

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27, 2001

Eddie Lama Receives Courage of Conscience Award

New York City Construction Contractor Recognized for Passionate Commitment to Animal Advocacy and Street-Level Education

His inspiring and life affirming journey to compassion is the subject of an award-winning documentary, *The Witness*. Now, Eddie Lama, a construction contractor who grew up in a Brooklyn neighborhood steeped in violence, who transformed his own experience of being victimized into a commitment to protect the vulnerable, has received a Courage of Conscience Award. The Peace Abbey in Sherborn, Massachusetts, presents this award annually "out of a desire to promote the causes of peace and justice, non-violence and love." Past honorees have included Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama.

This year, Eddie Lama shares this honor with Michael True (pacifist, educator, author and life-long peace activist), Joseph Moakley (late member of Congress), Michael MacDonald (author of *All Souls* and initiator of the gun buy back program), Sr. Jeannette Normandin (Founder of Ruah House for Women living with HIV), Million Mom March, (national organization responsible for bringing people together to protest gun violence), and the Harvard Living Wage Campaign.

A spokesperson for the Peace Abbey says, "Recipients of awards represent the means by which the public is able to personally relate to a given cause. They become the lens through which a cause is experienced and embraced—the persona or face with which the public can readily identify."

At the Peace Abbey on Sunday, June 17, immediately following a screening of *The Witness* organized by the Boston Vegetarian Society, Eddie Lama was presented with the award by Mary Margaret Earl. Speaking on behalf of the Peace Abbey, she said, "In *The Witness* Eddie shared a powerful definition of a miracle. A miracle, he says, is a change in perception. He is a living miracle. A regular guy from Brooklyn—who works construction and who watched his first cat to get a date—has become a hero. He is changing the world for the animals. He is inspiring others to follow their own conscience and change the world too. For standing as an inspiration while standing among us we thank him, and we joyfully present him with this Courage of Conscience award."

"In my lifetime I have been both the oppressor and the oppressed," said Lama as he accepted the award, "both the fomenter of discord and the advocate for peace. Both the perpetrator and the victim. But most significantly, I have been both the silence and the voice. It is the human voice that is the primary tool for change."

Eddie Lama runs a New York City-based construction company, and is also the founder of FaunaVision, a charitable non-profit organization which operates the Oasis animal sanctuary in Upstate New York, providing homes for hundreds of abandoned and neglected cats, dogs and farm animals. FaunaVision also designs unique audiovisual mobile systems that empower the efforts of activists to educate the public about animal issues.

For more information, contact James LaVeck, (607) 275-0806

For more information about Eddie Lama and the documentary *The Witness*, visit: www.tribeofheart.org
For more information about the Peace Abbey and the Courage of Conscience award, visit: www.peaceabbey.org