

# *TIBET*

## *CRY OF THE SNOW LION*

FROM THE ACADEMY AWARD WINNING PRODUCERS OF *BROKEN RAINBOW*

Directed by Tom Peosay  
Produced by Tom Peosay, Sue Peosay,  
Victoria Mudd and Maria Florio  
Written by Sue Peosay & Victoria Mudd

USA, 2003, 104 minutes

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# *TIBET: CRY OF THE SNOW LION*

## **CREDITS**

**Produced by:** Earthworks Films, Inc. – Maria Florio and Victoria Mudd  
Zambuling Pictures, Inc. – Tom Peosay and Sue Peosay

**Directed by:** Tom Peosay

**Written by:** Sue Peosay  
Victoria Mudd

**Edited by:** Kathryn Himoff

**Additional Editing by:** Frank Christopher

**Music by:** Jeff Beal  
Featuring Performances by Nawang Khechog

**Narration by:** Martin Sheen

**Voiceovers by:** Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Ed Harris,  
Frank Christopher, Edward Edwards,  
Shirley Knight, Lynn Marta

# Synopsis

Ten years in the making, this provocative documentary was filmed during a remarkable nine journeys throughout Tibet, India and Nepal. *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* brings audiences to the long-forbidden "rooftop of the world" with an unprecedented richness of imagery... from rarely-seen rituals in remote monasteries, to horse races with Khamba warriors; from brothels and slums in the holy city of Lhasa, to magnificent Himalayan peaks still traveled by nomadic yak caravans. The dark secrets of Tibet's recent past are powerfully chronicled through riveting personal stories and interviews, and a collection of undercover and archival images never before assembled in one film. A definitive exploration of a legendary subject, *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* is an epic story of courage and compassion.

# Production Overview

Isolated for centuries behind the Himalayas, Tibet captured the imagination of the rest of the world as a land of exotic mysteries and hidden secrets. Today, Tibet remains a land of mystery – but the secrets hidden there are the result of one of the most tragic clashes of cultures in human history. *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* is the culmination of a ten-year effort to bring the story of Tibet to the big screen as never before. The production of this 35mm documentary led the filmmakers on an extraordinary journey, which reflects the epic nature of the story it addresses.

**Nine Journeys To Tibet** What separates *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* from other films on the subject is its wealth of footage actually shot *in Tibet*. Producer-Director-Cinematographer Tom Peosay made nine journeys to the fabled “rooftop of the world,” filming in locations which included the historic streets of the capital of Lhasa; 18,000-foot-high Himalayan passes; and thrilling festivals in remote areas rarely seen by outsiders. Shooting at high altitudes presented unique challenges, says Tom: “When shooting a documentary film, you have to concentrate very deeply on what you’re doing because there’s often no chance for a second take; and if you’re shooting handheld, you often have to hold your breath for the shots, and that’s a difficult thing to do until after you’ve had sufficient time to acclimatize”

Besides the physical difficulties, the filmmakers faced unique challenges shooting in a country where information is so tightly controlled. Producer-Co-writer Victoria Mudd recalls, “We were always aware that we were in an occupied country. There was always a feeling of being watched.” Aware of the potential for serious consequences, the filmmakers did not conduct any interviews in Tibet, and everything they photographed was public and in the open. Still, Peosay was able to document the dire threats Tibetan culture faces in its homeland – and capture intimate glimpses of life that reveal the vitality of Tibetan culture even after fifty years of Chinese rule.

The filmmakers also shot extensively in Tibetan exile communities in India and Nepal, including the spectacle of hundreds of thousands of Tibetan Buddhists gathered for Kalachakra, or “Wheel of Time” teachings given by the Dalai Lama in India. Other shoots took the crew to Washington DC, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Florida and London. Over three hundred hours of footage was shot for *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* during the course of its ten-year production.

**Riveting Stories** Sixty-eight interviews were conducted for the film, (38 of which appear in the final cut) providing an extraordinary breadth of perspective and insight. Tibetan survivors of torture and prisons; Chinese officials; western scholars and legislators; a Tibetan television cameraman, a Chinese human rights activist and a warrior nun are just some of the individuals who lend their voices to *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion*. Interviewing the Dalai Lama was among the most memorable filmmaking experiences for the crew. “He’s genuinely interested in meeting people from all walks of life,” says Tom Peosay, “and his sense of humor, his disarming laugh, just pierces

through any sense of protocol. As a journalist, over the years I've met presidents and movie stars and rock-and-roll stars, and there's simply no one on this planet who connects to people on a one-to-one basis with such good heart – as he puts it, 'good human feeling.' He melts you."

