

Hope



*400 people set out on a boat.
Only 7 made it to Australia.
Amal Basry was one of them...*

Press Kit

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Flying Carpet Films in association with Gecko Films
PRESENTS

Hope

400 people set out on a boat. Only 7 made it to Australia. Amal Basry was one of them...

Producers	Sue Brooks & Steve Thomas
Co-Producer	Kim Anning
Writer/Director/Narrator	Steve Thomas
Cinematographer	Peter Zakharov
Editor	Uri Mizrahi
Music	Munir Bashir/David Chesworth
Duration	104 mins
Genre	Feature documentary
Language	English (some Arabic)
Country of production	Australia
Shooting Format	DVC Pro
Master Format	Digital Betacam

Premiere Screening: Melbourne International Film Festival (August 2007)
(MIFF Link: http://www.melbournefilmfestival.com.au/2007/film?film_id=8634)

Special thanks to the many Australians who generously contributed towards the completion of 'Hope'.

Produced in association with the Australian Film Commission.

Information: flyingcarpet@pacific.net.au

Website: www.hopedocumentary.com.au

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'HOPE'

1-Para Synopsis

Amal Basry watched *The Titanic* at a cinema in Baghdad the night before she fled Iraq. 18 months later the people smuggling boat she was on sank between Indonesia and Australia. 350 people drowned. Amal survived by clinging to the floating body of a dead woman for 22 hours. Now Amal fights to ensure that the disaster is not forgotten, to reunite her family and 'find what it was I lost in the ocean'...

Longer Synopsis

Four hundred asylum seekers were pitched into the sea when their people-smuggling boat from Indonesia sank on its way to Australia in 2001. Three hundred and fifty three people drowned. Only seven survivors made it to Australia.

Amal Basry, who had fled Iraq, was one of those survivors. She spent 22 hours in the ocean hanging on to a floating corpse, convinced that her son was dead and she was the only person left alive.

Controversy surrounded the sinking of the boat, which became known as the SIEV X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel Unknown). In public, Amal became an advocate for the survivors. In private, she fought to reunite her fragmented family, cope with the personal consequences of the disaster and return to Indonesia to 'find what I lost in the ocean'.

Amal loved movies and had always dreamed of being in a film of her own. Documentary maker Steve Thomas wanted to record her life story. So they made a deal. And having embarked on this journey, they were determined to see it through to the end....

There are many twists and turns in the story as 'Hope' unfolds. We'd rather not give these away because we don't want to spoil the viewer's own journey.... Suffice to say that ultimately 'Hope' is an inspiring story. A film that works on many levels, it is a universal tale of family, migration and the search for 'a better life'.

Excerpts from letters & emails received after the premiere of 'Hope' at the Melbourne International Film Festival

"In an age in which every second film is defined as 'must-see', in which most cinematic experiences are 'enriching' and 'inspirational', Hope would be cheapened by association with such words. A pity; they would otherwise be apt."

"Seeing HOPE I wept: the extraordinary Amal deserved just such a testament."

"We expected to come away shamed once again by our country's attitude towards people who come here looking for protection, and while that shame remains we found ourselves marvelling instead at Amal's beautiful life, at someone whose generous spirit seemed able to transcend her circumstances."

"Whilst resonating with sadness and loss, Hope is an ultimately redemptive documentary."

"Hope is the best type of documentary: activist without being preachy; simple without lacking complexity; effective – staggeringly so – without being gimmicky. It commanded – and rewarded – my whole attention."

"The scenes in Indonesia were among the most moving and the connection between the silver haired Australian and the feisty Iraqi woman desperate to get her story told became more and more compelling as the film went on."

"The film stayed with me all weekend, and I think that makes it really special."

"There are moments in the film when our hands find our mouths and our breathing stops: we might not expect that the lives of people fleeing persecution turn to bliss as soon as they're granted a visa, but even still, it doesn't seem 'fair' that someone of Amal's basic human goodness must fight the battles she's asked to fight."

"Although others had told the story of the SIEV X, Amal's story was hers alone and she wanted it told her way. Amazingly, HOPE is Amal's film as much as the filmmakers'; it's suffused with her presence, will and charisma."

"I spent my time at film school trying to remove myself from my films. Thank you for opening my eyes."

