

SYNOPSIS



"In 1965, under the leadership of General Suharto, the military moved against Sukarno, and under emergency powers began a massive purge of communists and their sympathizers. between 500,000 and one million people were slaughtered during the purge, with 750,000 others imprisoned or forced into exile. It was two years after the purge began, in 1967, the same year that Suharto assumed the presidency, that my mother and I arrived in Jakarta."

Barack Obama, "The Audacity of Hope"

Directed by anthropologist Robert Lemelson and edited by two-time Academy Award winner Pietro Scalia, "40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy" is a moving feature length documentary film about one of the most horrific chapters in Indonesia's history.

In one of the largest unknown mass-killings of the 20th century, an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 people were secretly and systematically killed in 1965-1966, when General Suharto began a bloody purge of suspected communists throughout Indonesia. Wielding his growing influence to install his New Order regime, Suharto ultimately gained power and the presidency of the country. Under his authoritarian rule, any discussion, recognition or memorializing of the mass killings that differed from the Suharto's official state narrative was quickly suppressed.

"40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy" follows the compelling testimonies of four individuals and their families from Central Java and Bali, two regions heavily affected by the purge. As they break their silence publicly for the first time, each family provides an intimate and frightening look at what it was like for survivors of the mass-killings. In chilling detail, they describe the events of 1965 through their own experiences, re-living and reflecting upon the stigmatization and brutalization they continue to endure on both the village and state levels. Over time, the survivors and their families attempt to find ways to deal with a tragedy that was not openly recognized by their neighbors, government or the world. Through their stories, the audience will come to understand modern-day Indonesia's potential for retribution, rehabilitation and reconciliation within this troubled historical context. The characters' narratives illustrate that such violence creates tears in the social and political fabric of society, which can take generations to heal.

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In modern psychiatry, the characters in this film would be given the diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur after a traumatic or life-threatening event. While all four characters in the film meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (e.g. frequent nightmares, hyperstartle reactions, emotional flooding and numbing, hyper vigilance), they find different ways to cope with their trauma without medication. These methods range from spirituality and political activism to a slow reintegration into society via community service. This highlights the importance of sociocultural and psychological differences between subjects coming from the same cultural context.

The film is composed of two distinct threads. One involves the main characters who, as children in 1965, witnessed the deaths, imprisonments and disappearances of close family members. As children, they also suffered the stigmatization and brutality of life under Suharto's New Order state. Finally, as adults, they struggle to come to terms with their tragic pasts. The film explores how each character copes with the long-lasting effects of childhood trauma. One character withdraws into a fantasy world; another turns to spirituality, and another towards activism. Finally, several of the characters confront the perpetrators, under whose shadow they have lived for years.

The second theme in the film is the multigenerational effects of the killings of 1965. The film provides a glimpse into the life of Budi, a young boy from Java, who is beaten and harassed by local villagers due to his father's status as a former political prisoner. His family finally decides to place him in an orphanage to remove him from this destructive social milieu. The film follows Budi's story, and we see him grow up from age 12-17, finally becoming a young adult who returns to the village where he was ostracized to confront the people who tortured him and his family.

However, this film is more than a tragic story of a genocide and its victims. The deeper theme in this film is the story of how children perceive, cope with, and ultimately come to terms with these experiences throughout their life course. The juxtaposition of narratives of the past with the current struggles of a younger generation provides a window into long-lasting effects of childhood trauma. It also stresses the importance of having a contextual understanding when exploring the effects of violence. The film makes the point that, in order to understand how best to treat victims of trauma, we need to have a clear understanding of their culture and history.

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This film goes beyond recounting the tales of Indonesians affected by the events of 1965. In the 20th century alone, several genocides and mass killings have taken place whose aftermaths have gone largely unnoticed. It is essential that we bring awareness to the long-lasting effects of such violence. This film has particular relevance in light of the current troubles confronting the United States - in Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, and other societies dealing with long-term violence, fear, oppression and loss. There are generations of people throughout such societies who will endure the same struggles as the characters in this film, and this film illuminates the human aspects of these horrific struggles.



CHARACTER BIOS





KERETA

Kereta is a Balinese farmer who witnessed the violence of 1965 firsthand. His father was betrayed by his own family, and was subsequently executed in front of his children. After this, Kereta begins to withdraw under the pressure of continued surveillance and fear under the New Order, and finally retreats into his own world filled with Balinese spirits and gods.



LANNY

At thirteen years old in Central Java, Lanny was abandoned by her father and later witnessed his execution. As an adult, she undergoes a profound spiritual crisis. Finally, after embracing Buddhism, she is able to return to the village where her father was murdered in order to do good works.



DEGUNG

A high-caste Balinese, Degung was abandoned following his father's death, and was raised by prostitutes Surabaya, Java. He returns home as a teenager and eventually becomes a scholar and an activist, raising awareness of the trauma caused by 1965 and its aftermath.



BUDI

Although Budi was born decades after the killings of 1965, he is harassed, stigmatized, and traumatized by local villagers in Java due to his father's status as an expolitical prisoner. His all-consuming desire for revenge leads him to face the men who tormented him and his family members.

CREW LIST





ROBERT LEMELSON

Director/Producer

A documentary filmmaker and psychological anthropologist, Dr. Robert Lemelson's work focuses on personal experience, culture, and mental illness in Indonesia and the United States. He has been conducting anthropological research in Indonesia since 1993. He is currently a research anthropologist at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior.



PIETRO SCALIA

Supervising Editor

Born in Sicily, Pietro Scalia won two **Academy Awards for Best Editing** including **JFK** by Oliver Stone and **Black Hawk Down** by Ridley Scott. His other editing credits are Body of Lies, American Gangster, Memoirs of a Geisha, Hannibal, Good Will Hunting, The Quick and The Dead, Stealing Beauty, Little Buddha and many others.

CINEMATOGRAPHER Dag Yngvesson

MOTION GRAPHICS / ANIMATION Luis Lopez

EDITORS Kathy Huang Wing Ko Emily Ng Heidi Zimmerman

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Alessandra Pasquino

MUSIC COMPOSER Malcolm Cross

FIELD SUPERVISORS Wayan Sadha

Ninik Supartini

MUSIC EDITOR
Richard Henderson



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I am sure everyone is familiar with George Santayana's quote, "Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This phrase has particular salience for this film. This film concerns the long-term effects of the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966, where approximately 500,000 to 1,000,000 people were killed in a matter of months. This violence was hidden from the world's view for 35 years under General Suharto's regime. In the years following the communist purge, there was an enforced silence about what had happened, hence the film's title "40 Years of Silence." It is only now, after the fall of the New Order regime in 1998 and the death of President Suharto last year, that Indonesians are starting to open up and come to terms with this horrific and tragic history.

