

# THE WITNESS

## A Tribe of Heart Documentary

© 2000, 43 minutes, color

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**"THE WITNESS is one man's truth that cries out for mass exposure... a unique, indelible 43-minute documentary that may be the most important and persuasive film about animals ever made."**  
—Howard Rosenberg, *The Los Angeles Times*

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### PBS Broadcasts

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**KBDI—Denver**  
Ind. Producer Showcase  
*November 16, 2001*

**WPBT—Miami**  
The Independent Focus  
*September 24, 2002*

**KTEH—San Jose, CA**  
Video i  
*November 18 & 20, 2002*

**WCNY—Syracuse, NY**  
Central Issues  
*May 15, 2003*

**KLVX—Las Vegas**  
*January 28, 2004*

**WJCT—Jacksonville, FL**  
*November 8, 2003*

**WNEO/WEAO—Ohio**  
*Nov. 1, 2003 & Jan. 10, 2004*

**WCVE/WHTJ—Virginia**  
*December 28, 2004*

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### Awards & Honors

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**Best of Festival & Best Documentary Awards**  
*Crested Butte Reel Fest*

**Outstanding Breakthrough Documentary Award**  
*CineWomen New York*

**Best Documentary Feature Awards (Jury & Audience)**  
*Brooklyn Film Festival*

**Best Short Film Award (Animal Advocacy Category)**  
*Activist Film Festival*

**Best Documentary Award**  
*Canyonlands Film Festival*

**1st Place Award (Advocacy/Public Policy & Awareness)**  
*Latham Foundation Search For Excellence Video Awards Prog.*

**Best Documentary Award**  
*New Jersey International Film Festival*

**Pare Lorentz Award Nominee (Int'l Documentary Assoc)**  
*Distinguished Documentary Achievement Awards*

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### Official Selection at Film Festivals

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**Canyonlands Film Festival**  
*Moab, UT — April 6, 2000*

**Dallas Video Festival**  
*Dallas, TX — Mar 18, 2001*

**Hive Film Festival**  
*Singapore — Nov 30 & Dec 1, 2003*

**Crested Butte Reel Fest**  
*Crested Butte, CO — Aug 19, 2000*

**Arizona Int'l Film Festival**  
*Tucson, AZ — Apr 19, 2001*

**Activist Film Festival**  
*Hollywood, CA — Apr 21, 2005*

**Brooklyn Film Festival**  
*New York, NY — Sept 9, 2000*

**Film Fest New Haven**  
*New Haven, CT — Apr 29, 2001*

**MassBay Film Festival**  
*Worcester, MA — Apr 24, 2005*

**Port Hueneme Int'l Film Festival**  
*Port Hueneme, CA — Oct 5, 2000*

**New Jersey Int'l Film Festival**  
*New Brunswick, NJ — Jul 26 & 27, 2001*

**Arizona Catholic Film Festival**  
*Phoenix, AZ — May 21, 2005*

**Cornell Environmental Film Festival**  
*Ithaca, NY — Oct 15, 2000*

**Dances With Films**  
*Los Angeles, CA — Jul 29, 2001*

**Fairfax Eco Film Festival**  
*Fairfax, CA — June 4, 2005*

**Hot Springs Documentary Film Fest**  
*Hot Springs, AR — Oct 18 & 21, 2000*

**Planet In Focus Env. Film Festival**  
*Toronto, ON, Canada — Sept 29, 2001*

**The Virginia Film Festival**  
*Charlottesville, VA — Oct 28, 2000*

**Olympia Film Festival**  
*Olympia, WA — Oct 21, 2001*

**Vermont Int'l Film Festival**  
*Burlington, VT — Oct 29, 2000*

**Red Bank Int'l Film Festival**  
*Red Bank, NJ — Aug 24, 2002*

**EarthVision Environmental Film Fest**  
*Santa Cruz, CA — Nov 13, 2000*

**Wilmington Independent Film Fest**  
*Wilmington, DE — Sept 26 & 28, 2002*

**Ojai Film Festival**  
*Ojai, CA — Nov 17, 2000*

**Cinemambiente Env. Film Festival**  
*Turin, Italy — Oct 19, 2002*

**The Conscientious Projector Film Fest**  
*Bainbridge Island, WA — March 4, 2001*

**Greenwich Film Festival**  
*Greenwich, CT — Oct 23, 2002*

**Tambay Film & Video Festival**  
*Tampa, FL — March 9, 2001*

**7th Int'l Env. Film Festival**  
*Istanbul, Turkey — June, 2003*

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### Endorsements

Susan McElroy (Bestselling Author)

