

Award-winning photographer Misan Harriman brings powerful message of social justice to 2024 Ajyal

Doha, Qatar; November 20, 2024: Acclaimed photographer and Oscar®-nominated filmmaker Misan Harriman said he was in tears when he was invited to the 2024 Ajyal Film Festival by Doha Film Institute Chief Executive Officer Fatma Hassan Alremaihi.

"I've never heard of a major film festival opening with a film about Sudan, where the world witnesses the largest loss of lives," says Harriman. "That Ajyal recognised it by opening with ***Sudan, Remember Us*** – to me – is an extremely revolutionary moment."

He was further moved by the fact that Ajyal 2024 was bringing *From Ground Zero*, set against the backdrop of the ongoing war on Palestine, with 22 short films created by filmmakers from Gaza.

"I have many colleagues in Gaza, some of them no more, and to see the reality of what is happening reflected in real-time in this way is crucial."

An Ambassador for Save the Children, Harriman said the films at Ajyal reflect the reality of Palestinian children, adding that the event's ethos intersects with his own commitments – from documenting the hunger crisis in North Africa to the migrant crisis in Sicily.

The founder of 'What We See', Harriman said it has evolved as web 3 phenomenon, and he is leveraging the platform to integrate technology and culture to create a level playing field that helps the vulnerable. Through his work as a photographer and filmmaker, Harriman challenges conventional narratives and advocates for social change. "When there is injustice, I turn my lens to that," he said.

Harriman, whose journey as a photographer began at age 40 when he was gifted a camera by his wife, is today one of the most influential voices in contemporary photography. His work gained global recognition during the Black Lives Matter protests, where his powerful images captured the raw emotion and humanity of the movement.

"I was shooting my own trauma," Harriman said. "I see the invisible scars in the people I photograph and it feels like taking their pain and holding it."

"When I'm shooting something I love, it's not just about the highlights and shadows," Harriman adds. "As the great photographer Robert Frank said, 'The eye should learn to listen.' Throughout my life, my eye has learned to listen deeply."

From shooting a British Vogue cover to his Oscar® nomination for "The After," his short film about grief and healing, Harriman's work focuses on underrepresented voices and stories. "I could have

just been the guy who shot the Vogue cover, going from yacht to castle to party," he says. "But I didn't want my daughters growing up with a father who only chased fame and fortune. I shot heroes who risked everything to bring change."

Harriman shares Ajyal's mission of nurturing meaningful dialogue through art and said : "We have to decide to decolonise our minds and look for the truth. In today's world, simply telling the truth has become a revolutionary act."

Another international talent at 2024 Ajyal, Jianjie Lin, the director of *Brief History of a Family* (China, France, Denmark, Qatar), also shares the view that human concepts are global.

Addressing the media he said: "This is my first feature and it observes the familial structure and how it reacts to social change. The movie addresses the one-child policy and how it affected middle-class families who are figuring out their new life with the anxiety of losing everything. It also talks about the individual's identity versus what parents may impose on their children."

Lin said that what makes Ajyal special is how it includes young people in the conversation, adding that the support by Doha Film Institute helped him reach global audiences as the team he worked with come from different backgrounds.

-ENDS-

About Doha Film Institute

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the Arab film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar and the region. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Film Festival; and Qumra. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

About Ajyal Film Festival

Ajyal Film Festival is an annual celebration of film designed to nurture young minds and support the development of mindful global citizens and thoughtful future leaders. 'Ajyal', Arabic for 'generations', builds on the Institute's history of community-based programming, and brings people of all ages together through screenings and events that inspire creative interaction and stimulate cinematic dialogue. Through its' jury programme, youth between the ages of 8 and 25 are given an opportunity to watch, analyse and discuss global cinema and culture, developing self-confidence, independent critical thinking skills, self-expression, and an appreciation of cinema, while making new friends and discovering global cultures.

Doha Film Institute:

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