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Thursday, July 2nd, 2009 | Posted by [Asbarez Staff](#)

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## 'Hove' (the Wind), Explores the Effects of Genocide on Modern-Day Women

In a new short film, "Hove" (the Wind), director Alex Webb explores the issue of the Armenian Genocide and its effects on two women in modern-day New York. The film was screened at the Palm Spring Film Festival on June 27. Asbarez Editor Ara Khachatourian caught up with Webb before the festival.

**Below is their conversation.**



**Ara Khachatourian:** *What's "Hove" The Wind about?*

**Alex Webb:** It's a film about two modern Armenian women. It's a bit of a mystery. They encounter something from the past. And as we learn during the film, it actually sparks in them a deeper understanding of what 1915 and the Armenian Genocide means to them.

Sometimes part of what I want to touch in this film is the idea that you know something with your head and you understand it rationally, but then something happens in your personal life that helps you understand it in a much deeper level, and actually feel it deeper—deeper in your heart. And it's also about that moment when someone realizes they will have to recognize this at a deeper level and maybe live with it in a new way that they didn't expect.

What I'm excited about is that, I think, it will hopefully resonate with Armenians as an interesting story about what the Genocide means at this point, almost a 100 years later. I've encountered Armenians who say it doesn't affect them at all and I've met those who say I think about it every day and it affects every thing I do. For non-Armenians, I think it does a good job of pulling the audience in and making them want to know more about a subject they may know nothing about.

The story is built around couple of historical photographs. And, my hope is that having seen those photographs... There's something about seeing a photograph that can make someone who knows nothing about a particular piece of history feel a little more like they're almost a witness. My hope is that when the Turkish propaganda comes up, there will be more people out there, who if they've seen photographs—even if they don't retain any facts and figures—will say 'No, no. I've seen that. I know that happened'

**A.K.:** *What prompted you to make this film?*

**A.W.:** I don't know if the audience has heard the phrase 'ABC.' This is something I encountered in the Armenian community and someone told me it means 'Armenian by Choice.' I married my wife, who is Armenian-American... I've been in the Armenian community now for many, many years... I was made to feel so welcome and so loved... I love the culture, the music, the food... And, so I've gotten to know the community and have become, in my own way—even though I'm not an Armenian—part of the community. Our son, Andranik, goes to Saturday School at St. Thomas in New Jersey, back on the East Coast. We are very committed to being connected to the culture for him, so it's become part of my culture.

As a writer and someone who creates things and tells stories, I think I've been taking in how the Genocide is felt and talked about in the community and I think out of that came this story.

**A.K.:** *What brings you to Southern California?*

**A.W.:** Actually, it's very exciting. We have our World Premiere of this film with Olympia Dukakis... By the way, she has a real connection with this material too, even though she isn't Armenian. Being Greek-American, her father was an Anatolian Greek and lost his land and his business and nearly his life to the Ottoman Turks in 1913. So, she has a very close and obvious connection to this material.

It's premiering at the Palm Springs international film festival, which is a prestigious film festival; it's one of the Oscar qualifying festivals. If a short film receives an award at one of these festivals it then automatically qualifies for Oscar consideration, so it's very exciting. It's a great place to have the premier. We've been given a wonderful spot in the series of screenings they're having. We're Saturday night, this coming Saturday night at 8 pm. We couldn't ask for a better time to have it shown, and it's also going to appear with some other very interesting films: a film directed by Courtney Cox with Laura Durn, and Demi Moore's directorial debut with her daughter starring in the short film, as well as Hove. So it should be a great evening in film. And I hope people will come out and see it and if they love it remember to vote, because that's one of the awards, the audience award.

