Mansfield Center Hosts Documentary, Lecture on 1965 Indonesian Genocide

MISSOULA – The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at the University of Montana will present the documentary “The Look of Silence” together with the Roxy Theater Sept. 18-24. The documentary, focusing on the brutal 1965 purge of alleged communists that killed up to 1 million people, will show twice daily at the theater. In keeping with the Center’s educational mandate, it will fund free admission for all UM Grizcard and Missoula County Public School ID holders.

Owen Sirrs of the Mansfield Center’s Defense Critical Language and Culture Program will preface the documentary with a short talk titled “The Year of Living Dangerously: A Forgotten Genocide” at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, to provide context for the purge, and will close the film with a Q-and-A session. Mansfield Center Associate Director Deena Mansour will also provide context from her experience working at the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia.

In 1965 and 1966, the Indonesian Army and its affiliated militias killed up to 1 million people. It was a purge of alleged communists, many of whom were ethnic Chinese. For decades, the Suharto dictatorship suppressed memories of these horrific events with the tragic result that many Indonesians are either afraid to speak about them or, in the case of the younger generation, are largely ignorant of them.

Directed by Josh Oppenheimer, “The Look of Silence” reveals the true story of one man’s quest to bring the terrible events of this period to light. The main subject confronts those men responsible for the death of an older brother he never knew. The Detroit News aptly describes “The Look of Silence” as “a terrifying study of mass moral rationalization.”
Sirrs is an adjunct professor who teaches Indonesian politics, history and culture to U.S. Army Special Forces. He previously served as an intelligence officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington, D.C. His publications include “Nasser and the Missile Age in the Middle East (2006),” “A History of the Egyptian Intelligence Service (2011)” and the forthcoming “Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence: Covert Action and Internal Operations.”

Mansour served as a diplomat at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia from 1994-1997, with a focus on the media, educational, and cultural affairs. She currently works with Indonesian and other students from southeast Asia in educational exchange programs.

UM’s Mansfield Center promotes better understanding of Asia, U.S. relations with Asia and ethics in public affairs in the spirit of Sen. Mike Mansfield (1903-2001) and his wife and life partner, Maureen Hayes Mansfield. The center houses programs that focus on the peoples and cultures of modern Asia and ethics in public affairs – the core interests and hallmarks of Sen. Mansfield’s career.

More information is available at http://www.umt.edu/mansfield.

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