



ARTS & CULTURE

In My Blood It Runs

Digital Film Guide

Virtual Film Screening from Monday, July 6, through Sunday, July 26, 2020

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About *In My Blood It Runs*

Ten-year-old Djujan is a child-healer, a good hunter and speaks three languages. As he shares his wisdom of history and the complex world around him, we see his spark and intelligence. Yet Djujan is 'failing' in school and facing increasing scrutiny from welfare and the police. As he travels perilously close to incarceration, his family fight to give him a strong Arrernte education alongside his western education, lest he becomes another statistic. This film walks with him as he grapples with these pressures, shares his truths and somewhere in-between finds space to dream, imagine, and hope for his future self.

Director Maya Newell's first feature *Gayby Baby* (Hot Docs, Good Pitch Aus, London BFI) sparked a national debate in Australia when it was banned in schools. Told through the lens of four children in same-sex families during the fight for marriage equality, the film offered the voice of those being ignored. Made in collaboration with Djujan and his family, *In My Blood It Runs* tackles another heated topic, First Nations education and juvenile justice and places the missing voice of children front and center.

Filmed candidly and intimately, we experience this world on the fringes of Alice Springs through Djujan's eyes. Djujan's family light candles when the power card runs out, often rely on extended family to drop around food and live alongside the ingrained effects of colonization and dispossession.

"The first ones that had the magic was the First People, that had the land. History runs straight into all the Aboriginals. It travels all the way through from my blood pipes all the way to the brain."

Djujan

Every day in the classroom, Djujan's strength as a child-healer and Arrernte language speaker goes unnoticed. While he likes school, his report card shows a stream of 'E's, which make him feel stupid. Education is universally understood as a ticket to success, but school becomes a site of displacement and Djujan starts running away from the classroom.

In stark contrast to his school behavior, on his ancestral homeland surrounded by his family, Djujan is focused, engaged and learning. We begin to see country as a classroom and a place where resilience can grow and revolution is alive.

But the pressures on Djujan in Alice Springs are ever encroaching – educational failure, domestic violence, child removal and police. In May 2016, images of children being tortured at the Northern Territory's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre are leaked and spike global uproar. At the time, 100% of children detained in the Northern Territory were Indigenous. The filmmakers begin to realize that Djujan's world does not exist in a vacuum but is a microcosm of a much larger political and historical battle being waged in Australia.



“White people educate our kids in the way they want them to be educated. But I want them to learn their language. So they can carry on their language. I want my children to grow up learning both ways.”

Carol Turner, grandmother

In the end, when Djujan cannot run nor fight alone, he faces the history that runs straight into him and realizes that not only has he inherited the trauma and dispossession of his land, but also the strength, resilience and resistance of many generations of his people which holds the key to his future.

About the making of the film

In My Blood It Runs was shot in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Sandy Bore Homeland and Borroloola Community, Northern Territory, Australia over three years. However Maya, the director, has been making films alongside Arrernte Elders and families at an NGO called Akeyulerrre for a decade. This film arose organically from those relationships. The intimacy of the film and the delicacy with which it has represented the complex struggles of Djujan and his families’ lives has been achieved through a deep and collaborative process between the filmmaking team and the family.

The Arrernte and Garrwa families in the film and the board of Advisors to the film are core partners and have been involved in robust consultation at all stages of production. This has been a deep and ongoing process to ensure that each individual comprehensively understands the terms of involvement and the control they have over how their stories and images portrayed. Some of the core pillars of our protocols include; fair credits ‘Collaborating Directors’ and ‘Advisors’, formal recognition of Traditional Owners of the land we filmed, meaningful and ongoing consultation, shared ownership and profit with those represented, capacity building for First Nations peoples within the film team and a team structure that has both Indigenous and non-Indigenous as the core creatives.

This event offers a stark insight into a potential future for Djujan. How will his family and community rise above?

In My Blood It Runs looks beyond the ‘problem’ to see the people. Instead of seeing this Aboriginal boy as a ‘criminal’, we see a child who has experienced systematic abuse; instead of ‘bad parents’, we see a family who has been systematically stripped of all agency yet undeniably love their kids; instead of a ‘failure’ at school, we see a child whose talents have been completely overlooked. And crucially, this child observes the inequality of the world he is presented with.





Cast

Dujuan Hoosan

Lead

Megan Hoosan

Mother / Collaborating Director

Carol Turner

Grandmother / Collaborating Director

Margaret Hoosan

Grandmother / Collaborating Director

Colin Mawson

Brother

James Mawson

Father / Collaborating Director

Jimmy Mawson

Grandfather / Collaborating Director

Created By

Directed by

Maya Newell

Produced by

Sophie Hyde, Rachel
Naninaaq Edwardson, Larissa
Behrendt, Maya Newell

Cinematography by

Maya Newell

Collaborating Directors

Dujuan Hoosan, Carol Turner,
Megan Hoosan, James
Mawson, Margaret Anderson,
Jimmy Mawson

Edited by

Maya Newell, Bryan Mason,
Simon Price

Advisors

William Tilmouth, Margaret
Kemarre Turner, Agnes
Abbott, Jane Vadiveloo, Amelia
Turner

Associate Producers

Lisa Sherrard, Alex Kelly

Executive Producer / Senior

Traditional Owner of Alice

Springs

Felicity Hayes

Composed by

Benjamin Speed

Additional Music by

Amit May Cohen

Impact Producers

Alex Kelly, Maya Newell

Sound Design by

Kim Patrick

Director's Statement, Maya Newell

Over the last decade, I have had the privilege to be repeatedly invited to make films with two Arrernte-led organizations in Alice Springs, Akeyulerre, and Children's Ground. These films showcased the empowering work families are doing to educate their children and keep their language and culture strong. Over these years, I have sat with Elders as they recorded songlines for their grandchildren for fear they may be lost, seen kids visit their country for the first time and heard children speaking confidently and fluently in their first, second, or third language.

I was shocked to learn that our mainstream education system perceives these same children as failures at school. And it's no surprise, when Australia and in many Western countries, First Nations children are only taught in English and their successes are measured by western values. Rarely do we see into the inner lives of First Nations children growing up as they navigate the rich and complex bicultural society they are born into. *In My Blood It Runs* is a film to dispel the conventional myths of failure, trauma and dysfunction of First Nations families and instead amplify the resilience, strength and love that is often exempt from our screens.

When I made my first feature documentary *Gayby Baby*, I learnt that children are rarely given the agency to tell their own stories.

But when they do, people stop and listen. When *Gayby Baby* was banned in Australian schools by the government, the film spurred a national debate about the welfare of Gayby children. *In My Blood It Runs* takes on another heated national debate; about how Australia treats Indigenous children; and presents a missing voice – the voice of the kids themselves.

It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to learn from Djujan over these years. I have often been inspired by Djujan's courage to speak his truth to the camera. Along the way, I have been struck by his innate moral code and his heartbreaking wisdom. He is so resilient yet also so vulnerable. He is growing up to be a strong young man and I believe his truth-telling has much to teach Australia and the World.

Over these years filming *In My Blood It Runs*, it is clear to me that the systems that are meant to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are often what are doing so much damage. We need systematic and radical change. Consistently, it was the solutions offered by Djujan's own family that were what ensured his safety. I have no doubt that it is the solutions created by First Nations peoples and communities that will be what leads to real change.

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 13 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the West. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach.

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