



VISIONING TIBET

Bringing Light Where There was Once Darkness...

THE STORY OF DR. MARC LIEBERMAN & THE TIBETAN VISION PROJECT

Visioning Tibet chronicles the passion of ophthalmologist Marc Lieberman, founder of the Tibet Vision Project. His mission: to end preventable blindness in Tibet — which has the highest rate of untreated cataract blindness in the world — by 2020. Bringing light where there was once darkness, Lieberman's work has been recognized by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, which named him 2003 Humanitarian of the Year.

The film is built around the stories of two Tibetans — Karma (a farmer from a small village in Northern Tibet) and Lhasang (patriarch of a nomadic family from the Tibetan plains) — who make the arduous journey to a remote clinic in the hopes of having their sight restored by Tibetan doctors trained by Lieberman. The film provides a view of contemporary Tibet and its people seldom seen by international audiences, using breathtaking cinematography.

“...vividly documents a miraculous project in Tibet...a tremendously worthwhile film...”

His Holiness The Dalai Lama

“...an inspiring documentary...”

The Washington Post

Producer/Director Isaac Solotaroff is an award-winning producer, director and editor.

He was co-producer, co-director and editor of his first film, *Jews and Buddhism: Belief Amended, Faith Revealed*. Narrated by Sharon Stone, the film was chosen “one of the outstanding documentaries of 1999” by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The film was shown at over 30 international film festivals and screened on PBS.

Solotaroff was co-producer and editor of *Los Romeros: The Royal Family of the Guitar*, which was nominated for a “best biography” Emmy in 2001 and broadcast nationally on PBS.

He has also edited several award-winning documentaries including, *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme* (HBO Best Documentary, Urban World Film Festival) and *Smokestack Lightening* (Best Documentary, Memphis Film Festival)

Film Notes:

- Documentary feature
- Video/color
- English and Tibetan (with English subtitles)
- 56 minutes

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The Doctors

Dr. Marc Lieberman

Dr. Marc Lieberman founded the Tibet Vision Project in 1995. The Tibet Vision Project operates as a non-governmental organization (NGO). It is one of the few NGOs or international health organizations able to function in Chinese – ruled Tibet.

For the past 10 years, “Dr. Marc” has made biannual one-month trips to Tibet, leading a team of doctors, nurses and technicians he has trained. Together, they run “eye camps” that provide basic eye care and perform up to 120 cataract operations in four days. To date, the project has restored sight to 3,000 Tibetans.

In 2003, he was awarded the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology in recognition of his work in Tibet.

In the 1980's, Lieberman became involved in Buddhist meditation and practice and active in Buddhist communities throughout northern California. He organized a series of meetings in the US and India between The Dalai Lama and Jewish scholars and rabbis, during which time he learned of cataract blindness crisis in Tibet. These meetings were the basis of the book of *The Jews in the Lotus*.

Lieberman received his medical training at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and its Wilmer Eye Institute with specialty training in glaucoma at University of California San Francisco. In private practice, as a glaucoma specialist in the Bay area, he serves as Director of Glaucoma Services at California Pacific Medical Center and Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at University of California/San Francisco.

Dr. Melvin Bert

Dr. Melvin Bert is the Director/Lhasa Training Program “Dr. Yogi” was part of the Tibet Vision Project's early founding and has worked and taught in Tibet on numerous occasions.

He received his medical training at State University of New York/Upstate Medical Center and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. In private practice, as a comprehensive ophthalmologist in San Francisco, he has served as Chief of Ophthalmology at Marshal Hale Memorial Hospital. He is also active in resident training as Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at University of California San Francisco.



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The Patients

Karma

Karma, 52, is from a small northern Tibetan village. A farmer, he works the land that has been in his family for generations. Karma, his wife, their adult children and their families live together in the family compound on the farm. His only trips away from home were to barter in a neighboring village and make religious pilgrimages.

Karma began losing his vision two years before filming began. The third member of his generation to suffer cataract disease, his older cousins Keluk and Lobsang had gone blind from cataracts years before. Since he was unable to work in the fields, Karma's main responsibility was caring for his cousins. But, even that had become difficult. He was close to totally losing his sight.

Going to the Tibet Vision Project "eye camp" was his last chance. If he regains his sight, his hope was to make a pilgrimage to the holy lake Lhama Lhatso — where Tibetans believe their past and future lives are reflected on the water's surface. There, he believes he will be able to look into the lake to see if he will suffer in future lives as he has in this one.

Lhasang

Lhasang, 56, is the patriarch of a nomadic family. Like his ancestors before him, he herds yak and goats on the plains of northern and central Tibet. His family includes his wife, two sons and six grandchildren. By nomadic standards, they are well-off, as evidenced by their large herd of yak — the primary form of currency in the area.

