

PEACEABLE KINGDOM

The Journey Home

FILMMAKERS BIO

The work of filmmakers Jenny Stein and James LaVeck has been recognized by film festival juries and audience members for its uncompromising yet compassionate portrayal of the interplay between what is most troubling in human society with what is most inspiring in human nature.

Stein and LaVeck are co-founders of the Ithaca, New York-based non-profit documentary production company Tribe of Heart. They are both graduates of Cornell University, and additionally Stein holds a Masters degree from UCLA's Independent Film and Television Producers Program. Their first film, *The Witness* (2000), was nominated for the Pare Lorentz award by the International Documentary Association and received CineWomen New York's *Outstanding Breakthrough Documentary Award*. It has been featured in 32 film festivals worldwide, receiving eight "Best Documentary" awards, most recently at festivals in Kiev (2007) and Prague (2007). Telling the story of a construction contractor from a violent Brooklyn neighborhood whose life is transformed by the unexpected love of a kitten, the documentary was described by Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Howard Rosenberg as "One man's truth that cries out for mass exposure... may be the most important and persuasive film about animals ever made." (*Los Angeles Times*)

Nearly 20,000 copies of *The Witness* have been purchased at screenings and over the Internet. The film has inspired people from all over the world to hold hundreds of community screenings, and to translate it into 11 languages, including Czech, French, Finnish, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and most recently, Chinese.

Director Jenny Stein shoots, edits and scores Tribe of Heart films, working with meticulous craftsmanship to merge the up-front authenticity of documentary with the fluid emotional dynamics usually associated with dramatic filmmaking. "At heart," says Stein, "I'm a choreographer that finds music and motion in everything—the spoken word, the moving image, even the flow of ideas. My goal as an artist is not to get people to think what I think, but to see what I see, to feel what I feel when I look out into the world. I hope to inspire people to undertake their own quest for truth and self-knowledge, and most important, to think for themselves."

My role models as a producer," says James LaVeck, "are those who successfully merge the creative arts with the healing arts. In both cases, if the practitioner and the process have integrity, the final result will be of lasting value." LaVeck's unique interviewing style recreates the experience of an extended late-night conversation with a trusted friend, the kind of one-to-one sharing that can lead to emotional and intellectual breakthroughs. "Documentary subjects know when you respect them," says LaVeck, "when you are listening not only with a sincere interest in understanding who they really are, but also with faith in the person who they are trying to become. Audiences also know what you think of them and what you hope for them, and they make choices accordingly about how deeply to participate in the viewing experience."

Jenny and James's films have appeared in 69 festivals around the world, where they have won 14 awards, including 3 for Best of Festival and 10 for Best Documentary. Their work has appeared on PBS, LinkTV and FreeSpeech TV in the United States, and on the United Kingdom's Community Channel. Due for release in the Fall of 2009, Stein and LaVeck's newest documentary, *Peaceable Kingdom: The Journey Home*, offers a riveting portrait of several farmers whose growing sense of connection with the animals they raise and send to slaughter leads them to courageously challenge the basic assumptions of their upbringing and culture, and ultimately, to re-align their lives with their deepest values.