



Emmy® Award Winning Director of *A Quiet Revolution* and *Another Way of Seeing Things*

Presents

An Agora Productions' Release

The POWER of the POWERLESS

A film by Emmy® Award Winner Cory Taylor

Narrated by Academy® Award Winner Jeremy Irons

Winner Documentary Feature Audience Award Sacramento Music & Film Festival, USA

Winner Documentary Feature Honorable Mention Ojai Film Festival, USA

Winner Golden Palm Award Mexico International Film Festival, Mexico

Official Selection **Tallahassee International Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Tiburon International Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Art of Document**, Warsaw, Poland

Official Selection of the **Best of One World Film Festival** – D.C., Brussels, Nairobi

Official Selection **United Nations Association Human Rights Film Festival**, San Francisco, USA

20th Anniversary of 1989 Official Selection **Libertas Film Festival**, Croatia

20th Anniversary of 1989 Official Selection **Planete Doc Film Festival**, Warsaw, Poland

Official Selection **International Film Festival Timisoara**, Romania

Official Selection **Chashama Festival of the Worlds**, New York, USA

Official Selection **Bergen International Film Festival**, Norway

Official Selection **ARPA International Film Festival**, Los Angeles, USA

Official Selection **Starz Denver Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **St. Louis International Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **International Film Festival South Africa**

Official Selection **Golden Gate Fiction & Documentary Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Boston International Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Art Film Festival**, Slovakia

Official Selection **Philadelphia Documentary & Fiction Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Burbank International Film Festival**, USA

Official Selection **Karama Human Rights Film Festival**, Aman, Jordan

Official Selection **Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival**, USA

The POWER of the POWERLESS

Synopsis (medium)

Narrated by Academy Award winner Jeremy Irons, "The Power of the Powerless" explores Czechoslovakia's legacy of communist rule and the struggle against it: From the iron-fisted Stalinist government of the 1950s; through the vibrant and politically active Prague Spring of the 1960s; the hard-line backlash of the 1970s; and finally the bloodless revolution of 1989. At the heart of the film is the story of blacklisted playwright Václav Havel and his fellow dissidents who, for two decades, spoke out against totalitarianism. The film culminates with the student-led movement in Prague, which sparked 1989's Velvet Revolution and drew a half-million people into the streets, catapulting Václav Havel into the presidency. The documentary features rare and never-before-seen interviews with key figures of the Velvet Revolution including Václav Havel. The participation of young Czechs in the film, who reveal that much of their country's recent history has already been forgotten, makes the film all the more pertinent for young viewers. Directed by Primetime Emmy Award winner Cory Taylor and completed in 2009, "The Power of the Powerless" has already been broadcast in 30 countries on 10 television networks, featured in 24 international film festivals, won multiple awards, and is currently being used by human rights organizations to encourage dissidents struggling in non-democratic countries including Burma, Cuba and the Middle East.

Synopsis (alternate)

History has shown that societies which fail to address past injustices are tragically destined to repeat the same mistakes. Narrated by **Academy Award® winner Jeremy Irons**, *The Power of the Powerless*, examines the harmful effects of erasing history, twenty years after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia. Contrasting the experiences of those who fought against the communist regime, with the silent majority who supported it, ***The Power of the Powerless*** investigates why many Czechs today don't want their communist past dug up. Featuring original interviews with dissidents such as former President **Vaclav Havel**, this film tells the inspirational story of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, and asks why Czech youth aren't being taught about their own history.

Synopsis (short)

Narrated by Academy® Award winner Jeremy Irons, *The Power of the Powerless* examines the struggle for freedom during the communist era in Czechoslovakia. Featuring Vaclav Havel, who ascended to power during the bloodless revolution of 1989, *The Power of the Powerless* investigates haunting questions about the communist past, which still linger today.

Logline

Jeremy Irons narrates the inspiring story of the Velvet Revolution, those who triumphed through nonviolence, and the legacy of apathy left behind.