Experiences from the interview process were a source of personal inspiration for the filmmakers; a sentiment they hope audiences will share. As Victoria Mudd puts it, "When you think of the suffering endured by the Tibetan people, it puts your own trials in perspective. These people are unbreakable. Ask yourself what is it about their teaching that helps them survive? They have a worldview based on love, forgiveness, and compassion that helps them survive this kind of brutality. One Tibetan man who had been terribly tortured told us the very worst thing that happened to him during his years of imprisonment was that he almost lost his sense of compassion. Almost."

**Rare Archival and Undercover Footage** Ten years of research enabled the filmmakers to uncover a collection of rare archival and undercover images never before assembled in one film. The powerful opening sequence of *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* combines Chinese police footage, never-before-published stills, images shot by witnesses, and riveting interview testimonies to cover the pivotal Lhasa demonstrations of 1987 with unprecedented detail and emotion. Working with some of the graphic images they discovered posed a particularly difficult challenge for the filmmakers. "It's a balancing act when presenting this kind of disturbing or violent material: we didn't want to make something unbearable," says Victoria Mudd. "This was something we struggled over endlessly as filmmakers: how to bear witness and relay the extent of the horror without completely alienating the viewer."

**Post-Production Achievements** State-of-the-art technology enabled the many different image sources to flow seamlessly together. Most of the film was shot in Betacam SP, the standard non-fiction television format, which was digitally up-converted to 24fps High Definition along with a myriad of other formats, then uniformly color-corrected before being transferred to 35mm film. Tom Peosay explains, "When up-converting the image, we actually used technology developed for use in 'smart bombs,' where every pixel has an individual processor on it, to make sure the image was absolutely perfect." Sue Peosay (Producer-Co-Writer) finds that "It's an interesting irony that ultra-modern technology developed for warfare is being used to produce a film that focuses on an ancient culture devoted to compassion and non-violence."

**A Long Journey** It's been a long journey from Tom and Sue Peosay's almost accidental trip to Tibet as backpackers in 1987; from Victoria Mudd's encounters with Tibetan refugees in Nepal in 1974; and Maria Florio's enchantment with a faraway land as her mother read "Seven Years in Tibet" to her as a child. There is a sense of urgency in getting the film to a wide audience, explains Victoria Mudd: "The Chinese are still executing Tibetans. It's worse now in that every day the occupation moves farther along and becomes more ingrained; every day more Chinese come to Tibet, further extinguishing Tibetan culture." But the film is not intended to be anti-Chinese. "I would hope that when Chinese people see this film, they would feel the same sort of concern and resolve I felt when I saw our partners' film, *Broken Rainbow*, and learned of the

injustices still being perpetrated against Native Americans in our own country,” says Sue Peosay. “Any real solution to the current problems in Tibet will need to come from within China. So ultimately, my personal hope is that this film can serve as a stepping stone for dialogue that may someday build a bridge toward a meaningful reconciliation between China and Tibet.” The filmmakers find hope in the fact that even after 50 years under Chinese rule, Tibetans have not yet lost their cultural identity, and continue to work for a non-violent solution to their struggle. It’s an example with potent global relevance, now more than ever, as Tom Peosay explains: “Some people may ask, ‘Why should the problems in Tibet stand out in a world filled with suffering?’ I think it’s because of the Tibetan people’s unbroken spirit, strength, and desire to find compassionate solutions, instead of falling into despair or pursuing terrorism or violent acts against their enemies.”

# The Story

The film opens with the memories of a journey to Tibet by two young American adventurers, who suddenly find themselves in the middle of Tibetan demonstrations against Chinese rule. Their riveting story is supported by interviews with Tibetan monks and nuns who participated in the demonstrations, accompanied by a powerful assemblage of images documenting the massacre and crackdown by Chinese forces. The heroic story of Jampa Tenzin, a monk who rescued prisoners from a burning police station, his subsequent capture, torture and death, leads to a prayer by the Dalai Lama, and sets the tone for the epic tale about to unfold: a story of struggle, courage, and compassion.

