

2007 Eugene Weekly Film Fest Oct. 5-7

Politics of Dissent

HUMAN STORIES FOR OUR TIME

Exploring the Politics of Dissent Through Film

And Film Posters

By Lois Wadsworth

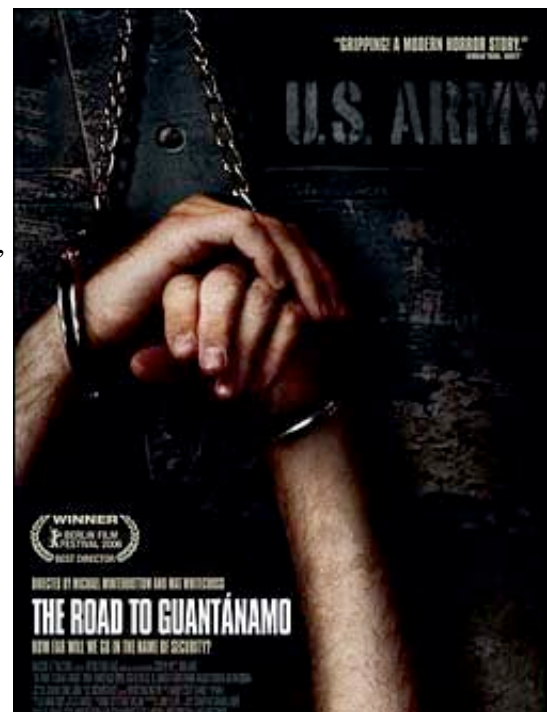
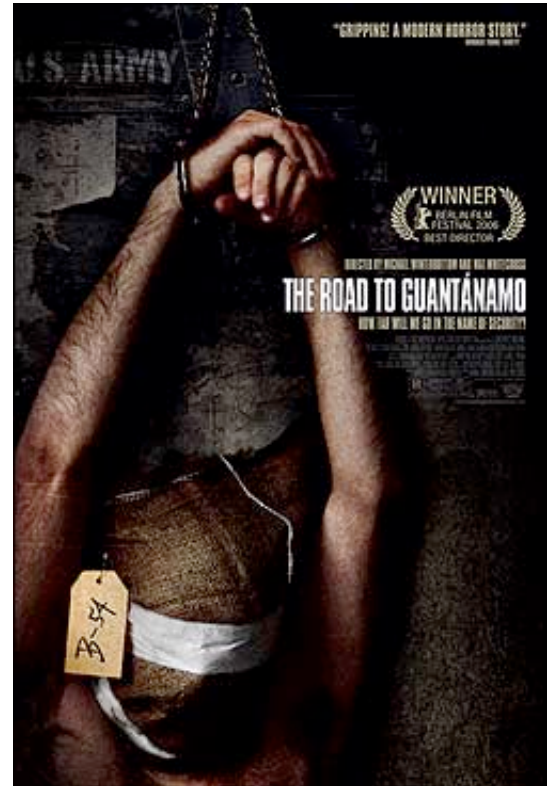
Eugene Weekly is proud to present a special program of five international and American contemporary and classic films Oct. 5-7 at the Bijou Art Cinemas, "Politics of Dissent: Human Stories for Our Time," in conjunction with the UO Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics and its two-year examination of Democracy and Citizenship in the 21st Century. No film released since 2000 has had a previous Eugene theatrical showing.

Can a handful of films make a difference in the way we understand concepts as significant as citizenship and democracy in a changing world?

Maybe. Films challenge ideas and add to the public discourse in varied ways. Citizen dissent in a democracy is often accompanied by inflammatory charges of disloyalty but can be viewed differently in film. Constitutional guarantees of a fair trial and a presumption of innocence until found guilty are being tested now through the courts and in the media. The role of the media and censorship of images remain hot topics in current affairs as do questions of prisoner abuse, unlawful detention, torture and rules of warfare. As ordinary citizens in distant countries daily confront the life-and-death effects of a war participated in by the U.S., their human stories speak to us through film.

A five-member panel of the conservative movie rating board, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), censored the newspaper ad poster for *The Road to Guantanamo*. Both the censored poster above and the more acceptable version below.

