We Are Egypt

Voices of Egypt’s Youth Opposition Movement

This is the story of the struggle for democracy in Egypt that led to the historic uprising in January-February 2011.

Filmed on the ground in Egypt over the preceding fourteen months, this story is told through the eyes of Egypt’s youth activists, labor movements and political opposition figures. It is an account of their struggle against extraordinary odds to remove an uncompromising US-backed authoritarian regime determined to stay in power.

Going beyond the recent headlines, this documentary offers the background story of years of mounting political resentment against the ruling regime. The film follows the efforts of democracy activists and the political opposition as they used Facebook and Twitter to organize and express themselves in increasingly outspoken ways, even at great personal risk. Emblematic of this growing opposition were the words spray-painted on a subway wall in English, “We are Egypt”.

The story also explores why the US has provided over thirty years of political, economic, and military support to the dictatorship, and what the implications of political change in Egypt are for US strategic interests in the Middle East region.

Documented during 2009 and 2010, the film unfolds with the opposition and labor movements gaining political momentum as the country prepared for the parliamentary elections that took place on November 28, 2010.

Presidential elections had been scheduled for later in 2011, but everything changed when the peaceful revolution began on January 25.

“We are Egypt” tells why it happened.
This film provides a wide range of voices from many walks of life in Egypt. In addition, some of the specialists interviewed include:

Ayman Nour, former political prisoner and presidential candidate in 2005 and leader of the Al Ghad opposition party, Saad Edin Ibrahim, professor of Sociology at American University in Cairo and prominent democracy activist, George Ishak of the Kifaya democracy movement, Ashraf Balba of the historic opposition Wafd party, Muhammad Beltagi of the Muslim Brotherhood, Nawal Saadawi, prominent Egyptian author, feminist intellectual and political activist, and Anwar Sadat, leader of the opposition Reform and Development Party and nephew of the late Egyptian president; human rights activists - Heba Morayef of Human Rights Watch in Egypt, Gamal Eid, human rights lawyer and director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, and Ahmed Seif, human rights lawyer and founder of the Hisham Mubarak Center); labor leaders - Kamal Abu Eita, leader of the only truly independent labor union in Egypt—the Real Estate Tax Authority Union; journalists - Mustapha Basyouni, formerly for El Dostor daily independent newspaper and labor activist, Hisham Foad of the Arabi Nassrist Party weekly, Hisham Kessam, independent journalist and recipient of the National Endowment for Democracy annual Democracy Award, and Jack Shenker, Egypt correspondent for The Guardian of London; and experts on US foreign policies toward Egypt - Michele Dunne, a former US State Department official and leading Egypt specialist at Carnegie National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC, Noam Chomsky, professor of Linguistics at MIT and long-time critic of US foreign policy, Leith Kubba of the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC. Insights from the perspective of the ruling regime are also offered by Ali Eldin Hilal, spokesperson for the ruling National Democratic Party and Omar Sharif, prominent Egyptian Hollywood actor.

About the Director

Lillie Paquette is a specialist in international affairs with an MA in Global Studies from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where she focused on mass media, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Paquette has followed developments in Middle East-US relations since her first visit to Egypt in 2002 as part of a Fulbright funded “Dialogue of Civilizations” student exchange program. For several years, she worked on Middle East and North Africa programs at the Washington DC-based nonprofit, International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), where she specialized in US State Department-funded media and civil society development programs. Over the past year, Paquette worked in Cairo where she filmed "We are Egypt - Voices of Egypt's Youth Opposition Movement". During her year in Egypt, she was also a video news reporter and producer for Reuters’ Cairo office, where she processed global video news reports and video footage for worldwide clients and consumers. She is an alumna of Docs In Progress in Silver Spring, MD, where she studied documentary film production and appreciation.