After the title, the audience is transported to the beginning of the story, the legendary "rooftop of the world" – via spectacular footage of Tibet's awe-inspiring landscape and timeless glimpses of Tibet's unique culture. A brief introduction to Tibetan history dispels popular misconceptions that Tibet is a tiny mountain kingdom and that Tibet has always been a land of peace and tranquility. Tibetan elders recollect the homeland of their youth. The foundations of Tibetan Buddhism are presented, lavishly illustrated with a wealth of stunning cinematography. These contemporary images support the point made by Buddhist scholar Stephen Batchelor that Tibetan traditions still endure in more remote areas of its homeland today, demonstrating that Tibetan culture is not yet lost.

Experts and witnesses discuss the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, and introduce the story of the current Dalai Lama. An archival view of the Dalai Lama's former residence, the Potala, suddenly cuts to a modern view, and a barrage of arresting images from today's Tibet: crowds of Chinese immigrants, destruction of historic Tibetan neighbourhoods, soldiers, prostitutes. Interviews express the powerlessness Tibetans feel in the face of Chinese colonization masked as modernization and development. A Chinese government spokesman counters with Beijing's official positions on Tibet, which leads to an overview of the current religious crackdown, all reinforced with rare visuals and interview testimony.

The camera follows pilgrims visiting Tibet's holiest temple, moving from deep into the inner sanctum to the image of Tibet's most revered statue of the Buddha, the Jowo. The sublime golden visage cuts to the stern faces of marching Chinese soldiers, as the storyline flashes back to the events, which led to the current conflict in Tibet. The story of China's "Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" in 1949 is vividly told by Robert Ford, an Englishman who was working in Tibet at the time, and was captured and imprisoned by the Chinese. The gulf between communist China and the religious devotion of Tibet adds to the mounting sense of tension, which builds with rarely seen Chinese propaganda films, including astonishing footage of the teenage Dalai Lama's visit to Beijing and meetings with Mao Tse Tung. Mao's last words to the Dalai Lama, that "religion is poison" presages the horrors about to befall Tibet.

Survivors of Chinese prisons and labor camps, the same elders who reminisced about the Tibet of their youth, tell the dreadful and little-known story of China's attempt to destroy Tibetan religion and resistance, and of the unimaginable suffering that befell Tibet and China during the Cultural Revolution. The story of the CIA's support of the Tibetan resistance movement is told with bitter poignancy by those who were trained in the USA and fought a "secret war" for 20 years.

Images of Tibetan pilgrims in Nepal lighting butterlamps on a dark night evoke a feeling of hope in troubled times. The storyline changes gears to focus on the remarkable efforts of the Dalai Lama to preserve and promote in exile what remains of Tibetan culture, and to lead a non-violent struggle for justice. Today, thousands of Tibetans each year continue to make the perilous escape from their homeland, their journeys illustrated by rare footage of refugees crossing Himalayan passes and arriving, frostbitten and exhausted in Dharamsala, Northern India. The lack of education or monastic opportunities in Tibet is a major force driving Tibetans into exile today, a point emotionally articulated by the former headmaster of a Tibetan school in India. A Chinese official counters that conditions in Tibet have only improved under Chinese rule, his words accompanied by surreal images from a Chinese-organized festival high on the Tibetan plateau, a view of Tibet rarely seen by outsiders.

The story flashes back to the death of Mao Tse Tung, and crowds of weeping, grief-stricken Chinese citizens. Under Mao's rule, Tibet had been sealed off from the outside world for 25 years. After his death, Tibetan hopes for a better future were fueled when an exile delegation was permitted to return to their homeland in preparation for discussions with the new Chinese government. But the scenes of weeping, grief-stricken crowds are repeated, this time in Tibet, as Tibetans implore the delegates to tell the Dalai Lama of their suffering during decades of hidden holocaust.

The outpouring of emotion in Tibet was a shock to the Chinese government in Beijing, which thought their Tibet problem was all but eradicated. Diplomatic ties with the Tibetan exiles were severed, and the Dalai Lama was compelled to turn to the outside world for help. Here the Dalai Lama explains the philosophy of compassion that has sustained the Tibetans through incredible hardship, a philosophy which offers hope not only to Tibetans in their struggle, but has inspired leaders and ordinary people alike the world over. The Dalai Lama's "Five Point Peace Plan" helped elevate the Tibetan issue to a matter of global concern, by proposing a demilitarized "Zone of Peace" in the strategic heart of Asia. Although a Chinese official denounces the Dalai Lama's efforts, it is a moving moment of triumph when the Dalai Lama accepts the Nobel Peace Prize.

