



the film

the Teacher's E-Zine to the Digital Revolution

the Teacher's **E-Zine** to the **Digital Revolution**

study guide for the **seeing is believing** project • Human Rights, New Technology and the Media

Welcome to the Digital Revolution!

The Digital Revolution refers to the rapid evolution and proliferation of digital technologies and the impact they have had on culture and society. The term is often used to denote the phenomenal spread of computers, but it actually refers to the shift from analog to digital in a broad spectrum of communications technologies, from computers to video to cell phones and beyond. Advancements in digital technology are creating a convergence of different media forms, and making it easier for people to become both producers and consumers of media.

Nowhere is this more evident than in human rights work around the world. In Brazil, unions set up screens in town squares and show the latest alternative news from around the country. In Tibet, dissidents capture exploitation of their land by Chinese companies and smuggle the video footage out of the country. In Kenya, human rights groups record evidence of torture and give the tapes to forensic scientists to use as evidence. In Canada, Adbusters creates “uncommercials” that parody corporate advertising, which are shown on television and made available through their Web site.

The goal of the **Teacher's E-Zine to the Digital Revolution** is to help educators and their students explore the use of these technologies in human rights work, and the social, ethical, cultural and political issues they engender.



table of contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Key Quotes | 2 |
| Introduction to the film and Web site | 2 |
| Teaching strategies | 2 |
| 1. Structure of the Film | 3 |
| 2. Joey and the Nakamata coalition | 4 |
| 3. Handicams and Human Rights | 5 |
| 4. Democracy & the Media | 6 |
| Additional Research Suggestions | 7 |
| Contact Information | 7 |



<< Gillian Caldwell, *Executive Director of WITNESS*

Film & Web Guide to *Seeing is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights and the News*

key quotes

The 1980's and 90's saw an explosion in the use of video to bring about political change across the world. Though the techniques were not necessarily new, the sheer volume of people now using video cameras certainly was.

— From **The Video Activist Handbook**,
Pluto Press, 2001.

People say a picture is worth a thousand words and obviously visual imagery has an impact that written words don't. But I think the tension around that really simple truism is that we want to encourage critical thinking. We want to encourage people to evaluate and re-evaluate what it is that they are being shown and told.

— Gillian Caldwell, Director of the human rights organization **Witness**, in *Seeing is Believing*.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

— Article 19 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village.

— Marshall McLuhan, Canadian philosopher, media theorist and educator, in his 1962 text **The Gutenberg Galaxy**.

INTRODUCTION

The **Seeing is Believing** documentary and Web site explore how 'amateur' video and other new communication technologies are used in human rights work around the world. Through over 30 different examples, from prosecutors at international war crimes tribunals to environmental campaigners, from neo-Nazi videographers to NGOs working in the Congo, the film and Web site offer a compelling window into the impact of the Digital Revolution. **Seeing is Believing** highlights the story of Joey Lozano, a Filipino media activist who works with Nakamata, a coalition of indigenous tribal groups using video and other state-of-the-art communications technologies to try to recover their ancestral lands.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

The following section is intended to be used in conjunction with the documentary **Seeing is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights and the News** and the Web site **seeingisbelieving.ca**, but can be adapted for use with just the Web site. The film and Web guide is divided into four sections, each containing a set of activities and/or discussion questions. Suggestions for research projects or further discussion are provided at the end.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

Note: If using only the Web site, focus on 'The Storyboard', located in the 'Video' section of the site.

Activity 1: As a prescreening activity, discuss some definitions of 'documentary'.

Sample definitions:

"The creative treatment of actuality."

John Grierson, pioneering documentary filmmaker and founder of the National Film Board of Canada, who coined the term 'documentary' in 1926.

"Factual films depicting real people, events or landscapes either lyrically or as a means of social comment."

Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary

Activity 2: There are over 30 scenes/stories covered in the documentary (or in 'The Storyboard' section of the Web site). Examine any sequence of five different scenes and try to determine the reasons for the filmmaker's/editor's choices. Consider such elements as the use of contrast, similarity, and juxtaposition.