The film is an intimate portrait of four families from very different parts of the Indonesian archipelago, all of whom were deeply affected by this event. Although they are from different parts of the Indonesian social world, all four characters witnessed their family members being imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

The film begins by telling these families' stories pre-1965 via their personal reflections and memories of their childhood. The characters then describe their families' experiences from 1965 and 1966, and discuss life during the New Order.

The film closes with the characters realization that the truth seeking and the search for justice and a measure of peace must begin with themselves, their families and their local communities. The prospect for a national reconciliation process is far off, even in a increasingly open, democratic and free Indonesia.

The film tells a very poignant and moving story. It is our hope that more people in the world aware of this tragic history. It is also our hope that Indonesians become more aware of this history, from the perspective of the victims. Understanding and telling this history is long overdue in modern Indonesia. It is also a vital process to ensure that this history is never repeated.

HISTORIANS ON 1965

In "40 Years of Silence" three historians provide the historical background and context for understanding the events of 1965 and their aftermath in Indonesia.



John Roosa, Ph.D.

Professor of History at University of British Columbia. His book, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia* (New Perspectives in SE Asian Studies) was published in 2006 by University of Wisconsin Press.



Geoffrey Robinson, Ph.D.

Professor of history at University of California, Los Angeles. His book *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence* in **Bali** was published in 1995 by Cornell University Press.



Baskara T. Wardaya, Ph.D.

Professor of history at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, Java. His book **Supersemar Revealed! From the CIA to the creeping Coup D'etat against Bung Karno** was published in 2006 by Galang Press in Jakarta.

MUSIC NOTES





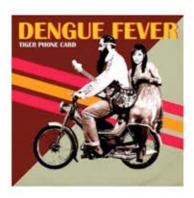
MUSIC EDITOR

Richard Henderson attended S.U.N.Y. Buffalo in the late 70's and studied film history. Richard's vibrant career path led him to work as a music editor and music supervisor on such acclaimed films like Borat, The Life Aquatic, and Into The Wild, which won him the Golden Reel Award. He is currently working on the sequel to Borat called Bruno with Sacha Baron Cohen.



COMPOSER

Malcolm Cross studied music performance and composition in London at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He also completed additional postgraduate studies in Jazz and Studio Music. Malcolm's past work includes original film scores for "Insomniac Obsessions (directed by Paul Cameron Carter), "Oh Saigon" documentary directed by Doan Hoang, "I Dream of Dog" directed by Jessica Rice, and "The Grey" by Norman Trotter IV.



Featuring music by

Dengue Fever is a Los Angeles based band that combines Cambodian pop music with psychedelic rock. Their rendition of the song "Genjer Genjer" is featured in the film. The song "Genjer Genjer" was initially written about women who gather the genjer plant, tie it in bunches, and sell it in the market. The song later became associated with the Indonesian communist party, and the government banned its performance.

To purchase "Genjer Genjer" by Dengue Fever, visit http://www.amazon.co.uk/Genjer/dp/B001IAMZ2C.

To purchase other music produced by **Elemental Productions**, visit http://cdbaby.com/cd/indonesiav1

For more information, visit http://www.40yearsofsilence.com



1. What inspired you to make this film?

Being trained as both a clinical psychologist and psychological anthropologist, I have long been interested in studying the long-term effects of trauma on people's lives and experiences in different cultures. I felt that only by understanding these issues could we come up with better ways to treat people who have experienced trauma in their lives.

2. When did you start this project, and did you anticipate that it would take so long to complete?

Although a few shots in the film are from 1997, most of the footage comes from 2001-2006. Each year, several times a year, my film crew and I returned to Indonesia to follow the subjects' lives. It took this long to complete because we wanted a long enough scope in the characters' lives to really track their development.

3. Did you have a personal connection to Indonesia?

I have been working in Indonesia every year since 1993. I was a Fulbright scholar to Indonesia from 1996 – 1997, and have conducted thousands of interviews with subjects throughout the country, all focusing on issues relating to personal experience, culture, and mental illness.

4. How did you find the individuals and families for the film? Was it difficult convincing them to participate?

Some of them were patients in the clinics where I was conducting anthropological research, some were colleagues, and others were informants. I now consider all of them my close personal friends. Some feared for their personal safety but ultimately, they all felt that their stories should be told. It was only after I knew them well that they agreed to speak about their experiences during 1965 and afterwards.

5. Are you still in contact with them? How are their lives today?

Yes, and their lives are largely the same as they were depicted in the film.

6. Have the individuals you interviewed for the film seen it? If so, what was their response?

They have seen various cuts of the film throughout the editing process. They have given their consent for it to be shown.



7. I want to see your film. Is it available in theaters, on television or DVD?

Currently, the film is going through the film festival circuit. We are in discussion with distributors about having the film being more widely shown.

8. Do you intend to make other films? If so, what subject matter do you plan on addressing?

We are currently in production of a series of films that tells the stories of three people with mental illnesses in Indonesia. The film explores each individual's way of coping with their illness, and their community's response to it. See www.elementalproductions.org for more information.

9. How do the events of 1965 in Indonesia apply to other regions in the world?

There are both similarities and differences between the mass killings of 1965 and other mass killings of the 20th century. One of the striking features of the violence under General Suharto's regime was the degree to which the government successfully repressed all memorials, remembrances, and recollections of the event. The Suharto regime created a monolithic state narrative, and thus the world knows very little of this horrific and tragic history. There was an enforced silence in Indonesia because the perpetrators remained in power for decades afterwards.

It is only now that Indonesians are beginning to speak out, and this film represents part of that effort. Whenever I have given talks about this, even to highly educated audiences, rarely do people even know about this event even though it was the among the largest mass killings of the 20th century. This brings to mind the quote from Adolf Hitler, who, in planning the "Final Solution" stated "Who remembers the Armenians?" His belief was that he could act with impunity because he believed no one remembered or chose to care about the Armenian genocide. The "will to bear witness" in the efforts to bring such events as the mass killings in 1965 to wide attention are necessary correctives to the silencing of millions.