An amazing sequence of images shows hundreds of thousands of Tibetans celebrating a religious ritual ("Kalachakra" or "Wheel of Time" teachings) led by the Dalai Lama in exile. But the feeling of victory is short-lived. Scenes of monks joyously running to serve tea at the services in India are replaced by deeply disturbing images of monks running for their lives from Chinese storm-troopers during demonstrations that erupted as tensions escalated in Tibet after the Nobel award. What follows is perhaps the most emotionally painful portion of the film, as smuggled Chinese police tapes capture the



brutal beatings of monks in Tibet's holiest temple, and nuns describe being sexually violated with electric cattle prods after their arrest.

Distress is transformed to dignity as the visual cuts to crowds of nuns demonstrating in exile, expressing freely the desires, which led to unspeakable brutality in their homeland. Again, the motif of butterlamps flickering in the darkness leads the audience toward light, as interviews articulate the beliefs that have prevented Tibetans from being consumed by hatred and defeat. The story of Palden Gyatso, who appears throughout the film, powerfully illustrates the irrepressible spirit of so many Tibetan torture survivors. His astounding feat of obtaining torture implements and escape to exile, determined to tell the world what is happening in Tibet, brings this emotional climax of the film full circle.

The Dalai Lama returns with an eloquent statement about the importance of human rights, which cuts to images of more demonstrations – with a surprising twist – this time in China's Tienanmen Square. Here a remarkable case is made for the common suffering and desires shared by both Chinese and Tibetans – a bridge of hope between the two cultures. Beijing's justification for its brutality against both Chinese and Tibetans is revealed: fear of a Soviet-style breakup of the world's most populous nation, a nation with tremendous global economic influence.

Now the story shifts to western complicity in the oppression of Tibet. China's importance to the world economy has silenced most western opposition to the human rights violations taking place.

The wailing of a scantily clad Chinese nightclub singer abruptly brings the audience back to Tibet. China's "final solution" for Tibet – colonization and assimilation – is at last being accomplished, not through military force, but as a result of the massive population transfer of Chinese into Tibet – paid for, in part, by China's huge economic gains. An impressive series of documentary imagery details the effects of the accelerating Chinese assimilation of Tibet, culminating with the outrageous and tragic story of the disappearance of the young Panchen Lama.

Focus turns to the desperation felt by Tibetans, who, despite trying to maintain a moral high road in their struggle, see their culture disappearing with no concrete international support for their cause. The potential for Tibet to become the next Bosnia or Palestine is discussed, as the desperation borne of fifty years of Chinese repression explodes in the shocking footage of a Tibetan monk's unprecedented self-immolation in India.

Intimate scenes of Buddhist ritual, of the completion and destruction of an intricate sand mandala, transform the morass of desperation. The Dalai Lama points out that many Chinese are now expressing support for Tibet, as evidenced by remarkable footage of tens of thousands of Chinese who recently attended his teachings in Taiwan.

A final, fervent plea by the Dalai Lama is answered by the chanting of "Free Tibet! Free Tibet!" which cuts to a frenzied mosh pit at the Tibet Freedom Concert in San Francisco. The tensions and emotions which have mounted throughout the film are suddenly

released in a heady rush of pure musical and visual energy. Many of the Tibetan elders whose stories have been woven throughout the film reappear to speak before cheering crowds. Robert Thurman, a prominently featured Buddhist scholar in the film, passionately makes the case that the Tibetan cause is neither impossible nor hopeless.

The exuberant climax calms in the last minutes of the film, as a parade of breathtaking images reinforces the final stirring message of hope from Tibetan intellectual Lhasang Tsering: "We want to be counted among ordinary human beings who only seek ordinary human rights. The right of all people to be free to determine their future. There will be problems in Tibet, but we will solve them in our own way; and we will not be enemies with China – we could even be friends."

# Selected Interview Bios

## JOHN AVEDON

***“What’s so unique about the Tibetan experience, and so compelling, in many ways, is what the refugees have done outside of Tibet. They made the decision to fight for their country constructively, non-violently... By preserving their culture, they would eventually create a kind of living refutation of the Chinese claims on Tibet.”***

Author of the widely acclaimed *In Exile From the Land of Snows*, a book described as “the first full account of the Dalai Lama and Tibet since the Chinese conquest,” Avedon appears throughout the film to eloquently articulate the history and significance of China’s presence in Tibet.

