

This Caribbean Film Has Won The Amnesty International Human Rights Prize

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A scene from the award-winning film Cargo. (ttff image)

News Americas, PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Tues. Oct. 10, 2017: A Caribbean film that focuses on the issue of human trafficking – but from the point of view of reluctant trafficker, has won the Amnesty International Human Rights Prize.

Cargo by Bahamian film director Kareem Mortimer, won the top Prize at the recently concluded trinidad+tobago film festival, (ttff).

The Amnesty International Human Rights Prize is awarded to a Caribbean filmmaker whose film best highlights a human rights issue. The Award recognizes the importance of film as a vehicle for raising awareness about human rights issues and advancing inclusion and social justice.

Cargo, tells the story of human trafficking from the point of view of reluctant trafficker, Kevin. An American exile with a gambling addiction living in the Bahamas, he begins smuggling Haitians to Florida in an act of desperation to keep his secrets buried and get out of a financial bind.

Mortimer said the story was influenced by a childhood experience that impacted him deeply – a news story that showed the dead bodies of Haitians who had washed up on shore in the Bahamas, in an ill-fated attempt to get to Miami. The haunting image impacted him so greatly that he re-created it for the opening scene in the movie.

Mortimer, 36, is also known for such films as *Chance* (2005), *The Eleutheran Adventure* (2006), *Float* (2007), *I Am Not A Dummy* (2009), *Children of God*[1] (2010), *Wind Jammers* (2010) and *Passage* (2013).

His debut feature, *Children of God* (2010), is the first narrative feature from the Caribbean with LGBT themes. *Children of God* was shown on the television channel Showtime as well as distributed in over twenty-four countries around the world. In 2014, *Passage* was awarded an African Movie Academy Award for Best Short Film from the Diaspora.

Cargo, which played to packed audiences at the tfff, was selected the winner by a three-person jury comprised of Gregory Sloane-Seale, National Coordinator, Citizen Security Programme in the Ministry of National Security, Trinidad and Tobago; Dr Gabrielle Hosein, Head of Department and lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, at The University of the West Indies, and Pamela Carmona, Regional Youth and Activism Coordinator at the, Amnesty International Americas Regional Office, in Mexico.

According to Pamela Carmona, at Amnesty International Americas Regional Office, in Mexico: “Caribbean filmmakers have been fearless in crafting powerful stories of human struggle, sacrifice and triumph – reaching across cultures and countries, transcending language barriers to speak eloquently on the issues of human rights and social justice. As long as human rights violations exist, there will always be a need for such films, and this prize is our way of acknowledging the important work being done by filmmakers and activists in the Caribbean region.

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than three million members, supporters and activists in over 150 countries and territories. The organisation exposes human rights violations and campaigns for their full enjoyment for everyone around the world. It is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and is funded mainly by its membership and public donations.

The trinidad+tobago film festival (tfff) celebrates films from and about the Caribbean and its diaspora, as well as from world cinema, through an annual festival and year-round screenings. In addition, the tfff seeks to facilitate the growth of Caribbean cinema by offering a wide-ranging industry programme and networking opportunities.