

Film on Portland's impoverished families gets Emmy nod

"American Winter" documentary nominated for outstanding reporting; awards given in September

BY JOANNE ZUHL
STAFF WRITER

"American Winter," the documentary film about the trauma of modern poverty through the eyes of eight Portland families, has been nominated for an Emmy. The film originally aired on HBO, but it has been shown in theaters across the country and continues to leverage community discussions about poverty, homelessness and what co-director and producer Joe Gantz calls "the other America."

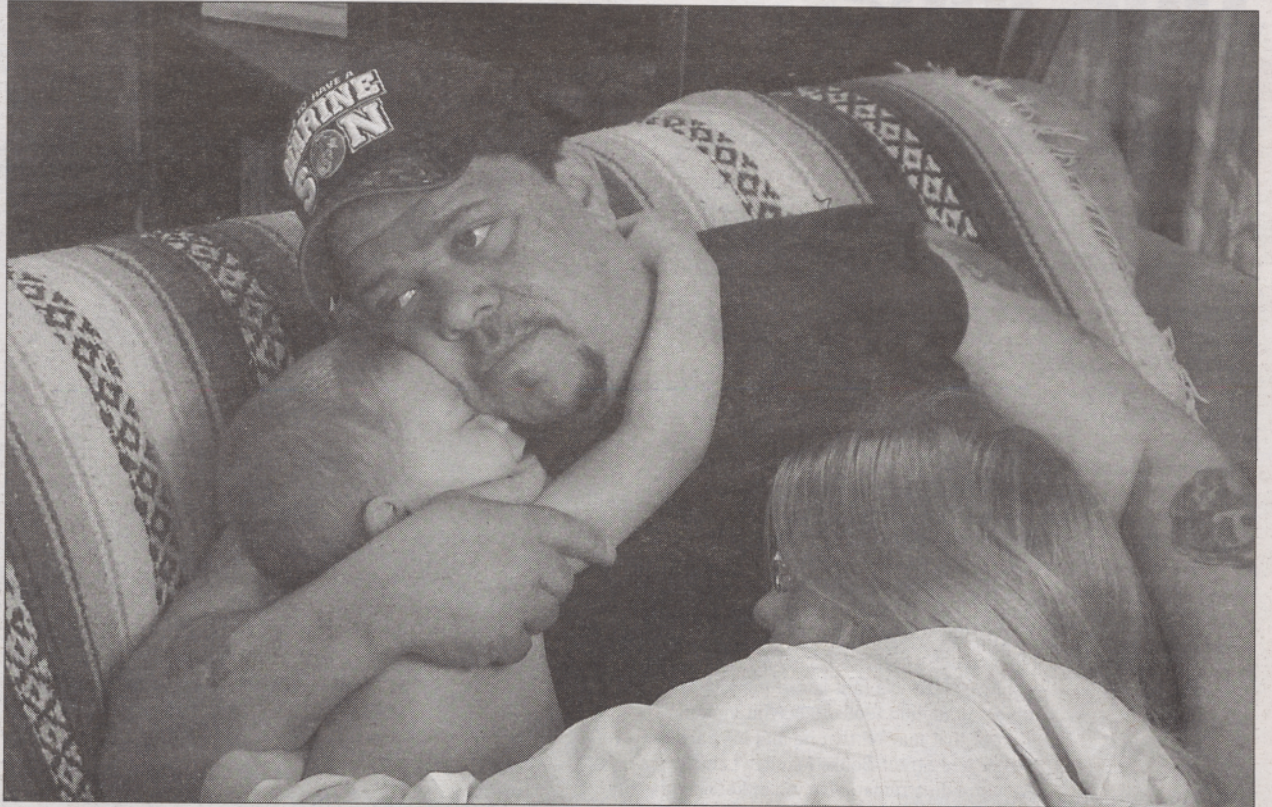
"This film is about one of the critical issues of our time in that people are getting poorer — and jobs are paying less, and are being shipped overseas, and are being done by robots — at the same time that the tax laws have given the wealthy more money," Gantz said in a phone conversation with Street Roots. "The system is getting rigged to benefit the wealthy, and not just through the tax laws, but the political system. It's a rigged system, and it's getting worse. There are two Americas, and one America is struggling mightily and having less political representation and making less money each year. And the other America is doing better and better."

Gantz and his brother Harry co-directed and produced the film and are nominated along with co-producers Aaron Butler and Devon Terrill as part of the production company View Film. Gantz and his crew have won an Emmy and received multiple nominations for their series "Taxicab Confessions."

