

FIRST RUN FEATURES PRESENTS

A JIHAD FOR LOVE

A Film by Parvez Sharma



Four Iranian refugees share a bittersweet moment, as seen in A JIHAD FOR LOVE, a film by Parvez Sharma. A First Run Features release.

Opens May 21st at the IFC Center

PRELIMINARY PRESS NOTES

A JIHAD FOR LOVE is produced by Sandi DuBowski (Director/Producer of the award-winning Trembling Before G-d) in association with ZDF-Arte, Channel 4, LOGO, SBS-Australia, The Sundance Documentary Fund and The Katahdin Foundation.

**A JIHAD FOR LOVE, 81 MIN, 2007, UNRATED
ARABIC/HINDI/PERSIAN/URDU/FRENCH W/ ENGLISH SUBTITLES**

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A Jihad for Love

In a time when Islam is under tremendous attack - from within and without - 'A Jihad for Love' is a daring documentary filmed in twelve countries and nine languages. Muslim gay filmmaker Parvez Sharma has gone where the silence is loudest, filming with great risk in nations where government permission to make this film was not an option.

A Jihad for Love is Mr. Sharma's debut and is the world's first feature documentary to explore the complex global intersections between Islam and homosexuality. Parvez enters the many worlds of Islam by illuminating multiple stories as diverse as Islam itself. The film travels a wide geographic arc presenting us lives from India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa and France. Always filming in secret and as a Muslim, Parvez makes the film from within the faith, depicting Islam with the same respect that the film's characters show for it. "A Jihad for Love" is co-produced by Sandi DuBowski (Director/Producer of the award-winning Trembling Before G-d) in association with ZDF-Arte, Channel 4, LOGO, SBS-Australia, The Sundance Documentary Fund and The Katahdin Foundation.

In Western media, the concept of 'jihad' is often narrowly equated with holy war. But Jihad also has a deeper meaning, its literal Arabic being 'struggle' or 'to strive in the path of God'. In this film we meet several characters engaged in their personal Jihad's for love. The people in this film have a lot to teach us about love. Their pursuit of love has brought them into conflicts with their countries, families, and even themselves. Such is the quandary of being both homosexual and Muslim, a combination so taboo that very little about it has been documented.

As a result majority of gay and lesbian Muslims must travel a twisting, lonely and often dangerous road. The majority of Muslims believe that homosexuality is forbidden by the Quran and many scholars quote Hadith (sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) to directly condemn homosexuality. Islam, already the second largest religion in the world is also the fastest growing. 50 nations have a Muslim majority. In a few of those nations laws interpreted from alleged Quranic prohibitions of male homosexuality (lesbianism is allegedly absent from the Quran) are enforced by religious, tribal or military authorities to monitor, entrap, imprison, torture and even execute homosexuals. Even for those who migrate to Europe or North America and adopt Western personae of "gay" or "queer," the relative freedoms of new homelands are mitigated by persistent racial profiling and intensified state surveillance after the attacks of 9/11 and train bombings in Madrid and London.

As a result, many gay and lesbian Muslims end up renouncing their religion completely. But the real-life characters of A Jihad for Love aren't willing to abandon a faith they cherish and that sustains them. Instead, they struggle to

reconcile their ardent belief with the innate reality of their being. The international chorus of gay and lesbian Muslims brought together by *A Jihad for Love* doesn't seek to vilify or reject Islam, but rather negotiate a new relationship to it. In doing so, the film's extraordinary characters attempt to point the way for all Muslims to move beyond the hostile, war-torn present, toward a more hopeful future. As one can imagine, it was a difficult decision for the subjects to participate in the film due to the violence they could face. It took the filmmaker six years to finish this film and he like those who have stepped forward to tell their stories feel that they are Islam's most unlikely storytellers. All of them feel that this film is too important for over a billion Muslims-and all the non-Muslims in the world-for them to say no. They are willing to take the risk in their quest to lay equal claim to their profoundly held faith.

A Jihad for Love's characters each have vastly different personal takes on Islam, some observing a rigorously orthodox regimen, others leading highly secular lifestyles while remaining spiritually devout. As the camera attentively captures their stories, the film's gay and lesbian characters emerge in all their human complexity, giving the viewer an honest rendering of their lives while complicating our assumptions about a monolithic Muslim community.

