

Intelligent Lives – a wide spectrum of courage

"I wanted you to see what real courage is...It's when you know you're licked before you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what."

–Atticus Finch,
To Kill A
Mockingbird

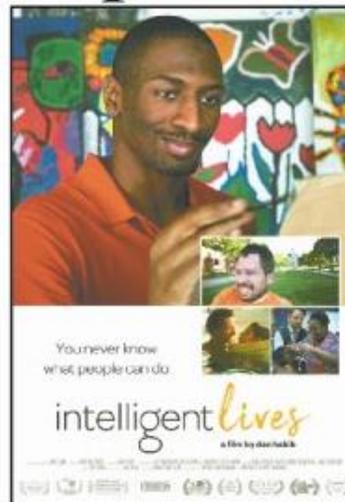
When Atticus Finch says these words, he is explaining to his daughter, Scout, why he took on the challenge of defending a black man when he knew he would lose the case. Sometimes adversity brings with it unexpected gifts, but only if you see them. Perception is everything, as Atticus Finch knew, and as Concord-based award-winning photographer and filmmaker Dan Habib knows in his bones. Habib, filmmaker for the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disabilities, recently released his newest film, *Intelligent Lives*.



D. QUINCY WHITNEY

Habib never thought he would transition from photographer to filmmaker, but his son, Samuel, spurred him beyond his own expectations. That is, Samuel, who at age 3, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. As Habib watched his son deal with the world inside an impaired body, he knew he needed to capture Samuel—his sparkling, joyful personality trapped inside a body with severe physical disabilities—on film, as he was growing. Habib worked on the film from 2004-07, during Samuel's elementary school years.

"My 2008 documentary film 'Including Samuel,' focuses on Samuel's elementary school years, and our family's efforts to include him in every aspect of our community. On the little league team. In school theater. And most importantly, in the classroom," observed Habib in a recent interview at Gibson's



Courtesy photo

A poster promoting filmmaker Dan Habib's newest film, 'Intelligent Lives.'

bookstore in Concord.

Including Samuel not only received wide acclaim, Habib received the unexpected gift of a wide cross-cultural audience, so much so that he was

approached individually by people offering to translate the film into other languages—17 different languages.

Habib: "At first, as I looked at Samuel, I saw obstacles and burdens. Now, I see intensity, determination, effort, power, and beauty. Samuel has taught me about patience, about guarded assumptions, about the error of pre-judging the capabilities of another person."

In the film, Betsy Habib beautifully captured the tendency of society and those without evident disabilities to prejudge another, observing, "You cannot simplify my son into a wheelchair. He is just as complex as any other person."

In 2008, as a result of the widespread interest generated by Including Samuel, Associate Director of the UNH Institute on Disabilities Mary Schuch pitched the idea that Habib could use film to transform public perception about people with disabilities.