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Technical Details

Title: The Power of the Powerless

Length: 78 minutes

Original Format: DVCPRO HD

Mastering Format: HDCAM SR; color/B&W; Aspect Ratio: 1.78 (16x9 widescreen); Stereo; Sound Mix: LTRT

Year of Production: 2009

Genre: Documentary

Alternative formats:

Length: 58 minutes (HDCAM SR or Digibeta) color/B&W; Aspect Ratio: 1.78 (16x9 widescreen); Stereo; Sound Mix: LTRT

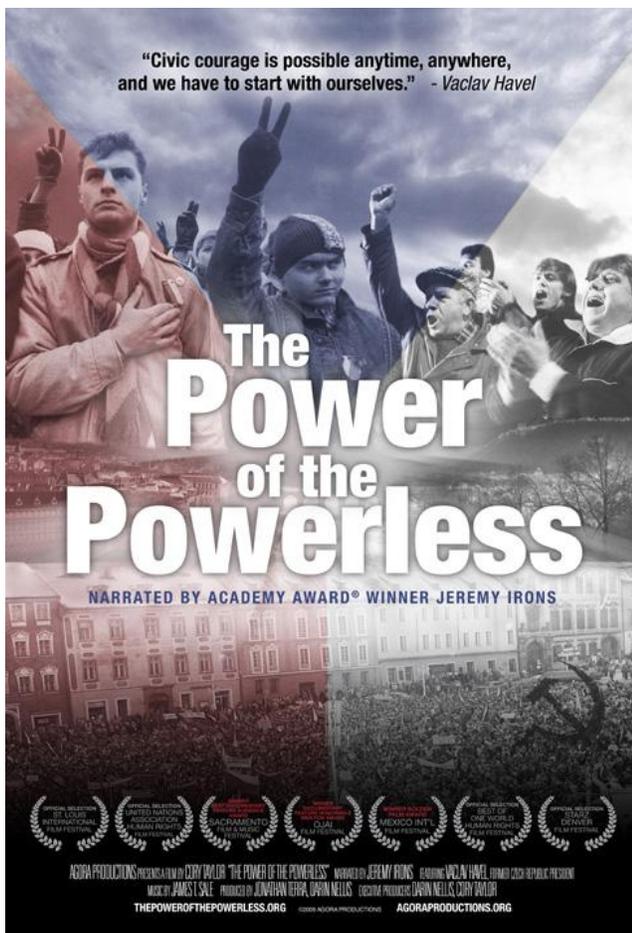
Available formats:

78 min: Blu-ray, DVD, HDCAM (NTSC). 58 min and 78 min: HDCAM SR (NTSC) and Digibeta Anamorphic or Letterbox (NTSC or PAL), DVD

What a Revolution Should Look Like: *The Power of the Powerless*

Mar 092011

By [Joe Bendel](#). Initially, the student-driven revolution against Czechoslovakia's hardline Communist government seemed hopelessly naïve. In a mere eleven days, the humbled regime relinquished their dubious claim to power, clearing the way for democratic elections. Unlike the current Middle Eastern "Days of Rage," it all transpired without demonstrators committing any sexually, ethnically, or religiously motivated acts of violence. In fact, whether Havel and the Velvet Revolution were too forgiving of their former oppressors is one of the questions raised in Cory Taylor's documentary, [The Power of the Powerless](#), which opens this Friday in the Los Angeles area.



In 1989, Prague witnessed one of the most inspiring revolutions in world history. However, several college students interviewed throughout *Powerless* are unsure what to make of it. More specifically, they are unclear how their parents were or were not involved with either the Revolution or the former Communist secret police and its network of informers. By contrast, Dana Němcová's children knew only too well their mother was one of the 242 original signatories on the Charter '77 declaration. Indeed, through a coordinated campaign of harassment, the government would not let them forget it.

For context, *Powerless* provides an authoritative overview of the Communist Coup of 1948, the brief period of liberalization known as "Prague Spring," and the resulting Soviet invasion of 1968. According to historian and onetime Havel advisor Jacques Rupnik, during the Stalinist period of so-called

"Normalization" approximately half a million party members were purged. Indeed, the extent to which the Velvet Revolutionaries reached out to those former Prague Springers in 1989 clearly illustrates the humanist spirit of the movement.

Not surprisingly, Havel emerges as the critical figure of the film's narrative. Yet one of the *Powerless*'s great merits is the wealth of former dissident voices it presents, including the relatively unheralded Němcová, as well as the likes of Jan Bubeník, a leader of the student demonstrators who became the youngest member to serve in the Czechoslovakian Parliament. Featuring the silky tones of narrator Jeremy Irons, the film tells the real life human stories of average people, who rather than merely finding themselves caught up in great events, rose to the occasion, becoming leaders themselves.

The ultimate wisdom of Havel's conciliatory tone to all but the worst offenders of the former regime remains an open question throughout *Powerless*. While most Czechs readily give him credit for unifying their country (though he was unable to hold together Czechoslovakia as a whole), many are plagued by nagging questions in the absence of a full accounting of the dark years of Communism. However, the peaceful "people power" Havel harnessed in face of a violent government repression speaks volumes. Indeed, *Powerless* is a timely reminder that democratic revolution must be accompanied by a commitment to individual rights in order to be successful. Insightful and informative, *Powerless* opens this Friday (3/11) at the Laemmle Music Box in Beverly Hills, with a New York engagement to come sometime in the near future.