Crucially, this film speaks with a Muslim voice, unlike other documentaries about sexual politics in Islam made by Western directors. In the hope of opening a dialogue that has been mostly non-existent, in Islam's recent history and defining jihad as a "struggle" rather than a "war," the film presents the struggle for love.

Participants of the Film

The Iranian Gay Refugees

Amir is a young Iranian currently living a life in limbo in Turkey. While in Iran, Amir was charged with crimes of “sexual preference, sexual contact, illicit speech, illicit dress, makeup, and mannerism”—and for these “crimes,” Amir was sentenced to a flogging and received 100 lashes, after being brutally beaten and tortured while in the custody of the police. He arrived in Turkey a year ago undertaking a perilous journey from Shiraz, his hometown, over the border under the cover of darkness where he needed to bribe customs officials to leave. Amir is filmed as he waits to receive asylum, with a group of three other young gay Iranian men who arrived in Turkey before Amir. Two were granted asylum in Canada. These men left Turkey a few months ago and we documented their departure to what they hope is a better life while others wait in limbo. From these four men, we learned that at least 10 other Iranian men in Turkey have been denied asylum and these men will probably be sent back to Iran by the Turkish government - where under an increasingly repressive regime, only peril awaits them.

Mazen

In a highly publicized breach of human rights, the Egyptian government arrested and imprisoned 52 men in Cairo when they raided a gay club, The Queen Boat, on the Nile River in 2001. Mazen was one of these men and was imprisoned and tortured for two years. Mazen won asylum in France. At first, Mazen was filmed in silhouette. But after two years of discussions, director Parvez Sharma is also able to document Mazen’s remarkably brave decision to go public and show his face. While recovering from the suffering of torture and adjusting to a life of freedom, he has lived an often penniless and jobless life on the streets of Arab Paris. After three years of separation, he is struggling with whether he will share this with his mother.

Imam Muhsin Hendricks

A very different kind of story for A Jihad for Love emerges from South Africa – that of Imam Muhsin Hendricks. He is a 37-year old gay Imam living in Johannesburg. His father and grandfather were the spiritual centers for the Orthodox Muslim community in Cape Town when he was growing up. He is a divorced father of three children from an arranged marriage. From this learned lineage of religious teachers and family he has taken the extraordinary step to come out as an openly gay Imam who dares to take on orthodoxy.

Muhsin is a seeker of truth and his entire life has been defined by that search. This is a character that truly lives and embodies Islam. His speech is always peppered with quotations and examples from the Quran, which he has committed to memory in its entirety, making him an ‘Hafiz Quran’-one of the most respected members in his community. On his journey he has faced tremendous opposition:

from his community - which excommunicated him; from his family; and even his Muslim gay partner who would rather see him live a quiet and unthreatening life

In a historic first, Muhsin was invited to address the Islamic Social Welfare Council (ISWA)– a conservative organization that had many years ago excommunicated him for being open about his sexuality. This is a historic event because at no time in modern Islamic history has an openly gay Imam been invited by the orthodoxy to workshop with them on Islam and homosexuality. Muhsin's two-day interaction with the members of ISWA was unparalleled. For their time together, Muhsin and the group engaged in a thought-provoking, often dissonant discourse about his life, his choices, homosexuality, and the Quran. In the end each one of the members of ISWA testify to a better understanding of Islam and homosexuality coupled with a feeling of affirmation of gays and lesbians.

Muhsin is documented going through a period of intense introspection about his faith, his activism and fundamentally his belief system. He goes on this journey with many questions about the work he does with gay and lesbian Muslims and whether he should continue it or abandon it. He asks if Allah is a god of punishment or a god who forgives and loves all of his creations. His Umrah (a journey to the holy sites in Mecca and Medina-which happens outside of Hajj time) is a significant and critical step in seeking the truth. He has taken his questions to Allah and to his house. This is a remarkable spiritual journey and one that we hope will resonate with the thousands of Muslims who will view this film. In this case, Muhsin comes back with a renewed energy to continue his holy work.

