

BORDERING ON TREASON



A single mother and small town photojournalist risks her life, imprisonment and a million dollar fine to cover the war in Iraq, telling the stories that do not reach American television.



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SYNOPSIS

Bordering On Treason tells the amazing story of Lorna Tychostup, a single mother and photojournalist who travels to Iraq continuously for nine years to put a human face on a horrific global tragedy.

Visiting military units and Iraqi families beyond the green zone, she evolves from naïve civilian to established journalist. Through Lorna's personal journey, Bordering On Treason explores the complexities of this war and the possibility of hope.

In February 2003, Lorna, a single mother and News & Politics Editor for a local arts magazine in New Paltz, N.Y., knowingly risks her life, imprisonment, and a million dollar fine by traveling to Iraq under the threat of war.

On a mission to “bring back the face of the Iraqi people” to the American public, Lorna returns with images of ordinary Iraqis she hopes will sway people against the invasion. Her controversial journey is challenged in a live television broadcast as FOX News lambastes her efforts as “villainous and bordering on treason” and accuses her of “aiding and abetting the enemy... on the brink of war.”

Deeply affected by her time spent with Iraqis, Lorna returns to an occupied Iraq intent on uncovering the untold stories. Traveling without security in local taxis, she stays in small unprotected hotels outside the safety zones where mainstream journalists are lodged. Embedding with soldiers and visiting with Iraqis in regions in and around Baghdad, including bombed-out government properties inhabited with thousands of squatters, insurgent villages, and the Shia stronghold of Sadr City, Tychostup seeks the other truths of how the war has changed Iraq.

Returning to the US after each trip with stories she believes are not reaching American TV sets, Lorna travels around the country giving lectures, presenting her slide show and appearing on innumerable media outlets. By relaying her experiences, she works to connect Americans and everyday Iraqis. Along the way she meets a range of Americans: students, soldiers, soldier's families, and Iraqi-Americans – all of who want to understand what's really happening beyond the national media's coverage of the war.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This documentary began as a collective effort by San Tong, Jesse Epstein, and I along with a number of other NY based filmmakers, who like our subjects, wanted to know what was going on... We conceived of it as a character-driven narrative exploring various perspectives on the Iraq invasion.

After following several subjects, Lorna's journey to confront the complexities in America and Iraq compelled us to focus on her story alone. She questioned the lack of information on the news, the rush to war, and the divides between left and right. Indeed, while many of us felt paralyzed, overwhelmed and averted our gaze, Lorna refused to let the enemy be dehumanized nor the soldiers forgotten/ignored.

I became heavily, personally invested in the film. I became intimately involved in Lorna's life and developed an affinity with her. She inspired me to keep looking at the war and at her. I realized that in order to tell her story, I had to wait patiently and allow it to take shape over time.

We filmed from the initial invasion through the most recent "withdrawal". Her story has become a longitudinal retrospective on the past eight years of the war. Her photos and stories a conduit for Americans' desire to connect with Iraqis. She helps illuminate the realities of a war often referred to as merely an "occupation," and the emotional and political disconnect that Americans have experienced/expressed in relation to Iraq.

A combination of verité, personal journal, and interview footage takes viewers on an intimate exploration of the lives of the Iraqis and American soldiers Lorna encounters. In addition to the empathy her images invoke, her conversations, direct to camera, provide the audience with a personal connection to her subjects and her thought process. Mainstream news footage will combine with Lorna's own reportage to provide the historical context and impetus for the personal stories she seeks out.

President Obama once called America's role in Iraq one of the most "personal, emotional and global issues" of the time. Lorna's impassioned, ideological shift – which we watch happen over eight years, offers viewers a unique, very personal and individual perspective on this historic period.

- Trish Dalton

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BIOS

TRISH DALTON *Director/Producer/Videographer*

Trish Dalton is an award winning independent director/producer with 15 years of experience creating personal story, social impact documentaries. Her feature-length and short form documentaries cover subjects, ranging from the occupation of Iraq to the US-Mexico border fence, have broadcast on HBO, Time-Warner, PBS and Ovation after screening at film festivals around the world, including: IDFA, Visions du Reel, SXSW, Miami, Denver Starz, Nashville, True/False, DOC NYC, Full Frame, and Tribeca. Her films include Student Athlete, Bordering on Treason, Election Year, Southmost USA, and One Night Stand.

TrishDaltonFilms.com

JESSE EPSTEIN *Story Producer/Videographer*

Jesse Ericka Epstein is a Sundance Award-Winning documentary filmmaker. She received an Masters Degree in Documentary Film from NYU, and was named one of “25 filmmakers to watch” by Filmmaker Magazine. Her films have screened in over 40 film festivals worldwide, at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), MaSS MoCA, The Peabody Museum, and Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam. Jesse’s film 34x25x36 received a national PBS Broadcast on POV. In addition, she has a published video Op-Doc in the New York Times.

SAN TONG *Associate Producer/Videographer*

San Tong tells stories and fine-tunes social networking communications. She works at an advertising agency, while pursuing various writing and documentary projects. She was the Visual Director for Theater Group called Mango Tribe, an APIA women’s theatre production group. She was also a literary manager for the 5th Night Screenplay and Short Film Series at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

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CREDITS

Directed and produced by Trish Dalton

Story produced by Jesse Epstein

Edited by Milton Ginsberg and Jody Jorgensen

Associate produced by San Tong

Score by John Califra

CONTACT

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