



Informational letter about the International Film Festival against racism and xenophobia "Open Your Eyes". Invitation to cooperation.

Organized by:

Russian Social Democratic Union of Youth (RSDUY), www.sdsm.hkey.ru

Dates:

18-22 March 2009.

Event description.

Film festival against racism and xenophobia "Open your Eyes" takes place in Saint-Petersburg for the fourth time already and is associated with March 21st – International Day of struggle for abolition of all forms of racial discrimination, announced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966.

On this day in the city of Sharpeville (South Africa) in 1960 police opened fire on participants of protest demonstration against racist laws of the apartheid regime. 69 demonstrators were killed.

In spite of the fact that a certain progress in opposing racial discrimination and xenophobia can be seen around the world, the problem is far from being fully solved and further work on elimination racism is needed.

We believe this work can only be effective in condition of consolidation of efforts inside the country as well as on the international level.

In recent years many countries face the dangerously constant rise of racism and xenophobia as well as the right-wing extremism. Unfortunately Russia is no exception. Escalation of intolerance in society leads to a considerable growth of youth violence on the ground of national, racial or religious prejudice.

Such tendencies become serious challenge for civil society and demand new approaches.

As one of possible ways to influence the situation we suggest our film festival against racism and xenophobia "**OPEN YOUR EYES**", which aims to encourage the efforts on both local and international level in opposing chauvinism.

Film festival against racism and xenophobia "**OPEN YOUR EYES**":

- is an independent public forum,
- in the frames of the project non-commercial show of movies dedicated to the problems of racism and intolerance of all kinds is held,
- each show is followed by the discussion of the shown movie and the questions set by the movie with participation of the audience, well-known experts on the problem, human rights activists, members of NGOs, representatives of the city authorities etc.

In March 2007 and 2008 the Festival took place in the movie centre "House of the Film" and has gathered an audience of 3000 people each year. Discussions and presentations

of social projects on tolerance held after the show brought huge interest among viewers, guests and experts.

Significantly enough, this film festival has initiated a whole series of various anti-racism actions not only in Saint-Petersburg, but in some other cities of Russia (RSDUY branches in Moscow, Great Novgorod, Petrozavodsk etc.). This year the festival is spreading further even overcoming national borders. Not only more Russian cities are ready to join this year (Izhevsk, Vologda...) but youth social-democratic organisations from Kaunas (Lithuania), Mainz (Germany), Helsingborg (Sweden) have approved their interest to hold some actions in the frames of mutual stand against xenophobia.

Starting from the first film festival against racism and xenophobia "Open Your Eyes" in 2005 its main partner was Social Democratic Union of Youth of Saint-Petersburg (www.sdsm.hkey.ru) – an independent public youth organization. Festival is held with support of the Fridrich Ebert Fund.

In 2009 together with SDUY SPb distribution of the information about the project will be organised through the volunteer network consisting of students of different universities and working youth of the city.

We expect that this year the festival will be attended by more than 3000 people: students and professors of high schools and universities, young professionals and so on.

In 2009 film festival special attention will be given to study the means of formation of xenophobic attitudes and opposing manipulations on the grounds of racism and intolerance.

We invite your organisation for cooperation:

- in working out the program of the film festival (relevant movies, works of young film directors)
- in engaging experts for discussions
- in holding mutual actions on tolerance (flash mobs, street actions, photo exhibitions etc.)

For more information please turn to the Organisation Committee of the Festival (St.Petersburg, Russia):

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