

Children of War



*"YOU HAVE TO SING
TO PEACE, TO LIFE
AND TO HOPE. BECAUSE
IF THERE'S A PERSON
WHO DOESN'T HAVE
HOPE FOR LIFE, HE'S
LIKE A DEATH."*

— Fito Garcia, teenage refugee from
Guatemala, introducing a song he sings
for Canadian students

Produced by the International Youth Year Training Program, with the assistance of
Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada



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Children of War

This remarkable film introduces Canadians to teenagers from war-torn lands and chronicles their personal accounts of what life is like in the absence of basic human rights. The teenagers include Cairan Cahill from Northern Ireland; Yvette Le Roux, a white anti-apartheid student from Namibia; Gui Henriques, who fled East Timor to escape genocide; Yamila Zelaya, an activist student refugee from El Salvador; Fito Garcia, an activist in the popular resistance and a refugee from Guatemala; and Justice Kangwa from Zimbabwe, a country that has had majority rule since 1980, but that is still recovering from the emotional wounds of oppression.

Speaking with dignity and candor to high school students in Montreal, these teenagers relate the suffering they and their people have endured. Some, like Cairan Cahill, have spent their entire lives amidst violence, never knowing what it is to live under peaceful conditions. Others, like Yamila Zelaya and Fito Garcia, became active in student and popular resistance movements when military minorities seized power in their countries.

Together, these courageous teenagers put a human face on some of the stories we hear or see in the media. They talk about how it feels to be under constant surveillance, or to be harassed for no reason at all. They describe some of the brutal psychological torture they have undergone, and the systematic genocide they have witnessed. They reveal several of the common tactics used worldwide to try to demoralize and disempower people, such as friends or family members of known activists being murdered and left on the activists' doorsteps, or individuals being taken into custody then simply disappearing.

The teenagers from these troubled countries display intelligence, maturity, and a faith in the future. They communicate clearly the details of situations that are essentially foreign to Canadian youth. This inspiring and thought-provoking film will introduce students to the realities being faced by their peers in many other cultures. An excellent discussion starter for the classroom, grades 7 to 13.

Note: The six teenagers appearing in this film were participants in the 1985-86 International Youth for Peace and Justice Tour, an event organized by community groups and school boards across Canada and supported by the government. The documentary chronicles their meetings with both grade 8 and grade 11 students.

The excellent *Study Guide: International Youth for Peace and Justice Tour 1986*, containing extensive lesson suggestions and study material, is available from I.Y.P.J.T., 1435 City Councillors, Suite 31, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2E4 (Cost: \$10.)

There is also a French film, *Les Enfants de la guerre*, filmed during a French-language tour, ID # 106C 0286 059, 23:43.

Audiences:

General audiences; High school (grades 7 to 13)

Subject Areas:

Social Studies, History and Current Affairs; Political Science and Peace Education units; Values Education/Ethics

Some questions for discussion:

1. What are some of your feelings and thoughts after viewing this film? Are there details you find surprising?
2. Which teenager impresses you the most? Why?
3. Imagine you are one of the teenagers in the film who had to escape his/her country. What is it like to go to school and to live in a foreign country? Is it easy to learn a new language? How do classmates behave towards you?
4. What qualities of personal being and attitudes in relationships might help avoid the polarizations that seem to lead to conflict?
5. Think of times when you acted out of a wish for revenge on someone, out of greed, or out of a wish to experience power over others. Discuss these times in small groups. Imagine what the world would be like if everyone always acted out of these impulses.
6. Many people believe that foreign intervention — for example, the provision of military weapons — accelerates and maintains civil war. What is civil war? Why do other countries get involved? The International Youth for Peace and Justice Tour is another example of foreign intervention. In your view, is it a "justified" one? What makes it different from military intervention, or from political/economic colonialization?
7. In small groups, think of one or two small steps you can take that would help you and others move towards a more harmonious world.

Activities:

1. In small groups, choose one of the teenagers appearing in the film and write a short description of what his/her daily life was or is like. From this, discuss a typical situation you can role-play. Rehearse this short drama, then act it out for your classmates. In the large class group, discuss what it would be like to live such a scenario on a daily basis. Remember to look for some of the positive aspects.
2. Imagine you are living in one of the situations described in the film. What kinds of belief systems, about the world and about people, might you develop? Share your ideas in small groups. Then, with your group, think about the belief systems you have developed in your own culture. Have one person in the group list the belief systems you come up with, for the other culture and for your own. What meaning of *power* would each belief lead to?
3. Choose one of the countries mentioned in the film. Research its history, and its current events, then write an essay. Include consideration of why the country is where it is today, and also what might help the country move towards more peaceful conditions.
4. Write a short essay on qualities of being that can help one face crises and challenges. Include what you have learned from the teenagers in the film.

Director
Premika Ratnam

Cinematographer
Roger Rochat

Sound Recordist
Catherine Van Der Donck

Music Composed and Performed by
Fito Garcia

Sound Editor
Meiyen Chan

Re-recording
Shelley Craig

Commentary Written by
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Narrator
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Produced by the International Youth Year Training Program with the assistance of Studio D of the National Film Board of Canada

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Color

Screening time: 25 minutes 20 seconds

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3/4": 116C 0186 067
VHS: 113C 0186 067
Beta: 114C 0186 067



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