10. What do you hope audiences will take away from the film?

There are many paths to recovering from a childhood of violence and trauma. This film illustrates this by showing characters who all learn to cope and recover from their trauma in different ways. Secondly, it is crucial to understand the social and cultural setting in which trauma occurs. Without this understanding, the meanings and implications of trauma and violence could be misinterpreted.



PRODUCTION NOTES

"40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy" was shot in a ten year period from 1997-2007 in the islands of Bali and Java in Indonesia.

The languages spoken in the film are English, Balinese, Javanese, and Indonesian. It is subtitled in English.

There are over 400 hours of footage, making it a challenging and rewarding process to cut it down to an 86 minute film.

The film is shot in Dv-Cam and 16 mm.

The music is all original, and much of it recorded in Indonesia, with Indonesian musicians.

Over 300 hours of interviews were recorded, with over 10,000 pages of translated transcripts.

Footage was also shot at the deserted political prison camps on Buru island in eastern Indonesia.



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An electronic press kit is available for download on our website http://www.40yearsofsilence.com/presses/2

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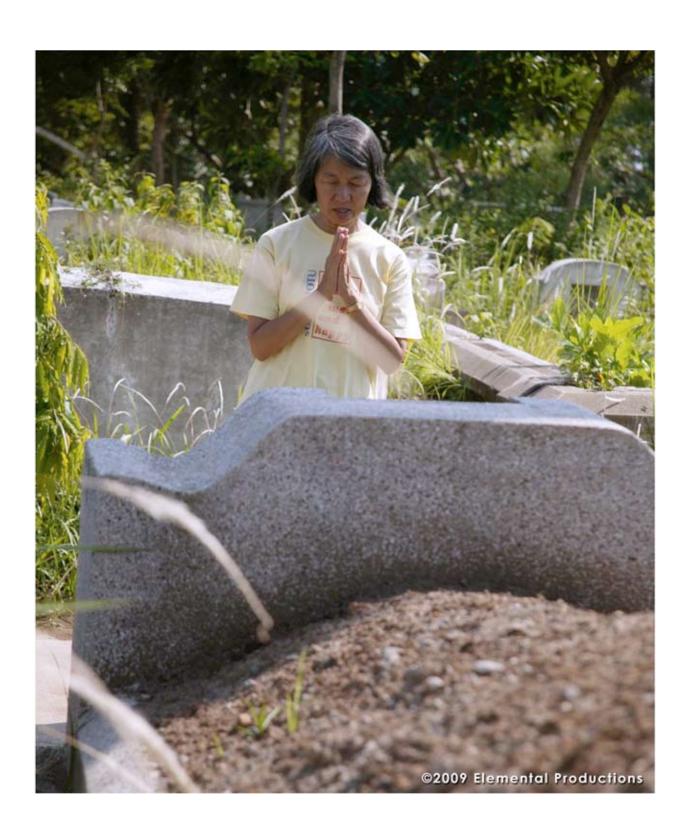




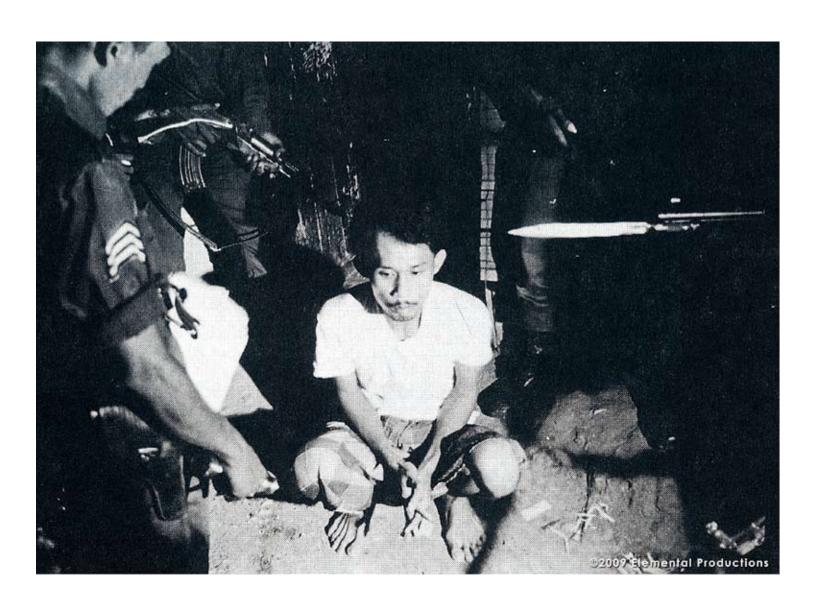












UCLAToday | Faculty and Staff News

10 Questions for Robert Lemelson

In 1965-66, between 500,000 and 1 million Indonesians were slaughtered in one of the most barbaric state-sponsored humanitarian tragedies of the modern world. Long denied by the Indonesian government, the little-known massacre is mentioned in President Obama's bestselling book, "The Audacity of Hope."

It is also the subject of a chilling documentary film produced and directed by **Robert Lemelson**, a research anthropologist at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. The film, "40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy," follows the lives of four survivors and their families over a six-year period. Lemelson talks with Today Staff Writer Ajay Singh about the film and why the so-called "1965" event is still shrouded in silence.



What was the impetus for your film?

I was doing work in Indonesia with about 100 patients who had suffered a psychotic breakdown when I realized that the origins of some of their problems were in the events of 1965. I was in Indonesia in 1996-97 as a Fulbright scholar, a time when discussing, exploring, doing research on '65 was next to impossible. In fact, before [the late Indonesian President] Suharto fell from power in 1998, no one wanted to talk about '65. They were frightened and had good reasons to be. One of the survivors shown in my film, for example, had never mentioned to anybody that his father had been killed in front of him, that members of his family were taken away and that other members of his village had participated in the killings.

Do you find Indonesia appealing as an anthropologist?

It's one of the more culturally fascinating and diverse places in the world. My work is in cultural and trans-cultural psychiatry, and you need to pick a part of the world in which

there's a large ethnographic corpus of the complicated relationships between culture and mental illness. My original project was looking at issues of outcome and recovery from severe mental illness, following the World Health Organization's studies that people in the developing world have better recovery outcomes: If you develop schizophrenia in Bali, India or Nigeria, you're more likely to return home and to work and have fewer hospitalizations.

What were the reasons for 1965?

