

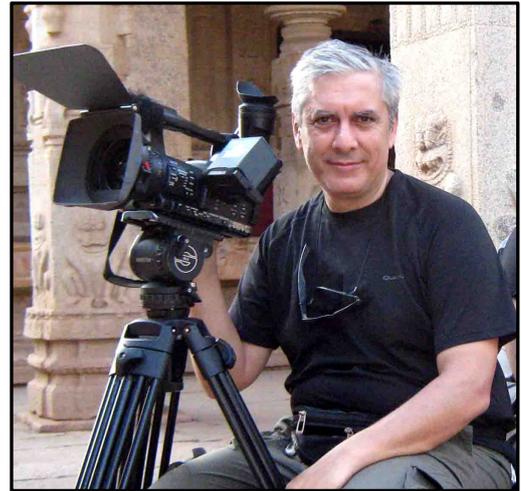
# Interview

## Making the GREASE films - an eye-opening experience

Diego D'Innocenzo (Director and Producer) and Gabriele Colferai (Director) talk about their experience creating these documentaries for the GREASE project. Both are with the Rome-based film production company Terra.

***What were the main challenges you faced in making these films?***

**Diego D'Innocenzo:** The films consist mainly of interviews - people in different countries expressing their deepest thoughts and feelings. Each interviewee told their own story, of course. But we wanted these interviews to tell a bigger story. In the case of **Religion and Society** we were trying to portray the situation of an entire religious group in a particular country. In **Countering Religious Extremism** we wanted to describe the effectiveness of a particular type of prevention program. So, our first challenge was to go beyond the regular interview.



Another challenge we faced with **Countering Religious Extremism** was the sensitive nature of the subject material. Programmes aimed at countering violent radicalisation deal with people in danger of being recruited – or who have already been recruited - to commit acts of violence. In some cases we were dealing with people who had committed violent crimes. They are obviously very difficult to film. We managed to enter a prison in Italy, and that was definitely a moving experience. We had to replace with words what we couldn't get with images.

***To produce these films, you interviewed people all over the world. Who among them made the strongest impression on you?***



**Gabriele Colferai:** Both films address issues related to religion that people feel very strongly about. While making the film about religions, the person who made the strongest impression on us was Jenny. This is because she represents a segment of the picture that could have been easily left out of the documentary. Because humanism is not strictly a religion, but more a philosophy of life. She is a young member of Humanist UK, an organization of people who don't believe in anything that is supernatural and promote a very pragmatic form of social activism. What

struck us was how the values of a non-believer regarding social coexistence were exactly the same as with the people from all the different religions we had interviewed. That was quite a discovery.

As for **Countering Religious Extremism**, the programme that made the strongest impression on us was definitely the one involving the Imam visiting prisons. We consider that a perfect example of collaboration between a religious group and the state. It shows how even a simple action not requiring a great amount of money can have tangible results

***How difficult was it getting interviewees – particularly those representing a minority faith in a given country - to open up?***

**G. Colferai:** What was really challenging was to get people to talk openly about highly sensitive themes. The key to doing that was to create in a very short time a relationship of trust between us and the interviewee based on empathy. We managed to do that in every country we visited, and it was extremely rewarding to see how people from very different cultures changed their attitude towards us in a similar way. They went from being initially suspicious to feeling gratitude towards us for being there and listening to their stories.

***In talking to people of different faiths in different countries, did you find they had anything in common?***

**D. D'Innocenzo:** We noticed that the main differences between religions are in the way believers live their own faith, in the rules they follow. But when it comes to the principle that guides life-affirming believers in their relations with broader society, the differences dramatically decrease. They all want to live with tolerance, peace and respect.

***You also talked to people who are working to prevent religiously motivated/attribution radicalisation. Did you sense they are up against similar obstacles, or are their challenges different depending on the socio-economic cultural-political context?***

**G. Colferai:** What we feel is that each country we visited is going through a different phase in dealing with radicalisation. For this reason the challenges they face and the objectives of their programmes are very different. Some programmes focus more on prevention, others on re-education of inmates or on giving a voice to a community whose public image has been tarnished by the terroristic attacks.

***Which audiences do you think might benefit most from watching these films? What message - if any - do you think audiences will take away from these films?***

**D. D'Innocenzo:** Both documentaries are appropriate for a broad range of audiences. They can be very useful for professionals who work daily with the topics addressed, but also for young students who approach these issues for the first time. We believe that all audiences can appreciate the films because they take the viewer around the world in a rather short

period of time. They open a window on a vast range of human experience, introducing us to people who are geographically and culturally quite far removed from one another.

For me the most powerful message of **Religion and Society** is definitely the metaphor of “two hands clapping” which we hear near the end of the film. The Tibetan Buddhists in India are a successful example of how an entire population migrated to another country that is culturally very different and yet found a way to live there peacefully. It’s a story of tolerance of the host country and great adaptability of the newcomers.

Those who watch **Countering Religious Radicalisation** might be surprised by the variety of programmes around the world dealing with the same problem. They might also be surprised that these programmes don’t deal strictly with “security” but take different approaches that involve religious groups, academic researchers and the whole community. We hope policymakers and decisionmakers who watch the film will reflect on the good practices presented and maybe apply some of them in their own countries.

A [video interview](#) with the directors of the GREASE documentaries is available on our film website.