

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## PRESS KIT CONTENTS



*“Brilliant and stunning.”* – Cleveland International Film Festival

*“Thakur proves her gift for communicating vulnerable and complex topics with raw honesty and captivating visuals.”* – The Daily Texan

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# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## **LOGLINE:**

The filmmaker receives the letter unopened by her Indian father for 20 years, to discover why her interracial family was banished. Three generations, three continents, one family.

## **SYNOPSIS** (long)

TERRIBLE CHILDREN is sparked by a family letter unopened for decades. The filmmaker discovers the events that led to her father's banishment from his Indian family after marrying her Danish mother. This compelling journey reveals her parents' memories during the same decade: Muslim-Hindu riots during India's Partition, boyhood training in a paramilitary group, and Denmark during Nazi-occupation. Dreamlike images and searing archival footage reveal unexpected parallels of war based on racial purity, and the transformative power of love.

## **SYNOPSIS** (short)

The filmmaker discovers a story about her father from a letter that remained unopened for 20 years. She tells her father's lyrical nightmares and archival dreams about religious war, love, and redemption across India, Denmark, USA and Canada.

## **CONTACT:**

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## **TECH SPECS:**

TRT:	56:13 minutes
Format:	Shot on HD
Aspect Ratio:	16:9
Exhibition Format:	DCP 4K
Audio:	5.1 Surround Sound
Languages:	English, French, Danish
Subtitles:	English
Closed Captions:	Available

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## **SHANTI THAKUR** – PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, WRITER, EDITOR

Born in Canada, Shanti Thakur is an award-winning filmmaker who has worked in New York City for twenty years. Her work is recognized for visually lush fiction and documentary films that span a landscape of subjects from science fiction to restorative justice. Shanti's films have screened at over 200 international film festivals and museums including the Cannes Film Festival, Montreal World Film Festival, Edinburgh Film Festival, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Shanti's short fiction film SKY PEOPLE was considered for an Academy Award nomination.

Crossing various genres, RED TULIPS, A STORY ABOUT FORGETTING, SKY PEOPLE, KAIROS, SEVEN HOURS TO BURN, TWO FORMS, CIRCLES and DOMINO have won 30 awards and have broadcast in 22 countries. Working as director, writer, editor and producer on her films, Shanti has received support from the National Film Board of Canada, the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts, the Independent Film Project (IFP) and the Pew Fellowship in the Arts. She is a Professor and the Director of the School of Film and Animation at the Rochester Institute of Technology. [www.shantithakur.com](http://www.shantithakur.com)

## **MARK LIPSON** – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

MARK LIPSON attended NYU Film School and came to Los Angeles to pursue photography and film/television producing. He developed and associate produced the original CHILDREN OF THE CORN feature and produced ALMOST YOU, an indie-comedy for Fox Classics. In the mid-90's he supervised three innovative documentary series for ITVS, including THE UNITED STATES OF POETRY. Later, while shooting stills for David Byrne's film TRUE STORIES, he met Errol Morris and went on to produce three of Errol's films: the award winning THE THIN BLUE LINE, then FAST CHEAP AND OUT OF CONTROL and most recently, TABLOID.

Mark has executive produced and post-supervised numerous independent features such as STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE, COUNTDOWN TO ZERO, THIS SPACE AVAILABLE, THE SOURCE FAMILY MOVIE, RED ARMY, the Emmy Award winning IN FOOTBALL WE TRUST and THE JUDGE. His current projects include BOGALUSA CHARM, SOCIAL ANIMALS, JOY BUBBLES AND BELLY OF THE BEAST.

## **BENJAMIN WOLF** – CINEMATOGRAPHER

From the Emmy award winning PBS series SLAVERY AND THE MAKING OF AMERICA, to the Peabody award winning series NIMROD NATION to the Academy Award considered short film SKY PEOPLE, Benjamin has brought a successful combination of skill, creativity, and collaboration to his work as a Director of Photography and Director. Upon graduating from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, he began his career on

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the highly successful PBS series WEST VIRGINIA. After moving to New York City in the late 1990's, Benjamin continued working in non-fiction with films such as AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES and LOSING IT while also expanding into more narrative and commercial projects. Now based in Colorado and with over a dozen award winning features and shorts to his credit, such as PATER FAMILIAS, TALKING TO STAN, and IT'S ABOUT UGLINESS Benjamin easily moves between film and television, narrative and documentary, directing and cinematography.

## **QUENTIN CHIAPPETTA** – SOUND DESIGNER, MUSICIAN

Quentin is an award-winning, classically trained composer and sound designer with years of experience scoring for every type of media, from television and film, to theater and VR. Quentin's music for television is heard in hundreds of series, including the hit show THE FIRST 48. He has composed scores for dozens of independent feature films and documentaries, and designed and mixed the sound for hundreds, many of which have premiered at film festivals around the world, including Sundance, Cannes, Berlin, and the Tribeca Film Festival. His recent work includes the documentary short COLLETTE which won an Oscar in 2021, the Netflix series DAUGHTERS OF DESTINY, the original score and sound work for the documentary REACHING WEST on public television.