As reported by *Washington Post* staff writer Philip Kennicott (5/17/06), MPAA spokesperson Gayle Osterberg said, "If it's a poster that's hanging in a theater, anyone who walks into that theater, regardless of what movie they've come to see, will be exposed to it." Osterberg cited images not allowed by the MPAA as "depictions of violence, blood, people in jeopardy, drugs, nudity, profanity, people in frightening situations, disturbing or



frightening scenes.” While torture is not specifically banned in the MPAA’s guidelines, she said, they “would probably encompass” it.



Kennicott ends his 1200-word article with these words about the importance to framing the torture debate of images not seen in the U.S. but widely circulated elsewhere: “Without seeing those images, it can be difficult to build a visceral case against the Bush administration’s substantial relaxing of rules regulating torture. Advocates of full disclosure, including many voices on the Internet, have argued that the consequences of an American drift toward acceptance or indifference to torture are so profound that there should be exceptions to the usual standards of taste.”

Pacifica Radio’s flagship station WBAI in New York stayed with the story. As Prairie Miller reported in WBAI’s art magazine, the MPAA required that a quote by Michael Moore be deleted from a later poster for the same film because it urged “every American” to see it, even though it was an R-rated film.

“But the movie company, Roadside Attractions, did not bow to this less than subtle pressure to dump Michael Moore,” Miller wrote. “They simply and possibly improved the quote to: ‘A film that every American VOTER should see!’”

This entire slate of films is the result of a group process that began some months ago with a list of 70 proposed films. Hard-working participants winnowed down the list through successive ballots, choosing a limited number of titles for further refinement. Selection then centered on titles available in 35 mm. format for the October showings.

Along the way, a number of worthy titles had to be dropped, including these, which had also been ranked highly: *11:09:01* (2002, International); *The Lives of Others* (2006, Germany); *The Official Story* (1985, Argentina); *The Take* (documentary, 2004, Canada); *Taxi to the Dark* (documentary, 2007, U.S.); *The Battle of Algiers* (1966, Italy, Algeria); *Secret Ballot* (2001, International); *In This World* (2003, U.S.); and *Madeinusa* (2006, Peru).

We hope you enjoy the films previewed here. Tickets to specific shows cost \$5 each and are available at the Bijou. Because seating is limited, you’re encouraged to buy tickets in advance at the theater and arrive 15 minutes before show time. A detailed film schedule follows.

Exploring Democracy and Citizenship in the 21st Century

Films, speakers, conference and symposia

The Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics at the University of Oregon will explore the changing understanding of citizenship and the democratic process in the United States and other countries during academic years 2007-08 and 2008-09. U.S. topics include: the underlying features and mechanisms of democracy; the debate over immigration and citizenship; citizen engagement; and the law of democracy. International topics include: global citizenship; U.S. attempts to build and transplant democracy; and the role of international social movements



in building democratic institutions.

Creative Commons photo by Joseph Voves

The Morse Center programs for this fall and winter terms include the Eugene Weekly Film Fest, which takes place Oct. 5-7, at the Bijou Art Cinemas. Other programs include speakers, symposia, an award banquet and a conference. For more info visit www.waynemorsecenter.uoregon.edu

First up is a symposium, “Civil Rights and War Time Detention: Examining Guantánamo,” to be held from 3:30 to 5 pm on Oct. 8, in room 175 of the Knight Law Center, UO. The public is invited to the symposium; reception to follow.

What happens to civil rights during times of war? Can existing legal processes protect the rights of non-citizens in a democracy? Garrett Epps, the 2007-08 Morse Center Resident Scholar and the UO Hollis Professor of Law, will moderate a discussion by panelists Steve Wax, Tom Johnson and Ibrahim Gassama. The panel will focus on legal strategies for the defense of current detainees held by the U.S. at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Wax, head of Oregon’s Public Defender Office, represents seven Guantánamo Bay detainees. Johnson was recently awarded the Judge Learned Hand Award for his pro bono representation of a Kazakhstani national detained at Guantánamo for five years. UO Professor of Law Gassama has done extensive work in human rights and foreign issues.

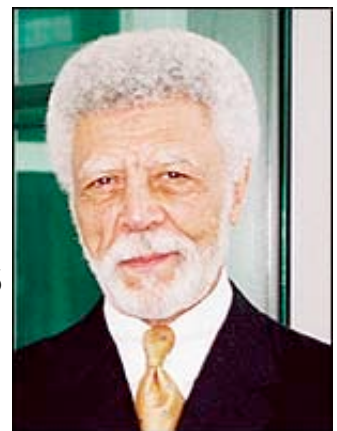
Also this month, Oakland, California Mayor Ron Dellums will receive the “Wayne Morse Integrity in Politics Award” at a 7 pm dinner on October 26 at the Valley River Inn. The Wayne Morse Historical Park Corporation sponsors the event. Call 682-5380 or email integrity.award@gmail.com to purchase banquet tickets.