"The hope of Hope is that stories such as Amal's will continue to be told - not for the sake of telling - but in the hope that through their telling something might change - if not today, then maybe tomorrow."

BACKGROUND TO THE SIEV X

The context of 'Hope' lies in the dramatic events of the ten weeks leading up to John Howard's third Australian Federal Election victory on 10th November 2001. Those events were sparked on 26th August by the rescue of over 400 Afghani's from a boat called the *Palapa* by Captain Arne Rinnan and the crew of the Norwegian cargo boat the *Tampa*.

When Capt Rinnan attempted to land the asylum seekers on Christmas Island he was rebuffed by Government orders. A tense stand-off resulted. The Howard Government was determined to halt the flow of boat people to the mainland of Australia where, under the policy of mandatory detention introduced by the previous Labour Government, immigration reception and processing centres such as that at Woomera were struggling to cope. This was the moment when the Government invoked its 'Pacific Solution'.

Eventually, the Afghani's were transferred to Nauru via the naval ship *Manoora*. The Government then announced its intention to turn boats containing asylum seekers back to Indonesia, towing them there if necessary. At the same time *Operation Relex* was launched with the purpose of conducting maritime surveillance and disrupting the people smugglers' operations.

It was in early October, soon after the events of 9/11 in New York, that during the towing by *HMAS Adelaide* of another crippled SIEV ('Suspected Illegal* Entry Vessel 4'), the *Olong*, the now notorious 'children overboard' incident occurred, precipitating more controversy. This incident and that of *the Tampa* are the events most Australians recall. But less than two weeks later, on October 19th, the SIEV which later became known as '*X for unknown*' because it was never intercepted, sank en route to Christmas Island with the loss of 353 lives. It was the largest maritime disaster in our region since World War 2 and yet only 10% of the Australian population now say they've heard of it.

Many questions surrounding the SIEV X disaster remain unanswered. A Senate Committee which investigated the incident called for an independent inquiry into the Government's people smuggling disruption program, expressed surprise that the undetected sinking of the SIEV X caused no review of intelligence processes and called for a re-focus on the imperative to preserve the safety of lives at sea.

Between August and October 2001 a total of 12 SIEVs were tracked, intercepted and their passengers either returned to Indonesia or transferred to detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island. The SIEV X was the people smugglers' last attempt from Indonesia. By the time John Howard began his third term in office the boats had stopped coming. According to the book '*Dark Victory*', we had managed to prevent about 2400 people from landing here at a cost to the taxpayer of around \$500 million.

Many of those people were wives and children stuck in limbo and desperate to join husbands who had already been accepted in Australia as genuine refugees. However, the Temporary Protection Visa system prevented the latter from

travelling overseas or sending for their relatives under the family reunion program. Amal Basry's was one such family.

* Note: The Government's use of the term "illegal" has been questioned by those who point out that Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Australia is a signatory, states that "*Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution*".

References:

'Dark Victory' by David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, Allen and Unwin.

'A Certain Maritime Incident' by Tony Kevin, Scribe Publications.

www.sievx.com

www.sievxmemorial.com

PRODUCTION STILLS

A selection of production stills from 'Hope' can be downloaded from the Hope website or are available electronically on request.

Thumbnail examples of stills:



004.jpg



115.jpg



117.jpg



121.jpg



Amal&Steve1a.jpg



Amal&Steve2a.jpg

SUE BROOKS - PRODUCER

Sue Brooks directed the feature film **Japanese Story**.

Japanese Story has won 27 awards including 8 **AFI** awards in 2003 and a coveted **FIPRESCI** award. The gross box office for Australia was over 4.5 million dollars and it was sold to over 22 territories including Samuel Goldwyn jnr. for the United States.

Sue also directed the feature **Road to Nhill**. **Road to Nhill** had a very loyal, devoted audience who constantly responded to its apparent verisimilitude. It played in Australian cinemas for over nine months. It also won the prestigious Thessaloniki prize for best film and the Turin prize for best script.

Sue also directed a number of episodes of the popular ABC series **Sea Change** starring Sigrid Thornton and David Wenham. **Sea Change** became one of the top rating dramas for the year.

Sue has also directed the documentaries **High Heels** and **Land of the Long Weekend** for Film Australia. **High Heels** was a finalist in the Sydney Film Festival Dendy awards and **Land of the Long Weekend** was nominated for an AWGIE script prize. She has been a consultant director for Steve Thomas on **Black Man's Houses**, **Least Said Soonest Mended** and **Family Foibles** for the ABC.