## AMA ADHE TAPONTSANG

***“There was nothing there but bones. Our eyes had sunken. We didn't dare look at each other. They cried and groaned for awhile, and then died.”***

Ama Adhe tells one of the most moving stories in the film: a survivor of 28 brutal years in prisons and camps for defying Chinese rule; she sewed a quilt of scraps from the clothes of her friends who died. Despite a life filled with unimaginable loss and suffering, Adhe remains a woman of incredible strength and warmth, who has made a new life caring for recently arrived Tibetan refugees at the official refugee center in Dharamsala. “Ama” is Tibetan for mother; which is how she is known among Tibetans in exile – a beloved and much admired woman whose life is profiled in the book, *The Voice That Remembers: A Tibetan Woman's Inspiring Story of Survival*, Wisdom Pubs. 1999.

## ANI PACHEN

***“As long as I'm breathing, as long as I have blood running in my veins, I will never stop fighting for the independence of Tibet.”***

Ani Pachen appears several times in the film, recalling “pleasant occasions” in the Tibet of her youth; the horrors of mass executions after the Chinese invasion; and speaking before crowds of Tibet supporters at a rally in the U.S. Her extraordinary life story is chronicled in the book “Sorrow Mountain.” She was born the daughter of a powerful chieftain in eastern Tibet. Despite having taken vows as a nun, when her father died, she led his army against the Chinese invaders. After she was captured, she endured 21 years of imprisonment and almost constant torture. Her spiritual training and practice gave her the strength to survive. When she was finally released from prison, she resumed her activities against the Chinese occupiers until, convinced that she was soon to be re-arrested, she escaped to India where she was able to fulfill her life long dream of meeting the Dalai Lama. An inspiration to many, she worked tirelessly for the freedom of her people until her recent death.

### **CHEN GUO CHING**

***“It is totally unacceptable to the Chinese government for officials of any country to meet him [the Dalai Lama] in any form.”***

A Chinese government spokesman at the Washington, DC embassy of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Chen presents the official position of the Beijing government regarding Tibet.

### **ROBERT FORD**

***“Of course China’s invasion was not a peaceful liberation. These were armed troops invading another’s territory. How can you call it peaceful?”***

One of only a handful of westerners to have lived in pre-Chinese Tibet, Ford’s experiences in Tibet are comparable – and perhaps even more extraordinary – than the better-known author of *Seven Years in Tibet*, Heinrich Harrer. Ford was hired by the Tibetan government in 1948 as a radio operator and sent to the remote eastern province of Kham. While there he encountered not only a way of life virtually untouched by the outside world, but witnessed firsthand the Chinese invasion of Tibet, as the People’s Liberation Army captured the town where he was based in 1950, and imprisoned Ford for nearly five years. As a result, Ford became fluent in Chinese as well as Tibetan, and Chinese efforts to indoctrinate him in communist re-education gave him unique insights to the “other side” of the story of modern Tibet. Ford offers a rare and fond glimpse of a vanished world while managing to avoid romanticism by clearly recounting the frailties and failures of the old Tibet. He is one of the first “Tibet activists,” and a rare English-speaking link between vastly different times and worlds. The memoir of his Tibetan experiences is titled *Wind Between The Worlds*; 1957; reprinted in 1987 by Snow Lion Publications as *Captured in Tibet*

### **PALDEN GYATSO**

***“Electric cattle prods were used on me many times. They used it often in my mouth.”***

In 1959, Palden Gyatso was a young monk at the prestigious Drepung Monastery. When Chinese forces began shelling the Norbulingka Palace during the March 10 uprising, Palden Gyatso joined thousands of monks and lay people who took up arms to protect the Dalai Lama. Palden was captured in the brutal crackdown after the Dalai Lama escaped, and spent the next 33 years in a series of prisons, labour camps, and various forms of house arrest. Subjected to violent physical and psychological torture, Palden eventually managed to escape to India, carrying with him hard evidence of the brutality inflicted upon resisters to Chinese rule: the electric prods and instruments that had been used to torture him. Determined to tell the outside world of the violations of human rights continuing in his homeland, Palden Gyatso has testified before the U.S. Congress, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and countless other speaking engagements and appearances. His story, *The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk*, is a unique tribute to the strength and triumph of the human spirit.

