



# PAIN WARRIORS

A New Documentary  
by  
Tina Petrova and Eugene Weis

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## **PAIN WARRIORS**

A Visionary Media Inc. Film / By Producers Tina Petrova & Eugene Weis

Pain Warriors ~ eloquently weaves together heart - breaking stories of an all but invisible demographic: those who struggle to stay alive daily, amidst life long chronic pain & chronic illness.

Through our investigative lens, we travel from the windswept beaches of sunny California to the frigid tundra of Midwest America on to the urban sprawl of Toronto Canada - venturing half way round the world to a remote medical outpost in Zanskar, India.

From the stunning verite POV of a 11 year old cancer survivor who struggles moment by moment with pain demons, the supporting stories of his siblings - to majestic, sweeping drone shots of Zanskar India, H.H. Dalai Lama's medical centre- we track the hopes struggles and fears of chronic pain patients, their families & the doctors under scrutiny for treating long term pain with humanity and dignity. Doctors face uncertain futures & even incarceration in the US, amidst a hostile regulatory environment.

A 31st generation Shaolin Warrior monk performs breath taking Chi Kung rituals -culminating in setting a patient's body on fire with alcohol and herbs ; a Zen teacher offers mindfulness meditation to an attentive group of patients , striving to learn tools for a peaceful co- existence with pain. A grieving husband struggles to understand how his beloved wife fell through the cracks of an advanced medical system - while a devastated mother pours her daughters ashes solemnly into the Pacific Ocean.

Overdose deaths and addiction are a serious public health issue. Equally as serious, but not nearly talked about enough, are abandoned pain patients who degrade from part -time work outside the home, housekeeping for the family and raising children, to being bedridden with tortuous pain, once long time medications are reduced or even stopped by doctors fearing for their livelihood.

It is our hope to spark discussion in the international community about what happens when the pendulum swings too far one way, marginalizing and ostracizing one group of individuals – in this case long time pain patients, by lumping them into a “one size fits all” addict mentality.

In both Canada and the USA, 1 in 4 persons report they live with a daily chronic pain condition. By the year 2020, when Boomers enter retirement en masse, surveys suggest this figure will rise to 1 in 3, straining an already fragile health care infrastructure, costing governments billions to manage annually.

Without timely education, discussion and strategies to face this impending health crisis - we are doomed to face new hardships as an aging population faces a rise in degenerative diseases and a lack of programs, treatments and financial support to assist them. We hope to bring a balanced view and open the door for solutions - to what has become a complex, life and death challenge.

## CREATIVE TEAM



### **Tina Petrova** **Director, Producer, Writer**

Tina has been part of the film, television and theatre scene in Canada for more than 30 years as an award winning actress, producer, writer and director. She is a graduate of **Ryerson University** Film Studies and Alumni of Academy Award winning Norman Jewison's C.F.C. (Canadian **Film Centre**).

Critics have called her a "*visionary*" creating works of "*faith and healing*." Her breakout feature "*Rumi-Turning Ecstatic*" has screened in 19 countries to date, and been translated into 3 languages. It was the recipient of the **Brilliant Light Film Festival L.A.** "Best Director" award, 2010.

"*Animating the Golden Rule...*" a half hour journey through the world's main religions- features the art, drama and voices of teenaged youth as they bring to life one of the most universal Moral Ethics worldwide. "*Animating...*" won **Best International Short** at the **Interfaith Harmony Film Festival**, Los Angeles 2013. She is a board member for the **Coalition for Quality Children's Media**. Both projects were picked up by educational Distributor **CHOICES VIDEO**, Los Angeles CA. Earlier films include "*Secret Survivors*" (Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival) "*Grandview the Lost Years*" (Golden Sheath award) and "*Real Bodies, Real Beauty, Real Lives ...*" a film examining women and real beauty, Executive Produced by Canadian Fashion Icon **Linda Lundstrom**.

Tina is an outspoken advocate & activist on the issue of **Chronic Pain**. She has spoken at **TEDX YOUTH, CAMH, GILDA'S CLUB** and the **UNITED NATIONS** among a variety of international venues. Her current passion is to raise awareness regarding the lack of resources and research available for Chronic Illness and Chronic Pain.

### **Eugene Weis** **Director, Producer, Editor**

Eugene Weis has been working as a Documentary feature film editor with top industry professionals in the Canadian film business for the last 10 years. His keen sense for storytelling has allowed him to craft films tackling important social issues, which have gone on to accrue numerous awards and accolades. Recent works include: **Metamorphosis** (Velcrow Ripper & Nova Ami) Produced by **National Film Board Of Canada**, **Magic Pills** and **The Forbidden Shore** - Grand Jury Prize Best Documentary 2016, Gasparilla International Film Festival.