Dellums retired from the U.S. House of Representatives in 1998 after serving for 27 years as an advocate for peace and justice. Dellums is known internationally for his early advocacy to end the Vietnam War, his visionary leadership to end U.S. support for the racist apartheid regime of South Africa and his crucial role in bringing the HIV/AIDS pandemic to light in this country. He served as Chair of the House Armed Services Committee and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

On Nov. 19, Steven Tipton will speak on “Public Pulpits: Religion in the Moral Argument of Public Life” at 7 pm in room 175 of the Knight Law Center. UO President Dave Frohnmayer will introduce Professor Tipton, who will sign books following his public address.

Tipton, an astute social observer on religion and politics, will examine the American paradox of the place of religion in politics. He will explore religion’s role in the moral conflicts and institutional strains of American politics and public life today, including how religious and political institutions think through us and how they shape the ways we think about ourselves, our society and the good of government.

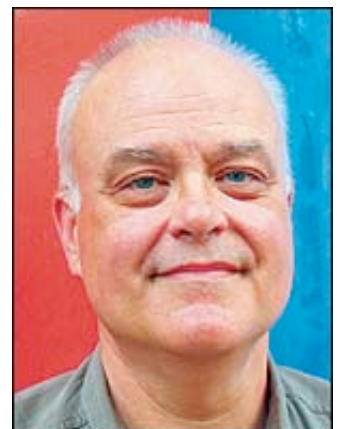
Tipton, Professor of Sociology of Religion at Emory University and its Candler School of Theology, will examine the moral drama of growing intimacy and tension between an expanded state, with more explicitly moral and morally arguable public responsibilities, and more diversified religious institutions pursuing politicized moral advocacy. His new book, *Public Pulpits: Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument*



Dellums



Tipton



Epps

of Public Life will be published in late fall 2007.

In the new year of 2008, Morse Center Resident Scholar Garrett Epps presents a symposium on “Immigration and Citizenship.” Epps is the author of *Democracy Reborn: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Fight for Equal Rights in Post-Civil War America*. The symposium runs from 9 am- 4 pm on Jan. 25, 2008, in room 175 of the Knight Law Center. Book signing and reception follow.

Epps and nationally renowned legal scholars Kevin Johnson, Hiroshi Motomura and John Eastman will discuss and debate current issues relevant to immigration and citizenship. Epps will present his research on the 14th Amendment’s guarantee that people born in this country are citizens. Epps argues that the framers meant to include ALL people born in the U.S.

Johnson of UC Davis keynotes the conference with remarks based on his forthcoming book, *Opening the Floodgates: Rethinking Our Border and Immigration Laws*. Johnson argues that open migration policies deserve fuller analysis and makes a case for eliminating the border as a legal construct that impedes movement of people into this country. Professor Johnson has published extensively on immigration law and policy, racial identity, and civil rights in national and international journals.

Motomura will discuss his views on the politics and policy of immigration reform. An influential scholar and teacher of immigration and citizenship law and Kenan Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina, Motomura’s latest book is *Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States*. He has published many articles and essays on the subject and has been active in policy debates and lawsuits.

Eastman will present a counter perspective. Currently Dean and Donald P. Kennedy Chair in Law at Chapman School of Law, Eastman previously served as a law clerk with Justice Clarence Thomas at the U.S. Supreme Court and with Judge J. Michael Luttig at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. His academic fields include political philosophy, American government, constitutional law and international relations.

Additional speakers include critical race theorists Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic and local activists Guadalupe Quinn and Larry Kleinman.

Arturo Escobar, 2007-08 Morse Professor, will give a public address on “Left Turn? Right Turn? Where is Latin America Going?” In his address at 7 pm on Jan. 31, 2008, in the EMU Ballroom on the UO campus he will examine the democratic election of left and center-left governments in several Latin American countries, speaking from his perspective as a Colombian national and a U.S. citizen.