As his vision began to dim from cataract disease, Lhasang struggled to keep count of his herd. He was no longer able to do the needlepoint — stitching clothing, blankets and tent covers for his family as he had for years. At the same time, his wife was going blind from a corneal infection.

Lhasang's blindness became a strain on his family. Unable to be their provider darkened both his mood and outlook on life.

His hope was that a trip to the "eye camp" would allow him to see his wife, children and grandchildren again and to regain his ability to contribute to their well-being.



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Producer/Director/Editor

Isaac Solotaroff is a New York-based award-winning producer, director and editor who also works frequently in San Francisco.

Solotaroff began production on *Visioning Tibet* in 2000, when he joined Dr. Marc Lieberman on one of his trips to Tibet. He made two subsequent trips in 2001 and 2002. For the next two years, he edited the film — whenever he could spare time from producing and editing commissioned documentaries, industrials and marketing videos. Solotaroff finished the fine cut in January 2005.

His was co-producer, co-director and editor of his first film, *Jews and Buddhism: Belief Amended, Faith Revealed*. Narrated by Sharon Stone, the film was chosen “one of the outstanding documentaries of 1999” by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The film was shown at over 30 international film festivals and was screened on PBS. Loosely-based on *The Jew in the Lotus*, it chronicled the historic meetings between the Dalai Lama and a group of rabbis and Jewish scholars in the United States and India.

Solotaroff was co-producer and editor of *Los Romeros: The Royal Family of the Guitar*, which was nominated for a “best biography” Emmy in 2001 and broadcast nationally on PBS.

He has also edited several award-winning documentaries including, *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme* (HBO Best Documentary, Urban World Film Festival) and *Smokestack Lightening* (Best Documentary, Memphis Film Festival).

Solotaroff is currently editing and managing post-production on three PBS documentaries — *Call It Home*, *Nonna's Kitchen* and *The Right to Sing: A History of Political Music in the United States*. He is also developing several feature-length documentaries, including a film about the origins of Hip-Hop and a project detailing the stories of four Rock 'n Roll photographers from the 1960's and 1970's.

Awards

Best Documentary/Mt. Shasta Film Festival (2005)
Best Mountain Culture Film/ Taos Mountain Film Festival (2005)
Honorable Mention/Fargo Film Festival (2006)

Shown at over 15 US and international film festivals.

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Crew Bios

Kirk Schroeder, Director of Photography

Kirk Schroeder has worked as a freelance cameraman in San Francisco for 10 years. He works in a variety of production formats, including documentary, educational, magazine and broadcast journalism. His work has been broadcast in the United States and internationally. Schroeder was DP for several award-winning education programs for Studio Three Productions in Oakland, CA.

Chris Hajian, Composer

Chris Hajian has some 20 years experience in composing and recording music for documentaries, independent film, network television and commercials. Documentary credits include *Mandel — Man of Vision*, *Naked World*, *Naked States* and *The Execution of Wanda Jean*. Feature film credits include *Inspector Gadget 2* (Disney), *Chairman of the Board* (Trimark) and *Samantha: An American Girl Holiday* (Warner Brothers). He has written television scores for *Law and Order*, *NYPD Blue*, *Ally McBeal*, *20/20*, *Friends* and *The Sopranos*.

Behind the Scenes:

Every documentary filmmaker has faced the challenge of making the best film possible within a limited budget but making *Visioning Tibet* involved the additional challenge of shooting a high-quality documentary while not appearing to be making a documentary. This allowed the crew to travel freely and film in rural communities, which have been off-limits to Westerners for over 50 years.

China is deeply suspicious of the foreign media and nowhere is this truer than in Tibet. The crew and equipment had to be limited to bare minimum —producer/director and camera/sound person. We used local volunteers, when necessary.

We were fortunate to benefit greatly from huge leaps in video technology, which allowed us to shoot and capture professional grade pictures and sound on a relatively inconspicuous production kit.



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Tibet Vision Project

The Tibet Vision Project operates as a non-governmental organization (NGO). It is one of the few NGOs or international health organizations able to function in Chinese – ruled Tibet.

With the help of its partners, the small, but focused project maintains its impact by:

- Sustaining the high-quality surgical care delivered by the First People's Hospital Eye Department in intensive, free-of-charge eye camp settings in remote areas of Tibet.
- Collaborating with other NGOs in re-training surgical eye teams (the Swiss Red Cross and Tilganga Eye Centre of Nepal) in Shigatse Prefecture, Tibet's second largest county, to maximize the training experience of local medical and surgical teams.
- Providing free eye care for the poor and needy in Lhasa, who count on our semi-annual visits at the First People's Hospital to help manage their chronic conditions.
- Supervising the blind children of Tibet's only school for the blind, assuring their well-being and maximal functionality.