

Valid Points Make ‘U.N. Me’ a Reasonable Exposé

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 2, 2012 - 8:42am

- [Ami Horowitz](#) [2]
- [Documentary](#) [3]
- [Government](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Matthew Groff](#) [6]
- [Movie Review](#) [7]
- [New York City](#) [8]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [9]
- [U.N. Me](#) [10]
- [United Nations](#) [11]
- [Visio Entertainment](#) [12]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – As a product of the post WWII era of global cooperation, the United Nations in New York City has arguably become a bloated and expensive paperweight, 67 years after its birth. Documentary filmmaker Ami Horowitz takes on this bloat with passion and some conspicuous points in “U.N. Me.”

The pun of the title does imply the relationship that Horowitz exposes in the film. What purpose does the bureaucracy that has developed in the United Nations serve in a post-iron curtain, post 9/11 world? According to the filmmaker, not much. Valuable dollars are poured into the organization, and in return – according to the the film – there is duplicity, hypocrisy and disingenuous interactions with countries that the U.N. is supposedly giving either military or humanitarian aid.

Ami Horowitz is the Michael-Moorish guide to the proceedings, as he breaks down situations that has given the United Nations an ever-increasing black eye. There is the incident in the African nation of Côte d'Ivoire – when U.N. peacekeepers opened fire on demonstrators, the “oil for food” program in Iraq – where only Saddam Hussein reaped the benefits and the genocidal situations in Darfur and Rwanda – where the U.N. did little to intervene.



Ami Horowitz of ‘U.N. Me’
Photo credit: Visio Entertainment

Through narrative, interviews and interaction within the United Nations building in New York City, Horowitz exposes these backward assignments that the organization has engineered, all in the name of their own existence. Also, in keeping with their charter that all nations have a seat at the table, there are incredible inconsistencies, such as Iran being part of the council on women’s rights. With billions of dollars

per year being poured into the organization from the United States alone, there seems to be less and less return.

Despite the point-of-view that drives Horowitz and co-creator Matthew Groff – Horowitz is a self-admitted conservative – they do effectively make their case. The United Nations is one of those institutions that civically sits apart in their status as a beacon of cooperative world countries. There is feedback from the Secretary General of the coterie when world events dictate, and a separate army that uses men and equipment in many hot spots, but does the average world citizen know what is really going on? At least Horowitz attempts to explain it.

The documentary makers have good reporter’s instincts. Their assessments of some of the not-so-successful U.N. missions are well represented and followed up with solid interviews, featuring both the critics and the players within the organization. There are few satisfying answers from the U.N. side, which leads to the conclusion that it has concrete bureaucracy as its most important principle. With low accountability, it becomes easier to simply look busy.

There is an illustrative style in the documentary and attempts at humor that is reminiscent of Michael Moore, but with less impact. It distracts rather than adds to the point, but as the documentary sheds these stunts their thesis builds to the conclusion. When the filmmakers are straight reporting, that’s when they do their best work. Some of the “humor” bits – such as “U.N. Peacekeepers Gone Wild” – are obvious and flat, it is the interviews that argue their position much more convincingly.



Ami Horowitz on the Ivory Coast in Africa in ‘U.N. Me’
Photo credit: Visio Entertainment

When Horowitz takes the United Nations podium (during a tour of the facilities) and starts pleading with the organization to fulfill their promise, the risk of doing such a thing and the anger he displays is very real. There is a question of agenda from this perspective. How would a reorganization of the U.N. work and which country, or group of countries, are willing to hold them accountable to such a retooling? In a two party political system in the United States, and as a host nation, it seems that in 67 years nothing has happened here to force reformation. It would have been telling to include more U.N. member nation opinions in the documentary as well.

The bottom line is that Horowitz and Groff have done their homework, they do present their findings and these truths are damning to the United Nations. Reform starts from shining a light in otherwise dark corners, and the filmmakers have turned on the beacon.

“U.N. Me” has a limited theatrical release and Video on Demand on June 1st. See local listings for theaters, show times and channel locations. Featuring Ami Horowitz, written and directed by Ami Horowitz and Matthew Groff. Rated “PG-13”



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