In the early to mid-1960s, the economic policies of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, were pretty disastrous and there was tremendous poverty, destitution and suffering. The Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which was the third-largest communist party in the world, was very popular. The Vietnam War was ratcheting up and many people in Indonesia and in the West were very frightened of the PKI. On September 30, 1965, there was a coup attempt that was subsequently blamed entirely on the PKI. Six generals and a colonel were either killed or kidnapped and later executed. It was a very incompetent coup and it was rapidly suppressed. General Suharto took control of the military and used the coup — in the words of University of British Columbia historian John Russo, who's in the film — as a pretext for mass murder.

As an anthropologist, why do you think people commit genocide?

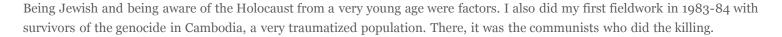


Is it people who commit genocide? Or actors on various levels? It's a very complex array of forces ranging from human nature to political economy to power grabs. But if you look at Rwanda, Cambodia and Bosnia, would the genocides there have occurred without political leaders?

Why is there such silence about the Indonesian genocide?

The silence was imposed from above. It was too dangerous for people to speak about the killings.

Is there something in your own background that got you interested in genocide?



Is there another side to 1965 that deserves mention?

One of the theories about '65 is that it was a spontaneous uprising against the PKI. But as the film discusses, the generals were killed in October and the killings, in Bali, for example, didn't start in any large sense until mid-December, with the arrival of Suharto's paramilitary troops. The violence then spread. So these were killings that were driven — they weren't some sort of 'national force' within a society.



How has the Indonesian government reacted to your film?

They haven't because I haven't released it in Indonesia yet. But a reaction is certainly a concern of mine because '65 is such a sensitive issue in Indonesia. There are many forces in Indonesia who either do not want the story to be told or have been so convinced by the monolithic state narrative in a propaganda film that until lately was shown every year. The nation would shut down and would have to watch this film and remember the fallen generals. So there was one story about what happened in '65, and any dissenting or conflicting stories were rapidly, often brutally, suppressed.

Has that stopped after the Suharto era?

Not entirely. In 2001, the government rewrote some of the high school textbooks to include a more nuanced picture of what happened in '65. In 2007, there were mass book burnings in Java of these textbooks. People felt they wanted to return to the Suharto-era version of history. Some historians believe violence in Indonesia can be quite cyclical in nature. So the fear that violence and repression will return is a real one.

Why do you think it's important to for 'truth and reconciliation' in such matters?

The best answer to that came from the philosopher George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

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Arts

Breaking from the 'Silence'

Published On 2/20/2009 10:41:52 AM By ANITA B. HOFSCHNEIDER Crimson Staff Writer

"I want to torture people the way they did my family," proclaims Budi, a young Indonesian boy, at the start of Robert B. Lemelson's documentary film, "40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy." Such is the sentiment that now prevails over the long silence that followed in the wake of the mass killings which took place in the mid-60s in Bali—deeply embedded anger is passionately released, experiences of discrimination and pain fervently expressed. In a film both moving and disturbing, psychological anthropologist Lemelson explores the lives of four individuals and their families in Indonesia, and reveals their suffering through "one of the largest unknown mass killings of the 20th century."

Produced and directed by Lemelson and edited by two-time Academy Award winner Pietro Scalia ("Black Hawk Down," "JFK"), "40 Years of Silence" documents the systematic and discreet extermination of an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 Indonesians from 1965 to 1966. The killings, which targeted members of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), a then-legal political entity, occurred under the direction of General Suharto at the time of his rise to power. Suharto eventually ascended to the presidency and remained there until 1998. It is only now, a decade after his resignation and 40 years after the massacre, that survivors of the atrocities are finally sharing their stories.

The film, which was screened at Harvard on February 12th, was well received by its audience, but also subjected to certain pointed criticisms. Spectators found fault with the film's lack of emphasis on the involvement of the U.S. government in the killings, and on Lemelson's portrayal of the PKI's lack of culpability.

The former criticism held that the film ought to have addressed the CIA's involvement in the atrocities, which included covert support and funding of Suharto's army. In response, Lemelson stated that the choice to omit that part of history was an "editorial decision," and cited the limited amount of time allotted for imparting information.

The latter criticism contended that Lemelson did not adequately express the PKI's role in the atrocities of 1965, choosing instead to lay all the blame on Suharto and his "New Order" regime.

Of this criticism, Lemelson admitted, "[The film] gives a little bit of a false picture." Although he is a self-professed "anti-Communist," he conceded that the film is "soft" on the PKI's contribution to the extreme tensions in Indonesian society during 1965.

Despite these criticisms, however, the film is strong in several areas. The film's score, which was edited by Richard Henderson ("Borat," "The Life Aquatic"), is entirely original and complements the intense testimonies of the participants. The use of archival footage and historical commentary is also effective, as is Lemelson's attention to character development. As one spectator commented, the film does not attempt to "glamorize or create saints" out of the victims. Rather, they are portrayed honestly as complicated people coming to terms with the trauma of their past. In fact, all of the survivors interviewed in the film are struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the social stigmatization that still haunts Communist-affiliated citizens in Indonesia.

Lemelson, a professor at the Department of Psychiatry & Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA, began conducting research in Indonesia in 1996 as a Fulbright Scholar, and has continued his work on culture and mental illness there ever since.

He learned of the 1965 holocaust through a conversation with a man who had lost his family as a result of the purge.

Lemelson said he hopes that the film is eventually viewed by President Obama, who moved to Indonesia the year that Suharto became President. Lemelson believes a public acknowledgement by Obama of the victims' suffering would serve to validate their experiences.

For now, "40 Years of Silence" gives voice to both survivors and victims in an attempt to legitimize a painful history and ensure that the memory of it, once hidden, is not lost.

—Staff writer Anita B. Hofschneider can be reached at hofschn@fas.harvard.edu.

http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=526677

Jakarta **Globe**

April 29, 2009

Breaking the 40-Year Silence About the Anti-Communist Purge

A feature-length documentary that was shown at the Boston International Film Festival over the weekend is an intergenerational depiction of the 1965-66 anti-Communist purge, in which an estimated 500,000 Indonesians were killed at the hands of the military.

"40 Years of Silence: An Indonesia Tragedy" was shot between 1997 and 2007 on the islands of Bali and Java. The film follows the stories of four people whose parents fell victim to the violence and torture of the military; some even witnessed the executions of their parents.

After keeping their stories to themselves for 40 years, they reveal how they struggled to survive discrimination under Suharto's New Order regime and how those experiences still haunt them today.

