



Seeds of Change



Brothers Help Farmers Tell Their Story

by Kathryn Good-Schiff

They didn't intend to become filmmakers, but brothers Matt '99 and Loren Feinstein '01 are now. Their documentary film *Ciclovida: Lifecycle* was an official selection of the Blue Planet Film Festival and won Best Environmental Film at both the Green Screen Environmental Film Festival and the Byron Bay Film Festival. The brothers continue to be busy promoting both the film and its environmental and social message.

Ciclovida: Lifecycle follows two Brazilian farmers, Ivania de Alencar and Inacio do Nascimento, on what became an epic journey across South America. Ivania and Inacio, who are also musicians and activists for ecological and social justice, travel in search of the historical sources of genetic agricultural diversity that would allow them to grow healthy food on the Barra do Lemme collective farm in Brazil where they live with their families. They are farmers in the traditional sense, who wish to grow small amounts of diverse crops in harmony with the land, and they ally themselves against large-scale industrial agriculture, which they report has had devastating environmental and social effects in their country.

The groundwork for the film was laid when Matt was studying International Development and Social Change at Clark University. He met Ivania and Inacio while studying abroad and working with social movements in South America in 2002. He stayed in touch with them and in 2006 they told him about their bike trip and asked if he could help them make



a film about it. Matt turned to his brother Loren, who had worked at the Media Education Foundation in Northampton, MA, and had some filmmaking experience, and the two decided to take on this worthy cause.

"While at Williston I connected deeply with several international students," says Matt, who currently works at Worcester Roots Project, an organization that seeks to promote economic, social, and environmental justice. "This continued my interest in international studies and global solidarity. I received a strong Spanish base [at Williston] with Señora Robinson, from which learning Portuguese was much more attainable."

Ciclovida: Lifecycle follows Ivania and Inacio as they bicycle more than 6,000 miles in the course of a year searching for natural, heirloom seeds to grow at their farm. They wish to rekindle the time-honored practice in which small farmers produce their own seeds for the next year from the food crops they grow, instead of buying genetically engineered seeds from large companies who, according to Matt and Loren, do not have the small farmers' best interest in mind. As Loren describes it, "In Brazil, government programs, along with big agribusiness, subsidize and distribute genetically-modified and hybridized seeds to farmers. Once naturally reproducing seeds become scarce or go extinct, the large foreign corporations then

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control the seed supply of that region." If farmers cannot afford to buy seeds, they may be forced quit farming and end up in urban slums.

The film raises awareness of this issue as it follows the two farmers on their sometimes joyful, sometimes challenging journey. Along the way, they meet up with like-minded people and document some of the environmental and social costs of industrial agriculture, such as deforestation and children made ill from pesticides. But the film ends with a positive message, as Ivania and Inacio return home with a supply of seeds and begin to grow new crops.

The Williston Northampton School held a public screening of *Ciclovida: Lifecycle* on February 11, 2011, in the Reed Campus Center, and another screening is planned for Reunion 2011. Matt and Loren were happy to share their film and the story of its creation with faculty and students. "I was really pleased to see how interested the students were," says Loren. "I was surprised by how immediately they wanted to become involved." He emphasizes that the film was done with no budget and all-volunteer labor, but a very professional product came out of it, thanks to the dedication and vision of those involved, which is a great lesson for aspiring film makers.

The brothers hope that their film will educate viewers about the environmental and social challenges in Brazil, but they also want to build excitement closer to home. Loren says, "This is a story that shows peasant farmers who have very few resources and yet enact a major, sustainable change in their area. It is an inspirational story for everyone to take that energy and put it into important projects."



***Ciclovida: Lifecycle*, which has already been shown in various locations in the United States and South America, will go on bike tour this spring down the East Coast, accompanied by the film's protagonists who will travel from Brazil to help promote it. For more information or to schedule a showing in your community, visit www.ciclovida.org.**



Matt '99 and Loren '01 Feinstein