Maha and Maryam

Maha and Maryam are Arab lesbians who are re-united on camera in the heart of the Arab world. Lovers for three years now, they met online on a website for Arab women, Bint al Nas. Both have survived brief and abusive marriages and can only share their love for each other in private. Their families, one Moroccan and the other Egyptian, would never understand the love they hold so deep. Filmmaker Parvez Sharma travels with Mariam from her home to Paris to meet Maha. In the teeming streets of Cairo, as they meet after six months, Maha and Maryam go on a shared journey of search and discovery. In the heart of the old city, under the shadow Islam's most prestigious center of theological learning, Al-Azhar, they discover an old bookstore where they find a copy of the Fiqh al Sunnah (The Laws of the Prophet). Hidden in it are two entire pages that condemn their love. In the heart of an ancient mosque in the Citadel area they discover beautiful Islamic calligraphy as they declare their impossible love for each other. Both make plans to go on the Hajj together, knowing well that Islam won't allow them to take the difficult journey without male companions. For Maha and Maryam, Islam remains the center of their existence and we see them pray and ask God for forgiveness, as they realize that the fulcrum of their beings is also their biggest source of condemnation

Ferda and Kiymet

Ferda is a 42-year-old devout Sufi lesbian who lives in Istanbul, Turkey. A fearless leader with a profoundly deep laugh, Ferda fills up most spaces with her joie de vivre- a quality that is unique for a woman who struggled for many years for her place and financial independence in a male-dominated Turkish society. Ferda grew up in a non-traditional household though, where her mother was the strongest influence. It is to this mother, now religious and 80-years-old that Ferda takes her new lover, Kiymet, 37 and a mother of two, to meet. This on camera-meeting between the mother and her daughter's choice of life partner is profound and meaningful, but also provides delightful moments as the older Mrs. Gavdar's pet parrot talks to all present, in Turkish, about love. Ferda and Kiymet undertake a spiritual pilgrimage of a lifetime to Konya, where Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the 13th century Sufi Mystic and founder of the Sufi Mevlevi tradition is buried. Tearful and very much in love they pray with intense devotion at his 'turbe' (grave) and also seek blessings for their love at the grave of Shams al-din of Tabriz (now in Iran)- rumored by many to have been the Mevlana's male lover and indeed the source of inspiration for his greatest work, The Masnavi. It is in Konya that we see the love of these two remarkable women come to life under the watchful eyes of Islam as they wander the streets, pray in the women's corner of a mosque, and weep as spectators when the Mevlevi dervishes undertake the ancient meditative ritual of whirling as a sign of unity with God. Ferda and Kiymet are seen in a variety of remarkable scenes that traverse much of the landscape of contemporary Turkey, a nation struggling with a return to conservatism and memories of a difficult past. They talk openly about their youth and childhood and indeed Ferda confesses to the camera about her first love- a deeply religious Imam (a story that was reported in the Turkish press some years ago). They fearlessly demonstrate their love of each other and life in many public spaces and even lead us into the secret world of other lesbians in Istanbul. These remarkable women, both equally devout become the fulcrum for A Jihad for Love of a life lived in a comfortable and indeed empowering union of sexuality and spirituality.

Ahsan and Qasim

In India, his home country director Parvez Sharma documents the lives of Ahsan- a Sunni Muslim and Qasim- A Shia Muslim. Both men, coming from poor backgrounds do not adopt western peronae of 'gay' and instead rely on local constructs like 'koti' and zenana'-used by many men in the Indian sub-continent to self identify around their sexualities. The terms are often also used derogatorily to describe effeminate men but within their own circle of friends they become markers of identity. Ahsan laments the lack of a religious education as he walks the corridors of the Nadhwa Madrassa in Lucknow-an Islamic religious school that is amongst the most prestigious in the Indian sub-continent. Qasim who has faced questions around his sexuality and faith travels with the Director to meet Syed Kalbe Jawad-one of the most prominent clerics and authorities on Shia Islam outside of Iran. This is a meeting that will go to the very heart of the

