



Photo by Sreedhar Vasomsetti

Geoff Edgers, producer of "Do It Again," and Samuel Goldberg, producer of "The Last Survivor," converses at a reception for Goldberg's film at the Ulrich Museum of Art on Thursday. Edgers' film was featured at the Orpheum on Friday night.

# Documentary about genocide survivors shown in conjunction with Ulrich exhibit

By MEGAN PAULY  
news@thesunflower.com

Sometimes, a face is easier to recall than a name.

Such was the case for Jene Fisher, an audience member of Thursday night's showing of "The Last Survivor," a documentary chronicling the journeys of four genocide survivors and their dedication to the anti-genocide movement.

As the camera panned across the image of a family tree on the wall of Holocaust survivor Hedi Fried's summer home, Fisher recognized the face of the Swedish foreign exchange student she hosted 12 years ago—Alex, Fried's great-nephew.

"She reminded me of Alex," Fisher said. "I was really excited—I got that feeling when I was hearing her, but it's been a long time. I was certain of the relationship when I saw his picture in the film."

Fried, a clinical psychologist, began a survivor support group called Café Europa, the initial inspiration for "The Last Survivor"

film, co-directed by Michael Pertnoy and Michael Kleiman and produced by Samuel Goldberg.

Pertnoy, founder of Righteous Pictures, sent a clip of the film to Goldberg.

"I watched it, was totally blown away and moved to tears. I decided to start screening the film on campus. I was hooked," Goldberg said. "I decided it was the perfect convergence of both areas I wanted to work in, film and philanthropy."

What began as a feature film about a single survivor blossomed into a story about the common link between survivors of the Holocaust and genocides in Rwanda, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"The stories are all very different, but they all survived something very awful," Goldberg said. "It is quite uplifting in the fact that they have all devoted themselves to genocide prevention, education, raising awareness and being change-agents within their communities. It's called 'The Last Survivor' because that is the goal—that we will one day be able to meet the last survivor of one

of these atrocities, one of these genocides."

Boston Globe Arts reporter Geoff Edgers praised Goldberg's efforts.

"What he has accomplished—and what this film accomplished—is quite incredible," Edgers said. "The documentary and film world is a difficult world; it's a place with no financial support. To pull something off like this is really impressive. Also, it's a really important cause. This isn't Michael Moore, but it's just as essential."

Wichita State student David Hellman shared Edgers' opinion.

"Socially conscious art has always been around, and it has to be there because literally, people don't know," Hellman said. "The title says it all. I wish there were more things like that."

Nnenna Udochu, member of the Cultural Ambassador Program and native of Nigeria, volunteered at a reception for Goldberg at the Ulrich Museum of Art prior to the film showing.

"The Last Survivor" was featured in conjunction with a current Ulrich exhibit, Alfredo Jaar's "We

Wish To Inform You That We Didn't Know."

"In the museum piece, the three people interviewed are really asked about their experience during the genocide. They're not looking at the rebuilding process," said Ulrich Curator Emily Stamey. "The memorials (in Jaar's piece) are a way of moving on without forgetting, but Goldberg's film is about people getting out of those places, taking on activist roles and educating people. There's a content overlap, but they're also very different."

Nigeria, mentioned in Jaar's exhibit for its toxic pollution problem, has one of the world's worst environmental situations in the world.

"It's good that the world knows what's going on," Udochu said. "People in southern Nigeria were fighting over the pollution problem, and because of that, there were deaths and riots."

Jaar, known for his socially and morally complex artwork, will speak in the CAC Theatre at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 3. The event is free and open to the public.

Meanwhile, Goldberg is in the process of launching a campaign—The Last Survivor Outreach Campaign—that will take "The Last Survivor" to faith-based institutions, museums, colleges and high schools across the country.

April is Genocide Prevention Month.

"Film is the greatest window to talk about these subjects because it gives people a quicker but also really powerful way—through imagery and survivor testimony—to get involved in this," Goldberg said. "If we can start by being tolerant within our own communities—whether it's the African, Asian, someone we're not familiar with or wouldn't usually talk to—that's a start."

"All of these atrocities begin with some sort of intolerance, some sort of bigotry or bias. If we're able to have a better sense of community and more open-minded outlook on life and the people around us, this sows the seeds of tolerance and the ability to care about your fellow citizens regardless of color, race or ethnicity."