

# my cultural divide



Bridging the gap between consumerism and culture.

GREEN DRAGON PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

A FILM BY FAISAL LUTCHMEDIAL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TARA ARNST

SOUND EDIT AND MIX EMORY MURCHISON

MUSIC ANDREW KIM, STEVE PATUTA AND THE HIGH DIALS

PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

CONSEIL DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES QUEBEC

AND THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA



bridge the gap at [www.myculturaldivide.ca](http://www.myculturaldivide.ca)

"★★★★½ Passionate and revealing... this is politically engaged filmmaking with a heart."

- John Griffin, The Montreal Gazette

"A well thought out doc about the problems of globalization and cheap labour, one that's aware of the lack of easy answers."

- Mark Slutsky, The Montreal Mirror

## my cultural divide

Filmmaker Faisal Lutchmedial goes beyond the activist stereotype as he takes a personal journey into his mother's native country for the first time. A three month visit to Bangladesh becomes a discovery of family and home that runs parallel with his attempt to tackle the complex issue of global trade.

Starting from the opening scene *My Cultural Divide* questions the logic of the hardcore political activist, and wonders aloud whether ethical consuming actually does anything good for the workers behind the machines. Because of family connections Lutchmedial makes his way into some of the worst factories in Bangladesh, and talks frankly with the workers inside about their job and living conditions.

Accompanied by his ailing mother, Lutchmedial takes us on a very personal journey to bridge the gap between his heritage in Bangladesh and his life in Canada. He connects his politics with his humanity, and weaves together a story that is both thought provoking and touching.



# Director's Statement

*My Cultural Divide* is about the exploitation of cheap labour in the garment industry by developed countries, the political movements here which have sprouted up in protest to it, and the ethical dilemmas which the so-called “conscientious consumer” faces every day when standing in the check out line. It is also a personal journey into Bangladesh, into the culture, and into my family roots. It is, in essence, an attempt to connect the humanity that drives production, and the consumers a thousand miles away who buy into a system without considering the costs.



This documentary is different from the average activist diatribe in that I had no wish to make an exposé of sweatshops or the specific corporations that use them. Everyone knows sweatshops exist, and every outsourcer, with few exceptions, makes their fortunes off them. No, I wanted to make a film about why, if we all have this knowledge, it seems as though there is no stopping the constant

erosion of labour rights in the world. I also wanted to make a film that was more than just a lot of disturbing third world images shot by the western eye - I had the unique opportunity to bring the viewer into sweatshops through my own discovery of my mother's homeland. Context is everything; my conclusions would not have been the same without this human element.

*My Cultural Divide* is an effort to break down these dichotomies, the unscrupulous capitalist vs. the idealistic activist, the personal vs. the political, my cultural heritage vs. my home in the west. This is the divide I wish to bridge, to somehow help the garment worker earn a fair wage, while at the same time connecting to a part of myself I barely know.

# Director's Bio



Faisal Lutchmedial is a Montreal filmmaker of both east and west Indian decent. His work has explored his place as a Canadian with a mixed cultural background beginning with *My Cultural Divide* (2006, documentary, 75 min). This film explores heritage, culture, and the 2nd generation immigrant experience – as well as tackling labour rights in the garment industry in his mother's native Bangladesh. The following year Lutchmedial made the short *Going*

*Through The Motions* (2007) which is a hybrid fiction / documentary about his father's native land of Trinidad and Montreal's Expo '67.

More recently, Lutchmedial directed and acted in a short fiction entitled *Useless Things* (2009, 16 min), a SODEC funded production to be aired on the CBC, about a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrant dealing with his parents death and a loss of history.

Previous to this, Lutchmedial made a diverse array of work on a variety of subjects and genres which have played in film festivals in Canada and abroad.

Lutchmedial has a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Distinction from Concordia University, where he attended the Cinema program.

