

Press Release

Youth jurors at 10th Ajyal Film Festival discuss the struggles in cultural assimilation in an increasingly polarised world

- *Three-time Academy Award nominee Rachid Bouchareb's 'Our Brothers' bring out new perspectives on global citizenship*

Doha, Qatar; October 2, 2022: The less-discussed aspects of global citizenship and the struggles in cultural assimilation dominated the debate at the Special Edition of the 10th Ajyal Youth Festival, as film students and enthusiasts, part of the senior-most Ajyal jury, Bader, shared their concerns on how racists overtures globally are increasingly being normalized.

At a discussion by Bader Jurors, aged 18 to 25, who watched the thought-provoking feature, ***Our Brothers*** (France/2022) by three-time Academy Award® nominee Rachid Bouchareb, the unfortunate reality of racial discrimination that many young people experienced was highlighted. While expressing their disappointment with the current state of play, they also shared an optimistic outlook for a future built on mutual respect.

The basis of the discussion was the bold theme put forth by the film that pans into the families of two victims who were tragically killed one night in 1986, when thousands of students took to the streets of Paris to protest the harsh higher education reforms. The young jurors said the film brings out the everyday struggles of people from varying cultural backgrounds as they aim to be culturally assimilated.

They drew out parallels in the real world about young people, especially Arabs, trying to fit in to newly embraced homes, only to realise that the prevailing broken societal systems tend to normalize xenophobia, which many silently accept, as they only way to survive. They worried that prevailing social pressures prevent even those who want to make a difference from doing the right thing. What matters now, they said, is for governments globally to listen to the voice and needs of young people and address them.

On the second day of the festival, members of the media interacted with the directors of four short films, each presenting a universal theme. Zoel Aeschbacher, the director of ***Fairplay*** (Switzerland, France/2022) said he attempted to bring out through sarcasm the extent to which peer pressure and competitiveness are encouraged across all layers of the society – be it for social media likes, office recognition or out of despair.

Andrea Gatopoulos, the director of ***Happy New Year, Jim*** (Italy/2022), said he was delighted that his short is being screened before young jurors because he had constructed the film with teen audiences in mind. “How young adolescents will respond to this film about gaming and its adverse consequences is something I am keen to know. Today, parents are aware of the problems related to gaming, but many do not know the extent of its impact.” Adding that gaming per se is not harmful, he said it is important for policy makers to look at the regulations because addictive gaming can have devastating consequences.

Interacting with the media, Tony El Ghazal, who was born and brought in the country, discussed the making of his film, ***Nasser & The Ticket*** (Qatar/2022), which is set 50 years ago, when legendary footballer

Pelé played a match in Doha. The short film is about a nine-year-old who is desperate to get a ticket to watch the match. The film was created following a workshop with the Doha Film Institute and Qatar Football Association.

“It is joyful that the film is being screened to young Ajyal Jurors, including nine-year-olds, who will relate to Nasser, the young protagonist. It acts as a reminder of what makes football ‘the beautiful game’. If football can bring blockading countries to play together on one field, it surely has the power to unite people from different countries, classes and cultures,” Tony said.

Niranjan Raj Bhetwal, the director of *The Eternal Melody* (Nepal/2021), addressed the media, sharing his experiences about working with raw actors, who brought out the intensity he sought for his film, which is about the agony of accepting loss, a theme that is universal.

The Special Edition of the 10th Ajyal Film Festival will screen a specially curated programme of important stories from around the world to over 613 jurors from 50 countries. They will also take part in the Ajyal Talks and Spotlight sessions in addition to taking part in lively discussions on cinema and critiquing the movies they watched.

Katara is the Cultural Partner of the Special 10th Edition of the Ajyal Film Festival. Contributing Partners include Darwish Holding, the Official Electronics Provider; with FNAC, Sony and 51 East; Qommunication is the Social Media Partner; and Friends of the Festival include Alkalive, the Official Water Sponsor; Giffoni, Qatar Museums, Leisure (Virtuocity).

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