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## **Artists Focus on Human Rights at Sunscreen Film Festival**

*For the past five years, Youth for Human Rights, supported by the Scientology Churches of the Tampa Bay area, has been one of the sponsors of the Sunscreen Film Festival. Industry professionals see film as the best medium to promote human rights,*

Once a year, St. Petersburg, Florida, goes "Hollywood" for the Sunscreen Film Festival, now in its 8th year. Sunscreen has steadily grown in prominence and is now one of 23 festivals sponsored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. More than 800 films were submitted and 95 were selected and screened April 18–21, 2013, at the Muvico Baywalk.

Unique to Sunscreen is its focus on education. This year's festival offered 15 filmmaking workshops, conducted by industry talent brought in from New York and Los Angeles.

Among those presenting workshops were Los Angeles-based Filmmaker Isa Totah and actress Veronica Milagros. Their appearance was sponsored in part by Youth for Human Rights. The Church of Scientology, of which Totah and

Milagros are both members, is the largest supporter of Youth for Human Rights internationally.

Milagros, originally from Argentina, began her career in theater and ballet. She studied with the Joffrey School and Company in New York. She now lives in Los Angeles and has appeared in *Jake in Progress*, *Nip/Tuck* and *The Unit*.

In her workshop, Milagros emphasized persistence and training. Much as an athlete trains for competition, actors also need to practice their art.

She believes in the power of film to inspire, recalling that it was film that first made her aware of human rights.

"I remember when I watched *Platoon*," said Milagros. "I left that theater knowing with 100 percent certainty that I did not agree with war. It created in me a sense of duty, as an artist, to bring peace and understanding to this world."

Totah is a director, screenwriter and actor who has appeared on *Married with Children* and the HBO mini series *Earth to Moon*.

He believes "Sunscreen ranks up there with the best of them" and that Sunscreen organizers are "motivated by a love of film and a desire to pass along knowledge to help new and old filmmakers accomplish their art."

In his workshops Totah focused on creativity and hard work rather than being concerned about the roadblocks to success.

He believes in the power of film to improve the culture, citing the 30 award-winning public service announcements produced by filmmaker Taron Lexton as a classic example. Each PSAs conveys the message of one of the 30 rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Totah admires the way these films have brought this previously little-known document to life, conveying its importance to people of all ages.

Youth for Human Rights Tampa has been one of the sponsors of the Sunscreen Film Festival for the past five years.

"Sunscreen is all about the freedom of expression," says Paola Martinez, Youth for Human Rights coordinator of the Church of Scientology of Tampa. "Youth for Human Rights is very proud to help get this message out far and wide."

The Church of Scientology published *Scientology: How We Help—United for Human Rights, Making Human Rights a Global Reality* to meet requests for more information about the human rights education and awareness initiative the Church supports. To learn more, visit [www.Scientology.org/humanrights](http://www.Scientology.org/humanrights).

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*Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard wrote, "Human rights must be made a fact, not an idealistic dream," and the Scientology religion is based on the principles of human rights. The Code of a Scientologist calls on all members of the religion to dedicate themselves "to support true humanitarian endeavors in the fields of human rights."*

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Filmmaker Isa Totah conducted workshops at the 8th annual Sunscreen Film Festival in St. Petersburg, Florida, April 18–21, 2013. Totah's appearance at the festival was sponsored in part by the Tampa Bay chapter of Youth for Human Rights.