



We Are The Giant Discussion Guide

Director: Greg Barker
 Year: 2014
 Time: 92 min

You might know this director from:

- The Thread (2015)
- Manhunt (2013)
- Koran by Heart (2011)
- Sergio (2009)
- Showdown with Iran (2007)
- The Age of AIDS (2006)
- Ghosts of Rwanda (2004)
- The Long Road to War (2003)
- Campaign Against Terror (2002)
- The Survival of Saddam (2000)

FILM SUMMARY

When the Arab Spring demonstrations struck in Tunisia in late 2010, a shockwave accelerated across the region. People who had long been accustomed and subjected to living beneath corrupt, scandalous regimes understood that radical change could be within their reach. WE ARE THE GIANT offers an insider’s view at the tumult in three countries - Libya, Syria, and Bahrain - and the stories of the ordinary people championing the extraordinary.

Fire. Burning disintegration. The destruction of one thing making way for another. The visual effects populating the screen before, during, and after WE ARE THE GIANT present well-known, recognizable revolutionaries. Martin Luther King, Che Guevara, Mao Zedong have all gone down in the history books as individuals pioneering a new way of living for society’s great populace.

Osama Ben-Sadik and his son Muhannad in Libya, Ghassan Yassin and Motaz Murad in Syria, and the Al-Khawaja family in Bahrain may not be in the history books, yet the revolutions they champion are. Some resort to weapons, while others propagate peaceful resistance and continued non-violence. All, however, are front-line revolutionaries living beneath dictatorial regimes, risking life and personal security in the name of justice, and taking the first step towards a new way of living for their nations.

As protests rocked the Arab world, director Greg Barker entrusted the filming to co-producer Razan Ghalayini, who found the stories on the ground, collecting footage from guerrilla photographers living through these frightening, revolutionary times. A tale of perseverance and die-hard hope in the face of injustice, death, and destruction, WE ARE THE GIANT is a tribute to the power of the people to do what was previously nothing less than impossible.

FILM THEMES

As the Arab Spring roared across a region, real people instigated real change, proving that the greatest movements begin with a simple human decision to call out, connect, and act.

REVOLUTION: WHERE TO BEGIN?

People can learn to live with anything, accepting the most oppressive regimes as the norm. Yet there comes a time when - as expressed by Muhannad Ben-Sadik - "Enough is enough." Therein is born revolution. These eruptive movements, that shake long-standing foundations to the core and reset the balance for the future, must begin somewhere. Revolutions are built from the ground up, with a few fearless individuals selflessly selecting to sacrifice their safety in the name of the greater good, speaking out against the status-quo. And for every single individual to die in the name of revolution, another 10 people rise to revolt. Through example, a few can lead the masses to a new civil order.

TECHNOLOGY

In countries where group meetings are prohibited and civilian actions are under constant scrutiny, establishing a means of organizing protests, or even gauging whether enough of the public is ready to revolt, is close to impossible. With access to technology and the numerous social media it provides, citizens now have the possibility to ignite and unite without being spotted on the street. People living under a dictatorship can have their stories told across the globe through a simple connected device, and those on the ground are able to reach others, finding the fuel, motivation, and means to organize, uniting towards real change.

NON-VIOLENCE VS. VIOLENCE

The divide between armed and peaceful revolutions does not present the clearest line. Many revolutions begin with non-violent tactics and ideology, with peaceful protesters promoting that which unites rather than divides us. In order to keep the power within a country and in the minds of the people a revolution involves, non-violence is essential. But is peaceful resistance always effective? As non-violent activist Motaz Murad spoke to the camera about his continued efforts - and dismay - at bringing about change in Syria, an explosion rocked the walls. In the words of Maryam Al-Khawaja, "How long can people stay peaceful?" WE ARE THE GIANT presents the dilemma facing those living under regimes that propagate violence, with peace the last thing on their radar.

SPREADING THE WORD

There are varying ways to revolt. The Al-Khawajas are frontline revolutionaries that peacefully rail against the Bahraini regime. By sending Maryam out of the country to spread the word of injustices taking place to the Western world, their call to arms uses morals over governmental violence. As a human rights campaigner, Maryam works from the outside, appealing to those Western powers passively complicit in the brutal corruption of the Bahraini government. With words as her weapon, she exposes the battle to the international community, demanding we face our involvement in her people's fate.

"The moment the wall of fear was broken, it was impossible to go back."

Ghassan Yassin, Syria

"Without hope, you're not going to get anywhere. You have to believe that this is going somewhere."

Zainab Al-Khawaja, Bahrain

"He who arms you, he who gives you the weapons, he is the one who holds the power."

Motaz Murad, Syria

FILM FACTS:

- WE ARE THE GIANT premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, and received an award at the Hawaii International Film Festival, whose organizers stated, “The film’s power lies not only in sharing powerful stories from the Middle East, but also in showing us that even here in Hawaii, our participation in local activism is a profoundly important exercise to be engaged in.”
- The titles and graphics, which constitute a large part of the film, were created by The Mill, a visual effects company that had previously worked with director Barker on his documentary “The Manhunt.” The burn effect was something that art director Manija Emran built the project around, as in her words burning is “the single most powerful image representing revolutions.”
- In order to film on location in Syria, Bahrain, and Libya - where filming is strictly prohibited in many situations and highly punishable - co-producer Razan Ghalayini established an extensive network of internal contacts. As Ghalayini is of Arab descent and speaks Arabic, she was able to fit in on the ground.
- Zainab al-Khawaja gave birth to a baby boy soon after being sentenced to three years in prison for tearing up a picture of the Bahraini king and additional charges constituting a total 4-year prison sentence.
- Many of the non-violent activists in Syria were working out of Dariya, a suburb of Damascus.
- The Arab Spring, demonstrations across the Arab world, began in December 2010 in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, where rulers were forced out of power; sparked civil unrest in Bahrain and Syria; and inspired protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan.
- Libya is the fourth largest country in Africa and had a 2014 population of 6 million, with 97% Muslim. Italian forces were present in Libya from 1911 and in 1934 declared the unified colony of Libya. Following WWII, Italy relinquished control. In 1969 Muammar Gaddafi gained control by overthrowing King Idris. In February 2011, full-scale revolts erupted, instigating the Libyan Civil War. Gaddafi was killed in October 2011.
- Located in Western Asia, Syria had a 2014 population of 18 million, 90% practicing Islam. French forces occupied Syria from 1920 until 1946, when the country came under control of a republican government. A military overthrow in 1970 placed Hafez al-Assad at the helm, who ruled until his death in 2000, when his son Bashar assumed control through elections.
- Bahrain, a small island country in the Persian Gulf, is the fourth most densely populated state in the world. Having been ruled by both the Portuguese and British, Bahrain claimed independence in 1971. The country, however, has been ruled by the Al Khalifa dynasty since 1783.
- WE ARE THE GIANT was filmed in 2.5 years.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Support** the [Gulf Center for Human Rights](#), which works to protect and defend human rights’ campaigners throughout the Gulf region.
2. **Consider** donating to the cause of [Human Rights Watch](#): to protect human rights on a global level, or following their work by connecting with their organization.
3. **Stay** abreast of the issues that concern you and make your voice heard by expressing your views to the online community. Social media is an incredible tool for connecting people and exposing human rights’ offences.
4. **Support** [Pace e Bene](#), an independent, non-denominational organization, that works to spread non-violent peacemaking across the globe - they offer many ways to get involved!

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.