

# Slater Jewell-Kemker about YOUTH UNSTOPPABLE

## “We also need a more angry voice”

In her first feature documentary *YOUTH UNSTOPPABLE*, Canadian activist Slater Jewell-Kemker paints a portrait of the global “youth for climate” movement. Since she first took part in a UN climate conference as a youth delegate at the age of 15, she has been capturing her impressions on camera over a period of 12 years. The result is a unique chronicle of the development of a political mass movement.

The film has been released in Germany as a part of the BJJ’s 50th anniversary celebration campaign. In an ECFA Journal interview in November 2020 BJJ (Bundesverband Jugend und Film) manager Reinhold Schöffel described the film as *“the perfect embodiment of our vision on cinema. It’s all about empowerment and launching dialogues between different generations. This is a perfect example of how we understand film culture: motivating people to communicate, discuss and make a stand.”* One year later, we ask director Slater Jewell-Kemker to strike a balance.

Slater Jewell-Kemker: *YOUTH UNSTOPPABLE* has been shown at over 100 festivals in more than 80 countries. There was an inspiring word of mouth. The film mostly reached out to young people and ordinary citizens, influencing them and establishing connections, which has really amazed me.

### In what sense?

Jewell-Kemker: When making a film, you hope that it will leave an impression. The way the film was received by young people made my 15 years of blood, sweat and tears, justified and worthwhile.

### When did it become clear that you had the right material for a feature documentary in your hands?

Jewell-Kemker: After my experience as a youth delegate in Japan and working with other young climate activists, I realised in 2008 that their voices cannot be heard in mainstream media. The voices of the next generation are not taken seriously. So I wanted to try to capture their stories. Film-



making is storytelling and therefore also a way of connecting with people. It was clear to me that when it comes to climate protection, we absolutely need a more creative, optimistic, but also a more angry voice.

### What was your most intense experience while working on this film?

Jewell-Kemker: There were two. As a filmmaker, it was when shooting with my friend Alina outside of Kathmandu, Nepal, in a small village that had been flooded and destroyed by heavy monsoon rains. As I was filming, I suddenly understood the full scope of the disaster, but also realised my privileges, in terms of filming the scenery and

then returning home. I couldn’t come to terms with the idea that I would return to my previous life, just like this.

### And the other moment?

Jewell-Kemker: That happened when visiting my mother’s family in Alberta, Canada, home of the oil sands industry. My uncle’s job is to persuade farmers and indigenous communities to sell their land or to sign leases with the company so that they can lay their pipelines across the country. That means there will be oil spills. A part of my family refused to speak with me. I know that my relatives are involved in an energy production that is directly linked to the climate crisis, but they



