

Award for Film About Human Rights of Disabled Paraguayans

Washington, DC. - "Picture this" - Canada's international disability film festival, has named Alison A. Hillman, Director of Mental Disability Rights International's (MDRI) Americas Advocacy Initiative, as a 2005 winner in their documentary film category. Hillman won the award for film shot in a psychiatric hospital in Paraguay, where MDRI investigators found egregious human rights violations perpetrated against patients, including two boys who had been kept naked in isolation cells for over four years.

Using this video as evidence to supplement their petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), MDRI and the Center for Justice in International Law (CEJIL) obtained an historic ruling to protect 460 people in Paraguay's psychiatric facility. In addition to immediate life-saving medical treatment and protection from sexual abuse, the Commission ordered Paraguay to end the barbaric practice of long-term isolation.

Hillman, an attorney and lead investigator in Paraguay, shot the film to illustrate the inhuman and degrading conditions and long-term segregation suffered by those institutionalized. Hillman edited the video together with a volunteer editor arranged by WITNESS, an organization that specializes in helping human rights groups use the media to further their advocacy efforts.

The juried film festival centers exclusively on work done by people with disabilities or on the topic of disability. Hillman describes the film as, "A haunting documentary of conditions inside Paraguay's Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital. The video enumerates international human rights norms for the protection of persons with mental disabilities and illustrates vividly how conditions and treatment in the hospital violates fundamental human rights principles." Film festival jurors claim the film is "in your face - real," "an uncompromising look at injustice," "powerful, gripping & painful," "very political, informative and educational," "extremely effective," "photography speaks for itself," "very disturbing but important to see," and "very hard to watch . . . got the point across clearly & dramatically."

MDRI is an international human rights organization dedicated to the recognition and enforcement of the rights of people with mental disabilities worldwide. MDRI needs your support! Click [\[here\]](#) to contribute to MDRI using our secure server.

The "Picture this" film festival and award ceremony will be held February 14-18, 2005 at the University of Calgary in Alberta Canada.