

BP Spill Aftermath Exposed in Humanizing Doc 'The Great Invisible'

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on November 6, 2014 - 12:09pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Four years later, and the change that lamentably only comes from the casualties of life and livelihood has not reached the Gulf of Mexico. Director Margaret Brown's documentary compassionately bestows a disillusioned voice to the affected individuals, from oil riggers to oyster shuckers, whose reliance on the gulf's livelihood was devastated when BP spilled a total of 176 million gallons of oil over 87 days starting on April 20, 2010.

One perspective begins with a home video. Lead oil rigger Doug Brown shares with "The Great Invisible's" viewers the informal footage he made inside the "Titanic"-like rig Deepwater Horizon, before its explosion killed eleven men and caused the devastating spill (the rig was owned by Transocean, and then leased by BP). Brown and others (like Stephen Stone, who still has his lifejacket) provide their during-and-after stories of survival, which have now become epilogues of bare compassion from their employers, and post-traumatic stress.

In Bayou La Batre, Alabama, a different point-of-view is provided, of the seafood workers whose livelihood came from the livestock in the water. Brown angles this through optimism and humanity, following around volunteer Roosevelt as he drives around donated food. Concurrently functioning as Brown's tour guide to the lost communities with out-of-work shuckers and fishers, Roosevelt treats victims with the attitude that is missing from the companies that spared checks soon after the events, with support that quickly dissipated thereafter.



"The Great Invisible"

Photo credit: Radius-TWC

Looming over the affected is the reliable, who appear in sporadic juxtapositions throughout Brown's film. With an early mention of BP's refusal to involve themselves in the doc, there's only echoes of their mentalities, shown in the recorded testimonies by head honchos about their incompetencies (like with their safety manuals that warn about walruses inside the Gulf of Mexico), and "pay czar" (Wikipedia's term, not mine) Kenneth Feinberg, who was hired by BP to convince the type of people (that Roosevelt is trying to keep alive) to accept payoffs. Footage of phony oil conferences and rig auctions have an eerie effect, expressing a shameless lack of distance that goes beyond classism and racism.

Brown's ugliest moments come from cigar-chomping kings who openly regale about the energy business' olden days, as introduced by a man claiming how his father helped release hostages that were taken by Saddam Hussein in the early 90s. They excuse casual egomania in these discomforting moments, especially when proclaiming their disconnected businesses as a type of service people should feel lucky for. In

an unspoken manner, this narcissism is evident in how Brown was even able to capture this footage of them speaking, with at least two cameras, as if they are so removed from the issues and the plight that they don't mind being filmed in a movie that even Tony Hayward and his phony sentimentality wouldn't touch.



"The Great Invisible"

Photo credit: Radius-TWC

"The Great Invisible" reassembles a vivid, frustrated picture in its connecting of components that have since tried to distance themselves from each other - from the discouraged locals who are shown not attending grievance meetings, to the oily fat cats trying to move on from their embarrassment. In this process, Brown's compelling, matter-of-fact journalism shares a stasis with its subject matter. Capturing a land in which the guilty have yet to genuinely put change in motion, her presentation refuses the comfort of the usual arc; this storytelling becomes a political gesture itself. With Brown's film successfully more eye-opening than it is sludgy, it puts vivid faces and frustrations to those living outside the glossy commercials of BP's PR; the casualties previously known as only statistics.

"The Great Invisible" opens at Chicago's Music Box Theater on November 7, 2014. A documentary directed by Margaret Brown.
Rated "PG-13"



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