

Hong Kong filmmakers launch crowdfunding campaign to pay tribute to the city's unsung heroes – domestic helpers

#makethehelperhappen

HONG KONG, 17 August, 2015 – An overwhelming majority of the 330,000 migrant domestic helpers living in Hong Kong are mothers who have sacrificed years of raising their own children to raise someone else's. Filmmakers, Joanna Bowers and Tony Verb, are raising funds through a [Kickstarter](#) campaign to produce a documentary which will pay tribute to these women called **The Helper**. The film will explore the individual stories of the women who sing in the Hong Kong domestic helpers' choir The Unsung Heroes. The film will follow these women as they prepare to leave their homes thousands of miles away in the Philippines and Indonesia to travel to Hong Kong and the everyday adversity they face in their jobs. In parallel, the film will document the choir group as they rehearse for the city's largest music and arts festival, Clockenflap, where they will sing about their untold stories of sacrifice on a global stage.

Domestic helpers in Hong Kong carry out a range of duties including cooking, shopping and cleaning for a monthly minimum range of HKD4,200 (USD520) with no restrictions on total hours worked. They only have one day off per week. They go for long periods without seeing their families and sometimes find themselves alienated from their loved ones



when they finally go home. In addition to documenting their painful personal struggles, the film explores the systemic and legal challenges domestic helpers face during their stay in Hong Kong including difficulties in financial planning, work conditions, and employer-employee relations.

“**The Helper** documentary is a tribute to migrant domestic workers and will show the maternal sacrifice they make through the perspective of individual helpers, their own children, and the children they help to raise in Hong Kong,” says director Joanna Bowers. “We’d like people from all over the world, and especially in Hong Kong, to help us tell their important story, to make **The Helper** happen.”

Each individual's story is woven together into a larger narrative about The Unsung Heroes, a choir of helper mothers, who are preparing for a live performance of their powerfully emotional song

dedicated to their children titled, 'I Wish I Could Kiss You Goodnight'. The film progresses alongside the group's choir rehearsals and culminates in their anticipated performance in front of tens of thousands of Hong Kongers at the city's biggest music and arts festival, Clockenflap. Esteemed Tony, and Grammy Award winner, Steve Sidwell, will direct the Unsung Heroes' live performance.

Donations for the Kickstarter campaign start at US\$5 and offer a number of gifts for individuals who are instrumental to making the documentary. These gifts include an invitation to **The Helper** premiere and co-producer credits.



"Idealistically we hope we can change the way in which these hardworking ladies are perceived by giving them a platform and highlight their very real stories to the world," says producer Tony Verb.

"For the past year we have been working alongside a number of associations and groups that work very closely with the domestic helper community in Hong Kong and we are very grateful for their support and guidance on this project," added Verb.

The filmmakers will be dedicating 51 percent of the finished documentary's profits to supporting three Hong Kong non-governmental organisations that serve the interest of migrant domestic workers. These are PathFinders, an organisation that helps vulnerable children of migrant domestic helpers born in Hong Kong; Mission for Migrant Workers, provider of responsive services to Asian migrants; and Enrich, a group that trains foreign domestic workers on financial literacy, entrepreneurship and communications.

For details on the gifts available to Kickstarter campaign supporters please see attached document. For information on how to be part of this project go to www.thehelperdocumentary.com and the

[Kickstarter](#) page which will go live 17 July 2015. More information is also available on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#). #makethehelperhappen

Ends

-Media Enquiries -

For media enquiries or to arrange an interview please contact CRED Communications at:

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About the filmmaker

Joanna Bowers - Director/Producer

Director and screenwriter Joanna Bowers earned her BA in Broadcast Journalism with the BBC from the University of Leeds in England, before relocating to sunny Los Angeles where she began her career working on national television commercials, starting as director's assistant and treatment writer and progressing to production management.

In 2009 Joanna's debut short-film INVIOLEATE ROSE began her directing career, quickly followed by TV pilots RIDING HOODS; ALL RHYME, NO REASON, and LULU GETS A LIFE for Fox Digital. Her co-written screenplay BORN TO NUN has been optioned by Natalie Portman's Handsome Charlie Films and her co-written feature-film directorial debut TUESDAY GIRL will go into production in Hong Kong in 2015. Recent directing work includes commercial, fashion and corporate content in the United States, Thailand, Indonesia, China and Hong Kong.

Tony Verb - Producer

Tony Verb is an entrepreneur, marketer and producer with a focus on tech, entertainment, cultural and social ventures. His latest assignment was driving marketing communication for the Clockenflap Music & Arts Festival. He is running his cultural consulting and entertainment production services under C&Co and Co. Production.

As member of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers community, he is involved in addressing locally and globally important social issues. That same dedication drove him to facilitate the production of a documentary about the domestic helpers in Hong Kong, The Helper as his most recent project. His motto is "Explore. Innovate. Inspire." and that is something he is keen to implement in the creative execution by working closely with his partners in the development process whenever he is involved.

Alfred Pang - Director of Photography

Alfred studied Film and TV in Malaysia and Australia. Now he is running his own company and mainly produces TV commercials, music videos, and promotional videos in Hong Kong beyond his international film projects.