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Pete Borneman

Documentary Focusing on Life, Advocacy of Selma Rubin to Screen at SBIFF

The film, celebrating the lasting legacy of preservation left by the late environmental activist, will be shown twice next week in Santa Barbara



Environmental activist Selma Rubin and documentary filmmaker Beezhan Tulu, producer of "Selma Rubin and Community of Life," at El Capitan. "She was just vibrant," Tulu says. (Beezhan Tulu courtesy photo)

By Lara Cooper, Noozhawk Staff Writer | @laraancooper | Published on 01.30.2014 8:16 p.m.

0 COMMENT

With her iconic glasses and hat, **activist Selma Rubin** was a constant presence in local environmental circles until her death in 2012. One film that has its first screening next week at the **Santa Barbara International Film Festival** celebrates her life and her legacy of environmental advocacy.

Selma Rubin and Community of Life will show at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the **Santa Barbara Museum of Art** with a post-screening celebration to follow in the Faulkner

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Gallery of the **Central Library**. The film will also be showing at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the Metro 4 Theatre.

[Click here for a schedule of the showings and to purchase tickets.](#)

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Noozhawk spoke with documentary filmmaker **Beezhan Tulu**, who described meeting Rubin for the first time.

Rubin helped create the organization **Get Oil Out** after the 1969 oil spill in the **Santa Barbara Channel**, and was involved in the founding of the first **Earth Day in Santa Barbara**. Other community environmental stalwarts, such as the **Community Environmental Council** and the **Environmental Defense Center**, were also started with Rubin's

help.

She also spearheaded the preservation of **El Capitan**, Ellwood, the Carpinteria Bluffs and the **Douglas Family Preserve** from development.

Tulu, a Hawaii-based filmmaker, said he was at Orella Farms in El Capitan filming its techniques of topsoil management when a friend recommended he meet Rubin.

When Tulu showed up at her doorstep, he said he knew within five minutes that he had met an incredible community figure.

"She was just vibrant," he said, adding that Rubin never seemed to slow down. "When I met her, she was 95 and still driving on the freeway."

He said one of her biggest strengths was focusing on the present.

Multiple interviews with Rubin were done at her home, at El Capitan and other locations while filming.

"The general idea was how the determination of one person can affect the whole planet. ... I think the film can be used to show how to build communities," he said, adding that organizations such as the Environmental Defense Center and Community Environmental Council could serve as models for policy in other places.

Tulu formerly worked in Hollywood at **Warner Bros.** but left to pursue documentary work, and now says he's a "one-man show" with his camera, computer and the rest of his belongings packed onto his bike.

He raised more than \$10,000 via **Kickstarter** to fund the filming process, and came away with material that went into a half-dozen separate documentaries, of which Rubin's film was one.

"In Hollywood, a low-budget film would be around \$300,000, so when I tell people I shot this footage with \$10,000, they don't believe it," he said.

Tulu said that many people stepped up to donate services and time to make the film happen, including a nonprofit that donated a free flight for Tulu so he could film aerial footage over El Capitan for the film.

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Tulu found out several weeks ago that the film had been selected to be part of the festival, and he's hoping to screen the film in other places as well.

"My films are about our present challenges on the environment, but my films are not fear-based or blame-based," he said, adding that they try to focus on solutions instead.

When people come to Santa Barbara and enjoy the pristine coastline, they should remember it's not by accident.

"It's because of people like Selma protecting it with their hard work," he said.

The Santa Barbara International Film Festival, which opened Thursday, runs through Feb. 9.

— *Noozhawk* staff writer Lara Cooper can be reached at lcooper@noozhawk.com. Follow Noozhawk on Twitter: [@noozhawk](#), [@NoozhawkNews](#) and [@NoozhawkBiz](#). Connect with *Noozhawk* on Facebook.

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