

BEYOND BELIEF

Press Kit

A Film by Beth Murphy
& Principle Pictures



A MOVING AND BEAUTIFUL FILM...
Khaled Hosseini, Author of *The Kite Runner*

A TRULY REMARKABLE STORY...
ABC News

GENUINELY INSPIRATIONAL!
New York magazine

SYNOPSIS

Susan Retik and Patti Quigley are two ordinary soccer moms living in the affluent suburbs of Boston until tragedy strikes. Rather than turning inwards, grief compels these women to focus on the country where the terrorists who took their husbands' lives were trained: Afghanistan.

Over the course of two years, as they cope with loss and struggle to raise their families as single mothers, these extraordinary women dedicate themselves to empowering Afghan widows whose lives have been ravaged by decades of war, poverty and oppression – factors they consider to be the root causes of terrorism. As Susan and Patti make the courageous journey from their comfortable neighborhoods to the most desperate Afghan villages, they discover a powerful bond with each other, an unlikely kinship with widows halfway around the world, and a profound way to move beyond tragedy.

From the ruins of the World Trade Center to those of Kabul and back, theirs is a journey of personal strength and international reconciliation, and a testament to the vision that peace can be forged... one woman at a time.

Director Biography

Beth Murphy has been directing, producing, and reporting for documentaries and television & radio news for 18 years. As the founder of Principle Pictures, Beth has contributed programming to The History Channel, Discovery Channel, Lifetime Television, PBS and numerous international media outlets. From covering stories of slavery in Sudan to young women battling breast cancer, Beth's work focuses on the hope and humanity that often define our darkest hours. She has won two Gracie Allen Awards from American Women in Radio and Television. Beth is also an author (*Fighting For Our Future*, McGraw Hill) and university professor. At Suffolk University and American University Paris, Beth has taught courses in covering international crises, the business of international news, and media ethics. Prior to her film work, Beth was as a television and radio news reporter and anchor. She was born in Gales Ferry, Connecticut and earned a B.A. in History from the University of Connecticut, and an M.A. in International Relations and International Communications from Boston University. She also studied documentary filmmaking at the George Washington University Documentary Center. Beth serves on the board of the International Institute of Boston, an organization that helps immigrants and refugees.

Filmography

Flu Time Bomb (Discovery International, 2006)

Breast Cancer Legacy (Discovery Health, 2005)

Flying Pyramids—Soaring Stones (History Channel, 2004)

Fighting for Our Future (Lifetime, 2002)

Heroes of Hope: Crisis in Kosovo (1 of 9 public television documentaries Beth produced from 1998-2000)

Books

Fighting For Our Future: How Young Women Find Strength, Hope and Courage While Taking Control of Breast Cancer (McGraw Hill, 2002)

Open My Eyes, Open My Soul by Yolanda King (contributing author)

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

In July 2000 I was teaching a journalism class at American University Paris and brought my students to Amnesty International for a conversation about genocide. As we were wrapping up, the Amnesty representative ushered us into a room and over to a large cardboard box with a bright blue fabric peeking out. *Have you ever worn a burqa before?* she asked. As I pulled the tent-like garment over my head and imagined being forced to wear it, I thought about what it would be like to be invisible to the world. That's when I knew I wanted to produce a film about Afghanistan and help Afghan women to become visible again. The challenge was finding a way for the film to resonate with an American audience.

A year later, after the attacks of September 11th, the ability to draw the connection between Afghanistan and us seemed obvious. Three months later, I traveled to Afghanistan to film the growing humanitarian crisis and the aid workers who were struggling to respond to it. I was looking forward to seeing women shedding their burqas, liberated from the medieval laws of the Taliban. But when I arrived, all the women I encountered were still covered head-to-toe, allowed only a small mesh patch for their window to the world. When the documentary I was working on failed to sell, I vowed to return to this place that captured a piece of me with its beauty, isolation and sorrow.

