

Born in Captivity (former title "Wall of Shame")

Australian filmmakers Daniel Fallshaw and Violeta Ayala go to the Saharawi refugee camps in the Algerian desert to make a film about the human price of the long lasting political conflict in the Western Sahara, and find a society where slavery still exists.

In 1975 Fetim was three when she escaped the Moroccan invasion of Western Sahara with Deido; a white Arab woman who wasn't her mother. Together with 160,000 Saharawis led by the Polisario they reach the Algerian desert and become refugees. Ambarka, Fetim's black mother, stayed in Western Sahara with the remaining half of the population under Moroccan occupation. In less than 48 hours families were torn apart.

Since the invasion this conflict between the Polisario and Morocco has dominated politics in North Africa. By the early 80's Morocco had built a 2,700-kilometre wall to physically separate the region. The UN brokered a ceasefire in 1991 with the promise of organising a referendum to decide the fate of Western Sahara. Failing to organise the referendum, the UN started a family reunion program, flying people from the Moroccan occupied territory to meet family members living in the Algerian camps and vice-versa. The reunion only lasts five days.

Black Saharawis in this society have traditionally been slaves stolen or purchased from sub-Saharan Africa and converted to Islam. They are made to believe their religious duty is to serve their Moor masters. Slaves have no official status in the society. They cannot own property. They cannot make a legal contract. They cannot inherit. They cannot decide whom to marry, etc. Despite how the masters treat them, the legal status of the slaves is the same everywhere as it makes some people property of other people.

There are several thousand black Saharawi slaves who live in these refugee camps in Algeria. They live trapped between their country's fight for independence and their own right to freedom. Is it possible the Polisario a liberation movement condone this state of affairs?

Born in Captivity will provide an honest picture of this society today, where slaves cannot decide their fate, masters believe that they belong to a superior race, political leaders pretend to be unaware, religion reinforces slavery and organisations like the UN stand by and do nothing.