Escobar will discuss dominant and alternative trends in development, thinking and policies in South America and the Caribbean as recently elected “Left” regimes test their abilities to transform the undemocratic development models of the past. He is the Kenan Distinguished Teaching Professor of Anthropology and director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Escobar’s work aims to broaden understanding of globalization; the processes of modernity; the importance of place; colonialism; and alternatives to



Escobar



Grandin

Eurocentric knowledge and development. His forthcoming book from Duke University Press is based on 12 years of collaboration with the social movement of black communities within the Colombian Pacific.

Escobar will be in residence at the UO for the first five weeks of winter term 2008 and will co-teach an anthropology class with Lynn Stephen, “Anthropologies of Development and Social Movement.”

Finally, “Violence and Reconciliation in Latin America: Human Rights, Memory and Democracy” will be examined in a conference to be held on campus Jan. 31 - Feb 2, 2008. The Morse Center cosponsors the conference with the UO Latin America Studies Program and the Savage Endowment for International Relations and Peace.

The conference will evaluate the place of truth commissions, struggles over historical memory and alternative forms of truth-telling in recent efforts towards peace, reconciliation and democratic governance in Latin America. Conference speakers from Latin America and the United States will link human rights issues of the past with ongoing efforts to promote democracy and human rights in Latin America today. For more information visit: <http://las.uoregon.edu/events/index.htm>

“Remembering Latin America’s Other ‘Transition to Democracy’” is the subject of Greg Grandin’s keynote address at the conference at 5:30 pm on Feb. 1 in the EMU Fir Room. In this annual Las Casas lecture, Grandin, Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies at New York University, will discuss the current political resurgence of the left in light of Latin America’s earlier, truncated “transition to democracy.”

Grandin’s latest book is *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. He has served on the United Nations Truth Commission for Guatemala and has published in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, the *Boston Review*, and *The New York Times*.

Cool Medium Runs Hot

MEDIUM COOL (1969, U.S., 110 min., R.) Director, writer, cinematographer Haskell Wexler. Producers Wexler and Tully Friedman. Editor, Verna Fields. Music, Mike Bloomfield. Art direction, Leon Ericksen. Stars Robert Forster, Verna Bloom, Peter Bonerz, Harold Blankenship, Charles Geary. Paramount Pictures.

This acclaimed film written, directed and shot by Haskell Wexler is a drama about John Casselli, a TV cameraman (Robert Forster), who keeps his distance from the news he reports, at least until he’s caught up in the so-called “police riots” during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. (Although Chicago police arrested 589 people, the protestors were outnumbered 5 to 1 by Mayor Daley’s 12,000 officers and the 7,500 Illinois National Guard he called in to help them.)

Like the film’s fictional characters, the audience experiences the violence on the streets first-hand as the director, actors and crew are swept away. Wexler shot some footage at the legal rally in Grant Park, where Eileen (Verna Bloom) goes to look for her 11-year old son Harold (Harold Blankenship).



Wexler appears briefly in the film as a cameraman on a scaffold.

The only original 35 mm print available of *Medium Cool* has scratches throughout. While scratchy prints used to be ordinary, today's techno-savvy audiences like to know print quality. If you're thrilled by the theatrical showing of this landmark film, seek out the 2001 British documentary, *Look out, Haskell, It's Real: The Making of 'Medium Cool.'* The line "Look out Haskell, it's real" was dubbed into *Medium Cool* after shooting was complete. Wexler has said it expresses what he was thinking at the time.

Medium Cool raises questions about the role of the media in a democracy. The film was selected for the National Film Registry in 2003. Steve Leggett made these comments at a 1998 screening for the National Film Preservation Board's public review process:

"Wexler used the character of a TV newscameraman to discuss weighty issues of personal/professional ethics, idealism and responsibility. Whose purposes should news footage serve? Where is the place and responsibility of an individual in a society marked by out-of-control chaotic turmoil?"

The documentary and dramatic filmmakers represented in this film series took great personal and professional risks to create works that help us better understand our troubling times.

Splitting Apart

IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS (2006, U.S., 94 min., NR) Documentary. Director, cinematographer, music and sound, James Longley. Producers, John Sinno, Longley. Editors, Billy McMillin, Fiona Otway, Longley. With Mohammed Haithem as himself. In Kurdish, Arabic and English with English subtitles. An HBO Documentary Film. Typecast Pictures Release.