Kereta, a Balinese farmer, saw a group of men kill his father with a sword after his own family turned him over to authorities. Lanny, a woman from Central Java, has similar memories and finds peace only in her spirituality. Degung, also from Bali, remembers as a child watching a group of men drag his father away and decapitate him. He was abandoned in Surabaya after his father's death and was raised by sex workers there.

Although Budi was born decades after the killings, he has been harassed and stigmatized by his fellow villagers in Java because his father is an ex-political prisoner. He was eventually put into an orphanage to protect him from the villagers who tore down his family's small home. The young man comes face to face with the villagers who tormented him and tells of his anger and desire for revenge.

The director, Robert Lemelson, who is also a trained psychologist, said in a press release that all four of his subjects suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, characterized by frequent nightmares, emotional flooding and hypervigilance.

Degung has focused his energy on political activism, raising awareness of the trauma caused by the mass killings. Lanny focuses on Buddhism to overcome the memories of her father's death. She recounts her childhood, which was spent largely alone as the other children branded her a Communist that couldn't be trusted

Kereta returns to a peaceful life after years of being fearful and wary, also with the image of his father's brutal execution in his mind.

Explanations and opinions from three historians are also included to give a broader political perspective of the purge.

Some of Lemelson's sources were at first reluctant to speak.

"It was only after I knew them well that they agreed to speak about their experiences," Lemelson said. "Some feared for their personal safety, but ultimately, they all felt that their stories should be told."

Living in the United States, Lemelson and his crew returned to Indonesia several times over the years to track the everyday lives of the four subjects and to record their psychological progress.

"[This film] took this long to complete because we wanted a long-enough scope in the characters' lives to really track their development," he said.

Lemelson's film is adding to the pool of information slowly being disclosed from a time shrouded in secrecy.

"One of the striking features of the violence under Suharto's regime was the degree to which the government successfully repressed all memorials, remembrances and recollections of the event," he said.

A screening of a rough cut of the film was shown last year at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, but there is no word yet on whether the film will be screened again in Indonesia.



June 19, 2009

1965 Mass Killings Erased From History, Scholars Say

Armando Siahaan

Singapore. Scholars attending a conference discussing the 1965 mass killings agreed on Friday that the Indonesian government had done very little to address the devastating historical event.

University of Sydney's Adrian Vickers said that Indonesians in general were still entrenched with the New Order frame of mind when it came to public discussion on the event, where the killings of the six generals by Indonesian Communist Party members is given more preeminence than the killings of the some 500,000 victims of alleged communist affiliation.

He said that the government must change the national education curriculum to alter the prevailing mindset on the event.

Asvi Warman Adam, a senior researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, said that the government had yet to include the events of 1965 slaughter in the national curriculum, particularly in history textbooks.

Asvi said that current official Indonesian history textbooks only mentioned the alleged 1965 communist coup, but not the mass killings that followed it.

In the latest version of "Sejarah Nasional Indonesia" (Indonesian National History), a history publication by state-owned Balai Pustaka used as a reference for Indonesian history textbooks, Asvi said that the mass killings were not even mentioned, let alone the notion of human rights violation by the Indonesian armed forces.

Historians said that a countercoup led by then Lt. Gen. Suharto, led to a nationwide purge of communist party members and their supporters that saw more than 1.5 million people summarily detained for years and some 500,000 killed.

"The book only mentions that following the [alleged] September 30 coup, the government established a fact-finding commission that reported directly to the president," Asvi said. "But it didn't mention what was being reported."

Winarso, an activist who has been working with a victims group named Sekber, said that advocacy groups wanted the government to officially recognize and apologize for the killings that occurred in 1965.

Flinders University scholar Priyambudi Sulitiyanto and activist researcher Sentot Setyasiswanto said that many nongovernmental organizations had worked with the

victims and their families, but the government had failed to respond appropriately to their pleas.

They said that one way to address the issue would be by creating a truth and reconciliation commission as an official mechanism to address past human rights abuses in Indonesia, offering some form of reconciliatory closure for the victims.

Under pressure from human rights and victim advocacy groups, the House of Representatives worked on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission draft bill in 2004, but it was annulled by the Constitutional Court in 2006 under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration.

The National Commission on Human Rights then established an ad hoc team in 2008 to address allegations of human rights violations linked to the 1965 slaughter.

Nurkholis, who heads the ad hoc team, said that they have proceeded with a formal inquiry by interviewing witnesses of the event, both from the perpetrators' and the victims' side. He said that the team had gathered 311 interviews from areas in Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Bali.

Nurkholis said that there the inquiry has faced difficulties, such as the far-flung locations of the witnesses and the credibility of the victims's testimonial because of their old age.

He also said that the inquiry not only received weak government support but there were also attempts to influence matters by the military and Islamic groups.

Jakarta **Globe**

July 1, 2009

1965: Giving Voice to the Silenced Past

Armando Siahaan



Rob directing Kereta in "40 Years of Silence." The film has been submitted to the Jakarta International Film Festival, which runs December 4-12. (Photo courtesy of Elemental Productions)

Robert Lemelson's documentary opens with an astute statement: "It is one of the largest unrecognized mass killings of the 20th century."

"It" was a nationwide purge by the Suharto-led Armed Forces following an alleged failed coup by the Indonesian Communist Party on Sept. 30, 1965. More than 500,000 suspected communists were brutally and systematically slaughtered, and more were imprisoned or exiled. Under the New Order regime, the event was erased from the nation's records and, for decades, survivors and families of the victims have kept silent out of fear.

"40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy" chronicles the heart-rending accounts of four individuals gravely affected by the 1965 mass killings, and their journeys to come to terms with the past.

Three of the main subjects of trained psychologist Lemelson's film are living testaments to the violence inflicted on their families.

Kereta was a member of the People's Art Guild, known as Lekra. During the purge he witnessed many killings and had to continually hide to avoid becoming a target himself, as Lekra was thought to be linked to the Communist Party.

The Balinese farmer saw his father betrayed by a close relative and then murdered in front of him. Kereta has lived in constant fear since, he says in the film.

"They attacked him with a sword, they hit his head until his brain splattered, they stabbed his stomach with a sword, they gouged out his eyes with a pick."

Lanny, who is from a well-off family of Chinese ethnicity, said her father left the family to escape being killed when she was only 13 years old. During the reign of Suharto, her house was repeatedly ransacked and her family harassed, nobody wanted to befriend her at school and, eventually, she lost faith in God.