Eugene edited **Milk**, which explored the issues of infant feeding and the commercialization of birth around the world. Milk premiered at Hotdocs 2015 and was nominated for **Best Feature Documentary** at the **2015 Hollywood Film Festival**. He was nominated for **Best Editor (2015) Madrid International Film Festival**.

**The Poet of Havana** (Editor) follows the life and career of Cuban native Carlos Varela was winner of the **Audience Choice Award for Best Doc** at the 2015 Gasparilla International Film Festival and winner of **Jury Award** (Best Documentary 2016 Edmonton International Film Festival.) It aired on HBO in the U.S. and Canada.

**Who The F\*\*K Is Arthur Fogel** (Editor) examined the high-octane global live music industry and the quiet man at its very center- featuring stellar interviews, performances & appearances by a Who's Who of stars and insiders; with U2, Madonna, The Police, Lady Gaga, Rush and more. For this, Eugene garnered a nomination for **Best Picture Editor** by the **Canadian Academy of Motion Pictures** (2015). It aired on HBO Canada and Epix.

Eugene sits on the Board of Directors for the prestigious **AluCine Latin Film and Media Arts Festival**, is a voting member of the **Canadian Academy of Motion Pictures** as well as a member of the **Canadian Cinema Editors** (C.C.E).

## **Ryan McPherson D.P.** **Zanskar, India / Montana Unit**

Ryan has honed his craft as a cinematographer over the past decade and is the epitome of a camera ninja: light on his feet, tactical, aware, and relentless. Ryan often shoots in stressful situations and in technical, dangerous and remote terrain. He possesses an acute attention to detail and captures emotion filled moments with a unique visual signature and a certain empathetic respect for those difficult scenarios. Ryan is an Emmy® award winning cinematographer and has shot on a variety of hit shows including: "Life Below Zero", "Ice Road Truckers", "Wicked Tuna", "Swords", "Man Hunt", "Port Protection", "Deadliest Catch", to name a few. Between extensive rigging & waterproofing A/V systems, motion controlled time lapse photography, licensed drone piloting, and years of run-and-gun, ENG experience, he covers a lot of ground cinematically speaking, with a diverse set of skills that allows him a level of flexibility while on set, at the same time minimizing the over-all footprint of the production. Ryan has shot on location in 6 out of the 7 continents, 20+ countries, but has a deep appreciation for Brazil where he has explored and documented over 40 undiscovered rivers, armed merely with camping gear, rations and camera equipment tucked in the back of a white water kayak. When he is not in "the trenches" with his camera, you can find him paragliding high above the Sierra Nevada Mountains, driving cross-country in his 40-foot home on wheels with his wife or traveling the back roads of Nepal on a three-dollars a day.

## **Katie McPherson: Camera/ Field Producer** **Zanskar, India/ Montana Unit**

A Montana native, Katie moved to California in 2005 and began producing documentary films from her pursuits as a professional white water kayaker.

Her drive to tell stories with substance and explore the unknown has sent Katie to the deepest gorges in Asia, to the backchannels of the Nile River in Africa, and to the thickest jungles in South America directing extreme sports, and environmental documentaries. Katie worked in marketing and business development for non-profits and Silicon Valley start-ups before she returned to her home in film production. Katie is methodical in uncomfortable situations and disciplined in harsh environments. She currently works as a producer for major TV networks such as CBS, A&E, National Geographic, Discovery Channel and BBC Worldwide. In January of 2017 Katie and her husband Ryan launched Good Blood Media, a documentary content company. They are currently working with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to bring healthcare to Northern India and save what the Dalai Lama calls "the last authentic Buddhist culture". Katie digs deep to find stories that bring intrigue and new perspective, and she aspires to progress the entertainment standard. When she is not on a shoot, you can find her skiing the backcountry of Montana, retrofitting her home on wheels for the next adventure, and surfing past sunset.

## **Tiffany Hsiung: Director of Photography, Canada**

Tiffany Hsiung is an award-winning filmmaker based in Toronto. Whether it is filmmaking or teaching, Hsiung's work has taken her through and beyond the diverse communities of her hometown, and well across the globe.

Her socially conscious work and dynamic artistry sparks a unique energy in the stories of marginalized individuals and communities.

Hsiung's approach to storytelling is driven by the relationship that is built with the people she meets. By shooting much of her own work, Hsiung obtains unobtrusive access to the stories she captures.

Hsiung is a graduate of Ryerson University, where she studied film production. She was the recipient of the **Norman Jewison award**.

Her award winning short film '**Binding Borders**' (2007), screened in film festivals internationally and propelled her to direct the RCI/CBC six-part miniseries on Beijing's first ever Olympic Games, '**A New Face for Beijing**' (2008).

