

“The Will to Live”

As the world grows ever smaller the need for empathy and reconciliation grows ever greater. All around us today we see conflict and suffering. War, torture, genocide and terrorism are the order of the day. How can we break this vicious cycle of conflict and strife? How can we learn to reach out and to build instead of destroying?

In her film “The Will to Live” Anne Gyrith Bonne explores the fundamental need for empathy and reconciliation. Bonne has spent months filming in the favelas and prisons of South America, in the shanty towns of South Africa and in the streets surrounding lower Manhattan’s “ground zero”. Wherever she went Bonne asked the widely different people she met about their thoughts on “love”, “hatred”, and “reconciliation”.

In addition to these prisoners, farmers, favela orphans, shanty town hustlers and everyday Manhattanites, Bonne also conducted extensive interviews with human rights campaigners such as Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, the Honduran activist Dr. Juan Almeyda and Chanrithy Him, the award-winning author of *When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge* (W.W. Norton). The result is a grippingly poetic meditation on the nature of humanity and a fascinating exploration of the common bonds that unite us all.

The shooting of “The Will to Live” began in South Africa on September 11th, 2001 and it concluded in April 2002. Since the film was completed the tragic events of 9/11 have served to further polarise the world. More than a year has passed in Iraq since the “end of combat operations” and yet still the combat continues. Every week soldiers, terrorists and civilians continue to die in this conflict. Hundreds of human beings are currently being held without legal representation, outside the rule of law, in Cuba’s Guantanamo prison. Every week, more and more Israeli settlers build homes in occupied Palestinian territory and every week more and more Palestinian terrorists blow themselves up in Israel’s streets, in its shopping malls and on its school busses. The levels of resentment and distrust in the world are rising at an ever increasing pace. Unfortunately, so is our technological capacity for destruction.

These sobering developments render “The Will to Live” even more pertinent today than it was on its release. This film will broaden the horizons of anyone who watches it and it is guaranteed to serve as an invaluable teaching supplement by stimulating debate in classrooms across the world.

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