"Even my footsteps expressed anger," Lanny says. "I became very fierce."

Degung was only 5 when the killings took place. His father was killed, his mother later remarried a guard she met while in prison and Degung was sent to Surabaya, where his uncle repeatedly beat him until he ran away to an area where sex workers lived.

He told the filmmakers that at the time, nobody could be trusted. "What I find most devastating about the violence," Degung says, "you know, those who initiated the killings were really more like the guys next door — or sometimes it was your cousin."

Through the words of these four, the 90-minute documentary poignantly recounts the harshness of the purge and the hardships children of victims endured during the period.

Budi, the fourth Indonesian featured in the documentary, was born decades after the purge but is still much affected by its aftermath. His father's status as an ex-political prisoner meant the whole family was stigmatized.

Fellow villagers tore down their house and Budi says he endured continuous harassment and verbal abuse until his parents finally put him in an orphanage. His older brother Kris was once beaten by five military officers until he suffered a concussion, and became a street kid in an attempt to find safe haven.

"My family was tortured, slandered and terrorized," Budi says. "I want to kill, to torture people the way they did my family."

Through its control over education and other propaganda tools, the Suharto regime persistently depicted communists as sadistic killers who had taken the lives of six high-ranking generals during the failed September coup.

Whether intentionally or not, Lemelson's documentary contests, if not reverses, that prevailing perception in Indonesia by presenting the military as the "evildoers." However, it fails to fully address the Communist Party's part in the volatile political tension leading up to 1965.

But Lemelson makes no attempt to sanctify his subjects in his edit.

"If I want to fight them, I'll need a bottle of chemicals, gasoline, cloth and a match," Budi tells the camera. "I want to blow up their houses so they experience the grief and pain my family suffered."

Degung is also unapologetic about his hatred toward his mother, who left him after she remarried. "I hate my mother. Yeah, I wanted to kill her," he says fervently.

At its conclusion, the film breathes an air of salvation as the subjects each find ways come to terms with their brutal past. Degung becomes a human rights activists, Lanny finds solace in Buddhism, Kereta chooses to live away from society and Budi takes up martial arts to toughen his mind.

"If I still keep the hatred, it's like I have a bomb inside," Lanny said. "I think I have suffered enough, why should I suffer more?"

The documentary includes black-and-white footage of the looting, arrests and violence that occurred at the time, which graphically illustrates the subjects' stories and acts as an emotional time machine that allows the audience to experience the events as if watching in real time.

The somber musical score can be sleep-inducing, but stories as moving as these do not need any audio embellishment — the players have been silenced for so many years it is only appropriate they now voice their story undisturbed. Lemelson does, in fact, incorporate the essence of Indonesia by using traditional instruments and choosing "Genjer-genjer" — a song that was banned due to its strong association with the communists — as the theme music.

The documentary, enriched with colorful stories, leaves its audience with interwoven and conflicting feelings of sympathy, anger, relief and a certain degree of shame for being unaware of such a horrific yet veiled past.

"40 Years of Silence" is not only a documentation that unravels one of the darkest chapters in Indonesian history, it is a medium of liberation that clearly gives voice to victims of an until-now silenced past.

The Jakarta Post

Robert Lemelson: Indonesia, a paradise for work and study

Sri Wahyuni, The Jakarta Post, Yogyakarta | Sun, 08/02/2009 1:11 PM | People



(JP/Sri Wahyuni)(JP/Sri Wahyuni)

The first time he arrived in Bali as a tourist in 1993, American researcher, philanthropist and documentary filmmaker Robert Lemelson from the University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA) promptly felt a great affection and affinity for the country and its people.

"I liked the warmth, kindness and hospitality of the people I met," Lemelson told The Jakarta Post during a recent visit to Yogyakarta for a project with Gadjah Mada University's (UGM) School of Psychology. And then when he returned to live there for two years as a Fulbright scholar conducting a research dissertation on mental illness, Lemelson developed an even stronger bond.

"I felt that Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural tradition made it an ideal place to work and study for an anthropologist," said the research anthropologist at UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience.

Specializing in Southeast Asian studies, psychological anthropology and trans-cultural psychiatry, Lemelson explored the relationship between culture and mental illness in Indonesia and worked for the World Health Organization (WHO) on issues facing the country.

"I have done research on schizophrenia, neuropsychiatric disorders and post traumatic stress disorder, among others."

One of his projects was to examine how the neuropsychiatric disorders - obsessive-compulsive disorder and Tourette's syndrome - affected people in a Hindu culture in a small village in Bali.

This later led him to the production of his first documentary film, which tells the story of a young Balinese girl named Gusti Ayu who suffered Tourette's syndrome.

Entitled Movement and Madness: Gusti Ayu (Lemyng Films, 2006), the film was jointly produced with his fellow documentary filmmaker Dag Yngvesson, and was the culmination of six years of footage first shot in 2000, tracing the development and personal evolution of Gusti and her disorder.

Lemelson has filmed other areas and people in Indonesia, especially in Bali and Yogyakarta - the two places where he has spent the most time during his frequent visits to the country, since 1997. His works focus on personal experience, culture and mental illness in Indonesia and the US.

Lemelson's latest documentary work is 40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy (Elemental Productions, 2009), a film about four families who survived the mass violence in 1965-1966 following a failed coup attempt, known as the Sept. 30 Movement (G-30-S/PKI), and the purges of purported communists by the emergent Soeharto regime.

"It is a powerful portrayal of survival and resilience," said Lemelson, who is also CEO and founder of Elemental Productions.

The film, he said, primarily aims to tell the story of how individuals and families deal with fear, violence, oppression and the forced silencing of memory and how this affected their lives and experience.

"I am very aware that this remains an extraordinarily sensitive issue in Indonesian society. But I would like to see it otherwise," he said.

"An event of such magnitude, where *all historians agree* hundreds of thousands or even a million of people were killed, needs to be understood, debated, explored, narrated and memorialized."

Currently in the post-production stage of another series of documentary films on mental disorders of three Balinese individuals, Lemelson is also working on research and a film project in collaboration with UGM.

"This project concerns the *outcome question' in trans-cultural psychiatry," said Lemelson, who is also a lecturer at the UCLA's departments of anthropology and psychology.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, Lemelson said, the WHO conducted the largest transcultural psychiatric epidemiology project in history. A major finding was that outcomes or recoveries from serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, were better in the developing world.

