

## ?Yellow Oscar? goes to documentary exposing US nuclear tests in Pacific

Brian Roewe | May. 30, 2013 Eco Catholic

A documentary depicting the horrifying effects on islanders from nuclear testing conducted by the United States in the Pacific won a "Yellow Oscar" Sunday at the third annual International Uranium Film Festival.

"[Nuclear Savage: The Islands of Secret Project 4.1](#) [1]" pulls the curtain on the United States' Cold War-era nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. U.S. filmmaker Adam Jonas Horowitz blends released government footage of nuclear tests with interviews of the people of Rongelap, an atoll of the Marshall Islands that was never evacuated before the U.S. its March 1954 "Bravo" test.

Bravo was the [largest U.S. nuclear test](#) [2], with an estimated explosion 1,000 times larger than what occurred in Hiroshima, Japan during World War II. A [7-minute preview reel](#) [3], available for viewing at the film's website, shows footage of the test, followed by doctors associated with Project 4.1, who checked, but did not treat, the people of Rongelap for the effects of the nuclear fallout.

Audio narration of 1957 U.S. government footage of the medical studies describe the Rongelap people as "fishing people, savages by our standards." Many of those exposed to the radiation experienced burns on their bodies, as well as suffered birth defects and developed thyroid cancer and other forms of the disease.

The tests also resulted in a contaminated environment, with Horowitz discovering during his first visit to the islands in 1986 the presence of radioactive coconuts, leaking nuclear waste repositories, and densely populated slums.

The festival described "Nuclear Savage" as "a must-see documentary for everybody, no matter if you are in favour of nuclear power or against."

In addition to its "Yellow Oscar," the film has won several other awards since its 2011 debut. Among them are the 2012 Jury Prize at the Chicago 'Peace on Earth' Film Festival; the 2012 Audience Award for best film at the CinemaPlantea International Film Festival in Mexico City; and the Jury Prize for best feature documentary film at the 2012 Paris/FIFE International Festival of Environmental Films in Paris.

In October, *NCR* columnist Jesuit Fr. John Dear [reviewed the documentary](#) [4], saying it "demonstrates how the U.S. government used the Marshall Islanders as human guinea pigs for more than three decades to study the effects of radiation sickness."

"The combination of militarism, U.S. imperialism, nuclear weapons, environmental destruction, sheer racism and total disregard for these gentle, impoverished people is shocking, to say the least," Dear said in his review.

Held in Rio de Janeiro, the Uranium Film Festival seeks to engage the public from a neutral position in a discussion about nuclear power and weapons, uranium mining, and health effects from radioactivity.

Other winners at this year's festival included: from Russia, "Atomic Ivan," best feature fiction movie; from Estonia, "Curiosity Kills," best short comedy; from India, "High Power," best short documentary; from Germany, "Abita," best animated film; and from Jordan, "No to a Nuclear Jordan," best student film.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.nuclearsavage.com/>

[2] <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/peoplevents/pandeAMEX51.html>

[3] <http://www.nuclearsavage.com/#!/vstc2=page-2>

[4] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/road-peace/nuclear-savage-powerful-new-documentary-us-hydrogen-bombs>