**A.K.:** *What were the challenges with making this actually a short film, given the subject matter?*

**A.W.:** Well, it's interesting. One of the things I feel I do well as a filmmaker is to tell a lot of story in a small amount of time. I think in the modern world, the way we watch television commercials, the way we flick that remote control, you have to be able to do that—to tell a lot of story in a short period of time and pull people in quickly. It is a challenge, obviously, because it's a huge piece of history, and I don't remotely attempt to cover everything, you can't do that with something as important as the Armenian genocide... so I just tried to tell a little corner of it, which is about how is this affecting these two modern women. One of the things I'm excited about though—and I hope that with pieces like Ararat,

and then this short film, and others that are out there, the Lark Farm—is that it more and more will make young Armenian-American or Armenian filmmakers in the Diaspora excited. As the French filmmaker Truffaut says, “film is a dialogue,” so if I say something hopefully it will excite someone else to say something different, like ‘no that’s not the story you should tell this story.’ And the more that happens I think it will be crucial for the telling of this history and this story. I mean, if you look at the Holocaust it has Sophie’s Choice, it has The Pianist, it has Schindler’s List... there are a wide variety of different angles and different stories that people have told, even this year, The Reader was a very different angle on the holocaust.

I hope that for my son it will be more about honoring his history and less about having to defend his history in the future, and I hope that if nothing else it encourages somebody else to make a film about the genocide and tell the bigger, better story

**A.K.:** *Do you feel that these films that are coming about the genocide are actually not the defense of a history, but rather history as a reality going into cinema, and how do you feel that that can develop as we progress as a community, and as a nation?*

**A.W.:** It’s interesting because I feel that one of the things that film does which is good about it, and why I’m excited about making a film like this and excited about these other films that are happening, is that it isn’t an attempt to debate facts and figures, because obviously the propaganda that has come from the Turkish government are facts and figures, and it’s hard for people until they’ve done a lot of research to dispute those. But with these stories it’s clear that the basis for telling the story is that these things happened, and it’s a great way to introduce the viewer to these ideas without it turning into a debate.

It’s understood. It’s happened. I mean, the rest of the world knows. There’s only one country that doesn’t know that it’s happened.

**A.K.:** *Tell us a little about yourself as a filmmaker.*

**A.W.:** I’m someone that likes to find a way into a story that’s more of a mystery. Even if it’s something that you might not necessarily associate with that, it’s a powerful way to pull people into a story even if in the end it’s something that’s much greater than your typical mystery structure.

I’m excited because I’m working now on a feature length story from the Armenian genocide and my hope is because we shot this film at such a high level with an Oscar winning actress and a wonderful Armenian-American actress, and we shot it on 35mm, and as people can come see it Saturday at 8pm, they will see that it’s done at the highest level in terms of cinematography. So hopefully we can build a platform to talk about this feature-length story

**A.K.:** *The film itself was very powerful to say the least. How was it working the lead actresses in the film?*

**A.W.:** It was really wonderful. And it was interesting because for all of us at one point or another, even just shooting the film, these little moments do happen—not unlike the epiphany that happens in the film for the characters.

I tried to put in lots of real moments that the actresses wouldn’t need to act. For instance, Olympia and Shirley Anne—the two actresses actually know each other—and at one point Olympia actually did give a small gift to Shirley Anne as a memento, as something with meaning, from one generation to the next, although not both Armenians in real life. I put that in the script, and so there’s something that happens when actors feel really secure in the knowledge that what they’re being asked to do is very close to their own experiences. I could even just watch Olympia studying the book, as people who when they see the film will see... it was having an affect just there, while we were preparing—

**A.K.:** *There’s a certain intensity...*

**A.W.:** Yeah, there’s an intensity to the photographs that is undeniable. Even when you’ve seen them, and you think you know what they’re about... they take on new levels all the time and new understandings. Olympia having all her grandchildren and children, and myself with our four and half year old Andranik—all these things take on greater weight with each year of more wisdom and more understanding.

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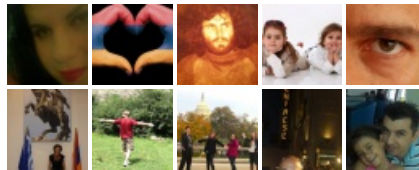
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