Posted on March 9th, 2011 at 10:36am

Showing power within the 'Powerless'

by: MICHAEL SMITH World Scene Writer
Friday, July 02, 2010
7/2/2010 8:49:30 AM

What started as a few lonely dissidents seeking freedom through nonviolent means grew into mass demonstrations, which ultimately toppled communist tyranny in Czechoslovakia's 1989 Velvet Revolution.

"The Power of the Powerless," a new documentary that begins playing Friday at Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., recounts those events. In addition to various U.S. screenings, the film is also being shown in underground channels through international human rights organizations in areas such as Burma, Cuba and the Middle East.

The goal of those screenings is to deliver a pro-democracy message to dissidents who seek freedom through nonviolence in restricted countries, said Darin Nellis, executive producer of the film.

Nellis will be present at Circle Cinema for question-and-answer sessions in conjunction with Friday's 7:30 p.m. screening at the theater, as well as for Saturday's 2:45 p.m. matinee showing.

"Our objective is to increase awareness among viewers of what people are capable of, as well as to provoke a dialogue — especially among young people — about the importance of safeguarding democracy and human rights," Nellis said.

"We believe this is an important and timely message for Americans on the eve of celebrating our own freedom and independence," he added, regarding the Fourth of July holiday.

Oscar-winning actor Jeremy Irons narrates the documentary, which features former Czech President Vaclav Havel, whose persistent advocacy for his people's rights and his being imprisoned for these beliefs inspired others to end the communist regime that controlled the country.

"The victory of Vaclav Havel and his fellow dissidents over communist tyranny 20 years ago is one of those stories that restores your faith in humanity," says Cory Taylor, the film's director, in a prepared statement.

"At the same time, it's a cautionary tale about what can happen when we let our fears immobilize us."

Nellis heads Agora Productions, a nonprofit group with the mission of promoting humane values and enlightening young adults and others of the stories of "positive role models through film, art and educational materials."

"The Power of the Powerless" has a running time of 1 hour, 18 minutes and is not rated by the Motion Picture Association of America. More information about this film event is available at tulsaworld.com/circle or by calling the theater at 592-3456.

Associate Images Follow:



Vaclav Havel, the first president of the Czech Republic, leads protests during Prague's 1989 Velvet Revolution. The demonstrations are the focus of "The Power of the Powerless," a new documentary at Circle Cinema. Courtesy





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Director's Statement

From Cory Taylor, Director, *The Power of the Powerless*

Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" is one of the most stirring episodes of *people-power* in recent history. Inspired by the courageous struggle of a handful of dissidents, and sparked by idealistic students demonstrating in the streets of Prague, Czechs and Slovaks brought an end to forty years of communist tyranny through bloodless revolution in 1989. Today, Vaclav Havel, the former outlaw playwright who led the opposition, is respected as one of the most important human rights figures of the 20th Century.

Though many informed people see the relevance of the Velvet Revolution to current events, great majorities of people around the world are still unaware of this inspiring story. Fewer still, are those who know about the trials and tribulations Vaclav Havel and his fellow dissidents endured to achieve a bloodless transfer of power. For this reason, and in support of freedom and human rights around the world, we set out to make this documentary.

What we couldn't have known until we made the film, is how little is known about what really took place even in the Czech Republic, where many young people remain in the dark about their country's communist past.

We are grateful that so many key figures from this important episode, including President Vaclav Havel, agreed to participate in this documentary. In a world where viable alternatives to armed conflict are still desperately needed, the time is right to reflect on 1989's Velvet Revolution.



Director
The Power of the Powerless

About the Film

From Cory Taylor, Director, *The POWER of the POWERLESS*

In 2005, we began research on the Velvet Revolution for a documentary. The more I read about the life of Václav Havel – his trajectory from outspoken playwright to political prisoner to leader of a bloodless revolution and later, first president of post-totalitarian Czechoslovakia – the more inspired I became. When I learned that young people in Prague had sparked 1989’s Velvet Revolution and embraced Havel’s non-violent philosophy, I was hooked. A year later in 2006, the production team for “The Power of the Powerless” was assembled in Prague to begin filming.

