

divine write

William H. Gates
Founder & Co-Chair
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Dear Mr Gates,

Today's media are awash with images of death, starvation, deprivation, and conflict. But that's not what this world is all about. Unfortunately, so many of our media agencies and outlets live by the mantra that bad news sells. Just as "no news is good news", so too "good news is no news".

But in our hearts, we know otherwise. (And in fact, this intuition is supported by empirical communications research.)

International Hero is about celebrating our heroes. It is the world's richest annual journalism award. With prize money of US \$300,000, it will recognise and encourage the work of journalists celebrating the lives and deeds of the heroes of our time.

There are 3 award categories:

- Hero Stories
- Survival Stories
- Famous Heroes

We would like you to be a judge.

The *International Hero* Project

In times like these, we need heroes, and we need to know about them. We don't mean propaganda and we don't mean pulling the wool over people's eyes. We mean balancing the negativity with some inspiring positivity.

"I'm sure each of you could cite hundreds and hundreds of heroes who are quietly going out and doing work... in the community and giving of their resources. But when we do know them, when we do see them, when we do learn from them, we must stand with them and draw the attention and the respect and the acknowledgement—and the inspiration for ourselves—that their example demands."

Patty Stonesifer, Co-chair & President
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

International Hero has the support of the UN, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, various politicians, and the world's leading corporations – from finance to automotive, food to technology, credit companies to sporting manufacturers. Our partners include an international television network, an international publisher, and most importantly of all, a major international news agency. We have access to their network of journalists, internal promotion, and a streamlined system to facilitate submissions.

International Hero will take submissions from all around the world, and will include:

- 48 television episodes
- an annual 1 million copy book release
- a soundtrack CD release (with a percentage of proceeds donated to charity)
- miscellaneous merchandising
- prime-time TV advertising exposure with a \$6 million budget
- over \$1 million spent on other forms of advertising
- a \$3 million dollar annual live award presentation (Australia's national icon, The Sydney Opera House, has just been confirmed as the venue for the May 23, 2004 presentation)
- \$10 million dedicated to the creation of the *Survival Institute of America*

International Hero will celebrate the courage, the endurance, the kindness, and the nobility of the real leaders of our time. And by leaders, we mean the people at the grass roots. The people sacrificing their own finances, their comfort, their health, and at times, their lives for the benefit of others. Following in the footsteps of awards such as your own *Gates Award for Global Health*, it will bring recognition to these heroes, while at the same time, perpetuating their cause.

People like Nelson Mandella, John Gardner, Christopher Reeve, the late Dr. Albert Sabin, U2's Bono... And the unsung heroes like Dr. Fred Hollows, the volunteer AIDS workers from all around the world, Amnesty International volunteers, fire and police officers, church leaders, trade-unionists, community activists...

Who could forget Tiananmen Square, June 1989... The lone young man blocking a tank's progress with just his body? But how many people know his name was Wang Wei Lin?

International Hero will reward balanced, inspirational stories on the real heroes of our time. It will harness the world's media to bring about a paradigm shift in the way the world is portrayed.

The Judging Panel

8 leaders from all walks of life will form the judging panel. 8 leaders, all at the fore of their chosen field, and the pinnacle of their careers. This is an opportunity for all 8 members to unite in a universally respected alliance and cement their roles in history as leading humanitarians.

By being an *International Hero* judge, you'll not only be helping journalists move forward in their day-to-day work, you'll also be rewarding them for exemplary

work... The very words you used at this year's *Newspaper Association of America Annual Convention* to describe technologies, are the same words we'd use to describe *International Hero*. It "represents a new process of how the news is gathered and presented in different ways". Just as the technologies are "tools of empowerment", so to are the stories empowerment products.

It's time to honor our heroes. As one Melinda Gates expressed it, "to bring overdue recognition to the heroic people and institutions that have been fighting this fight for so long".