For example, if a person develops a serious mental illness, they were more likely to return home to their families, more likely to return to work, less likely to have return hospitalizations and further episodes of their illness if they were living in Indonesia rather than in America.

"I have been conducting research on this issue since the 1990s and will continue this and a documentary film project comparing the lives of the mentally ill in Indonesia with those in Los Angeles."

In terms of philanthropy, the stand of the New Jersey-born Lemelson is unquestionable, including his work in Indonesia.

After the tsunami devastated Aceh in 2004 and a powerful earthquakes destroyed Yogyakarta and parts of Central Java in 2006, Lemelson was among the first foreigners to send emergency aid.

He was also involved in and provided financial support to some local non-government organization in the recovery process, especially through the trauma healing programs for survivors, which was within his area of expertise.

"When the different philanthropic foundations I direct wanted to do programs in the developing world, in the areas of economic development, health care and mental health treatment, I immediately thought of Indonesia and the great needs here," he said.

Lemelson usually comes to Indonesia several times a year, and stays for a month or so.

"I would like to return at some point in the coming years for a longer period, to engage in more extensive research and participate more fully in our philanthropic enterprises."

He also frequently comes to evaluate the multi-million dollar Recognition and Mentoring Program (RAMP) here, which he helped initiate in 2006, and which is funded by the Lemelson Foundation, where he is co-vice president and secretary.

The Lemelson Foundation began this program to promote invention, innovation and entrepreneurship for basic human needs and sustainable development, he said.

The program, run in partnership with the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB), the Technology Innovation Foundation (YIT) and Indonesian field partners, helps poor people gain access to technologies that improve their economic status and health.

"The Lemelson Foundation is deeply committed to our RAMP program in Indonesia," said the son of one of the US most productive inventors of the 20th century, the late Jerome Lemelson, who had over 600 patents ranging from barcode readers and crying baby dolls, to machines of everyday convenience including computer hard drives, ATMs and fax machines and cassette mechanisms found in the walkman.

"We have one of the largest programs in the world to promote invention and innovation as a solution to the problems of poverty eradication and wealth generation in the developing world," he said.

The foundation, he added, had been working in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia (among other places), funding inventors and inventions that address basic human needs.

"An example of success is Kickstart," he said, referring to a non-government organization in Kenya and Tanzania that produces what he calls the "money maker" pump, a simple and cheap treadle pump designed like a "stair master" exercise machine in the gym, which allows subsistence level farmers irrigate their crops.

"Farmers can now grow food year round, instead of relying on rainfalls, and typically go from \$1 a day to between \$5 and \$10 a day. This invention, in its marketing, sales and distribution, now accounts for between 0.5 and 1 percent of Kenya's entire GDP!"

RAMP Indonesia, he said, aids grassroots and student inventors in developing, commercializing and marketing their innovations, and offers access to more affordable technologies that enhance entrepreneurship and improve the lives of those in Indonesia living on less than \$2 a day.

"The program facilitates the development of invention and innovation-based technology in the WEHAB (water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity) fields," he said.

The Jakarta Post

Digging into Indonesia's 'black hole of silence'

Isabel Esterman,The Jakarta Post,Jakarta | Sat, 08/01/2009 2:18 PM | Entertainment

Beginning in October 1965, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were killed in a statesanctioned mass murder of accused communists. Neighbors killed neighbors, and bodies piled into mass graves across the archipelago. It was one of the bloodiest episodes in one of the bloodiest centuries of human history.

Even in Indonesia, though, it's a story that remains largely untold. Unlike the mass killings in Cambodia or Rwanda, which were followed by war crimes trials and public processes of reconciliation, the history of the 1965 massacres disappeared into what historian Geoffrey Robinson describes as a "black hole of silence". The perpetrators of the massacre remained in power, promoting a version of history that cast blame solely on the victims. Under Soeharto's New Order, anyone related to or associated with communist party members was stigmatized, keeping survivors from speaking out. Even the number of dead remains unknown, with an accepted range of 500,000 to one million.

In his deeply emotional documentary 40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy, American anthropologist and clinical psychologist Robert Lemelson examines the effects of the killings, and the ensuing suppression of memory, on individual survivors and on Indonesian society as a whole.

The film, which had it first Indonesian screening on July 23 at a private showing at the Goethe Institute, opens with graphic archival footage of unarmed men and women being chased down, rounded up and beaten on the streets.

From there, it quickly shifts from public scenes of violence to personal recollections of loss and trauma. The film centers on the stories of four families victimized by the killings: Kereta, a Balinese farmer whose father was executed in front of him when he was a child; Lanny, the beloved daughter of a wealthy ethnic-Chinese family from Central Java, who also witnessed her father's murder; Degung, a high-caste Balinese who was abandoned after his father's death and raised by prostitutes in Surabaya after running away from an abusive relative; and Budi, a Javanese teenager born decades after 1965, but so traumatized by the persecution he faces as the son of an ex-political prisoner that his parents placed him in an orphanage to remove him from their village.

Lemelson began the project in 1996 and 1997, while conducting research into the relationship between culture and mental health in Indonesia. As he conducted his anthropological research, he learned many of the people he encountered were suffering from trauma rooted in the 1965 massacres. At the time, Soeharto's New Order regime was still in power, and some of his interview subjects had never before discussed their

experiences. Their memories went unacknowledged by their communities, their country and the world.

"Under the New Order, there was a monolithic state narrative about what happened in '65," recalls Lemelson. "You really couldn't talk about it. . It created an extraordinary climate of fear and suppression."

That silence and fear obstructed the process of healing for both individuals and society, explains Lemelson: "When children experience something violent and fearful that involves loss, silence has a negative effect on health."

Narrative, by contrast, can help reverse some of the damage "even on the cellular level", he explains, pointing to studies showing improved immune function in survivors given the opportunity to discuss their memories. So he encouraged subjects to explore this painful past.

Despite the risks of disclosing their connection to communist party members, the subjects of the film consented to having their interviews filmed. Over the next decade, Lemelson and his crew made regular trips to Indonesia, collecting more than 300 hours of interviews and following his subjects as they struggled to come to terms with the past.

Archival footage and expert interviews with historians John Roosa, Geoffrey Robinson and Baskara T. Wardaya provide a basic background on the social and political conditions that led to the massacre. But it's clear that Lemelson is approaching the topic as an anthropologist and psychologist, not as a historian or political scientist.