At the time, we thought it would be a good idea to utilize contemporary Czech college students as storytellers in the documentary since they were the first generation to grow up in the post-totalitarian era. Finding them and documenting their lives was the first of two goals on our agenda that Fall: the second was to film the events associated with the revolution’s anniversary. On a scouting trip the previous year, a stirring candlelit march in Prague gave us the impression that the city’s residents celebrated the anniversary with deep conviction. Similarly, conversations on that trip with Czech students convinced me that plenty of Czech young people were willing and able to recite the story of the Velvet Revolution and impart how it had shaped their ideals.

We started by interviewing prospective students at a local coffee shop. The first day we were disappointed: none of the candidates expressed any personal interest in the Velvet Revolution. By the fifth, an unfortunate pattern had emerged: the majority of young people we met felt little connection to the events of 1989 and few could recall the details. A few days later, my hopes were further dashed when we found out there would not be any events commemorating the revolution’s anniversary that year. I got the flu and broke out in a rash.

Pulling myself together, I joined my colleagues for one more round of interviews. Three candidates possessing greater knowledge of the subject appeared and arrangements were made to start filming. But our subsequent attempt to fit these young people into scenes relating to the Velvet Revolution proved disastrous. Asking them to recount episodes from Czech history through contrived conversations in a second language and in frigid temperatures on camera was not going well. I was enveloped in a Kafkaesque depression. Then, on November 17th, while the rest of the city was preoccupied with other things, our students joined a sparse crowd to lay candles at various monuments associated with the anniversary. I could hardly conceal my disappointment.

It would take another two trips to Prague for us to realize how significant that first one was. Our assumptions had to be shattered in order to see beyond them. In retrospect, I’m grateful to have gone through this painful experience. Without it, we might never have uncovered the disturbing reasons why so many young Czechs aren’t being taught their own history, and “The Power of the Powerless” wouldn’t be the film that it is.

The POWER of the POWERLESS

Character Updates

- **Václav Havel** was twice chosen as president of post-communist Czechoslovakia. He continues to write and speak publicly on human rights and democracy.
- **John Bok** founded the Šalomoun Association to provide legal aid to the unjustly accused.
- **Jan Bubeník** became the youngest member of the Czechoslovak Federal Parliament in 1990 and later joined the private sector.
- **Jiří Dienstbier** became the first post-communist foreign minister of Czechoslovakia and university lecturer.
- **Ivan Havel** founded an academic institute and continues to work as a professor and editor.
- **Jan Jařab** became National Human Rights Commissioner of the Czech Republic and policy advisor to the European Commission.
- **Josef Jařab** became the freely-elected rector of one of Czechoslovakia's largest universities and was elected in to the Czech Senate in 1997 and 2001.
- **Oskar Krejčí** is a professor of political science and has written over twenty books and a thousand articles in his field.
- **Dana Němcová** served as head of a major humanitarian organization and continues to support pro-democracy activists threatened with persecution.
- **Monika Pajerová** worked as an advisor and spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later founded a civic organization promoting European unity.
- **Martin Palouš** became Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic at the United Nations.
- **Šimon Pánek** established the largest human rights and humanitarian organization in the Czech Republic.
- **Jiřina Šiklová** established the Department of Social Work at Charles University in Prague and later founded the Czech Gender Studies Center.
- **Jan Urban** has worked as a war correspondent, documentary filmmaker, publisher and university lecturer.
- **Alexandr Vondra** became Foreign Minister and later Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic.
- **Paul Wilson**, since being expelled from communist Czechoslovakia he has worked as a writer, radio producer and translator of Václav Havel's works.

The POWER of the POWERLESS

Production Biographies

Cory Taylor, Executive Producer/Director

Cory Taylor is a documentary filmmaker who began his career working as a photographer and editor for *National Geographic*. In 2002, his award-winning film, “A Quiet Revolution”, narrated by Meryl Streep and featuring Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai, brought attention to human and ecological security issues and was screened in over fifty countries at UN-sponsored events, film festivals, television, and integrated into university and high school curricula in North America and Asia. In 2004, Taylor’s second directorial effort, “Another Way of Seeing Things”, narrated by F. Murray Abraham, which dealt with the issue of tolerance in the media, won multiple awards at the Columbus and Tiburon International Film Festivals. Taylor has traveled to India to film segments with the International Centre for Gandhian Studies and has collaborated closely with the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College. He is also a primetime Emmy Award-winning filmmaker with fifteen years of experience writing, producing and editing over 40 documentaries for PBS, National Geographic, NBC, Discovery Channel and various NGOs. Taylor received his BA from UCLA in Theater, Film and Television.

