

## 'I am Happy'

A film by Soraya Umewaka

premieres at

### HBO: NY International Latino Film Festival

July 28<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>



'I am Happy' (66 minutes) sheds light on the humanity that resides in the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Through portraits of a graffiti artist, samba dancers, police officers and maids, this documentary focuses on how these individuals persevere and perceive happiness during economic and social hardship. Although deprived of wealth, opportunities, and even social mobility, happiness becomes a form of self-salvation that nobody can take away from these individuals.

Screening of 'I am Happy':

NY Int. Latino Film Festival World Premiere

July 29th Wednesday 3:30pm at Clearview Cinemas

July 31st Friday 4:00 pm at Clearview Cinemas

260 West 23rd Street between 7th and 8th Avenues

Map:

<http://nylatino.bside.com/2009/venues/screening/2483166116/print;jsessionid=087E0E4C0F62423DE058F3A01DAF3781>

### Longer Synopsis

'I am Happy', an intimate documentary, sheds light on the humanity that resides in the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro. Principally filmed in Cantagalo, a favela situated near Copacabana beach, this documentary explores the lives of eight remarkable individuals: two young samba dancers, a renowned graffiti artist, a capoeira/hip hop dancer, two maids, and two community police officers who work inside Cantagalo. Although deprived of wealth, opportunities, and even social mobility, happiness becomes a form of self-salvation that nobody can take away from these individuals.

"I am happy. I am always happy. Do you think my happiness is false?" expresses Claudia an Afro-Brazilian maid, who has been working from the age of 11.

Vinicius, a talented Afro-Brazilian samba dancer who lives in Cantagalo expresses, "Sometimes I want to tell them, I'm not some monster I'm human just like you."

"Instead of sending police-men with bullets up here in the favelas, the solution is

culture.” Acme, graffiti artist.

Jose, an Afro-Brazilian hip-hop dancer passed his law university exam but has no means to pay his university tuition. “If everyone, if all Afro-Brazilians could go to university, they wouldn’t be in favelas, dealing, stealing, and killing.”

### **Director’s Statement:**

“The people down there [on the streets] are afraid of the people here in the favelas, and the people here are afraid of people there. So everyone lives without knowing what’s on the other side.”  
Acme (graffiti artist)

In the summer of 2006, I visited a samba dance class in Cantagalo, a favela situated near Ipanema and Copacabana beach—one of the wealthiest areas in Rio, Brazil. It was there that I met Vinicius, a samba dancer. I wanted to see first-hand what it is to live in the favelas of Rio and how the young people respond to the contrast of life-styles in the favelas and in the Ipanema neighborhood. How is happiness viewed in the favelas of Rio? How do people in the favelas cope with inequality and hardship?

Through this documentary, I intend to provoke a spark of interest in the people who live in the favelas of Brazil using vibrant colors. I am hopeful that the evident charisma of the individuals in my film will inspire people to reach out and access the humanity and the profound creative culture that resides in favelas.

I have made this documentary with the intention that viewers develop a form of intimacy with the personal portraits of the individuals in this film, which can be a powerful tool to combat indifference, and fear. I also hope that this documentary will challenge our tendency to see people, situations in a black-and-white manner.

### **Filmography**

Soraya Umewaka is a social artist who received her A.B. degree in Comparative Politics from Princeton University in 2006. Being Japanese-Lebanese, she grew up in England and Japan. ‘Street Witness’ (2007, Quito, Ecuador) a documentary on Ecuadorian street children was shown at the Miami International Film Festival (2008) and HBO: NY Latino Film Festival (2008), Belgrade International Documentary Film Festival (2009).

Upon winning Princeton University’s Labouisse Fellowship in 2006, (awarded yearly) she made documentaries of the UNV’s (UN Volunteers’) social development projects in the slums of the northeast of Brazil. Independently, for six months, she filmed ‘Eu Sou Feliz’ (‘I am Happy’) documenting the humanity that resides in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 2007, she filmed refugee camps in Colombia and Nepal.

Through the medium of documentary filmmaking, she raises awareness on social issues and raises funds for educational scholarships. Many of her films empower and humanize the voice of marginalized populations.

With grants from Princeton, she has made various short documentaries across the globe, with a focus on at-risk youths. She has made ‘Afghanistan Unveiled’ (2003, Kabul, Afghanistan), ‘Lost Voices’ (2004, Beirut, Lebanon), ‘One Day Along the Mekong River’ (2005, Phnom Penh, Cambodia), ‘Monica’s Sembradores,’ ‘Carapicui’ (second most violent favela of Sao Paulo, 2006), Microfinance Initiative in Rio’s favelas,’ (Rio, Brazil, 2007), ‘UNV Civil Cooperation’ (Bahia, Brazil, 2007).

### **Credit List:**

Carlos Esquivel  
Rubinho Peixoto  
Luis Cesar  
Carina Oliveira  
Vinicius Villiger  
Jose Ribamar  
Angela D’Aguiar  
Maria da Conceição dos Santos

Claudia Mateus  
Marcelo Silva  
Marina Silva  
Bruno Silva

**Photographer**  
Tomas Reyes

**Camera Assistant/Body Guard**  
Jose Ribamar

**Second Camera in Rio**  
**Portrait camera work of Maria and Luis Cesar**  
Amara Barroso

**Illustrator**  
Carlos Esquivel

**Text translator**  
Fabio Luis

**Sound Designer**  
Tak Ogawa

**Sound Editors**  
Hirokazu Ebisu  
Chi Hai  
Chang Kyung  
Miho Kiriya  
Yukari Watanabe

**Research Consultant on Maids**  
David Evan Harris

**Editing Consultant**  
Felipe Lacerda  
Naotomo Umewaka

**Text Design Consultant**  
Carla Salem

**Music**  
Filhos da Fé  
Sombrinha / Marquinhos PQD  
Courtesy of Tupiniquim Entertainment

'Propaganda Enganosa'  
Carlos Esquivel  
Courtesy of Carlos Esquivel

'Pentagono'  
Rael Feliciano  
Courtesy of Rael Felciano

'Cacuriás'  
Consuelo de Paula  
Courtesy of Tupiniquim Entertainment and Koala Records

'Roda de Capoeira'  
Vicente Barreto  
Courtesy of Tupiniquim Entertainment and Koala Records

'Playboy NP'  
MC Doidera  
Courtesy of MC Doidera

'Rise'  
Mr. Free  
Courtesy of Well Rooted Music

'Someday'  
Mr. Free  
Courtesy of Well Rooted Music

'Os Terços do Samba'  
Consuelo de Paula  
Courtesy of Tupiniquim Entertainment and Koala Records

'Ossain RMX'  
DJ Machintal  
Courtesy of DJ Machintal

'Claire de Lune'  
C. Debussy  
Courtesy of Reuge Music

O Meu Pranto Não Cessava  
Almir Guineto/ Fred Camacho/ Arlindo Cruz  
Courtesy of Tupiniquim Entertainment

#### **Video Game**

Counter Strike  
Courtesy of Valve Software

#### **Archival Footage**

O Globo  
'Casa-grande e Senzala'  
Gilberto Freyre  
Fondo De Cultura Economica

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#### **Contact Information**

Soraya Umewaka  
Royal Moto Azabu Garden #102  
Minatoku Tokyo  
106-0046 Tokyo Japan  
tel/fax: 813-5420-1314  
mobile: 81-90-1764-9808  
[streetwitness@gmail.com](mailto:streetwitness@gmail.com)