# Screenings

- **World Premiere:** Montreal World Film Festival, August 2006
- **Cinema Politica:** Concordia University, Montreal, September 2006
- **International Premiere:** Tri Continental Film Festival South Africa, September 2006
- **USA \*Premiere:** South Asian International Film Festival New York City, October 2006
- EICTV Cuban Film School Special Presentation with Q&A, January 2007
- Amnistie internationale de l'Université de Montréal Special Screenings, January 2007
- Buffalo University Gender Institute Film Festival, February 2007
- Princeton University, February 2007
- NewFilmmakers series, Anthology Film Archives, February 2007
- New York Arab and South Asian Film Festival, February 2007
- Montreal Human Rights Film Festival, March 2007
- Minneapolis / St. Paul International Film Festival, April 2007
- **European Premiere:** Visions du Reel, Nyon, Switzerland, April, 2007
- Finnish Social Forum, April 2007
- Lens Politica Film Festival, Helsinki, April 2007
- Globians Film Festival, Potsdam, Germany, August 2007
- Short and International Film Festival of Dhaka, February 2008



A man in old Dhaka fixes a rickshaw.

# Quotes

## ***Joshua Ginsberg, The McGill Daily***

"There is no finger-wagging here, but an open-minded discussion encompassing the voices of western activists and Bangladeshi workers. The film does not shy away from the disturbing reality, but responds to it with questions instead of hyperbole."

## ***Susannah Bartlow, Buffalo University Gender Institute***

"My Cultural Divide" is an inspirational film that opens awareness to what is going on throughout the world. Director Faisal Lutchmedial is a terrific, knowledgeable speaker. Far from the typical sweatshop documentary, "My Cultural Divide" connects with the viewer thanks to Faisal's willingness to share his experiences and remain open-minded both in the film and in conversation with audiences."

## ***Mark Slutsky, Montreal Mirror***

"Lutchmedial is an unabashed lefty and conscientious consumer, and he's curious how his ideals stack up in a country where a huge percentage of the economy depends on the garment industry, and by extension, sweatshops. It's kind of two films in one—a personal journey back home and a well-thought-out doc about the problems of globalization and cheap labour, one that's aware of the lack of any easy answers."

## ***Sue Smith, Host of This Morning Live!***

"Dov Charney, the CEO of American Apparel, is worth the price of admission, he's very funny."

## ***Wendy Schadewald, Short Redhead Reel Reviews***

"An eye-opening, thought-provoking documentary in which Canadian filmmaker Faisal Lutchmedial takes a 3-month journey with his Parkinson-afflicted mother to Bangladesh and brilliantly intertwines his personal visit to his mother's homeland to discover his origins with exploring and exposing the inhumane, appalling, disturbing, and horrific conditions under which many factory employees throughout India are exploited as slaves in sweatshops."

## Credit List

Writer/Director/Producer/Editor	Faisal Lutchmedial
Cinematographer	Tara Arnst
Additional Camerawork	Jim Hoffman Moses Maura Tyrell Henry Jeff Thorn Zahid Faisal Lutchmedial

Photographs by Faisal Lutchmedial and Tara Arnst, with exception of "Pentex Factory Police beatings" provided by the National Labor Committee.

Archival footage supplied by the Internet Moving Images Archive in association with Prelinger Archives.

*Integration Report I* (1960), dir: Madeline Anderson  
Adbusters anti-ads provided by the Media Foundation

Translation	Deena Aziz Suraiya Lutchmedial
Sound Edit / Mix	Emory Murchison
Colour Correction	Denis Gathelier
Average Consumer Voice Over	Shawn Meloncon
Average Consumer Art Director	Zahra Peal
Main Musical Score	Andrew Kim
Opening and Superhero music	Steve Patuta

"Things are Looking Better"  
written by Rishi Dhir and performed by "The High Dials"  
off the album "A New Devotion" (Rainbow Quartz)

"O Canada"

written by Calixa Lavallée  
performed by Montreal Festival Orchestra  
Conducted by Wilfrid Pelletier  
provided by the National Archives of Canada

"Hail to the Chief"

written by James Sanderson  
performed by The United States Air Force Band  
Washington, D.C.

"The appearance of recordings by The United States Air Force Band in this film in no way constitutes an endorsement by the United States Air Force of this film or the opinions stated within."

### Interviews

Tom Hanson, Raja Devashish Roy, Karin Mak, Naeem Mohaiemen, Mark Levinson, Hee Won Khym, Barbara Briggs, Amirul Haque Amin, Adam Neiman, Charles Kernaghan, Sk Nazma, Bob Jeffcott. Dov Charney. Sharon Cohen. Ann O'Loughlin, Amanda Chehrezad

Very Special Thanks to the garment workers who were interviewed for this documentary.

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Many factories in Bangladesh are known to be firetraps.