"You could perhaps call *The Witness* a story about a man and a cat. Or maybe you could say it is really a story about advocacy. Or about what lurks behind the doors of the fur industry. All these descriptions fall painfully short of the richness contained in this remarkable documentary. For me, *The Witness* is a mythic story of relationship—about how the honest and simple affection of a tiny cat grows one man's heart so big that it spills its compassion all over the city of New York. After seeing *The Witness*, you will never again doubt the magic of relationship—human to human, or human to animal. There is no greater power on earth."

—**Susan McElroy**, Author of NY Times Bestseller *Animals as Teachers and Healers*

California Teachers Association

"*The Witness* provides a catalyst for emphasizing the importance of relationships and the value of all life—human and non-human animal alike. Classrooms everywhere, in and outside the school-house, need to pay close attention to the message presented by Eddie Lama. His wisdom is simple, yet poignant, as he shows that nothing is more powerful than an act with a purpose and no lesson is more important than one filled with compassion. I encourage all teachers to watch this film and share it with their students. Together, you have the power and the wherewithal to bring about a new vision for change that can result in a new compassion and concern for all of life. *The Witness* shows us that it can be done. It's up to us to take the challenge."

—**Yale Wishnik, Ph.D** California Teachers Association

Director of Conference "Stopping the Fear: Creating Violence-Free Public Schools and Communities"

The United Federation of Teachers

"I highly recommend the use of *The Witness* in secondary school classrooms. It can be used as a tool to increase knowledge and broaden understanding of the full spectrum of human attitudes and subsequent behaviors exhibited toward animals. It is an impressive documentary and we strongly endorse it."

—**Sheila Schwartz, Ed.D** Chairperson, United Federation of Teachers, Humane Education Committee

The Fund for Animals

"*The Witness* is a compelling look at the power of activism, and the ability of one person to make a difference. If the animal protection movement is going to be successful, it will be because films like this one were able to move people and empower them to stand up and speak out against injustice. This powerful film will undoubtedly make a difference in many lives—both human and animal."

—**Michael Markarian**, Executive Vice President, The Fund for Animals

The Humane Society of the United States

"As Vice President of Investigative Services for the Humane Society of the United States, I and my section have spent the past several years investigating various aspects of the fur industry both in the United States and abroad. Investigative Services has penetrated and documented the activities of fur breeding facilities, slaughter facilities, tanneries, manufacturing plants, wholesalers and retailers both nationally and internationally. I found the video depictions of the activities of the fur industry in *The Witness* to be consistent with our investigative findings and in some cases more humane than those observed by us in the field."

—**Richard W. Swain, Jr.**, Vice President Investigative Services, The Humane Society of the US

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### Reviews & Press

Los Angeles Times — Calendar Section, Front Page (December 8, 2000)

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“*The Witness*...may be the most important and persuasive film about animals ever made. And one that most Americans will not see unless mainstream TV's programmers find the backbone to run it...

“The importance of *The Witness* lies in its subject matter combined with its unconventional voice that denounces cruelty... While speaking eloquently against animals being butchered for food or their coats, it tells a deeply soulful story of redemption that is quite remarkable, one whose unlikely center is a 44-year-old former tough guy whose personal odyssey, from disdain of animals to being their champion, merits a TV movie or feature film... *The Witness* is one man's truth that cries out for mass exposure.”