Cory Taylor (Abbreviated bio)

Cory Taylor is an Emmy® award winning filmmaker with over fifteen years of experience writing, producing, directing and editing over 40 documentaries for NBC, PBS, National Geographic, The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet and various NGOs. His most recent work includes the award-winning film, *A Quiet Revolution*, which aired in over in over 50 countries.

Darin Nellis, Executive Producer/Producer

Darin Nellis has devoted twenty years of experience working in business management and community relations for private, public and non-profit entities in the U.S. and Africa. Positions in the private sector include Managing Director for the Eurasian distribution company, Power Quality Holdings, and Director of Corporate Planning for the nanotech company, NanoTech Industries. Non-profit positions included Community Development Officer at the United Way of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount Peace Corps Fellow, Community Development Agent for the U.S. Peace Corps and Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator for the American Oceans Campaign.

Jonathan Terra, Producer/Researcher

Jonathan Terra has over 20 years of experience as a scholar and educator focusing on democratization and political change. Terra is a senior lecturer at the Anglo-American College in Prague, advisor to the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights in Brussels; former Adjunct Professor at the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education-Economics Institute (CERGE-EI) in Prague.

James T. Sale, Composer

James T. Sale is an accomplished composer and orchestrator for Film and television with 15 years of experience including scores for "The Haunting of Molly Hartley" and "Music Within." He also orchestrates and conducts music for Mark Mothersbaugh (Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs, Fanboys, Herbie: Fully Loaded), Bill Brown (CSI: NY), Lee Holdrige (Kindertransport) and for numerous award-winning video games.

Alex Ryan, Production Consultant

Alex Ryan was recently nominated for an Emmy for HBO's "Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq." She continues to produce films for HBO through her partnership with "Sopranos" actor James Gandolfini, as well as a newly signed development deal with HBO. Ryan, a former Paramount Creative Executive, currently has in development "Hemingway and Gellhorn," directed by Philip Kaufman ("The Right Stuff," "Quills"), which chronicles Ernest Hemingway's life; "Sacco and Vanzetti" – a film about the unjust execution of Italian immigrants in 1920's Boston directed by Rod Lurie ("The Contender," "Commander in Chief") and "Sonny" – the story of the notorious shoe executive and basketball scout Sonny Vacarro.

Lionel Friedberg, Production Consultant

Recipient of a Primetime Emmy, a National Emmy, the American Association for the Advancement of Science 'Westinghouse' Award for Science Programming, three Columbus and three Golden Eagles for Best Documentaries. He has worked for over 30 years supervising, producing, writing and directing documentaries, reality, investigative and educational programs and has 18 feature film credits as Director of Photography.

Credits

Written and Directed By

Cory Taylor

Executive Producers

Darin Nellis

Cory Taylor

Produced by

Jonathan Terra

Darin Nellis

Music by

James T. Sale

Narrated by

Jeremy Irons

Research By

Jonathan Terra

Production Consultants

Alex Ryan

Lionel Friedberg

Coordinating Producer

Otto Requette

Photographed and Edited By

Cory Taylor

Sound Recordist

Darin Nellis

Production Stills

Jonathan Terra

Production Advisors

Shinji Ishibashi

Paul Wilkinson

Michael T. Kaufman

Production Coordinators

Evan Weinerman

Julie Ann Taylor

Sound Editor

Darren Barnett

Online Editor/Colorist

TBD

Re-recording Mixer

Darren Barnett

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The Dr. Isabel L.D. Grant Memorial Fund

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Melissa Wong

Graphics Advisor
Ryan Nellis

Archival Research
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Absolutely Archives

Archive Photographs Courtesy of

Czech News Agency

Jan Bednár

Jirí Bednár

Vladimír Bosák

Josef Bubeník

Karel Cudlín

Jovan Dezort

Libor Hajski

Dagmar Havlová

Dagmar Hochová

Pavel Horejsí

Viktor Kolár

Jaroslav Kucera

Ivan Kyncl

Dana Kyndrová

Václav Maly

Ota Nepily

Alan Pajer

Divadlo Na zábradlí

Jan Sibík

Oldrich Skácha

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

National Archive of the Czech Republic

Libri Prohibiti

Security Forces Archive of the Czech Republic (ABS)

The Public Theater, New York

The Belknap Collection for the Performing Arts,

Department of Special and Area Studies Collections,

University of Florida, Gainesville

Stock Footage Courtesy of

Czech Television

National Film Archive of the Czech Republic

U.S. National Archives

Streamline Films, Inc.

The Mission of Agora Productions

Agora Productions (www.thepowerofthepowerless.org or www.agoraproductions.org) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote humane values, enhance critical thinking skills and expose people, particularly young adults, to positive role models through film, art and educational materials.