The Ground Up: Exploring the Right to the City
A Film Symposium

Sponsored by the University of Chicago Human Rights Program, the Film Studies Center, the Civic Knowledge Project and the Chicago Studies Program

Saturday, November 5, 2011
Film Studies Center
Cobb Hall 306
5811 South Ellis Ave

In the wake of economic displacement or physical devastation, how are cities rebuilt and for whom? Who has the right to decide? This film symposium explores the idea of “the right to the city”, the collective right of communities to self-determination and equitable distribution of resources, through documentaries that highlight the organizing responses of communities working to democratize the development of urban space in Chicago and New Orleans.

Program:

10 am - Introduction by Judy Hoffman

10:15 am - Screening of Land of Opportunity (2010, Dir. Luisa Dantas)
Introduction of film by Luisa Dantas

12 pm - Lunch – served on the 4th floor of Cobb Hall

1 pm - Screening of Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago’s Public Housing (1999, Dirs. Ronit Bezalel and Antonio Ferrera) and excerpts of Cabrini Green: Mixing It Up (2011, Dirs. Ronit Bezalel and Brenda Schumacher)
Introduction of films by Ronit Bezalel and Brenda Schumacher

2 pm - Panel discussion
Panelists:
Ronit Bezalel, Filmmaker
Deidre Brewster, Human Rights activist and organizer
Luisa Dantas, Filmmaker
Janet Smith, Associate Professor, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, UIC
Moderated by: Judy Hoffman, Senior Lecturer, Departments of Cinema and Media Studies and Visual Arts, University of Chicago

Coffee and treats will be served following the panel.

Wireless Access: To access the “uchicago” wireless network: on the U of C Wireless Access page, enter meeting-imi9 as the CNetID and leave the password blank.
Speaker Bios:

Ronit Bezalel has been creating social issue documentary films for over fifteen years. Bezalel began her career at the National Film Board of Canada, where she directed When Shirley Met Florence (1994). Her award-winning film, Voices of Cabrini: Remaking Chicago’s Public Housing (1999), received a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Award to catalyze dialogue about affordable housing issues in Chicago neighborhoods. Newsweek magazine selected Ronit as one of the "Top 10 Women of the 21st Century" (Jan 8, 2001) for this work. Bezalel holds an MFA from Columbia College Chicago, and a BA from McGill University in Montreal. Her latest film, Cabrini Green: Mixing It Up is being created in collaboration with filmmaker Brenda Schumacher.

Deidre Brewster is a well-known Community Development, Human Rights and Disabilities Rights Organizer. Her work has stemmed from a lifetime commitment to eradicate homelessness. For the past 12 years, she has worked on a wide range of human rights issues in Chicago and New Orleans, including leading trainings on fair housing rights, designing after-school programs for youth, and helping to develop the Relocation Rights Contract for public housing residents in Chicago. Brewster also led a successful campaign to lower the minimum age requirement for persons with disabilities to qualify for senior living in Chicago’s public housing. She has worked with a variety of organizations such as the Coalition for Public Housing, the Metropolitan Tenants Organization, and the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement at UIC. She recently moved into the mixed-income community next to Cabrini Green and is organizing tenants for a "voice at the table".

Luisa Dantas, a Brazilian-American filmmaker, has worked in film and television production in the U.S. and Brazil for over a decade on a wide array of documentary and narrative projects. Her most recent endeavor, Land of Opportunity, is a multi-platform documentary project that chronicles the rebuilding of New Orleans through the eyes of those on the frontlines. In 2005, Luisa co-produced the acclaimed documentary, Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price. She also directed and produced the web-series Voices From the Gulf for Color of Change. In addition to her documentary work, Luisa is a screenwriter and director of narrative films. Her first film, Bolo, was produced and shot in Brazil and screened in several international festivals. She also received a grant from Disney/ABC to develop Summertime, a screenplay about a young Latina coming of age at an exclusive New York prep school. She has also written for the pre-school series Go, Diego, Go! for Nickelodeon Television. Luisa is currently adapting the acclaimed non-fiction book Desire Street, by Pulitzer-prize winning author Jed Horne, into a screenplay. Luisa received her B.A. in English and Latin American studies from Brown University, and an M.F.A in Film from Columbia University.

