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7th December 2011
PRESS RELEASE

Last night 14 year old Amna Aslam, of Hollins Technology College, won the action category of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's Faith Shorts film competition for her film "Muhammad in Accrington Inspiring Me". Amna received her award from Tony Blair and Dawn French at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) in front of over 200 guests.

Other competition judges including June Sarpong, Lord Puttnam, Omid Djalili and the Grand Mufti of Bosnia were also at the awards ceremony. Hugh Jackman was unable to join as he is currently touring in the US with his musical "Hugh Jackman on Broadway" but opened the ceremony with a heartfelt video message to the Faith Shorts winners.

The film was made during R.E and Citizenship lessons and Amna's whole class were involved in the production. Twelve of the students and four of the teachers from the school were in the audience at BAFTA and were invited to take a bow in recognition of their contribution to the film.

Amna was invited on stage to accept her award and say a few words about her film.

Amna said:

"Thank you so much for this award, I am so please that people like our film, we had a lot of fun making it! It is a real honour for me to collect this award today and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped in the planning and filming.

"My aim was to show a positive message about Islam and chose to do it on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as I believe his teachings and his message are a real inspiration and they have a universal appeal.

"The process has helped me to discover more about my faith. I really valued the opportunity to show how proud I am of my religion."



Photo by James Perrin



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Tony Blair, Patron and Founder of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation said:

“Muhammad in Accrington Inspiring Me” is a great film which challenges some of the preconceived ideas about Muslims and Islam. I hope people can learn about the true meaning of Islam through Amna’s film. All of the students from Hollins Technology College should be very proud of their achievement.

“This new generation holds the potential to help turn the tide against religious tensions, building unity to counter those who see faith as a source for division and conflict

“Last night we saw young people proud of their faith. The winning filmmakers have a deep sense of values and solidarity with those of other faiths. This is faith at its best.

“These young people have made extraordinary films - this is the true face of faith. We need to be open about the other and this film competition has shown that giving young people a global voice has a real impact.

“Congratulations to all the winners.”

Entrants between 14 and 18 years old were asked to express in their own words what their faith means to them by answering the brief “let me show you how my faith inspires me”.

Entries flooded in from five continents around the world with young people from Australia, Canada, India, Lebanon, Philippines, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The three winning film makers traveled from the Philippines, Canada and the North West of England to have their films premiered at the British Academy of Film and Television Art. (Full details of all of the film makers and their films below)



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Media contact:

Susie McShane

Communications Manager

Susie.mcshane@tonyblairfaithfoundation.org

+44 (0) 207 647 7857

+44(0) 7500 798 166

Notes to Editor

Please credit photographer James Perrin.

Winning film makers:

Action category:

Film: Muhammad in Accrington...Inspiring Me

Filmmaker: Amna Aslam

Age: 14 years old

Religion: Muslim

Country: Accrington, North West England

Synopsis: This film is about how the teachings of Muhammad inspire this class of students in a positive way. Students saw the film competition as an opportunity to challenge some of the stereotypes about Islam and its associations with terrorism.

Notes: This film was a class effort with all 25 students involved in making it. 11 of the students involved in making the film and two of the teacher will be in the audience at the awards ceremony.

Family category:

Film: First Steps to Recovery

Filmmaker: Paulo Reyes

Age: 18 year old Film Student

Religion: Christian

Country: Manila, Philippines

Synopsis: the film explores illness and death and the ways in which faith can be a great source of strength and solace to those facing these issues.

Central message: "I want my viewers to pick up from my film, it would be that faith is not just believing that God will pull through for you. It's also putting your complete trust in Him even if He does not pull through for you."

Musical category:

Film: Be the Change You Want to See

Filmmaker: Nadim Merrikh, "The Dapper Rappers"

Age: 15 years old

Religion: Baha'i

Country: Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Synopsis: This is rap music video which aims to mobilise young people to take action, in a positive way.

Notes: The filmmakers were inspired by the London riots to make this film and motivate young people. The video has had over 10,000 hits on Youtube

Overall winner:

Nadim Merrikh, "The Dapper Rappers"

Special Film:

Film: Find Heaven

Filmmaker: Daniyal Noorani

Age: 27

Religion: Muslim

Country: Pakistan

Synopsis: a short cartoon aimed to help tackle extremism.

Notes: An extract of this short film will be shown before the panel discussion on representations of faith in film to help frame the discussion.

About the Tony Blair Faith Foundation

In an increasingly globalised world, religion is at the very core of life for billions of people and it cannot be ignored. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation aims to promote respect and understanding between the major religions. We empower, support and train young people in over 100 countries to take multi-faith action to eliminate deaths from malaria, providing them with a positive alternative to those who try to use faith as a means to divide. We provide emerging and current leaders with the education and analysis to understand the role of religion in the modern world and we break down barriers between young people of all faiths and none by using new technology to connect them.

www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org

The three categories for Faith Shorts 2011:

- My Faith Short – Family movie – how has faith inspired you, your family, your neighbour, or someone you admire?
- My Faith Short – Action movie – how does your faith inspire you to take action in your school, your community with other faiths or the wider world?
- My Faith Short –Musical movie – are you a fan of Bollywood or Broadway? How can you use music or song to celebrate your faith?

Prizes:

- An all-expenses paid trip to London to the Faith Shorts award ceremony at BAFTA for the winner and their guardian.
- The opportunity to make and edit a film with a professional film crew.
- A personal tour of the National Film and Television School by the school's director, award-winning producer and Faith Shorts judge, Nik Powell.

Full list of judges

- Tony Blair (Patron and Founder of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation)
- Shabana Azmi (Actor)
- Jonathan Caplan QC (Chairman of BAFTA Management Limited)
- Mustafa Ceric, (The Grand Mufti of Bosnia)
- Dawn French (Actor)
- Hugh Jackman (Actor)
- Anil Kapoor (Actor and Producer)
- Amr Khaled (Arab TV personality and Preacher)
- Jet Li (Actor and Campaigner)
- Sherry Lansing (Former FOX studios President)
- Kishore Lulla (Group Executive Chairman, Eros International plc)
- Wendi Murdoch (Businesswoman)
- Nik Powell (Director of the UK National Film and Television School)
- Lord Puttnam (Oscar-winning Producer)
- Rabbi David Rosen
- June Sarpong (Broadcaster and Campaigner)
- Deepak Verma (Actor and Filmmaker)