STEVE THOMAS - PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

Steve Thomas has been making documentaries in Australia as an independent filmmaker for 15 years.

His work as a writer/director includes:

- ***Black Man's Houses*** (1992, ABC TV) and ***Harold*** (1994, ABC TV), two award-winning documentaries examining black-white history in Australia.
- ***The Hillmen – A Soccer Fable*** (1996, SBS TV), about the misadventures of a junior soccer team and winner of the Australian Film Institute Award for Best TV Documentary.
- ***Least Said, Soonest Mended*** (2000, SBS TV), an adoption story about Steve's own family which won a United Nations Association Media Peace Award

In 2001 Steve produced ***Family Foibles***, an award-winning, half-hour series of family stories for ABC TV told by emerging directors.

His most recent film, ***Welcome to Woomera*** (2004, ABC TV), explores Australia's famous 'Rocket Town', more recently infamous for its immigration detention centre.

Steve lectures in documentary at the Victorian College of the Arts Film & TV School.

'HOPE' FILM CREDITS

HEAD CREDIT:

Flying Carpet Films
in association with Gecko Films
Presents

HOPE

FINAL CREDITS:

Produced by
SUE BROOKS
STEVE THOMAS

Directed & Narrated by
STEVE THOMAS

Co-Producer
KIM ANNING

Editor & Sound Designer
URI MIZRAHI

Cinematographer
PETER ZAKHAROV

Sound Recordist
STEVE THOMAS

Associate Producer Jakarta
LEXY RAMBADETA

Additional Camera
KEVIN ANDERSON
MAX DAVIS
BAYDEN FINDLAY
STEVE THOMAS

Video footage in Iran
AHMED BASRY

Post Production Facility
BLUE ROSE, U & A EDITING

Picture Grade/Mastering
COMPLETE POST

Colourist
ADRIAN HAUSER

Sound Post Facility
MICSOUND STUDIOS

Sound Mix
DAVID HARRISON
MICHAEL SLATER
SCOTT FINDLAY

Legals
SHAUN MILLER
MARSHALLS & DENT LAWYERS

Post-Production Coordinator
JULIANNE DEEB

Translator
MAJID SHOKOR

Music

MUNIR BASHIR
From the album 'Raga Roots'
Composed & Performed by Munir Bashir
Used with permission from Mozart Chahine
& Byblos Records

DAVID CHESWORTH
From the album 'Music to See Through'
Composed by David Chesworth
Performed by the David Chesworth Ensemble
Used with permission
Label: W.Minc Productions

Additional Music

'Moama'
Performed by Moein
from the album 'Moama'
Courtesy of Taraneh Enterprises

'Time & Tide'
Composed & performed by Those Bloody McKennas
from the album 'Time and Tide'
Courtesy of Those Bloody McKennas

Extract from DVD 'Something To Declare'
Courtesy of Actors For Refugees

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With permission from The Age Newspaper,
Melbourne, Australia.

PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

The Reichstein Foundation
Julian Burnside QC
Con McMahon
Bill Brooks
Janet Holmes a Court AC
Avril Lunken
Geraldine & Giovanni Gandolfo
Actors for Refugees
Andrea Matthews
Robin & Norman Rothfield
Barbara Spalding
Lesley & David Bond

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generously contributed to the completion of this film.

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South Oakleigh Secondary School
Fitzroy Learning Network
Canberra Uniting Church
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Imam Ali Islamic Centre, Fawkner
Connex Melbourne
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi

Produced in association with
AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION
(+ LOGO)

Special Thanks to the Basry family

Dedicated to Amal Hassan Basry
And all those who travelled on the SIEV X
Including the survivors living in Australia:
Amjed Basry, Faris Kadhem
Sondos Ismail, Najah Muhsin
Zeina Eldaiar Muhsin

www.hopedocumentary.com.au

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APPENDIX

FEATURE ARTICLE FROM 'THE AGE':

A feature article by Kathy Kizilos on 'Hope' published in The Age newspaper on 8/8/07 is available on request as a PDF file or can be found at:

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/small-dreams/2007/08/07/1186252701272.html>.