

BALCONY RELEASING

presents

STOLEN CHILDHOODS

FOR 246 MILLION CHILDREN, LIFE IS NOTHING BUT WORK

Directed by Len Morris
Co-Directed by Robin Romano
Narrated by Meryl Streep

© 2004 Color 85 minutes English language USA

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SYNOPSIS

Narrated by Meryl Streep, *STOLEN CHILDHOODS* is a documentary feature film about the growing plague of child labor that engulfs the lives of 246 million children today. In extraordinary footage of their working conditions, child slaves, bonded laborers and laboring poor children from eight countries (including the US) tell their own stories . . . children forced to pick pesticide-laden tobacco, coffee and vegetables, kids chained to looms, boys kidnapped to work on fishing platforms at sea, girls trafficked for prostitution, children scavenging at dumps and enslaved at rock quarries and brick kilns. All these children tell their stories in their own words.

STOLEN CHILDHOODS features interviews with 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Wangari Maathai, human rights activist, Kailash Satyarthi, and Senator Tom Harkin, who calls the world's child laborers, "a breeding ground for Osama Bin Laden's army and future terrorists."

At a time of increasing global insecurity, *STOLEN CHILDHOODS* reveals the risks of the world community continuing to waste these children's lives. It portrays local, national and international solutions at work to end child labor, offering a humanitarian path to a more stable world. It gives voice to children still lost to work and it celebrates the resilience of kids whose lives have been saved. It is a shocking, hopeful and energizing film and a call to action.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Narrated by Meryl Streep, *STOLEN CHILDHOODS* is a documentary feature film about the 246 million child laborers in the world today. Extraordinary footage and interviews with child slaves and kids working in poverty reveal young childhoods stolen away, and demands a call for action.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Today, for 246 million children, life is nothing but work.

STOLEN CHILDHOODS was made over seven years time, filming children laboring like slaves in eight countries across the globe. These kids understand two things: one, that unlike other children, their childhoods don't count; and two, that hard work is all they will ever know.

"It's a slow death," says Wangari Maathai, 2004's Nobel Peace Prize winner. Senator Tom Harkin sees child laborers as "a breeding ground for future terrorists."

The message of STOLEN CHILDHOODS is very timely. Helping these children is an opportunity for us to help ourselves. The film asks us all to keep the promises the world community has already made; to provide universal education for all children, and to act against the poverty, profiteering and prejudice that produces this shameful waste of children's lives.

When you hear these kids speak for themselves, it is impossible not to listen and not to act.

Len Morris, Director

Len Morris

Producer, Director, Writer

Len has produced, directed and edited television documentaries for over twenty years. His films have been syndicated and broadcast on HBO, TNT, PBS and other cable and international networks. His independent production company Galen Films has produced numerous award-winning documentaries. His films are on subjects as diverse as schizophrenia, environmental justice, street children, hunger in Africa, legal aid during the apartheid era in South Africa, the Holocaust and a string of specials on Hollywood . . . film noir, the American Western, Republic Pictures and singing cowboys. Len is a recipient of an Independent Filmmaker Award from the American Film Institute and is a director member of the Directors Guild of America.

Robin Romano

Co-Director and Director of Photography

As a writer/director/cameraman, Robin Romano has worked in Canadian news programming and international documentary television. His most recent projects have been *Death of a Slave Boy*, a two-hour special shot in Pakistan for European broadcast and *Globalization and Human Rights*, hosted by Charlayne Hunter Gault for PBS. As a still photographer, Mr. Romano is represented by Alan Kaplan Studios. He has taught Advanced Cinematography at the Graduate Film Institute of NYU, was visiting instructor at Columbia Graduate Film School and has lectured at Rhode Island School of Design and the Oak Institute for International Human Rights at Colby College.

Barbara Broccoli

Executive Producer

Barbara began her career as an assistant director on the James Bond films, *Octopussy* and *A View to a Kill*, and then became Associate Producer on *The Living Daylights* and *License to Kill*. She produced (with Michael Wilson), *Goldeneye*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *The World is Not Enough* and *Die Another Day*. Through her independent film company, Astoria Productions, she produced *Crime of the Century*, about the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby for HBO, which was nominated for four Golden Globes. Barbara is a graduate of Loyola University in Motion Picture and Television Communications

Pharis Harvey

Senior Program Consultant

Pharis is a founder of the International Labor Rights Fund. He is the author of *Trading Away the Future: Child Labor in India's Export Industries* and numerous articles on child labor. He is Chairman of the Board of Directors of RUGMARK Foundation - USA and a member of the boards of RUGMARK International, the Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace, the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, the US Labor Education in the Americas Project and the Consumers Choice Council. He is a co-chair for the Child Labor Coalition and a committee member for the Global March Against Child Labor. Pharis received the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award for "Lifetime Achievement" in developing and defending labor rights law internationally. Pharis holds degrees from Oklahoma City University and Yale University and is an ordained Methodist Minister.

Miriam Cutler

Composer

Los Angeles-based film composer Miriam Cutler has been writing, producing, and performing music for over 20 years. Her evocative scores have graced numerous narrative features and award-winning documentaries, as well as television, corporate videos, cartoons, and even two circuses. She's known for her versatility, her soulful integration of world music styles, and her enthusiasm for working collaboratively. Some recent credits include *Pandemic: Facing AIDS* (United Nations screening; HBO), *Lost in La Mancha*, which won the Evening Standard 'Peter Sellers Comedy Award' at the Savoy in London and received nominations for Best Documentary—Prix Arte at the European Film Academy Awards and the British Independent Film Awards, *Scout's Honor* Best Doc Audience Award, Freedom of Expression Award Sundance Film Festival, and *Amy's Orgasm*, a theatrically released comedy feature film.

REVIEWS / ENDORSEMENTS

"a powerful piece of journalism, a testament to the dedication of the filmmakers"

Aaron Brown CNN NewsNight

"'Stolen Childhoods' is a critically important work which shines a long-overdue spotlight the pernicious and ever present reality of child labor. It reminds us of all that still needs to be done and powerfully inspires us to take up that task."

Senator Christopher J. Dodd. (D-CT)

"Sensitive yet brutally honest . . . the film is a reminder to the world of costs of today's global economy on children and one of the most vile yet silent forms of human rights violations that is taking place every day in the world."

*Saji Prelis, Program Coordinator
Peacebuilding and Development Institute,
American University*

"I still get chills when I think about your film."

*Abikök Riak, Asia Pacific Regional Team,
World Vision U.S.*

"The film offers real working solutions to one of the most critical global problems of our time."

*Chivy Sok, Child Labor Research Initiative,
University of Iowa Center for Human Rights*

"Farmworker children toil invisibly, helping to bring food to America's tables. It is critical that their story be told, and I cannot think of a more powerful telling of their story than in 'Stolen Childhoods.'"

*Reid Maki, Children in the Field Campaign Director,
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs*

"A powerful and brutal film that needs to be seen to be believed. My copy has been passed from friend to friend, like a rare book, and just as treasured."

Eric Stoltz, actor

"Viewers will turn to each other within five minutes of the film's start and say, 'I didn't know this!'"

Vineyard Gazette (editorial)

"The best movie on contemporary slavery out there."

*Tommy Calvert
American Anti-Slavery Group*

"It changed the way I think about the things that I buy."

*Beth Phemister, student
University of Vermont*

"The message of Stolen Childhoods is one that cannot wait."

Meryl Streep, actor