Oregon-born Seattle filmmaker James Longley's prescient, cinema-verité documentary shot in Iraq 2002-2005 and edited from 300 hours of material won awards for best director, editing and cinematography at Sundance 2006. Longley shot enough footage and stayed in Iraq long enough to let "unpredictable incubate in his mind, *New York* magazine suggests.



The film captures Iraq's growing regionalism as various cultures "close in on themselves," film critic Sean Axmaker writes. This cinematically sophisticated film, which mirrors the multi-layered complexity of Iraq itself, is a must-see for Eugene's discriminating film audience.

In *Fragments'* three segments, people move through daily lives captured in poetic images and situations more metaphoric than political. Longley accomplishes this "canny cinematic construction" through varied cinema styles the *Village Voice's* Nathan Lee dubbed "kaleidoscopic patterning."

In the first segment the future seen through the eyes of an 11-year old, fatherless Sunni boy in Baghdad looks pretty bleak. Sacrificing education and childhood to support his family, the boy dutifully obeys the petty, tyrannical car mechanic to whom he is apprenticed. The boy's point of view "doubles for the camera lens," Lee notes.

In the middle section, Shiite fundamentalists loyal to cleric Muktada al-Sadr act out their beliefs in scenes of self-flagellation and public beatings. *The New York Times*' A.O. Scott calls them "images of sectarian commitment that verge on the fanatical," while Lee observes that Longley amps up such sequences with "strobe cuts, jump cuts, lens flares."

The final chapter follows a Kurdish farmer turned brick-baker and his son in a more ancient life rhythm in Northern Iraq. Smoke billows from a brick oven, not from a roadside bomb, in what Lee refers to as "the fragile pastoral of Kurdish Spring."

A Long Road Home

ROAD TO GUANTÁNAMO, THE (2006, U.K., 95 min., R) Directed by Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross. Produced by Andrew Eaton and Melissa Parmenter. Cinematography, Marcel Zyskind. Production design, Mark Digby. Music, Harry Escott, Molly Nyman. Stars Riz Ahmed, Farhad Harun, Afran Useman, Waqar Siddiqui. *Roadside Attractions*.

Based on the actual testimony of three young Muslim men from the English Midlands, Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross's powerful documentary-like re-creation by non-professional actors skillfully navigates the cinematic boundary between fiction and nonfiction. Interweaving TV footage of the "Tipton Three" with what Ella Taylor (*LA Weekly*) calls "bellicose fighting talk from assorted Bushies and Brits" and interviews with the men, the film tells their incredible story.



Four friends leave Britain together, traveling to Pakistan just days after 9/11 to attend the wedding of one, Asif. In Pakistan the men make their second bad decision: to travel to Afghanistan. Amid the chaos there, three of the men are captured by the Northern Alliance and accused of being Al Qaeda fighters, to which they finally agree after months of captivity. The fourth, Monir (Waqar Siddiqui), disappears and is not heard from again.

Asif (Afran Usman), Ruhel (Farhad Harun) and Shafiq (Riz Ahmed) survive bombings and being held in a container with no air. After confessing, they are handed over to the US military and whisked off to Guantánamo. Now the re-enactment of their treatment becomes the film's primary focus, and graphic depictions of interrogations and torture show prisoner abuse at Camp X-Ray and Camp Delta to be unrelenting and inhumane.

"The artifice is unmistakable," comments A.O. Scott for *The New York Times*, "since no camera could have penetrated the actual isolation cells, interrogation rooms and chicken wire cages." But as Scott observes, only in the Guantánamo's depersonalized confines do the men's individual personalities emerge, "when their heads have been shaved and they are dressed in identical orange jumpsuits."

Courts may question the reliability of the three men's testimony, but their guilt or innocence is not the issue of the film. Prisoner abuse is. Neither right nor moral, its practice by a self-defined democracy is abhorrent.

A Girl Alone

OSAMA (2004, Afghanistan, 83 min., NR) Written, edited and directed by Siddiq Barmak. Produced by Barmak, Julia Fraser, Julie LeBrocq, Frank Mannion. Cinematography, Ebrahim Ghafari. Stars Marina Golbahari, Arif Herati, Zubaida Sahar, Gol Rahman Ghorbandi, Mohamad Haref Harati, Mohamad Nader Khadjeh, Khwaja Nader and Hamida Refah. Written in Dari Farsi, with English subtitles. *United Artists*.