conflict in this film and leave the audience and indeed Qasim, with more questions than answers. Ahsan and Qasim both have found a sense of community within their circle of friends and it is their one moment of celebration and self expression-that finds itself joyously depicted in the film-using the vocabulary of Bollywood cinema-certainly the most familiar vocabulary to a billion Indians. In a remarkable way, the story of Ahsan and Qasim most directly challenges Western notions of sexuality and allows the audience to experience a way of being-and indeed a way of living sexuality, in a way that is different and enlightening.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Parvez Sharma (A Jihad for Love Director, Muslim Dialogue Project Director, A Jihad for Love Producer) is a Muslim gay filmmaker born and raised in India. For three years, Sharma worked as a broadcast journalist for Asia's premiere and most highly-rated 24-hour news network, the Star News Channel/NDTV, covering major assignments across the Indian subcontinent and specializing in investigative/human rights stories and political profiles. He worked as producer and/or editor for BBC World Television's *Moneywise* and *IndiaTomorrow*, Central Television (UK), The Discovery Channel (US), and the World Bank Film and Video Unit (US). He was the Assistant Director for the award-winning feature, *Dance of the Wind*, produced by Pandora Film in Germany and NFDC India with director Rajan Khosa which won awards at the London, Rotterdam and Nantes Film Festivals. In 2005, he was a Producer at Democracy Now!, the nationally broadcast radio and television program which airs on 225 stations across North America with award-winning host, Amy Goodman. He produced, edited and did additional camera for the DVD of Peter Friedman's Sundance Grand Jury Award winning film *Silverlake Life*. Parvez Sharma received his bachelor's degree in English Literature from Presidency College, University of Calcutta (India) and three Masters degrees: Mass Communication (Film and Television) from India's premier MCRC, Jamia Millia Islamia University; Broadcast Journalism from the University of Wales College of Cardiff, UK; and Film and Video from American University's School of Communication. He has taught Indian film and other media courses at American University's Department of Anthropology and its School of Communication in Washington, DC.

In the nineties-Sharma has been a print journalist for several prominent Indian newspapers including The Telegraph, The Statesman, The Economic Times, The Business Standard, and India Currents Magazine. While at the Statesman he reported on what was the first ever detailing of the lesbian experience within India for a national newspaper- *Emerging from the Shadows* (July 3, 1994) – which became a rallying point for lesbians around the country and was crucial in the formation of many lesbian organizations. As an activist he was instrumental in setting up the first organized LGBTQ effort in the eastern state of West Bengal, setting benchmarks for many other LGBT organizing efforts around the sub-continent. Parvez has spoken internationally on distinguished film/media panels and panels on issues crucial to LGBT communities in a South Asian and Muslim context. He was a featured speaker at Yale University Law School, at the Persistent Vision in San Francisco, The Open Society Institute in New York, The Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies in New York and at Amnesty International's Human Rights Conference – Global Pride, Global Action: Empowering the Spirit of Human Rights.

Sharma's first feature documentary, *A Jihad for Love*, is co-produced with the UK's Channel 4, France's ARTE, Germany's ZDF, Australia's SBS, and U.S.

MTV-LOGO. His work and the film have been profiled by *The New York Times*, *Variety*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *indieWIRE*, France's *Tetu Magazine*, *San Francisco Gate*, on NPR-Chicago and several other publications.

The film has been supported by a wide number of foundations including The van Ameringen Foundation, The Hartley Film Foundation, The Mathilde Krim Foundation, The Andrew Tobias Foundation - Stonewall Community Foundation, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, The Fledgling Fund, The Bruce Bastion Foundation, The Foundation for Fairer Capitalism, The Ted Snowdon Foundation, and The Mark D. Hostetter and Alexander N. Habib Foundation. He was honored with a nomination for a 2007 Rockefeller Film/Video/Multimedia Fellowship.

With his wide range of experience in film, television and activism spanning three continents (Asia, Europe, and North America), and his proficiency in five languages (English, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and Punjabi), Sharma hopes to bring a rich cultural perspective and an honest and skillful depiction of Islam-and his very own communities- to this film and the courageous journeys it documents and the global dialogue it catalyzes.

