

Teens' film shows dedication to diversity

Nationally aired film celebrates the uniqueness of being human

By Ana Maria Trujillo | The New Mexican

5/8/2010



Photo by: Luis Sánchez Saturno

Principal Rayna Dineen's office, colorfully dressed with only socks covering her feet. All students at the school take off their shoes "Japanese style" while they are inside.

"I think our school is very diverse and so we can all relate to each other, and I think that's interesting," Mima said. "Other schools don't have that same diversity, yet we're the ones who don't discriminate."

She and classmates Sarah Colvin, 14, and August Honnell, 12, created a film titled *Just Like You* that addresses the issue of diversity.

The film, which was created as part of John Graham and Jocelyn Jansons' film program at the school, aired nationally April 11 on PBS. The students' film was chosen out of a pool of 150 entries.

It's a simple yet powerful 2-minute film that shows kids of all ages, finishing the sentence: "Don't treat me bad because I'm ..." Each student says something different: "because I'm slower than others"; "because I don't have much money"; "because I'm from Mexico"; "because I'm gay"; and "because I'm a woman."

The film ends with one simple sentence: "It's not OK to treat me bad because I'm human, just like you."

"There is a lot of discrimination that goes on in schools and when our teacher suggested this contest, our group wanted to make a video that could stop discrimination in schooling systems," Sarah explained.

"If people would realize that we're all human, it might stop discrimination," Mima said.

Dineen noted that the film is perfect for the school, because it's on Jaguar Drive, close to Capital High School, where racial tensions are high between Mexican and New Mexican students. In fact, the Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences will address these tensions in its own version of *West Side Story*, titled *South Side Story*.

While Sarah is an actress, Mima is destined to make and produce films from behind the camera.

"My grandfather works in film, so I always was interested in it," Mima said. "He taught me how to do it. This is my first year in this school and I went to the summer (film) camp, and I took my love for film more seriously."

Mima plans to attend the film program at Denver School for the Arts next fall, a magnet school for grades six through 12 that's part of the Denver Public School system. Sarah will attend the New Mexico School for the Arts next fall to focus on her acting.

The film program at the Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences was started eight years ago.

"What our school tries to do is to integrate all different aspects of the arts and sciences," Dineen explained. "Film is a very captivating medium. It's a great way to get your message across, and it's very encouraging for kids to learn professional filmmaking techniques ... The kids who have graduated with their film skills have gone off to college."

Graduates of the small school don't always wait until college to pursue their love of film. Corrina Leatherwood, who graduated from the school and now is a freshman at Desert Academy, and former classmate Gioia Berlin, recently traveled to Newport Beach, Calif., when their film *Invisible* made it into the Youth Film Competition of the Newport Beach Film Festival.

"It's a really big deal," said Corrina's teacher at Desert Academy, Randy Bennett. "Competition (for Newport Beach Film Festival) is really fierce."

"I really like film just because it's a really unique art form," Corrina said before her trip. "There is so much you can do with it."

Invisible is the story of a friendless young girl who feels like she matters no one. She wishes to be invisible, but when her wish is granted, she has second thoughts.

"The film is about her realizing she is ignoring the people that to her were very visible; they were really important," Corrina said. "She realizes she has something to be visible for."

Dineen is proud of both the alumni and the students who are making waves. Sarah and Mima are proud that their film was aired on PBS, too.

"It was awesome," Sarah said about seeing her film on TV. "I was so excited."

Mostly, she is hoping the film will inspire people to accept others.

"I have friends who are gay and bi, and I know it's really not easy for them at places like Santa Fe High and sometimes at Monte (del Sol), so that kind of inspired me to make this video. I know it's really hard for them. I have a friend who is still in the closet and it's very hard for people to be discriminated against," Sarah said. "It's a problem that needs to end."

Contact Ana Maria Trujillo at 986-3084 or atrujillo@sfnewmexican.com.