Judy Hoffman is a member of Kartemquin Films and played a major role in their formation. As a student, she worked with French ethnographer and filmmaker Jean Rouch, and became deeply influenced by his innovative work in cinéma vérité and shared anthropology. The first woman film Camera Assistant in Chicago, Hoffman apprenticed in IATSE on feature films such as The Breakfast Club, but ultimately chose documentary. Her documentary credits include numerous independent productions with award-winning filmmakers such as: Albert Maysles; Ken Burns; Barbara Kopple; and Jill Godmilow. A major focus of her work has been with the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nation of
British Columbia, producing films and videotapes about the reclaiming of Native culture. For ten years Hoffman directed a video training program so that they could make their own videos, and she continues to work with them today on their projects. Hoffman received a VOICE Media Activism Award from Chicago’s Center for Community and Media in 1994, and in 2004 received the Nelson Algren Committee Award for “community activists making a significant contribution to Chicago life.” Recent production credits include films such as *Howard Zinn: You Can’t be Neutral on a Moving Train, Sacco and Vanzetti, The Gates,* and was the Executive Producer on *Voices of Cabrini.* She received her MFA from Northwestern University, and holds an appointment as Senior Lecturer in the Departments of Cinema and Media Studies and Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, where she is also a Faculty Board member of the Human Rights Program.

**Brenda Schumacher** is a filmmaker, community organizer and communications professional. Schumacher directed and produced the Chicago Gay Games VII documentary featuring athletes and artists from seventy countries. As the Broadcast Communications Director for Chicago Games she produced nationally broadcast television commercials and videos shorts about LGBT life and politics in communities around the world. Schumacher is the consulting broadcast producer for Gay Games VII Cologne, and has produced videos for Planet Out, MTV, Logo, and Q Television Network. Schumacher is the producer of the annual Decibelle Music & Culture Festival and a consultant to arts and social change organizations. She received her B.S. from Northwestern University in Communication and Gender Studies.

**Janet L. Smith** is an associate professor of urban planning and co-director of the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement at the University of Illinois at Chicago, a research center that focuses on working to improve the conditions and lives of people in the Chicago metropolitan area. Janet’s teaching, research and community service focuses on local housing planning and policy implementation. Research includes public housing transformation in Chicago and US; housing and health outcomes; expanding housing opportunities for people with disabilities; and implementing community driven strategies to preserve affordable housing. Published work on public housing includes a book, *Where are Poor People to Live? Transforming Public Housing Communities* (M.E. Sharpe, 2006) co-edited and written with Larry Bennett and Patricia Wright, along with several articles published in urban and housing journals. Janet earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts (1985) and Master of Urban Planning degree (1990) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a Ph.D. of Urban Studies from Cleveland State University (1998).
The Right to the City and the UDHR: A Quick Reference

Members of social movements and civil society around the world have used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (signed in 1948) to support the demand for the right to housing, often citing Article 25, which states:

“All everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” (full text available at: http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml)

The idea of “the right to the city” is a broader framework of political demands for the right to democracy and equitable access to resources in an urban environment, including the right to housing. The idea has been gaining popularity internationally for over the past two decades, and in 2005, members of NGOs, civil society, professional networks, and social movements from around the world contributed to the development of the World Charter on the Right to the City at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. As an overview of the idea of “the right to the city”, Article 1 of the World Charter on the Right to the City states:

“The Right to the City is defined as the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice. It is the collective right of the inhabitants of cities, in particular of the vulnerable and marginalized groups, that confers upon them legitimacy of action and organization, based on their uses and customs, with the objective to achieve full exercise of the right to free self-determination and an adequate standard of living. The Right to the City is interdependent of all internationally recognized and integrally conceived human rights, and therefore includes all the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which are already regulated in the international human rights treaties. This assumes the inclusion of the rights to work in equitable and satisfactory conditions; to establish and affiliate with unions; to social security, public health, clean drinking water, energy, public transportation, and other social services; to food, clothing, and adequate shelter; to quality public education and to culture; to information, political participation, peaceful coexistence, and access to justice; and the right to organize, gather, and manifest one’s opinion. It also includes respect for minorities; ethnic, racial, sexual and cultural plurality; and respect for migrants. Urban territories and their rural surroundings are also spaces and locations of the exercise and fulfillment of collective rights as a way of assuring equitable, universal, just, democratic, and sustainable distribution and enjoyment of the resources, wealth, services, goods, and opportunities that cities offer. The Right to the City therefore also includes the right to development, to a healthy environment, to the enjoyment and preservation of natural resources, to participation in urban planning and management, and to historical and cultural heritage.” (full charter available at: http://www.urbanreinventors.net/)