

Pizza, Democracy & The Little Prince



PRODUCED BY OPEN CITADEL IN COLLABORATION WITH GIVE A HAND ORGANIZATION DIRECTED BY ELENA HORN, ALESSANDRO LEONARDI
PRODUCER: ALEVTINA NEPOMNIACHTCHIKH CO-PRODUCER: ANDRAS KAPUVARI EDITOR: ALESSANDRO LEONARDI
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: SEBA KOSEMATOGLU, HULYA KOSEMATOGLU PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: ALICIA PORZYSZKOWSKA, KASIM DOMAC
DISTRIBUTION: JULIA CZAPLINSKA, SIMON CERF MUSIC COMPOSER: MATTIS SCHAFER SPECIAL THANKS TO NEYAD FOUNDATION

Pizza, Democracy & The Little Prince

Produced by open citadel

in collaboration with



Directed by Elena Horn
Alessandro Leonardi

Producer Alevtina Nepomniachtchikh

Co-producer Andras Kapuvari

Run time 10 minutes

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Awards Best Short Documentary
at Sedona International Film Festival

SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE

Profound discoveries and new friendships are made during interactions between Syrian children seeking refuge in Istanbul, and international students, volunteering in Turkey over their summer holidays. As these unlikely pairings are thrust together the Syrian refugees surprise and overwhelm their international counterparts with their bravery, humour and humanity showing above all that they too are just children.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A group of Syrian children living as refugees in Istanbul are each paired with an international student to converse and share some life stories. Despite the chaos and difficulties these young refugees have endured fleeing their war-torn home nation they show that they have retained their grit, tenacity and sense of humour. As conversation flows between the series of improbable duos it becomes evident that though there might exist a number of cultural and linguistic barriers ultimately there is more common ground than one might have previously thought. Bonding over pizza, football and an Arabic copy of the little prince amongst other things the young refugees make this realisation inevitable and champion their own resilience and humanity through a series of endearing encounters with their international counterparts.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Fleeing a war-torn nation in the hopes of a better life or at the very least safety for their families, many Syrians seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as Turkey. This humanitarian and refugee crisis attracts volunteers from all over the world including a group of international students giving up their summer to support the cause. These young men and women came to Istanbul hoping to do some good and help some young refugees. Despite their intentions it is the young refugees who teach them a lesson in bravery and compassion showing that despite their tumultuous life experiences they have not been enfeebled nor broken down. Through a series of uplifting interactions between these young people living worlds apart, we find that above all there are more similarities than one might have thought. Broken into pairs they each find commonalities and shared passions bringing these disparate peoples together in a way which is visibly surprising to them. The international volunteers are shown that ultimately the people they came to help are not so different to themselves making their bravery, and the hardships they have had to overcome even more striking. Friendships and mutual respect are forged as these discoveries are made in an uplifting and humanising depiction of refugees and their lives.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Syrian humanitarian and refugee crisis is an issue which has saturated the news in one way or another for quite some time now since the start of the civil war in 2011. Generally much of the coverage has been productive and helps to raise awareness about an important issue. However it is equally true the narrative has often been warped and twisted along the way leading to a disconnect with the reality of the situation on the ground and crucially with the identity of those who are afflicted. Indeed some of the coverage focusses upon the intense victimhood of these displaced peoples seeking to elicit a cheap emotional reaction through a jarring depiction of the worst hardships and horrors that they face. Conversely a less compassionate message can be found which stresses the burdens that refugees place upon host nations and the ramifications of their displacement for others. Ultimately it is our belief that both interpretations and depictions of these disenfranchised peoples are divisive, dehumanising and unproductive helping to foster an “us” and “them” mentality, which is exactly what we sought to combat with this film.

Instead we seek to show the world the enormous richness in humanity that these Syrian refugees possess and empower those actually affected by this crisis with the opportunity to take back control over the narrative. Indeed ‘Pizza, Democracy and the Little Prince’ does just this, allowing a group of young Syrian refugees to demonstrate to both the international volunteers who came to help them, as well as the viewer at home that they cannot be reduced to mere victims nor burdens. Rather they are people just like anyone else, albeit resiliently enduring some especially difficult circumstances. Throughout the course of the film it is exactly this which emerges as the young refugees are quick to challenge the dangerous preconception that they are “other” to those who are fortunate enough to be mere bystanders in this humanitarian crisis. Indeed by forging bonds over shared interests and passions with their international counterparts these young refugees refuse to have their humanity questioned and champion to the world that they are more than simply refugees they are people with the same hopes and aspirations as any other. This is a powerful humanising message which fosters unity and makes it difficult to not identify with and feel compassion for the victims of this humanitarian crisis.

