

Slumming to Another Drum

Feature length documentary

Film by Bartek Dziadosz & Nalini Persram

Produced by The Derek Jarman Lab

Currently in development

Dharavi in Mumbai, one of the world's most densely populated slums, is located beside the runways of Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, one of the world's busiest international traffic intersections. Over recent decades, the inhabitants of Dharavi have been resisting the airport authority's plans for commercial redevelopment of the land on which the slum is located. This is a struggle which, against the grain of the dominant narrative of global neoliberalism, has had a number of successes for the inhabitants of this slum settlement.

Slumming to Another Drum is a feature length documentary which aims to examine such disruptions and nuances in the global discourse about the world's poor. Often such stories are used as illustrations of concepts such as 'the ingenuity of the poor'. But this film is not interested in contributing to any such facile representations of slum life – we want to look closely at the complicated economic and cultural transactions that happen between the slum and the world outside it.



To this end, the film will primarily be focused on slum dwellers in Dharavi in Mumbai, and in Neza in Mexico City. In Mexico, the production will be working in collaboration with researchers from the Universidad Tecnológico de Monterrey and a number of professionals in third sector organizations. In India, the production will be drawing on the research and informants of Dr Nalini Persram. In both cases we are building on existing fieldwork in these locations conducted by local informants and researchers. The narrative mode of the film will be observational, slow-paced, and character driven.

In this film we will ask what motivates the audacious attempt by the destitute to scale the steep, smooth walls of poverty? What do the technologies of escape look like? What do the dispossessed possess that the rich do not recognize, and fundamentally lack? How is poverty defined by the rich, and conversely, how is wealth redefined by some in slum societies? And importantly, what do western cultural references to the ingenuity of the poor entail and hope to accomplish? Neoliberalism entails a grossly widening disparity between rich and poor, privatization of public institutions, and individualism writ large in the form of free and autonomous corporations. In response, at the core of this project is a focus on the way the 'return of the gaze' by those in poverty can transform the narrative of poverty itself, and shed light on the inherent contradictions of the promise and violence in the neoliberal system.



About the Filmmakers:

Bartek Dziadosz is the Director at the Derek Jarman Lab. He was cinematographer on *Spring, A Song for Politics* and *Harvest* in the Lab's acclaimed *The Seasons in Quincy* sequence. He also directed *A Song for Politics* and edited *Harvest*. His documentary on the sociologist *Zygmunt Bauman, The Trouble with Being Human These Days*, has screened around the world.

Nalini Persram teaches Social and Political Thought at York University, Toronto, where she is researching Dharavi amongst other topics such as subjectivity and survival, Caribbean forms of culture and resistance, and other sites of political theory. She has taught at Trinity College, Dublin and the University of the West Indies, and is the editor of *Postcolonialism and Political Theory* (Lexington Books, 2008).

