GETTING REAL Most of the short films on show at the Open Frames film festival this year have empowering, personal and sometimes painful political narratives.

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This year's Open Frame Film Festival is centered on people's rights. From the resilience of workers fighting a multinational corporation in "The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant," to "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," about the struggle of Liberian women to change the course of their country's future, or "A Daughter's Tale," the chronicle of a daughter's relationship with her mother who is losing to Alzheimer's, the documentaries create poignant personal and political narratives to engage with.

Five of the films featured were nominated for the Oscars. "Rabbits of Abandoned" by Andrea Oerting and "Burma 17" by Steven Bognar & Julia Reichert were nominated in 2010 and "Complaints of a Daffodil Daughter" and "Iraq in Fragments" earlier. Hosted by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust during September 15-18, the festival will also feature discussions with filmmakers and activists about the issues raised by the films. These include migration, livelihood, violence, globalization, disability, gender and sexuality. Rekha Dutta Bhatia, for instance, focuses on the representation of sex workers in Bollywood, saying, "I've put together clips that reinforce stereotypes. The brutal rape, for instance, is always shown chewing paan and the sex worker smoking.

Dutta says a chunk of the audience in this festival comprises filmmakers themselves. "It is interesting to see how peers react to my work. Also, we get to watch some independent films which could not be able to see.

Nitzaish Ghabry's "Jerusalem is Proud to be Present" is one such film. In the summer of 2009, Jerusalem witnessed a series of events that culminated in a gay pride parade. Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious leaders joined hands, protesting against what they said would 'shackle the holy city.'

In "The Last Truck," Michael Campbell, a white farmer, challenges Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's land reform programme in an international court. With the US troops' pullout from the troubled country on everybody's mind, James Longley's "Iraq in Fragments" could provide viewers with a perspective.

"Rabbits of Abandoned" is about wild rabbits that lived between the Berlin Wall. For 28 years, the Death Zone was their haven — full of grass, some predators and with guards protecting them from humans. After the Wall fell down, the rabbits had to learn to live in a free world. In "Burma 17," reporters armed with pocket-sized cameras expose the regime controlling their country. In 2007, more than 1,000 people took to the streets protesting the dictatorship.

"Burma 17" has a political subtitle, "Through an Eye," the story of a group of men who have sex with men, who come together to learn filmmaking. And in "Suddenly Last Winter," the political standsends the personal. The lives of Gustavo and Lucía change with a draft law that unleashes a wave of homophobia in the Italy.

Anywhere in the world, reality bites.