Quentin is a sought-after collaborator for ground-breaking video installations, including the legendary Tony Conrad, Zeena Parkins, Kim Sooja, and Christian Marclay. Quentin's 20-year creative relationship with Marclay culminated in THE CLOCK, the groundbreaking winner of the 2012 Venice Biennale for which he was the sound designer and mixer. [www.medianoise.com](http://www.medianoise.com)

## **JOHN MONACO** – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

John Monaco is an internationally recognized exhibition designer, instrumental in bringing one New York's finest art museums to the forefront of the museum industry. John has, in his thirteen years as a museum exhibition designer, created an experiential aesthetic that is "elegant, poetic and fearless" and has mastered the art of exhibition development from concept to fruition. John's dramatic and immersive style has influenced designers from Bhutan to Hong Kong and from London to Toronto and continues to generously serve as a de facto consultant to colleagues around the globe. John has also worked on production design for independent film, including RED TULIPS, A STORY ABOUT FORGETTING and TERRIBLE CHILDREN. [www.johnmonacodesign.com](http://www.johnmonacodesign.com)

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY (1992-2022)

### **TERRIBLE CHILDREN**

2021, 56 minutes, US, Hybrid Documentary

Producer, Director, Writer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

The filmmaker learns why her interracial family was banished from India, after receiving a letter, hidden for 20 years.

#### JURIED SCREENINGS +AWARDS

- Cleveland International Film Festival, April 2022 (World Premiere)
- Montreal Independent Film Festival May 2022
- Columbus International Film Festival, May 2022
- Southside Bethlehem Film Festival June 2022
- Austin Asian American Film Festival, June 2022
- University of Film and Video Association's Annual Conference, New York, July 2022
- **Award of Merit, Special Mention, Documentary**, Accolade Global Film Competition, August 2022
- **Award of Merit, Special Mention, Experimental**, Accolade Global Film Competition, August 2022
- Kerala International Documentary and Short Film Festival, INDIA, August 2022
- **Best Feature Documentary**, Buffalo international Film Festival, October 2022
- Take One Documentary Series, Rochester, NY October 2022
- Chelsea Film Festival, NYC October 2022
- DisOrient Asian American Film Festival, Eugene, Oregon March 2023
- NewFilmmakers NY, NYC TBA 2023
- Lisboa Indie Film Festival, Lisbon, PORTUGAL June 2023
- **Best Feature Documentary**, Berlin Indie Film Festival, GERMANY, June 2023

### **RED TULIPS, A STORY ABOUT FORGETTING**

2012, 14 minutes, US, fiction

Producer, Director, Writer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

A magical tale where everyone's memory lasts only a few hours. James learns how to recognize the only thing he needs to know.

### **SKY PEOPLE**

2008, 13 minutes, US, fiction

Producer, Director, Writer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

A lyrical satire on class in New York City. The film follows 21 different characters' race to be a "sky person" – the elite one percent who live above the 13th floor.

### **KAIROS**

2002, 17 minutes, US, fiction

Producer, Director, Writer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

Kairos: Greek for the transformative moment. A woman must choose between two contradictory lovers, two kinds of happiness.

### **SEVEN HOURS TO BURN**

1999, 9 minutes, US, experimental-documentary

Producer, Director, Writer, Cinematographer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

The filmmaker explores her Danish mother's and Indian father's experiences of two

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different wars based on religious and ethnic purity. Ghostly war footage is intercut with ethereal body-scapes and rich, impressionistic imagery.

## **TWO FORMS**

1998, 4 minutes, US, experimental

Director, Cinematographer, Editor: Shanti Thakur

Two Forms is a sensual and meditative study of two interlocking hands, ambiguous in gender. Black and white extreme close-ups suggest other corporeal forms and textures, reminiscent of the photography of Weston.

## **CIRCLES**

1997, 57 minutes, National Film Board of Canada, documentary,

Director, Researcher: Shanti Thakur

Explores Native American restorative justice through circle sentencing in the Yukon, where convicted criminals are sentenced by their community, victims, family and justice players.

## **DOMINO**

1994, 45 minutes, National Film Board of Canada, documentary

Producer, Director, Writer, Researcher: Shanti Thakur

Explores the poignant stories of interracial families through the children's eyes.

## **CROSSING BORDERS**

1992, 25 minutes, Canada, documentary

Producer, Director, Writer: Shanti Thakur

Follows the murder of a white woman in a mixed community in Montreal. Video was used as a tool to build dialogue between the Black community center and their white neighbors.

