

Filmmaking and Youth Video Programs

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Film and youth programs bring arts and social action dynamically together. Several active projects have made an impact since 1999. Here is the list of documentaries/films promoted by Balkan Sunflowers. More information about them below:

- Heart Poem (2000)
- Postcards from Peje (2000)
- Environment campaign TV spots (2001)
- Water emergency campaign TV spots (2002)
- In the Hands of the Youth (2002)
- Welcome to Plemetina (2003)
- Four Years Later (2004)
- CAN Volunteer Film (2005)
- Fighting Disease in Plemetina (2005)
- Four Changes (2005)
- Jekh Kham Jekh Sel (2007)
- A Chance to Learn (2008)
- Nachi Palem Khere / Never Back Home (2010) - in partnership with Romawood
- Our Journey (Stragedy) (2012)
- Cikorje Filma spots (2011-2012)

Furthermore, and in partnership with Romawood Balkan Sunflowers implemented the "Strengthening Minority Broadcasting in Kosovo" and the Rolling Film Festival programs.

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Youth Video 2000-2009

Balkan Sunflowers began a youth video program in Peja in early January 2000, only 8 months after the end of the war, as part of our Environment and Arts program, supported by UNICEF.

This program soon developed into a vibrant video workshop, with support from Canadian CIDA and IRC. The program leader was Kreshnik Tahirbegollii. Volunteer Sally Thompson from the UK worked as well with the first young videographers. Several short environmental films were made.

In February 2000 BSF Kosovo coordinator Rand Engel was on a flight from New York to Los Angeles. He had hastily torn an article about a Palestinian-Israeli youth video project from the New York Times, which he read on the flight. The article described "Peace of Mind" and its director, Mark Landsman. A few weeks later, returning to New York, sitting in the last row of the flight, he got into conversation with a woman sitting next to him, Denise Kasell, Executive Director of the Hamptons International Film Festival. She was showing "Peace of Mind" at the Hamptons Festival. A day later Landsman and Engel were talking about doing a project in Kosovo, and a day after that, Engel was on his way back to Kosovo.

In August 2000 Mark Landsman came to Peja to run a one month-long workshops. Two films were made: "Heart Poem" by the 12-14 year-olds, and "Postcard from Peja" by the older teenagers. Postcard was subsequently debuted at the Sundance Film Festival Gen-X workshop, and shown at the Human Rights Film Festival (NY), the One World Festival, Prishtina, and at other venues as part of the Human Rights Watch film program.

Postcard from Peje was made by Kosovar Albanian young people recounting their experience of war and loss, their life a year after the end of a devastating war, and their thoughts for the future. It was not "balanced" by other views of what happened. It was their voice. We believe it was a very honest look at the cost of war on young people.

Postcard from Peja 1st part

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Postcard from Peja 2nd part

In 2001, the youth made a number of short spots, including television public service announcements for the Care for Our

Kosovo program. In 2002, another film on "youth and violence" themes, *In the Hands of the Youth*, was produced, in a UNDP project as part of their Supporting Human Security in Kosovo program.

In 2003, filmmaker Kieran Darcy spent a year working with Kosovo youth in BSF projects. The first film, *Welcome to Plemetina*, was made with 14 Roma youth from Plemetina village, Obiliq/c municipality, near Prishtina. The film has subsequently been shown on Kosovo television, and at festivals in Europe and the US. The project was supported by the OSCE. Kieran then worked with a group of nine youths from Albanian, Serbian and Roma communities. A 42-minute documentary, *Four Years Later*, was produced, with support from the UNHCR.

Welcome To Plemetina part 1

Welcome to Plemetina Part 2

A number of young people have been significantly influenced by their participation in these programs:

- Kreshnik Tahirbegolli and two other participants in the Peja program were invited to attend the Sundance Film Festival in 2001. Kreshnik worked for Dukagjini television in Peja for many years and now works for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada.
- Casey Cooper-Johnson, BSF Peja coordinator, has become a filmmaker in Prishtina. He appears weekly on television with his satire, *Dhandrri i Kosovës*, and he is producer of "Under Construction" a television series now appearing on broadcasters in the Balkans region.
- Antoneta and Sevdije Kastrati, from Peja, have both become filmmakers. Sevdije, along with Casey is attending AFI. Neta's films have had many festival showings.
- Sami Mustafa from Plemetina village has formed Romawood Productions. One of his short films was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, which he was invited to attend. Sami volunteered with the European Voluntary Service in Bosnia introducing other young people to film, and has led film workshops in Kosovo, introducing others to film and continuing his own film work. He has been invited to do filmwork in France, Spain, Slovenia, and elsewhere. He has recently finished *Nachi Palem Khere (Never Back Home)* a one-hour documentary at the Plemetina Internally Displaced Persons camp, covering 10 years of the life of victims of war.
- Afrodita Berisa, Driton Berisa and Sylvia Emini all participated in the Plemetina project and subsequently got jobs with Radio Television Kosovo.
- Valon Imeri is a filmmaker, formerly in Prishtina, now in the US. He worked with RTK and makes his own films, one of which was shown at the Roma Film Festival in New York in October 2009. Valon was involved in a project profiling the lives of 4 young people around the globe "from China, America, Africa" and Valon in the Balkans.
- Tefik Agushi participated in BSF's 4 Years Later project and worked several years for Radio Television Kosovo.

To see other Balkan Sunflowers videos:

Volunteering

Community Activist Network