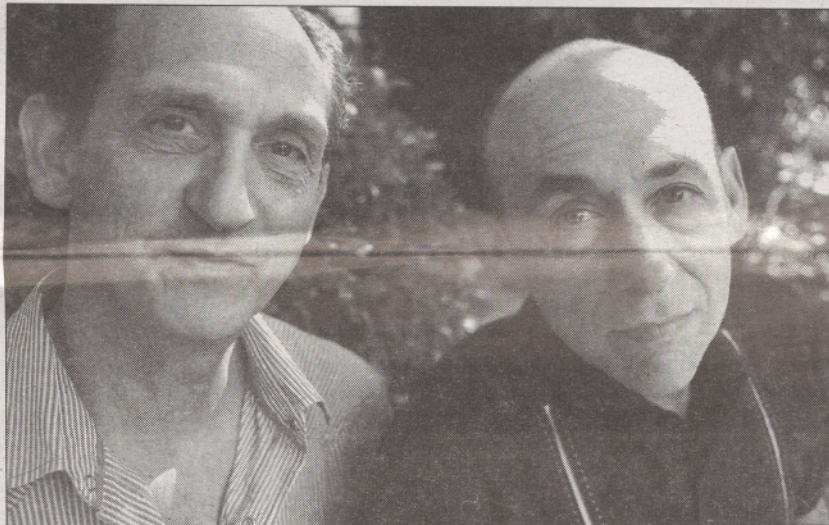
The crew worked on the film for several years, documenting the lives of eight Portland families struggling with poverty and living in fear of crisis after crisis. Gantz said they still stay in touch with some of the people in the film, and their struggles continue.

"Every week or two, someone calls and says this is working better or this has set me back again," he said. "In this country there are these myths. People doing well are told they're doing well because they deserve it and they are capable and they work hard. And the people who are not doing well are told it's because they're not capable, they don't work hard and they don't deserve it. When you see these people in the film you see things couldn't be further from the truth."

Gantz said the film continues to be screened weekly across the country in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOE AND HARRY GANTZ
Above, a still from "American Winter." At left, co-directors and producers Joe and Harry Gantz.



partnership with local advocacy organizations. They are followed by a discussion about the myths surrounding poverty, which he says prevent people from seeing the opportunities for change.

"American Winter" is nominated in the category of Outstanding Business and Economic Reporting Long Form, which is part of the News and Documentary division. The News and Documentary Emmys will be awarded on Sept. 30. (The red carpet primetime categories were awarded

Monday, Aug. 25.)

Soon after the film aired on HBO in March 2013, several family members featured in the documentary were invited by Sen. Jeff Merkley to testify before the House Banking Subcommittee on Economic Policy about poverty and the future of the middle class. Gantz hopes the nomination, and possibly winning an Emmy, will further elevate that discussion.

"It would be very gratifying to win an Emmy but it will also help us get this

message out," Gantz said. "You do it because you hope to effect some change. And I think the film has effected some change. There have been things that have happened, and then there's been this feeling that since the film came out, the amount of attention in the media and in the New York Times about rising poverty and income inequality has just grown, and the discussion has grown."

The filmmakers have said they chose Portland as a backdrop for their film because it wasn't the obvious choice when people think of poverty. He also tries to approach documentary filmmaking with an open mind, letting the story play out before him without a prescribed ending. But in a sense, this one isn't over.

"I don't come to a subject with an outcome in mind, but having spent eight months or so with these families, and seeing what's going on in this country and learning in the process of making this film, I feel like I'm very much an advocate because the system is not fair. And the disinformation is destructive. And to the extent that I can promote this film and a different point of view, I feel obligated to do that."



**PHC
NORTHWEST**
Beyond Limitations™

**PAID TRAINING
FOR PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES!**

5312 NE 148th Ave.
Portland, OR 97230

REQUIREMENTS:

- ✓ Pass a drug test
- ✓ Must be at least 18
- ✓ Must be able to provide documentation of a disability
- ✓ Fluency in English
- ✓ Clean background check

QUESTIONS?
Please call (503) 261-1266
or (800) 874-7917
email: dcherry@phcnw.com

**DINE OUT.
DIG IN.**

MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

Eat at participating restaurants during the month of September & 10% of your check will be donated to Sisters Of The Road.
Learn more at www.sistersoftheroad.org.



PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Pacific Pie Company	3 Por Que No?	4 Grain & Gristle	5 Prasad	6 Addy's Sandwich Bar
7	8	9 Mississippi Pizza (after 6pm)	10 Lincoln	11 Las Primas	12	13
14	15	16 Special Benefit Dinner: Art Institute of Portland	17 Florida Room	18 3 Doors Down Cafe	19 Harlow	20
21	22	23 Toast	24 The Observatory	25 Old Salt Marketplace	26 Big Ass Sandwiches	27 Daily Cafe
28 Daily Cafe	29	30				