1. Do you think the filmmaker's choices were effective in helping to convey the story or messages of the film?
2. What scenes had the greatest impact on you and why?
3. In order to explore some issues in greater depth, are there scenes that you wish were longer? Explain your reasons.
4. In the closing credits, we see a group of indigenous people in traditional costumes performing a traditional dance as they are being filmed and photographed. What message do you think the filmmakers were trying to convey by ending the film with this scene? Do you think it was a good way to end the film?

Activity 3: We keep returning in *Seeing is Believing* to scenes of Joey countering the oppression of indigenous people in the Philippines. The coverage of his work serves as a structural device to anchor the deeper messages of the documentary. View a short segment of the film that includes Joey Lozano and/or explore how his story is told on the Web site and discuss why he figures so prominently. Explore the different benefits and/or disadvantages of such in-depth coverage of Joey's story.



>>Joey Lozano, *Filipino Human Rights Activist*

2. JOEY AND THE NAKAMATA COALITION

Note: On the Web site, focus on 'The Campaign' section, which has additional background.

In the film **Seeing is Believing**, Gillian Caldwell, director of the human rights organization Witness, says, "Joey's a very good example of how video can both save lives and jeopardize them."

Joey says "Nakamata is getting stronger now with all the publicity they have received and with all the courage they have shown. So they are a threat now the people who have been benefiting from the lands that they are claiming as their ancestral domain."

Attacks against Nakamata leaders and villages coincide with their use of communications technologies in their land claims process, and Joey himself has been a target of assassination attempts.

Activity 1: Nakamata and Joey use several different kinds of digital communications technologies in their land claims process.

- Identify the various technologies and media used by members of the Nakamata coalition and Joey. (Note: if using only the Web site, information can be found in 'The Storyboard' in the 'Video' section and in the 'Campaign' section of the site).
- Trace the path that their footage takes. (Note to teachers: Students can describe how Joey's footage is downloaded onto his computer, edited into a short documentary, uploaded onto the Witness Web site for use in a 'rights alert' and letter-writing campaign. It is also broadcast by a television show, included in *Seeing is Believing*, and shown at a village screening. Other examples are illustrated in the film and on the Web site.)
- Describe the consequences of their campaign, both positive and negative. Describe how you would evaluate the possible risks and benefits of using communications technologies in a human rights campaign.

Activity 2: Write a portrait of Joey in which you try to convey the many sides of his life as a journalist, teacher, father, environmental and aboriginal rights activist, et cetera.



>>Datu Makapukaw, *Founder of Nakamata*, tries the Nakamata camera for the first time.

3. HANDICAMS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Activity 1: In groups, compare your answers to the following questions:

1. How have small video cameras been used in your school or at home?
2. Do you react differently when you're in front of the camera?
3. Have you and /or friends used video cameras as political tools, for example, to expose problems such as environmental degradation or human rights abuses? Why or why not?
4. Most videos reach very small audiences.



>>Audrey Challice, *Welsh pensioner*

What suggestions would you make to provide better access to them? Give some examples of alternative ways that human rights related video material could be used beyond movie theatres and television. (Note: Gillian Caldwell, director of *Witness*, mentions a few examples in the film and on the Web site.)

Activity 2: Select two or more human rights groups shown in **Seeing is Believing**. In each case, explain the following:

- their political and social agenda
- the role of handicams as a tool to achieve their goals
- the consequences of their use of this technology

Activity 3: Using the film, the Web site, or your own research, choose three examples of the use of video or other communications technologies as tools for social change. (Note: the Web site contains examples that are not included in the film. Summarize and explain how communications technologies have been instrumental in effecting change or communicating impressions through video, audiocassettes, photocopy machines, cell phones, e-mail, or Web sites.)

Activity 4: Peter Bok, the Czech filmmaker, states, "If you take any subject and put a plus or a minus sign in front of it you can change the meaning by 180 degrees. The same image. Propaganda."

Choose a scene from **Seeing is Believing** that includes a segment of amateur footage. Pay attention to the way the footage has been edited. Describe how you might reedit the point of view, add new narration, or include an expert commentator in a way that changes the original videographer's apparent intentions.

Alternative Activity 4: If you are using video technology in class, choose an issue that interests you that can be easily filmed, such as pollution, speeding traffic, urban poverty. Shoot a brief segment of footage of the problem. Using editing, narration or 'expert commentary', create two short videos using the same footage but representing opposing points of view about the 'meaning' of the problem or how to respond to it.

