

BHUTTO FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT: DUANE BAUGHMAN

Like most of the rest of the world, I watched CNN in horror on Dec. 27, 2007, when Benazir Bhutto, the first woman in history to lead a Muslim nation, was blown away by a suicide bomber. Millions felt Benazir was the best hope for democracy and progress in that strategically critical nuclear-armed country.

I always wondered how Benazir managed to defeat the impossible odds stacked against ANY woman in Pakistan and accomplish what she was able to accomplish.

As an American political consultant, my experience is both domestic and international. Before Benazir's death a close colleague of mine reconnected me with Benazir's advisor and close friend Mark Siegel, who had been pulling together American consultants on her behalf in anticipation of her 3rd rise to power in Pakistan.

Three days after she died, I watched Mark desperately trying – almost single-handedly -- to keep Benazir's legacy alive by making the rounds on every conceivable news show. Before long, we spoke about telling the world Benazir's story via a documentary film. A few months later, myself and a film crew would find ourselves sitting in Dubai in what had been Benazir's living room, listening to her three heartbroken children and her shaken widower, Asif Ali Zardari, explain why Benazir was compelled to leave her family and the safe confines of a cushy self-exile to march back into Pakistan to face death threats and a political hurricane.

Along the way on the amazing journey of making this movie, I discovered Pakistan and learned that Benazir's family story was something out of a Greek tragedy with unsolved murders, political intrigue, family feuds, hijackings, poisonings -- you name it. Her story had all the elements from triumph to tragedy. I understand better now why the Bhuttos are called the "Kennedy's of Pakistan." Ironically, at Harvard, her roommate was Bobby Kennedy's daughter, Kathleen Kennedy. But what made this experience so visceral and unique, was how much a part of it you become when you immerse yourself into a completely different world. Three days after checking out of the Marriot Islamabad, where the crew and myself had stayed during filming and had gotten to know the staff, the entire hotel was blown to the ground by a suicide bomber and a truck full of explosives, killing over 40 people at the end of Ramadan.

That attack made me realize that Benazir's story wasn't as much about a death-

too-soon as it was about what we accomplish while we're here. What would you do? Rest in comfort as she could've or go back and fight?

As much as this film resonates with the entire world, I would like it to empower women and young girls everywhere with the message: If there are times when you think the world is against you, think of Benazir, who came from a country where the law dictates that women come second, and honor killings are LEGAL. Yet in her 54 short years, Benazir stared down the dictator who killed her father, restored democracy to her country, and shattered the glass ceiling in Pakistan forever. Something that's never been done in America.

From a country feared for its nuclear weapons and Taliban suicide soldiers, came a woman so brave that she made the world take notice. She reminded us that hope can spring from even the most dangerous place on earth.