Sandi DuBowski (A Jihad for Love Producer, Muslim Dialogue Project Director of Strategy and Fundraising) is a filmmaker and writer based in New York. His feature documentary, *Trembling Before G-d* was in theatrical release in the United States, Israel, Canada, Germany, UK, and South Africa (in the U.S. with New Yorker Films). *Trembling Before G-d* was launched at New York's Film Forum to incredible audience, critical, and box office response and opened in over 80 U.S. cities. *Trembling* had a World Premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and has been the recipient of twelve awards including The Teddy Award for Best Documentary at the Berlin Film Festival, The Mayor's Prize for the Jewish Experience at the Jerusalem Film Festival, The GLAAD Media Award for Best Documentary, The Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at OUTFEST Los Angeles, and The Council on Foundations Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film and Media. The film was nominated for the 2002 Independent Spirit Awards for the IFC/Directv Truer Than Fiction Award. The L.A. Weekly named it one of the 10 Best Films of 2001. It was co-produced and broadcast by Keshet/Channel Two in Israel, the first co-production with U.S. producers and was broadcast in Israel in June 2004. It aired on BBC, HBO Latin America, The Sundance Channel, ARTE, Denmark's Channel 2, Australia's ABC, Netherlands' NIK, Poland's Canal Plus, Canada's The Documentary Channel, and other TV stations. An estimated 8 million people saw the film worldwide.

Feature stories on the project have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, NPR's *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Miami Herald*, *Filmmaker*

Magazine, The Jerusalem Post, The Village Voice, The Globe and Mail, CNN, and BBC News among other print and media outlets.

At the World Premiere of Trembling at the Sundance Film Festival, director DuBowski and Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi, hosted the first-ever Shabbat at Sundance and with partner Working Films, an unprecedented Mormon-Jewish gay dialogue. Since then, DuBowski has traveled to 100 cities around the world to conduct over 800 Q & A's, dialogues, events, and discussions with 200,000 individuals across faith, sexuality, age, racial, and Jewish denominational lines. Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Creative Capital Foundation and other foundations awarded Greenberg and DuBowski seed funding to launch an Orthodox Community Education Project in the U.S., Israel and the U.K. with the film (already eighteen Orthodox synagogues have invited the film to screen). They trained 11 facilitators in Jerusalem who held screenings and led dialogues for 2,000 principals, teachers, school counselors and therapists across the nation, breaking the taboo on discussing the issue of homosexuality in the country's Orthodox (and secular) school systems. And they convened the first Orthodox Mental Health Conference on Homosexuality.

DuBowski created Trembling on the Road, a dramatic 40-minute featurette that captures the dialogues, protests, and reactions - poignant, funny, angry, inspiring - of Trembling Before G-d's life-changing movement around the world. It is included on the Trembling Before G-d DVD, which contains three hours of original films about the making of the movie and its movement, and was nominated for Best Documentary DVD of 2003 by the International Press Academy.

In August 2007, DuBowski launched a Web 2.0. portal - www.filmsthatchangetheworld.com. Its first initiative is to spotlight, share and landmark the 5th Anniversary Celebration of Trembling on the Road by engaging 100,000 people through global house parties and online events.

DuBowski is a recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation's Film/Video/Multimedia Fellowship. In addition, his work has received support from Skywalker Sound - a division of Lucas Digital, Ltd. as well as over sixty foundations including The Creative Capital Foundation, The Steven Spielberg Righteous Persons Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Artslink, The Jerome Foundation, The Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media, The H. van Ameringen Foundation, The Threshold Foundation, The Lucius and Eva Eastman Fund, The Mathilde & Arthur B. Krim Foundation, The Walter and Elise Haas Foundation, and The National Foundation for Jewish Culture's Fund for Jewish Documentary Filmmaking.

DuBowski was named along with Mel Brooks, Bob Dylan, Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Chabon, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Senator Joseph

Lieberman, as one of The Forward 50, fifty Jews who have been at the center of the year's events, demonstrating leadership, offering new ideas and representing a distinct Jewish presence in American life. DuBowski was selected to participate for the past five years in ReBoot: A Network in Jewish Innovation which is designed to gather some of the brightest thinkers, creatives, theologians, and activists to examine what it means and what it could mean to be Jewish in America today and to ask what they are willing to do to bring that future about. He was also selected for the Rockwood Leadership Program's Art of Leadership training for the nation's leading Jewish social justice activists in Spring 2004 as well as one of 70 Jewish leaders invited to participate in The Conversation at the Aspen Institute in Fall 2005.