We believe that empowering these disenfranchised peoples to challenge the perceptions of who they are is key to promoting a more nuanced understanding of the Syrian refugee crisis, setting the stage for successful integration and in galvanising others into the positive action necessary to effectuate social change. It is our sincere hope that through the more humanising depictions of the crisis found in our short film we can change and improve the current culture surrounding this issue. Our goal is for this film to be shown at schools and other educational establishments around the world as an education tool which can help foster a more tolerant and open minded understanding of the situation and those who are affected by it. This in turn should help us to move forward as a society and forge a more positive reality for the next generation.

BIOGRAPHIES

Elena Horn

Elena is a young German filmmaker who started her career as a media psychologist researching the framing effects in the news coverage of the Iraq War in the US, Britain and Sweden. Today she is working as a story producer for ARTE, WDR, RTL and SPIEGEL TV Wissen. Elena's films focus on questions around education, working culture, love and ethnic conflict employing visual inspirations from the world of music and dance. As a director, Elena is a fellow of the Logan Non-Fiction Program in New York. In 2018 she was selected for the Global Short Doc Forum in London with her debut documentary "The Lesson".

Alessandro Leonardi

Alessandro Leonardi is an Italian film director. He graduated in Philosophy from the Università degli Studi in Milan, and then moved to London, where he obtained a Masters in Documentary at Brunel University. His short documentary debut 'Generation In Transit' featured on BBC3. Alessandro has experience in directing, shooting and editing in TV productions, feature films, documentaries as well as commercials. He is constantly in search of evocative aesthetics and powerful narratives - his quest is to find beautiful stories somewhere halfway between reality and fiction. He is always on the move around the globe, and lately filmed a travel documentary series across Europe for Der Spiegel TV. He is also a fellow at the Logan Institute in New York. His short movies received important Italian awards from Rai Cinema, Film Commission Torino Piemonte and international awards as well.

Alevtina Nepomniachtchikh

Alevtina has worked in the finance industry for almost a decade. She is an avid supporter of initiatives in education. Alevtina founded The Gazi Research Project to actively support research into issues faced by refugees and translate findings into practical solutions through real-world initiatives. Alevtina is also the founder of Open Citadel, a UK based production company dedicated to producing content in support of educational causes that seek to address all forms of prejudice and discrimination and generate positive social change.

Andras Kapuvari

András is a Hungarian-born educator and entrepreneur. He studied Land Economy at the University of Cambridge and currently manages his own educational technology venture, Edukado, in London. Prior to that, he worked as a consultant in Germany and Saudi Arabia. András is also member of the Cambridge Whitehall Group Education Committee. His main interests are application of digital technology in and the possibility of social empowerment through education as well as improving learning outcomes of third cultured kids.

open citadel

Open Citadel is a UK based media production company that specializes in producing content in support of educational causes that seek to overcome cultural, racial and religious barriers to help develop critical reflection and empower the young generation to stand up to injustice, prejudice and discrimination. Our films endeavour to foster a culture of compassion and justice and set the stage for creating a more tolerant, understanding and accepting society.

GIVE A HAND INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

The Give a Hand Organization (GAH) offers a volunteer program for students all around the world with focus on social impact. The aim of the programs is to help displaced children get educational opportunities they deserve and raise awareness about the unjust treatment of refugee children. The GAH gives international high school students from diverse background the chance to volunteer and create new social impact projects based on their varied interests and passions.



CREDITS

Directed by Elena Horn
Alessandro Leonardi

Cinematography by Alessandro Leonardi

Producer Alevtina Nepomniachtchikh

Co-producer Andras Kapuvari

Cast (in order of appearance) Maria, Rabi, Cemile, Moumi, Ali,
Lotas, Shuang Wu, Claire Schweitz,
Yahya, Pawan Polcharoen, Hamza,
Tamas Kocsis, Elif Naz Erkli, Yigit Kutun,
Beyhan, Alicja Borzyszkowska, Yu Qiao,
Kasim Domac, Muhammed, Luqi Wu,
Zeynep Duru Isk, Reyhan

Interpreter Mohammed Shalaby

Translator Burcu Ertunc
Maria Szafarz
Zeynep Duru Isik
Siyu Wang
Farah Wael Hallaba
Sebestyen Gergely
Kasim Domac

Editor Alessandro Leonardi

Second camera Elena Horn
Halil Sari
Yusufhan Igret
Serhat Tekin

Sound Önder Sagkal

Music composer Mattis Schaffer

Production coordinators Seba Kosematoglu
Hulya Kosematoglu

Production assistants Alicja Borzyszkowska
Kasim Domac
Fatma Soylu
Ihsan Kuyumcu

Distribution Julia Czaplinska
Simon Cerf

Copywriter Adam Gethin-Jones

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Delina
Señor

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