People seeking an in-depth examination of high-level political machinations or CIA involvement in the massacres will be disappointed.

"We're trying to show the event through the subjects and as experienced by them," explains Lemelson. "The issues that concerned them were personal and local," he adds and, given the enormous amount of footage he had to edit down, he wanted to be sure to keep those issues front and center.

What the film lacks in broad political critique, it makes up for with the emotional depth of the interviews with Kereta, Lanny, Degung, Budi and their families as they grapple with the past and struggle for redemption. In an early interview, the young Budi trembles as he recalls persecution by his neighbors; he stares straight into the camera and says he would like to find those responsible, soak them in gasoline, set them on fire and make them suffer like his family did. Years later, we meet him again, watching as he learns to master his anger through martial arts.

Lanny and Degung, too, explain their personal transformations.

"Maybe hatred made me live, but also killed me," Lanny says in the film. "If I still have the hatred, it's like I have a bomb inside me. I think I have suffered enough."

Instead of succumbing to bitterness about the past, she finds peace through Buddhism and returns to the village where her father was killed to practice good works for the future.

Degung, too, learns to push back his anger, channeling it into scholarship and activism. Kereta, the elderly Balinese farmer, seems the most disturbed, but he too finds a kind of peace by retreating into the Balinese spirit world, and wearing camouflage and a helmet as totems against harm.

Although Lemelson stresses that "we didn't come to ostensibly make a political film", he is not entirely without political intentions. He hopes bringing these personal stories of trauma and healing to the public can help reignite a broader discussion in Indonesian society. After decades of silence, having history reworked, rewritten and contested is a healthy process for society, he says.

"You see the positive effects of opening up a dialogue on difficult national issues," he told the audience at the Goethe screening, giving the example of Barack Obama's election as US president after the struggles of the American civil rights movement. "I hope this film can be a small drop in the process of democratization."

40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy, directed by Robert Lemelson, is in English, Indonesian, Javanese and Balinese, with Indonesian subtitles. Lemelson is currently seeking Asian distribution for the film, which he has submitted to the Jakarta International Film Festival. Read more about Lemelson in tomorrow's Sunday Post.

The writer is an intern at The Jakarta Post.



http://www.yinzyidz.com/

Indonesian genocide shows parallels to Holocaust

Tuesday, October 27, 2009 at 1:29PM

Dr. Robert Lemelson, the director of "40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy," was in town on Monday to speak at a panel discussion at Seton Hill University following a screening of his film. The event was part of the Ethel LeFrak Holocaust Education Conference at Seton Hill, and "Light/The Holocaust and Humanity Project." I had a chance to speak with him by telephone, before he boarded his plane to Pittsburgh.

Lemelson, an anthropologist, has worked in Indonesia every year since 1993. His documentary tells the story of four families affected by the mass-killings in Indonesia that occurred in 1965 and 1966, an event in Indonesia's history that is largely unknown.

Although the Indonesian genocide differed from the murders of the Holocaust in many ways, the two events present similar insights into the motivation for mass murder, Lemelson told me.

It is estimated that between 500,000 to 1 million people suspected of being Communists, or Communist sympathizers, were secretly and systematically killed in Indonesia in the mid-'60s. The official state narrative of the event was that the Communists murdered national heroes, and were out to kill everyone else, so they had to be stopped. Under General Suharto's authoritarian rule, any discussion, recognition, or memorializing of the mass killings that differed from Suharto's official state narrative was quickly suppressed.

"I interviewed some of the killers," Lemelson said, "and they see themselves as patriots and national heroes. But they committed major human rights violations and war crimes."

The atrocity of the mass killings was concealed for almost 40 years.

Lemelson said that, like in Nazi Germany, the perpetrators of the murders had to be "prepared," in order to get them to carry out such a horrific charge.

"There may be long-standing blood disputes," Lemelson said, "but to rise to the level of genocide, it (the motivation to kill) has to come from politics."

Lemelson said that the genocides of both the Holocaust and Indonesia show that "in a broader sense, it is somewhat difficult to get people to kill other people, but it is not that difficult."

"You have to provide them with the tools and the rationale. You have to prepare them and instill fear and hatred and primal emotions to drive them to kill," he said. "It's not easy, but once you get started, it becomes very easy."

The proliferation of democracy will, hopefully, lessen the incidences of genocide, Lemelson said.

"My hope is that with mass media and stable, civil societies, you'll see less of that happening. Democracy is a great buffer against these sorts of events. The things that happened at Abu Ghraib were horrific. But some people were brought to justice. That would not happen in a non-democratic society."



Indonesian suffering exposed in film

Julia Baum

Issue date: 11/18/09 Section: News

More than 50 Sacramento State students gathered to watch "40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy," on Tuesday evening and learned about the mass killings of Indonesia during 1965 with a forum with the film's director.

The film was presented by history professor Michael Vann, who first watched the film during the summer at a conference. One of Vann's students was able to put him in contact with Robert Lemelson, the film's director, who agreed to attend the screening.

The documentary explored the Indonesian mass killings of 1965-1966, which involved the kidnapping, torture and execution of suspected or actual members of the Indonesian Communist Party.

Though the killings tapered off, many Indonesians lived under military rule for more than 30 years.

Lemelson spent several years befriending and establishing trust with the people in the documentary, which can be difficult because of the trauma suffered as well as the danger of speaking out that still exists.

"There's still tremendous discrimination and fear about talking about (these events)," Lemelson said.

Subjects described years spent in prison camps, eating food that often had sand or rocks in it and urinating in the same shack where they slept. Others witnessed family members who were brutally beaten; two brothers saw their father hacked to death with a sword outside their home.

The children of suspected communists even now are sent away to orphanages to be safer because of the discrimination experienced in their village.

Senior history major Katie Healey called the film eye-opening.

"I'd never heard of the events that took place," Healey said. "I feel like that I couldn't imagine what they went through."

Healey said screenings like last night's are important because they increase the public's awareness of current atrocities that might be overlooked in regular history courses.

"We still have survivors that are still suffering," Healey said. "You should always try to be more aware."

Vann said that he screened the film to help people with less background on modern history become more involved and interested in world issues.

"I think there is a lot of recent history that Americans don't have a greater grasp of," Vann said. "Understanding events like this is essential to being global citizens."

Lemelson said that many of the people involved found the filming process to be healing, but also vital to continuing on with their lives.

"Silence of events like this is enormously disruptive," Lemelson said.

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