### **BLAKE KERR**

***“I ran up to him, saw immediately the child had been shot, in the chest, reached around to his back and saw that there was an exit wound in the back... The child literally died in my hands... There was nothing that I could do.”***

In 1987, Kerr and an old college friend, John Ackerly, were fulfilling a lifelong dream to visit Tibet, when they inadvertently found themselves in the midst of a violent crackdown on Tibetan demonstrators against Chinese rule. His story, entwined with the testimony of Ackerly and other Tibetan witnesses to the brutality, provides the riveting opening to ***Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion***. A medical doctor, he has returned several times to Tibet and Tibetan refugee communities to research and document ongoing human rights abuses. He tells of his life-changing experiences in the book, *Sky Burial: An Eyewitness Account of China's Brutal Crackdown in Tibet*.

### **JEANE KIRKPATRICK**

***“What the West has done is avert its eyes while genocide takes place in Tibet.”***

A former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick brings the credibility of years of service in the realm of international diplomacy to the film.

### **LHASANG TSERING**

***“For centuries our best minds, our saints and our philosophers concentrated all their time and energy to understanding the nature of the mind. And who can say which would really matter in the end – the landing on the moon or the understanding of the mind?”***

Impassioned and charismatic, Lhasang features prominently in ***Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion***, delivering many of the most memorable lines, including the stirring ending of the film. His life story encompasses many of the most important events and aspects of the Tibetan experience. As a youth, Lhasang joined Tibetan guerrilla resistance forces headquartered in the remote region of Mustang in Nepal, which was funded for 20 years by the CIA, and witnessed the tragic consequences that American détente with China caused for the Tibetans. He became headmaster of the Tibetan Children’s Village in Dharamsala, where he oversaw the education of children brought out of Tibet at great peril by their parents, desperate that their children receive an education in Tibetan language, history and culture that is unavailable in their homeland. Lhasang was the first president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the more “radical” and most activist Tibetan exile groups. He then went on to join several of the most notable exiled Tibetan intellectuals in founding the Amnye Machen Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies. A compelling and provocative figure who has at times dared to differ with the Dalai Lama, he is a refreshingly modern and direct Tibetan spokesman.

### **DREW LIU**

***“They are very much afraid of the breaking up of China. It's like a domino effect. If there's a loss of control in Tibet, there will be a similar loss of control in Xinjiang, in Inner Mongolia, and in other minority groups.”***

Executive Director of the China Strategic Institute in Washington, DC, an independent research and think tank, Drew Liu reveals the reason for China's heavy-handedness in Tibet.

### **ROBERT THURMAN**

***“Eighty-five percent of the national budget of Tibet was spent supporting the curriculum of the monastic universities, and ten percent of the population were in those monastic universities. This would be the equivalent in the United States as if the whole of the defense budget were put into the education budget. Enlightened people was what they were trying to produce.”***

Robert A. F. Thurman is a scholar, author, former Tibetan Buddhist monk, Director of Tibet House in New York City, a close personal friend of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and father of five children including the Hollywood actress, Uma. He has lectured all over the world; his charisma and enthusiasm draw packed audiences. Thurman became the first Westerner to be ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist monk. His ability to authentically translate esoteric Buddhist concepts into appealing language accessible to general audiences enhances some of the most important material covered in the film.

### **WEI JINGSHENG**

***“Many people have talked to me and said, there are so many problems faced by the Chinese people, why are you spending your time to also talk about the Tibetan issue? My answer is that this is not a question simply for the Tibetan people. This is a question for all people who see such human rights abuses. This is a problem for all of us living today on this earth.”***

Wei Jingsheng is probably the best-known Chinese human rights and democracy activist. Jailed for a total of more than 18 years due to his political activities, Wei Jingsheng is a winner of numerous human rights awards, including the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, the National Endowment for Democracy Award, and seven nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize since 1993. His appearance in *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* represents the hope for a meaningful resolution between the peoples of China and Tibet.

# About The Filmmakers

## **Maria Florio**

### **Producer**

Born in Westchester County, Maria Florio began her creative journey as a painter and sculptor, earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from the School of Visual Arts, New York University, and Columbia University. Using her fine arts training, Florio segued into the world of New York advertising, where her professional stints included serving as Art Director at Golden Press. Before long, Florio opened her own agency, Maria Florio Design Studios, with shingles in Newport Beach and Los Angeles.