4. DEMOCRACY AND THE MEDIA

The **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** states that “*freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication*” are fundamental freedoms. Some people argue that the consolidation of media ownership in the hands of a few corporations in Canada and around the world inhibit freedom of expression of different points of view. Others describe a ‘democratization’ of media because people are increasingly able to use the Internet and other communications technologies to make their own media.

1. Do you think that Canadians enjoy “freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and other media”?
2. How would you describe the relationship between democracy, freedom of expression and access to media?
3. Do you see a bias in Canadian media? If so, how would you describe it? Give examples. How do you think media bias could be addressed by Canadians? Do you think it should be?

Activity 1: If there are any human rights advocates in your community, invite them to your school as speakers. Ask them:

- to assess and compare the coverage of issues that they work on by media activists, media created by human rights organizations and mainstream media.
- what their relationship is with various media makers, and if they ‘make their own media’ as well.
- whether media coverage has had a positive impact, for example, by contributing to legislative change, better funding, or an increase in public awareness.
- whether media coverage has had a negative impact, and if so, what it was.

Alternative Activity 1: Research how a current issue is being presented on broadcast news and in alternative media. These could include ‘alternative’ Web sites, magazines, film and video festivals, satirical television shows, newspapers, or documentaries presented on programs such as CBC’s ‘Passionate Eye’ or ‘Rough Cuts’. Briefly summarize the different points of view offered on the issue, and describe the methods used by the different media-makers to convince you of their viewpoint.

Activity 2: Choose a group of people in your community that is advocating for social change. It could be an environmental group, an organization supporting aboriginal land claims, or a neighbourhood centre trying to change a city policy that affects their community, etc. What kind of media campaign would you design to help present the message of your chosen group to students in your school? Would you use video images to help tell the group’s story, and if so what kind of images would you choose? Would you choose a spokesperson? If so, who, and what might their two-minute sound-bite message be? Outline the kind of media campaign you would develop.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

1. The use of the Web has been crucial for the success of activism. Check out the Web sites listed in the Resources section of seeingsbelieving.ca. Select an issue that you feel is important and compare the coverage on several Web sites representing different points of view. Discuss how to critically assess the credibility of information provided on Web sites.
2. View a feature film with a political theme, such as The Killing Fields, Cry Freedom, Missing, Z, and Year of Living Dangerously. Describe how the film conveyed the experience of living under and /or resisting an oppressive political regime.
3. There have been recent and graphic examples of the dangers facing journalists and videographers covering wars and/or human rights abuses. The widely publicized murder of American reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan is one example. Investigate the challenges for journalists who work under dangerous conditions to report on stories in countries like Kosovo, Rwanda and Afghanistan. Describe the risks for journalists, photographers and videographers. Include case studies to illustrate the points you make.
4. Choose one of the key quotes at the beginning of the guide and describe how it applies to the use of video and other new communications technologies in the context of human rights work. Consider some of the ethical, cultural and political issues involved, using examples from the film, the Web site, or your own research.

the Teacher's **E-Zine** is brought to you by:

editor <Analee Weinberger>

writers <Barry Duncan, Stuart Poyntz, Patricia Fillmore, Melissa Riley, Analee Weinberger>

design <Katerina Cizek>

web design <Eric Smith>

web programming <Chris Murtagh>

producers <K. Cizek/F. Miquet/P. Wintonick>

SHARE your opinion of
the **Teacher's E-ZINE!**

Fill out our **QUESTIONNAIRE**
in Unit 4 of the e-zine, and fax, e-mail
or mail in your answers.

Produced by:

Necessary Illusions

24 Mont Royal West, suite 1008

Montreal, QC • Canada H2T 2S2

t. 514-287-7337

f. 514-287-7620

e. info@necessaryillusions.ca

For copies of the film:

Filmoption International

3401 St-Antoine Ouest,

Westmont, Qc H3Z 1X1

t. 514.931.6180 x225

f. 514.939.2034

e. email@filmoption.com

For all U.S. inquiries:

FirstRun/IcarusFilms

32 Court Street, 21st Floor,

Brooklyn, NY 11201

t. 718.488.8900

f. 718.488.8642

e. mailbox@frif.com

www.seeingsbelieving.ca

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through
the Human Rights Program, a program of the Department of Canadian Heritage

Canada