such as transgender people) and empower young girls. Award-winning filmmaker Linda Goldstein Knowlton follows the first troupe since its beginnings, taking us through three years of the troop's development, and demand for rapid expansion. The troop meets regularly to discuss controversial subjects organized around "social justice thematic modules" (such as disability, the environment, black lives matter), take camping trips and even travel to meet the legislators in Washington, D.C., as "the marches they've participated in aren't enough." This energetic, groundbreaking documentary is unforgettable.

### LINDA GOLDSTEIN KNOWLTON

CO-DIRECTED AND CO-PRODUCED THE FEATURE-LENGTH DOCUMENTARY, "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SESAME STREET" (2006). SHE PRODUCED THE FICTION FILM "WHALE RIDER" (2002), WINNER OF THE BAFTA. SHE ALSO DIRECTED THE DOCUMENTARY "SOMEWHERE BETWEEN" (2011), ABOUT ADOPTION FROM CHINA.

### WINNER

AUDIENCE AWARD  
BEST DOCUMENTARY AND  
FILMS4FAMILIES JURY AWARD,  
SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL

### LIVE PANEL

THURSDAY MAY 6  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"The film is an honest and hopeful testament to the struggles and triumphs faced by bootstrapped visionaries. Moreover, viewers get to see what empowered girlhood—centered in intersectionality, inclusivity and strength—looks like in action."* JANE HERVEY, FORBES



## 08 *Mayor, 2020*

**Feature Film: Documentary, Palestine. Directed by David Osit [89 minutes], in Arabic and English, with English subtitles.**



How do you run a city when you don't have a country? Musa Hadid, Christian, is the Mayor of Ramallah, the de facto capital of the Palestinian people (10 miles from Jerusalem, but they are prohibited from going there). Through verité seeped in absurdity and at times suspense, American director, David Osit immerses us in the day-to-day humor, challenges and risks the charismatic Musa traverses running this city occupied by Israel. For several months in 2017, we witness deliberations on questions the mayor of any city could face (such as improving school infrastructure), to very specific issues unique to Palestine today such as sewage overflowing due to lack of land ownership to build processing plants. He faces mounting unrest when Trump announces his decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital (discounting Palestinian's fight for recognition). Musa asks David (the director): "Do you think people in America, know or hear about what's happening here?" David isn't sure. The tensions in Ramallah escalate to new levels of danger. Osit succeeds in putting us in the daily shoes of a leader who fights for dignity, humanizing the Palestinian struggle. A must see to reflect on social responsibility across national lines.

**DAVID OSIT**  
IS AN AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER, EDITOR AND COMPOSER. HIS FEATURE DOCUMENTARY *THANK YOU FOR PLAYING* (2015) WON AN EMMY. HE ALSO DIRECTED *BUILDING BABEL* (2012).

**WINNER**  
GRAND JURY PRIZE,  
FULL FRAME DOCUMENTARY  
FILM FESTIVAL

**LIVE PANEL**  
WEDNESDAY MAY 5  
8:00 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

*"The best new film about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... offers a striking new perspective on that struggle. An operatic verite drama that often dips into bureaucratic black comedy and unnerving suspense."* **CRITICS PICK. ERIC KOHN, INDIEWIRE**

*"Mayor is essential viewing about the lines between small and grand acts of resistance."* **SEVENTH ROW**

# Program Summary

VIRTUAL FILM FESTIVALETTE ON  
THE THEME "EMPATHY AND ACTIVISM FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY"  
APRIL 25–MAY 9, 2021

- 01** *Hikari (Radiance)* 2017, Fiction, Drama, Japan
- 02** *This Is Home: A Refugee Story* 2018, Documentary, United States
- 03** *Wallay* 2017, Fiction, Dramatic Comedy, Burkina Faso
- 04** *El Sembrador (The Sower)* 2018, Documentary, Mexico
- 05** *Kun Koulu Vapautui Vankilasta (When School Broke Out of Prison)*  
2017, Documentary, Finland
- 06** *Espero tua Revolta (Your Turn)* 2019, Documentary, Brazil
- 07** *We Are the Radical Monarchs* 2018, Documentary, United States
- 08** *Mayor* 2020, Documentary, Palestine

Virtual live education and film panel discussions with film director Q&As (when available) and special guests, Tuesday, May 4, through Friday, May 7, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. PDT time.

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THE FESTIVALETTE IS CURATED BY ADRIANA CEPEDA, FILMMAKER MOBILIZARTE, AND JORGE BAXTER, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES, COLOMBIA. WITH RESEARCH ASSISTANCE BY FILMMAKER CLAUDIA BERMUDEZ.

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