What I could never have imagined then is that as I was filming in Afghanistan, there were two women living in my own backyard who were opening their eyes to the world in new and profound ways after losing their husbands on September 11th. Four years later I would return to Afghanistan with Susan Retik and Patti Quigley, whose loss gave them permission to shut out the world, but whose compassion forced them to have a leadership role in it.

It was important to me to tell their story because as the world has become increasingly divided by politics, ethnicity and religion, Susan and Patti affirm a common humanity that we all share. From the beginning, they recognize their Afghan counterparts as individuals—women they identify with and feel a connection to—rather than a monolithic, nameless, faceless group, as often happens during the world's tragedies.

I was struck by Susan and Patti's ability to recognize Afghanistan for all of its complexities. True, it is the country in which the terrorists trained to kill their husbands, but it is also a place that had been used as a pawn during the Cold War, only to then be abandoned by the international community – sparking a civil war that would last another decade. The effects were especially cruel for women. Banished from public life by the Taliban, they've suffered staggering declines in health. (Afghanistan is still one of the only countries in the world where women have a shorter life expectancy than men.) And when we arrived in Kabul in May 2006, the burqa still defined public life for most women.

Susan and Patti's mission is simple: to make life better for these women. And so is their message: hatred is the root of terrorism. They aren't naïve enough—nor do they have enough hubris—to think they can stop terrorism in its tracks. But they do have enough optimism—and enough faith in humanity—to believe that the War on Terror cannot be fought with bombs and bullets alone.

Production Credits

PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY
Beth Murphy

PHOTOGRAPHY
Kevin Belli
Sean Flynn

EDITORS
Kevin Belli
Beth Murphy

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Sean Flynn

ORIGINAL MUSIC
Evren Celimli

TRANSLATOR
Luna Asrar

ADDITIONAL CAMERA
Rhonda Moniz
Iqbal Ahmad
Jay Duchin
Bill Schlosser

MUSICIANS
Evren Celimli
Bill Geha

MUSIC
"Superman"
Performed by Five For Fighting
Courtesy of Aware Records LLC/Columbia Records
By arrangement with SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

GRAPHICS
Peggy Foley

DOLLY GRIPS
Dennis Murphy
Emily Kobus

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS
Ashleigh Howland
Emily Kobus
Louise Place
Chris Gazzara

ARCHIVE MATERIALS
ITN Source
NBC News

REVIEWS

A moving and beautiful film about a pair of September 11th widows who have turned their own personal tragedy into a chance to help Afghan widows thousands of miles away. This is a human story about the universality of loss, grief, and the ways in which we search for healing.

--- Khaled Hosseini, Author of *The Kite Runner*

A truly remarkable story of two women filled with courage and determination.

--- ABC News

Genuinely inspirational.

--- New York Magazine

Heartbreaking, inspiring and important... "Beyond Belief" is a must-see.

--- Cape Cod Times

An affecting portrait... compelling...

--- The Boston Globe

I wept like a baby throughout the film.

--- Anthony Kauffman, indieWire

"Beyond Belief" tells one of the most unique and moving stories to come out of 9/11. Every American who advocates killing in the names of the people who died that day should see it. For the rest of us, it's a sobering look at a country in crisis and an emotional journey taken with two awe-inspiring women.

--- Daniel Holloway, Metro International

This is a movie that everyone must see.

--- Flick Filosopher

Contact Information

www.principlepictures.com/beyondbelief

Director / Producer

Beth Murphy
47 Main St. #2
Plymouth, MA 02360
508.746.6700
bmurphy@principlepictures.com

International Sales Agent

Andrew Herwitz
The Film Sales Company
151 Lafayette St., 5th Floor
New York, NY 10014
646.274.0945
andrew.herwitz@filmsalescorp.com

Publicity

Liza Burnett
168 Second Avenue #396
New York, NY 10003
917.817.3566.
liza.burnett@gmail.com

Editor / Photographer

Kevin Belli
47 Main St. #2
Plymouth, MA 02360
508.746.6700
kbelli@principlepictures.com

Associate Producer / Photographer

Sean Flynn
47 Main St. #2
Plymouth, MA 02360
508.746.6700
sflynn@principlepictures.com