

Documentalist Tremblay to MediaSreda: “speaking out creates a better world for everybody”

Independent American documentary filmmaker and director Regis Tremblay became a speaker at the next meeting of the club MediaSreda at December 14th.

Regis makes social and political documentaries around the world, made several films about our country, Crimea and Russian Spring. Regis is known for his works: “The Ghost of Jeju”, “30 Seconds To Midnight” and “Je Suis Russia”.

Regis has a goal through his films showing the world the reality of life in Russia and show our country’s image in true colors.

We are sharing a fragment of the interview.

How did you decide to move to Russia and then to Crimea?

At 2016 I went to Russia to film for my documentary “30 Seconds To Midnight”. I was here for less than a month and found out how friendly Russians are. I was amazed and started making films.

When I went back to States and finished the documentary, it was not popular in there.

I came to Russia 3 more times and traveled the country. I loved the land and people. In 2019 I didn’t want to live in America anymore – I did not agree with what my government was doing and saying. I was angry at my country killing innocent people all over the world.

So, because I felt very comfortable in Russia, especially in Yalta, I decided to live here. Since 2019 I’m in Crimea.

Were you ever afraid about telling the truth about Russia?

As long as I’m in Russia – no.

<...>

Oliver Stone is a friend of mine. I emailed him 3 days ago and told him what I was doing. I texted “Oliver, I’m living now in Yalta for almost 3 years, I’m doing several video-podcasts about Russia and life in Russia, in Crimea. Could you be a guest on my show?”

He answered me “Unfortunately, because of the censorship in America I can’t speak of any of that anymore. It would not be wise or good for me to appear again promoting Russia”. He did a series on President Putin, produced a series of videos “Ukraine On Fire”. When I asked him about him coming back to Russia, he said “No. Nobody in America is listening”.

So that's how bad the situation is. If you speak good things about Russia, <in USA> you're punished.

How do you cope with the consuming process of making a documentary?

Project usually starts with the idea. My whole focus for many years has been about politics and social issues, peace, justice. I felt strongly about these things.

I make a lot of research (thankfully nowadays you can do this online) and start to put together the idea using storyboard. I write down each idea on a card and build them up.

For every movie I reach out to people. For docs about Russia I met politicians, veterans, military people, students, ordinary people... If you watch my films, you'd see me asking people "Who are you?", "What do you think?", "What do you think about America?".

You know what people say in Russia?

"We love American people but we're afraid of your government".

What's the difference between American and Russian culture?

This how it is growing up in America: I was born in 1945, in the end of Great Patriotic War, as you call it. This period from 1946 to 1950s was fantastic. Everybody had a home, a car, we had friends and could go play all day long and not come home 'till dinner time and nobody worried about us. We had fun and wasn't very interested in going to school.

At that time, we were taught that America won World War II, they never told us about Soviet Red Army that defeated nazi Germany. They said America was good and spread freedom and democracy. I was proud to be an American.

It was like that for everybody growing up then. We didn't know nothing about other countries. It was just "great and good America". I believed that for the most of my life.

You know when it changed? When I went to study to Rome. I had classmates from all over the world, and not all of them were fond of the USA.

For the first time I saw my country through the eyes of other people. That was the beginning when I woke up.

I went back in America and started seeing things I didn't like. Things started to change.

My culture affected me, but then my eyes were opened. I now see myself as the citizen of the world. I've been to many other countries (Mexico, Canada, Asian countries, Russia) and feel at home everywhere.

I had wonderful education and parents and I'm so grateful to find that we're all friends and deal with same problems.

What Russian media do you use and what is your opinion on them?

I use RT and TACC in English, Sputnik and several Telegram channels. I'll tell you the difference between Russian and American media.

In today's America journalism does not exist. If you look at the news, all the same reporters tell the same story all over. They don't investigate anymore, they have scripts to keep repeating. There is no journalistic freedom in America anymore. If you speak out and tell the truth – you lose your job.

You think Julian Assange should be in prison? United States of America wanna keep 'im in prison until he dies.

I don't see that happening in Russia. Maybe it does somewhere, but I don't see it happening.

When you become a journalist, your job is to tell people the truth. That's the job of a journalist in a free democratic society. Even when you're not liked and get punished. When they banned me on YouTube, I went to BitChute and Rumble. They didn't stop me and they won't.

How you are dealing with the negative attitude towards your work?

Now it's a badge: it doesn't bother me anymore. My film – “The Ghost Of Jeju” – was sent off for free. I have no idea how many people has seen it.

“The Ghost Of Jeju” was voluntarily translated to 7 languages including Russian. Thousands of people had written to me. Today they still ask me about this film.

What are the 3 main qualities of a modern journalist?

You have to love what you do, tell the truth and have a love for people.

But there's one more thing. You must perfect your craft. Whether you're a writer, photographer, videographer – become the best that you can be.

Veronika Zaruba