DuBowski signed with Keppler Associates, one of the country's largest agencies specializing in professional speaking engagements. He has been featured at Yale University, University of Chicago, MTV Networks' Diversity Series, Vassar College, University of Florida, Harvard University, The Schusterman Hillel International Leadership Assembly, University of Oregon, UNC-Chapel Hill, Wesleyan University, Bowdoin College, University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, Unity and Diversity: The American Association of University Professors Conference on Academic Freedom at Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities, Princeton University, Swarthmore College, Rice University, Macalester College, Kenyon College, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Florida State, Washington University, UNC-Charlotte, Manhattan College, Ohio University, Barnard College, Stanford University and The Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay and Transgender And Ally College Conference. He was an Artist-In-Residence at Arizona State "Connecting Communities" initiative on invitation from Colleen Jennings-Roggensack Executive Director of ASU Public Events and Assistant Vice President of Cultural Affairs.

He has served on juries for The 10th Anniversary Hamptons Film Festival Documentary Jury, The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (The Webby Awards), The Council on Foundations Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film and Media, and the McKnight Filmmaking Fellowship. He has written for Filmmaker Magazine, The Independent, and International Documentary Magazine, and spoken on numerous panels at conferences and festivals - The Toronto International Film Festival, The Sundance Film Festival, International Documentary Association, The Hot Docs Film Festival, ShowBiz Expo, BritDoc, The Open Society Institute, and Independent Feature Project.

DuBowski's award-winning short, Tomboychik, received the Golden Gate Award for Best Short Documentary at The San Francisco International Film Festival, was broadcast on WNET, and has screened at The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Rotterdam Film Festival, and The Jewish Museum's "Too Jewish?" show among other museums and festivals worldwide. It is distributed by

Video Data Bank in Chicago (www.vdb.org) and is available on the Trembling Before G-d Deluxe 2-Disc DVD.

Previously, DuBowski worked for nearly three years as a Research Associate at Planned Parenthood Federation of America merging strategic analysis and video of the anti-abortion movement and the Christian right. One of the videos he produced, *Missionaries Form Militias*, which documented national anti-abortion leader Rev. Matt Trewhella calling for the formation of armed militias, was screened for Attorney General Janet Reno and top federal law enforcement officials after Paul Hill's murder of abortion provider Dr. Bayard Britton. The piece was excerpted on CBS News, reported on by The New York Times, Newsweek, USA Today, and The Nation, and is being used by the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment to train human rights activists. The pieces were broadcast in "Hey There Good Neighbor," a five-part series curated by The Whitney Museum of American Art and The Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities.

In 1992, DuBowski graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard University. He received two Ford Program for Undergraduate Research grants for his work on homosexuality in Hollywood and independent film.

Linda Saetre (A Jihad for Love Executive Producer and Sales agent) A native of Norway, Linda Sætre is Founder of the New York based Saetre Corp, an international and multilingual media consulting firm. Saetre consults with and for high-end clients in the US, Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Saetre also serves as VP of Bonne Pioche International, the development and sales arm of production company Bonne Pioche, of the Oscar-winning documentary *MARCH OF THE PENGUINS*, which grossed over \$126 million worldwide and the upcoming *Fox and the Child* (Picturehouse). She and her staff are responsible for co-production and marketing and work tightly with the Hollywood studios and agencies as well as BBC, Channel Four, HBO, Sundance Channel, National Geographic and ABC. The Discovery Channel premiered the HD feature *Paris 2010: The Great Flood*, of which she is the Executive Producer, which is presented alongside other projects at www.bonnepioche.us.

Saetre graduated from New York's The New School for Social Research MEDIA Graduate Program in 1998. She also studied in Norway, Spain, France and England. After graduating, Saetre went on to work for independent film company Fox Lorber, producer Jim Stark (*Factotum* starring Matt Dillon, *Down by Law*, *Coffee and Cigarettes*) and Wellspring Media with five years as Executive Director of Sales and Co-Production. At Wellspring she spearheaded international acquisitions, sales and production of films and documentaries including Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* and *The Beauty Academy of Kabul*, which she executive produced and sold in Cannes.

She is a contributing writer to New York Times best selling authors Dave Eggers' and Vendela Vida's literary magazine *The Believer* and is fluent in Spanish, French, English, German and all Scandinavian languages. Saetre lives between New York – Paris – Oslo and her staff speaks Chinese, Arabic, Italian and Portuguese.

Clients: BBC, HBO, MTV, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, RAI, Canal+, as well as all the leading film distributors and studios (Fox Searchlight, Warner, SONY, Disney etc). Saetre attends every major film and TV market.