Although Florio always harbored a love of cinema, it was a fortuitous meeting with *Tibet* Producer-Co-writer Victoria Mudd – Mudd asked Florio to design a poster for one of her films – that began her foray into filmmaking. The result: the creation of Earthworks Films and an Academy Award for the team’s first project, the 1986 documentary *Broken Rainbow*.

“Tibet has haunted my entire life,” says Florio, who recounts reading *Seven Years In Tibet* with her mother as one of her earliest childhood memories. “Tibet informed my earliest literary memories and in some ways formed the beginning of my visual life, too.” Of the four principle filmmakers on *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion*, Florio is the only one who has not yet visited the land of snows. When asked why, Florio responds: “I made a vow to myself: I believe this film will be instrumental in bringing His Holiness the Dalai Lama back to Tibet. When he returns, I will make my visit.”

Florio, who is currently working on documentary film projects about world hunger and the history of violence against women, has a long history of human rights activism. Though she now counts working 20-hour days as her hobby, in the past the adventuresome and ebullient Florio has enjoyed skiing and skydiving.

## **Victoria Mudd**

### **Producer-Co-Writer**

A fifth generation Los Angeles native, Victoria Mudd studied with the widow of Robert Flaherty, the “father” of documentary films, in the early ‘70s; co-produced a feature documentary about a Scottish spiritual community (*Findhorn*); attended the American Film Institute (AFI) as a Directing Fellow in the early ‘80s, and has been involved in the production of documentary films ever since.

Mudd, who studied Cultural Anthropology at Stanford University, is a partner in Earthworks Films and Co-director-Producer of *BROKEN RAINBOW*, winner of the 1986 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. Mother of 13-year-old Kate, Mudd, who counts golfing, skiing, and surfing among her hobbies, journeyed to Tibet to research *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion*. While most of the responsibilities on the project were shared, among Mudd’s major focuses were structuring the wealth of material that

accumulated over the 10-year making of the film, and balancing the documentary's historical, political, ethnographic, and spiritual content.

### **Tom Peosay**

#### **Director-Cinematographer-Producer**

Peosay's feature documentary directorial debut took him to the legendary "rooftop of the world," an amazing nine times over the course of ten years, enabling him to document dramatic changes as well as subtle glimpses of life few filmmakers have been able to capture in Tibet.

A California native and graduate of UC Santa Barbara (Environmental Studies and Geography), Peosay has 20 years of experience shooting documentaries and network magazine shows for clients such as NBC, Jean-Michel Cousteau, and the Discovery Networks. He has also shot high-end video for feature films such as *Dragnet*, *Hero*, *Wayne's World*, and *The Bodyguard*. Peosay has traveled extensively throughout Asia and specializes in 24P High Definition digital cinematography. His passion for his craft has driven Tom to master technologies at the cutting edge of digital filmmaking.

According to Peosay, *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* is a showcase for the technology that allows so many different film and video formats to be seamlessly converted into a single 35mm presentation."

### **Sue Peosay**

#### **Producer-Co-Writer**

It was at UC Santa Barbara, where she studied fine arts and Asian studies, that Peosay met Tom Peosay, her future husband and filmmaking collaborator. Peosay recalls casually attending an on-campus lecture given by the Dalai Lama in 1986. A year later, she and Tom made their first journey together to Tibet – a journey that would deeply affect both their lives.

Once they decided to make the film, Sue learned some conversational Tibetan by cassette course while driving around Los Angeles. "Knowing a little of the language opened a lot of doors for us, and led to some incredible experiences." In addition to myriad co-writing and producing duties – which included organizing over 300 hours of footage – Peosay also served as the film's principle sound recorder. "Perhaps the most difficult aspect of doing sound work on documentaries is trying to be as unobtrusive as possible; to fade into the background, especially during things like religious rituals," says Peosay, who admits that pinning a microphone on the Dalai Lama during their first interview together was a little nerve-wracking.

Peosay has worked with her husband on shoots for NBC, CNN, World Monitor, A&E, and others, and traveled to Tibet with Tom six times over the 10-year making of *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion*. Now busy with their four-year-old son, Peosay describes the experience of filmmaking as, "Very intense: intensely pleasurable, intensely challenging, intensely difficult. [Tom and I] have been able to share some of the most extraordinary experiences by working together on this film."