—Howard Rosenberg, *Pulitzer-prize winning critic*

The Ann Arbor News — Review (December 5, 2001) Ann Arbor, Michigan, daily newspaper

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"It's risky business referring to any presentation as epiphanic. Yet 'The Witness' might merit the term... The psychology is clear, if unstated: If a tough guy like Eddie can nuzzle his favorite cat, can love animals and fight for them, then damn it, so can we!"

—Christopher Potter

The Hour — Review (August 9, 2001) Montreal news weekly

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“*The Witness* is the cat’s meow of activism... as a statement, its power is stunning.... Measured and bewildering, *The Witness* allows us to do just that: to witness, to watch, with jaws dropped and eyes moist. See it—you’ll be changed.” —Isa Tousignant

American Library Association’s BOOKLIST — Review (June 1, 2001)

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“Once a heavy smoker and drinker and now a vegetarian and animal rights advocate who believes that food and fur bearing animals share the same fears, feelings and intelligence as our treasured pets, Lama speaks passionately about his cause. Effective and never oversensationalized, this thought-provoking production will move both adult and teen viewers.”

—Candace Smith

Library Journal — Review (May 1, 2001)

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“This award-winning video, endorsed by the Humane Society of the United States, should be considered a tool to promote kindness toward animals. Recommended for upper-level school, academic, and public libraries.” —Marianne Eimer

London Free Press — Article (Sept. 18, 2000) Daily Canadian newspaper

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“[Eddie] recounts his experiences in the video and gently yet powerfully makes his case that animals deserve better than they generally receive from human beings. It is a graphic, sometimes disturbing message about the cruelty man dispenses almost casually toward food animals and fur-bearers. But it’s one that deserves to be seen and heard... Individuals can make a difference if they care enough. You can change the world, even if you have to do it a little bit at a time.” —Jim Chapman, *Columnist*

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## Reviews & Press (continued)

HumaneLines — News Item (Aug. 23, 2000) Newsletter of Humane Society of the US

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“The Witness delivers a powerful lesson on how individuals can help animals through daily lifestyle choices.”

About.com — Review (July 17, 2000) On-line magazine

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“Even as he describes growing up with contempt for animals, Eddie is sympathetic and likable. I could hardly stop laughing as Eddie revealed his motivations for taking in the kitten who would ultimately change his entire perspective. Later, when Eddie brought his message of compassion to the streets of New York City, I found myself on the verge of tears. Exploring a wide range of issues from vegetarianism to the fur trade, The Witness is also a fascinating study of the moment of awareness, the transformation that comes with awareness, and the subsequent desire to take action.” —*Tiffany Refior*

Satya Magazine — Cover Story (August, 2000)

Monthly magazine of vegetarianism, environmentalism, animal advocacy, and social justice

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“[The Witness] packs all the dramatic punch of an epic Hollywood feature, not only because of the aesthetic genius which Stein and LaVeck bring to the film, but because of its crescendo to a heart wrenching climax. The Witness ultimately sparks a volcanic release akin to the catharsis one might expect from a great performance of Don Giovanni... it evokes a universal sense of interrelationship, baring truth at once with beauty, making each undeniable. Deceptively simple, the film works on many levels, providing such easy and deep access to ‘animal consciousness’ that it ranks among the most effective cinematic tools for social change to date...”

“Anyone who sees this film will certainly await Tribe of Heart’s second volume not only with anticipation, but with awe, for The Witness is a powerful gift.” —*Jeff Lydon*

## About the Filmmakers

Jenny Stein and James LaVeck met in 1990, when she was a graduate student at UCLA’s Independent Producers Program and he was a freelance writer living in Ithaca, NY. They began collaborating on a screenplay based on one of his novels, and have been working together on creative projects ever since.

In 1999, Jenny and James founded Tribe of Heart, a charitable not-for-profit organization that makes use of storytelling, visual media and the arts to present a vision of a compassionate future. The Witness is Tribe of Heart’s debut project and the first of a four-part anthology of documentaries called “Animal People,” about individuals helping animals in unique and inspiring ways. The second installment of the anthology, “Peaceable Kingdom,” about former farmers and farm animal rescuers joining together to expose the injustices of factory farming, was released in February, 2004.