Juliet Weber (Editor) has been one of the top editors at HBO Documentaries. Her work includes *Mr. Conservative* (HBO, 2006 Election Premiere), a portrait of Barry Goldwater; *A Rape in A Small Town: The Florence Holway Story* (HBO) for which she was nominated for a 2006 Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Editing; *Diary of a Political Tourist* on the 2004 Democratic primaries (HBO); *Unchained Memories: Reading from the Slave Narratives* (HBO); *Three Sisters: Searching for A Cure on Project A.L.S.*; *Sister Helen*, on a Benedictine nun and her rehab center (Co-Editor, HBO Cinemax); *Daughter of the Bride* (HBO, Academy Award Nominee); *The Restless Conscience* on the German resistance to Hitler during WWII (Co-Editor, Academy Award Nominee). She has also edited a number of dramatic features including Robert Altman's *Prisoners of Inertia*, about Watergate, which won the Critics Prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

Richard Horowitz and Sussan Deyhim (Composers)

Richard Horowitz specializes in Middle-Eastern, Asian and African music. His first score was *The Sheltering Sky* for Bernardo Bertolucci in 1990, in collaboration with composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, and he has since gone on to work with directors such as Oliver Stone (*Any Given Sunday*), and Tony Bui (*Three Seasons*). Among his non-film works are collaborations with eclectic artists such as Jon Hassell, Michael Brook, David Byrne, Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois and Suzanne Vega, as well as an array of commissions from organisations as diverse as the Hong Kong City Contemporary Dance company, and the Moroccan Royal Cabbinate in London.

Sussan Deyhim is a composer, vocalist and performance artist who has been at the forefront of experimental music internationally for over two decades. Deyhim's music combines extended vocal techniques, digital processing, and the ancient mysticism of Middle Eastern music to create a deeply moving fusion of East and West.

Born in Tehran, Deyhim moved to New York City in 1980, embarking on a multifaceted career encompassing music, theater, dance and media, and wide-ranging collaborations with leading artists from across the spectrum of

contemporary art.

Deyhim has performed and recorded widely as a solo artist. Her one-woman show *Vocodeliks*, commissioned by the Whitney Museum of Art, led *Billboard Magazine* to describe Deyhim as "an overpowering presence...[whose] wordless incantations are amplified in harmonized layers and recycled into sampled loops, beckoning you into this virtual desert ritual" while the *New York Times* said that her "thrilling music...sounds in the ear long after you've left the show." Deyhim's solo recordings include *Madman of God: Divine Love Songs of the Persian Sufi Masters*, *Shy Angels* (with Bill Laswell) for the visionary label *Crammed Discs* and *Turbulent*. Other recordings include *Majoun* (for Sony Classical) and *Desert Equations* (released on *Crammed Discs*), both with the composer Richard Horowitz, a frequent collaborator. With composer and director Heiner Goebbels, Deyhim recorded *Shadows* (for ECM), based on writings of Edgar Allan Poe and Heiner Mueller, and composed and performed music for Deepak Chopra's *A Gift of Love*, with narration by Martin Sheen, Madonna, Goldie Hawn, and Debra Winger. She was also a featured soloist on Hal Wilner's tribute to Kurt Weill, *Lost in the Stars*.

Deyhim's numerous collaborations with the renowned visual artist/filmmaker Shirin Neshat have received critical acclaim, including the video *Turbulent*, which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial. Their multimedia performance *Logic of the Birds* was based on Farid ud-Din Attar's mystical book of poetry written in the 12th Century; produced by the Lincoln Center Summer Festival, the Walker Art Center, the Kitchen, and Artangel, *Logic* toured internationally.

Deyhim's previous work in the theater includes directing, co-composing, choreographing and performing a series of collaborations with Horowitz including: *AZAX/ATTRA: Desert Equations* (a one-woman multimedia performance piece produced by La Mama in New York City which toured internationally including *Ars Electronica* in Austria, Morocco, Paris, Berlin and Hong Kong); *The Ghost of Ibn Sabbah* (presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music/New Music America, Central Park's Summerstage, and NYC's Town Hall); and *X-Isle/Isle-X*, commissioned by the Hong Kong Coteremporary Dance Company (which subsequently toured in Japan and Indonesia). As a performer, Deyhim has appeared in many international theater productions, including works by Elizabeth Swados, Jean Claude Van Itale, and Lindsay Kemp.

