

Ilene Wong – Acceptance Speech - Innovative ETD (pdf format)

To the Awards Committee:

I am thrilled that the committee decided to honor my project - AIDS in Africa is such an important issue, and the project overcame so many logistical obstacles that I am grateful for the recognition. Thank you to Adobe for your generous grant.

When I initially set out to make a culturally-sensitive video addressing adherence to HIV, I received a lot of skepticism from many arenas, and actually lost out on some funding opportunities because my project was felt to be too ambitious. For their logistical help and talent, I must thank the Perinatal HIV Research Unit in Soweto, South Africa as well as the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. My advisor, Dr. Gerald Friedland, provide unwavering support and cheerleading. And of course, I cannot accept this award without giving my sincerest thanks to my talented co-producer, Nick Lawrence (currently at USC Film School), who provided his indispensable screenwriting, directing and editing skills.

I realize that my project is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to battling the problem of AIDS in Africa. But I hope that people can indeed learn from my experience that even on a shoestring budget, a determined group of people can make a tangible difference in combating HIV.