Since 2009 Hsiung has been documenting the lives of 3 survivors of military sexual slavery in Korea, Philippines and China during World War II by the Japanese Imperial Army for her debut feature length documentary **The Apology** (2016) a National Film Board of Canada production. With a successful world premiere at Hot Docs International Film festival, The Apology was one of the festivals top 10 films and at the International premiere in Busan International Im festival (Asia's largest film festival). The Apology took home the **Busan Cinephile Award** for best documentary. The film has currently secured U.S and Korean distribution.

Hsiung's work is fundamentally based on cross-cultural and intergenerational themes set to inspire younger generations and viewers to learn about their own cultures - and social responsibility in the global community.

## **PAIN AROUND THE WORLD**

### **THE COST OF PAIN TO CANADIANS**

#### **PAIN NUMBERS ARE ON THE RISE**

Currently 7 MILLION or 1 in 4 Canadians live in chronic intractable pain. As the boomer population faces aging and retirement over the next 3- 5 years, it is projected to reach 1 in 3.

Medical statistics indicate that 10- 50 % of all surgery patients will be left with burning electric shock like pain, which will not resolve. The majority of office visits to General practitioners and almost 78 % of Emergency room visits can currently be directly linked to a wide array of pain conditions.

**PAIN IS EXPENSIVE:** Recent statistics estimate Pain costs the Canadian public up to \$ 60 Billion a year in direct health care costs and lost productivity. That's more than cancer, heart disease and HIV combined. Discussion on Pain is virtually ignored in health care reform. Only ¼ of 1% of all federal dollars for health research in Canada goes to pain related studies. Pain is grossly underfunded. (\* Based on figures from Relieving Pain in America- 2011)

**PAIN KILLS:** Pain patients are twice as likely to kill themselves, from depression and despair. It is demoralizing and isolating. Chronic Pain sufferers on average, die 2- 5 years earlier than people without pain. A survey of 10 major Canadian universities found that Veterinary Medicine students receive approx. 87 hrs of training on how to treat pain, while Medical Students receive on average 16 hrs.

**PAIN IS INVISIBLE:** A recent survey of Canadians revealed that 54 % do not believe that chronic pain exists. In contrast, 58 % surveyed believe we have been visited by life on other planets. Society turns away from those who live in chronic pain. They are not believed by their workplace colleagues, their spouses, their families, their doctors. They are often shunned, considered to be "feeders" off insurance & disability plans. ~ **Statistics Canada / Canadian Mainstream News Outlets**

### **THE COST OF PAIN TO AMERICANS**

Recent statistics indicate that 113 Million Americans currently live in chronic, intractable pain. The estimated cost annually to the USA in medical treatments and lost productivity is a whopping \$ 630 BILLION. The epidemic of Chronic pain is far greater than what some would call the "epidemic of prescription pain killer abuse." (\* Relieving Pain In America 2011)

Legitimate pain patients seeking a quality of life, many attempting to remain a vital part of the workforce, are unjustly punished by pain pill abusers. Countless numbers of pain patients who rely on prescriptions to control severe pain, are consistently looked down upon as "addicts" by some Pharmacists, Doctors and those in society who cannot comprehend what living in Chronic pain is like. They are oftentimes penalized by the behavior of those who take drugs irresponsibly, to get "high."

Pain patients simply put, do not get "high" from prescriptives designed to manage pain. Their medications are titrated to a dosage that allows them to be lucid and functional, without being euphoric.

There are nearly 79 million baby boomers who will reach 65, between now and 2020. The U.S. health care system is not in any way equipped to handle the medical needs of that emerging demographic. Arthritis alone is comprised of over 100 conditions. 1 in 5 Americans live with some form of it, from juvenile arthritis and R.A. (Rheumatoid arthritis) which are autoimmune diseases to osteoarthritis, the most prevalent. It is the leading cause of disability for people aged 55 and older.

In the final years of a person's life they can spend up to 50 % of their total lifetime health care costs. In 2020 (in terms of today's dollar), we are looking at expenses of up to \$15 TRILLION annually, for the boomer generation. ~ **U.S. Mainstream News Outlets**

### **THE COST OF PAIN TO BRITONS (UK)**

The latest statistics coming out of the U.K. reveal that 10 Million Britons live in chronic pain. 9.4 million working days are lost to arthritic pain annually. 4.9 million days are lost to employee absenteeism due to pain annually. Back pain costs the exchequer of Briton \$ 5 Billion annually. Adolescents in pain costs the U.K. 4 Billion annually in services. ~ **The British Pain Society**

### **THE COST OF PAIN TO AUSTRALIANS**

1 out of 5 Australians currently live in Chronic Pain. 9.9 million absent workdays annually are due to chronic pain. The AUD. Cost to public and society is reported to be 1.4 Billion per annum. In 2007; the total estimated cost of Chronic Pain to Australian Society was 34 Billion. (Back problems alone comprised 4 billion.)

*"The Developed world's largest undiscovered Health Problem"*

~ **Professor Michael Cousins**

**A.M. Chair, National Pain Strategy**