Deyhim has appeared on numerous film soundtracks including *The Last Temptation of Christ*, directed by Martin Scorsese, with music by Peter Gabriel), *Any Given Sunday*, (directed by Oliver Stone; soundtrack by Richard Horowitz) and *Unfaithful* (directed by Adrian Lyne, with music by Jan Kaczmarek.)

Deyhim has collaborated with many of the most important figures in contemporary music, including Micky Hart, Branford Marsalis, Jerry Garcia, Jaron Lanier, Christian Marclay, Elliot Sharp, Arto Lindsay, Jan Mattox, Loren Rush and

Winston Tong. She has also toured internationally with Bill Laswell, Bobby McFerrin, Ornette Coleman, Jah Wobble, Will Calhoun, Doug Wimbish, Adrian Sherwood, Keith Le Blanc and Skip McDonald.

Deyhim has been a frequent participant at humanitarian events and benefits, including a performance at the gathering of the spiritual leaders of the world at the UN General Assembly in 2001; the first Gathering of Female Spiritual Leaders in Geneva at the United Nations, a 2004 performance for the Nobel peace prize winner Shirin Ebadi's award ceremony organized by Interfaith Center; the Royal Hope Gala, Royal Albert Hall, London, England with Placido Domingo, The Royal Ballet and many others, for medical aid to Iraqi children; and Witness, a benefit for human rights, sponsored by Peter Gabriel. Deyhim's current projects include a multimedia opera Zarathustra's Mother (inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra and sacred Zoroastrian texts), "Vorkestra", an all vocal album in collaboration with the visionary English producer Marius Devries, a collaboration with the Oscar winning Polish composer Jan Kazcmarek performing as a soloist, his orchestral film music with the USC Thornton Symphony and the Hollywood Film Chorale in Los Angeles at the Royce Hall in Jan 06 and a recent collaboration with composer Paul Haslinger (Tangerine Dream) and the legendary vocalist Nona Hendrix on the score for the anticipated "Showtime" new series Sleeper Cell which will air on Dec 05. (Soundtrack will be released on Miss Hendrix's label Rhythmbank in Jan 06.)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Why I made this film...

These days, I frequently get emails like these. I will not reveal the identity of this person and am changing his country of origin, but his pain and his dilemma is why I made this film. I am trying to find a way to be in touch with him and have him see the film. Inshaallah, we will all join in the message of hope and the embrace of love and understanding that so many need and need now.

Dear Parvez,

I am writing to you with no prior contact because you are my last destination of hope. The moral dilemma that you convey in your new documentary is eating my from within. I am 17 years old and the youngest of five children, of whom two are mentally disabled. My parents are very religious, and after having lived 17 years in France, they have still not integrated themselves, due to lack of language and difference of religion and culture. I simply need your help because I am alone in the struggle against my parents. I do not know whether they have the upper hand because they know the truth about whether homosexuality is a major sin, but what I do know is that they use it against me all the time. Personally, I am very much certain that I have not consciously made the decision to be a homosexual. I think all my misfortune began when I was raped at the age of six by a teenage friend to the family. I suffered many years of guilt and lonelines, and on top of that, today I am gay. Coming from my family and having my background that is the worst a person can be. So in Nov 07 my parents found out about my homosexuality and my third world war started. I was kept isolated during a month, very much confined to my home with no means of communication with the outside world whatsoever. I was given the ultimatum to either cure my self right away or be murdered and eliminated by my 30 year old brother/stoned to death by my father. Part of the cure would be going to Mecca with my mother in Dec 07, but I refused due to my school committments. They forbade me from seeing my one and only true friend, because he is a Christian transexual boy, and if I would have seen him without their approval, my brother and his wife would hire someone to eliminate my friend too. So I submitted to the atrocities hoping that I would find my way out of them soon. When school started in Jan 08, the social services were contacted, which further infuriated my family. Since then matters have shrunk almost to natural size and today I am no longer bothered by my brother and his wife thanks to an arrangement by the social services.

Please Parvez, I must see your documentary for I can no longer live and love with the knowledge that I am displeasing Allah. Please help me!