First-time Afghan filmmaker Siddiq Barmak's humanistic story of a young girl was the first film produced in Afghanistan after the Taliban was defeated. Islamist fundamentalism's tyranny against women was expressed through brutality, humiliation, denial of basic human rights, isolation and segregation. Women were forbidden to go outside the home to work or travel unless accompanied by a male family member. The timeliness of Barmak's film is reflected in recent news of the violent return of the Taliban to the mountainous border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.



Early in the film, the 12-year old daughter of a widow witnesses the Taliban using bullets and fire hoses against unarmed, burka-clad women demonstrating for the right to work. Later the girl is disguised as a boy, given the name Osama and sent out to work to help her impoverished mother and grandmother. The girl is fearful; she is not safe even when working for a sympathetic grocer. Though she passes as a boy, once she is forced to join the all-male corps run by the Taliban, the likelihood of her masquerade being discovered grows greater.

Osama's story "packs a cruel emotional wallop," Manohla Dargis wrote for the *LA Times* in 2004. Barmak takes his cues from contemporary Iranian directors, she notes, and "employs an unadorned documentary-inflected visual style that's far more aesthetically self-aware than it seems at first glance."

A.O. Scott (*The New York Times*) writes that the girl's "unvarnished vulnerability, along with the director's combination of tough-mindedness and lyricism, prevents the movie from becoming at all sentimental; instead, it is beautiful, thoughtful and almost unbearably sad."

Roger Ebert goes further: "Brave dissenting Islamic filmmakers are risking their lives to tell the story of the persecution of women, and it is a story worth knowing and mourning."

Up Close and Personal

12 ANGRY MEN (1957, U.S., 95 min., NR) Directed by Sidney Lumet. Written by Reginald Rose, from his original screenplay for "Studio One." Produced by Lumet and Rose. Cinematography, Boris Kaufman. Editor, Carl Lerner. Music, Kenyon Hopkins. Stars Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb, Martin Balsam, John Fiedler, E.G. Marshall, Jack Klugman, Ed Binns, Jack Warden, Joseph Sweeney, Ed Begley, George Voskovec, Robert Webber. MGM.

This black-and-white jury-room drama is mostly shot on only one set in which the 12 male jurors must decide the guilt or innocence of a young man in a death-sentence case. The day is very hot, and without air conditioning or open windows, the small room (16' X 24') seems to close in on the characters. As Roger Ebert (2007) famously describes the characters: "They smoke, they sweat, they swear, they sprawl, they stalk, they get angry."

The audience also feels confined and claustrophobic. Director Sidney Lumet describes changing to camera lenses of



longer focal lengths and shooting above, at and below eye level to achieve the visual effects he wanted in his book, *Making Movies*. Ebert quotes Lumet's decision to use a wide-angle lens in the film's last shot "to let us finally breathe."

The film's central action concerns the jurors' understanding of "reasonable doubt." As the only juror to cast a first-ballot not-guilty vote, Juror #8 (Henry Fonda) isn't sure the accused is innocent but has doubts about his guilt. Juror #3 (Lee J. Cobb), an angry, intolerant bully of a man, refuses to join the others in looking again at the evidence and talking to each other despite personal prejudices.

Each juror is fully differentiated from the other in Rose's script. Like Lumet's ability to contain and build tension within the jury room, Rose creates identifiable roles for the great character actors who play the jurors. Lumet and Rose worked during television's Golden Age, when original and adapted drama was regularly programmed and drew large audiences. Accustomed to minimalist sets, limited budgets and a few good actors in the "live" new medium, they were the perfect pair to create this American classic film.

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Politics of Dissent

HUMAN STORIES FOR OUR TIME

FILM FEST SCHEDULE:

Friday, Oct. 5

Iraq in Fragments
6:00 pm

Medium Cool
8:00 pm

Saturday, Oct. 6

Osama
1:00 pm

12 Angry Men
3:00 pm

Medium Cool
5:00 pm

Iraq in Fragments
7:20 pm

Road to Guantanamo
9:20 pm

Sunday, Oct. 7

Road to Guantanamo
2:00 pm

Osama
4:00 pm

12 Angry Men
6:00 pm

Each show costs \$5. Tickets for specific shows will be sold in advance at the **Bijou Arts Cinemas** (492 E. 13th Ave.).

For more information please visit the [Wayne Morse Center's website](#).