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Award-Winning Documentary to Screen as Part of Filmmaker Visit

Nottingham, UK – “Kansas vs. Darwin,” a feature-length documentary about the 2005 Kansas school board hearings on evolution, will be screened May 15th and 17th at the University of Nottingham. The screenings will be held in connection with Making Science Public, a research initiative funded by The Leverhulme Trust. American filmmaker Jeff Tamblyn, who directed, co-wrote and co-produced the film, will attend both screenings.

“Evolution’s not the only area where the public and science have experienced a major disconnect,” says Tamblyn about the film’s subject matter, “but when you compare it to global warming denial or objections to routine childhood vaccinations, it might be the most entertaining.”

Reviewers have called the film both “hilarious” and “disturbing” in its depiction of a state school board dominated by religious conservatives who hold hearings on evolution in order to provide political cover for their attempt to nullify the teaching of evolution in public school science classes. Perhaps more disturbing, however, is the pro-evolutionists’ response: a worldwide boycott of the hearings that unintentionally played right into the hands of their opponents. The film contains no narration, but moves forward through footage of the hearings combined with revealing interviews with principal figures on both sides of the conflict. “Kansas vs. Darwin” was the recipient of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Secret City Film Festival in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and was selected to screen in four other international festivals.

Tamblyn’s production and subsequent marketing of the film has led to a continuing interest in the often-awkward relationship between science and the billions of people it affects. Recently, at a Science Café night in Kansas, he met Alexander Smith – a University of Warwick Sociologist and principal researcher in Making Science Public – who later spearheaded the effort to bring the filmmaker to the UK to conduct his own face-to-face meetings with distinguished researchers in the program, which is headquartered at the University of Nottingham.

“I expect to use what I learn in the UK to help me make the next set of films, which look at the relationship between science and the public much as a relationship between two individuals – deeply interdependent but tragically mismatched,” Tamblyn says. “While it’s true that the public’s understanding of science is often functionally inadequate, the reverse is also true. Science – at an institutional level – doesn’t yet seem to comprehend its responsibilities or even the power it wields. I suspect our fate depends on whether these two entities can be reconciled. I’m very fortunate to be able to make this trip and to receive the gracious assistance of this scholarly program.”
Making Science Public is a five-year research initiative funded by The Leverhulme Trust, intended to explore and further define the current state of issues between science and religion, politics, education and the media, as well as ways in which these issues might best be resolved to benefit all sides.

Screenings of “Kansas vs. Darwin” will take place at 6.30 PM on Wed, 15th May and 1.30 PM on Fri 17th May, both in Hallward Library, Room LG140, on University of Nottingham’s University Park campus. The event is open to the public as well as students, faculty and staff. A question-and-answer session with Tamblyn will follow each screening.

“Kansas vs. Darwin” will also screen on 20 May in London at the British Library, and later that week at University of Warwick, with details to be announced soon.

Pertinent links:
British Library screening page: [http://www.bl.uk/whatson/events/event144686.html](http://www.bl.uk/whatson/events/event144686.html)

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Bio:
Jeff Tamblyn began his professional career in live theatre before becoming a filmmaker to the business world in 1980. Self-taught as a scriptwriter, producer and director, he won several high-level awards and served clients in a variety of industries across the United States. In 2005, he directed, co-wrote and co-produced Kansas vs. Darwin, which was released in 2008 by New Day Films.

Among his other credits are Field Producer for Patriot Guard Riders, another New Day film, in which he was responsible for interviews with and footage of members of the infamous Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas.

He’s presented several workshops on science communication in connection with screenings of his film, and was a presenter on educational distribution at SXSW Film Festival 2012. Beginning in 2010, he’s served New Day Films – a cooperative distributor of social-issue documentaries – as Director of Digital Distribution.

He’s currently working with teams of distinguished scholars on an innovative science-curriculum project as well as a feature film series about the relationship between science and the public.