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Local Filmmaker Returns from India Days before Attacks

(Cape May, NJ) North Cape May resident and filmmaker Chad Shagren returned from India where he was shooting his new documentary, having left just days before the terrorist attacks that took place this weekend. His new film will show the dangers in the cities of India for children who migrate there from the impoverished rural outlands.

“Agents of exploitation stand on the train platforms of the major cities waiting for their prey,” says Shagren. “Gang leaders, drug dealers, pimps are all waiting for children from the lowest level of the caste system to arrive.” The intention of his new documentary is to show the conditions in rural India, of a system that can only show younger people generations of hard labor, alcoholism, and child abuse and no way up. “These kids see their fathers working in the fields, abusing alcohol, and they receive unrelenting abuse,” he says. “And this lifestyle is repeating itself generation after generation.”

These children leave the rural areas for what they think is a better opportunity in the city. “They’re told of factory work, and placed into sweatshops,” Shagren reports. “The girls are moved into red light districts. So many become the victims and perpetrators of crimes and drug abuse.” The film is tentatively called “The Nowhere Children,” based on an article of the same name from a local reporter who served as a guide for the film crew.

About the recent terror attacks, Shagren observes that everything seemed normal on the surface while he was there, but he knew there was unrest. “We knew of bombs going off just weeks before we got there,” he says, “and we even commented to one other that all it would take to ruin the country is a public attack on Europeans and Americans. We all agreed that would destroy tourism, a major revenue base for their economy.”

Shagren’s first documentary, “Flying Kites,” is screening at the Lower Township Performing Arts Center on Tuesday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m. This film has been entered into the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and its focus is on the struggle and determination of orphans in Kenya, Africa. Shagren is a graduate of Long Island University where he majored in film, and he’s a former student of the Cape May Film Society’s summer program. JC Stinson, Creative Director for the Society, says, “Chad is a natural cinematographer. Certainly, he has had to work at his craft, but he was born with an eye for grabbing the most captivating images on film. You should go see this movie, and we’re looking forward to his next production.

The Cape May Film Society hosts the Cape May Film Festival, which is New Jersey’s premiere film festival dedicated to the support and presentation of creative, challenging, groundbreaking, film/video works by New Jersey filmmakers. The Society is also the region’s leading educational and cultural resource for youth and adult learners interested in all facets of the cinematic experience.

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