## AWARDS

- 2023 Best Feature Documentary, Berlin Indie Film Festival GERMANY
- 2022 Best Feature Documentary, Buffalo International Film Festival
- 2022 Award of Merit, Special Mention: Documentary, Accolade Global Film Competition
- 2022 Award of Merit, Special Mention: Experimental, Accolade Global Film Competition
- 2015 Award of Excellence, Accolade Global Film Competition
- 2014 CINE Special Jury Award, Narrative Short Film
- 2013 CINE Golden Eagle Award, Narrative Short Film
- 2013 Best of the Fest: Grand Remi Award—Experimental Film, Worldfest—Houston Film Festival
- 2012 Best Narrative Film, Columbus International Film Festival
- 2010 Platinum Remi Award Winner—Experimental Film, Worldfest—Houston Film Festival

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## (con't)

- 2009 Best Narrative Film Award, Columbus International Film Festival
- 2009 Best Experimental Film, Los Angeles International Short Film Festival (**Oscar Qualifier**)
- 2009 Best Narrative Film - Faculty Jury Award, University Film & Video Association Annual Conference
- 2009 Best of the Fest, Chicago International REEL Short Film Festival
- 2006 Best of 25 Years of Black Maria Film Festival, Museum of Modern Art, New York City
- 2003 Best Short—Audience Award, New Haven Film Festival
- 2003 Best Editing—Rhode Island International Film Festival
- 2003 Director's Citation Award—22nd Annual Black Maria Film Festival
- 2001 Pew Fellowship of the Art, Media Arts
- 2001 Pennsylvania Fellowship for the Arts, Film and Media
- 2000 Best Documentary Short Film, Cleveland International Film Festival (**Oscar Qualifier**)
- 2000 Honorable Mention, Big Muddy Film Festival
- 2000 Bronze Award-Experimental Film, Worldfest—Houston Film Festival
- 2000 Cannes Film Festival, France, “Emerging Filmmakers” showcase
- 2000 Best Documentary, Nextframe Film Festival
- 2000 Best Editing, Nextframe Film Festival
- 2000 Best Documentary, City Paper's Philadelphia Independent Film Contest
- 2000 Bronze Plaque, Columbus International Film Festival
- 2000 Gold Award—Documentary, New York Expo of Short Films, New York City
- 2000 Best Documentary Short, CineWomen New York
- 2000 Director's Choice Award, Black Maria Film and Video Festival
- 1999 Silver Apple Award, National Educational Media Network, Oakland, CA
- 1999 Best Documentary (Nomination), Dreamspeakers Film Festival, Edmonton, Canada
- 1999 Best Documentary, University of Film & Video Association Annual Conference
- 1995 Bronze Apple, National Educational Media Network, Oakland, CA

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Director: Shanti Thakur

Photo credit: Elizabeth Lamarck

My 86-year-old father handed me a crinkled blue letter and said quietly, *“Maybe you can do something with this.”* This is the letter his father sent him from India...which was left unopened for 20 years after his father’s death.

This is the beginning of the story.

Of race and masculinity, of love and betrayal, and finally, of transformation.

My father began to share stories of intergenerational trauma, colonization, coming-of-age, and creating a surrogate family. As a director, I wanted to steer away from the earnest, sociological portraits of non-Western people so often seen in documentaries. Instead, I created a cinematic style to bring his story to life, and to build his internal landscape.

Memory is like poetry. Facts and dates are un-moveable. But the way we create metaphor and dreams in our lives is an act of survival.

The goal is to represent the ‘un-representable’ through beautifully woven vignettes and creative reenactments contoured by archival footage. My use of poetic voice-over is the continuum that bridges three generations, three continents and three cultures.



# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

ON LOCATION: INDIA



# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

ON LOCATION: INDIA



# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

ON LOCATION: NYC



# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## CREDITS

director, writer, producer	SHANTI THAKUR
executive producer	MARK LIPSON
director of photography	BENJAMIN WOLF
sound design and original music	QUENTIN CHIAPPETTA
editor	SHANTI THAKUR
production design	JOHN MONACO
consulting editor	BO MEHRAD
line producer (india)	AMITABHA BHATTACHARYA

## CAST

hari	RAVI GURU SINGH
ruth	SINI MATTILA
california housewife	COCO CONROY
nirad chaudhuri	AMITABHA BHATTACHARYA
hari (boy)	EMPEROR KAIYUS
narrator	SHANTI THAKUR

## CREW

cinematographer	benjamin wolf
1 <sup>st</sup> assistant camera	tarek bouraque
production assistant	elif gorken
special effects makeup	john monaco
hair stylist	maya chenoh
props	hoj +steiner
wardrobe	hoj + steiner

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

## **POST**

vocal coach  
voice recording  
assistant editors

camille hayes  
red hook post  
mariana benevello  
harry jackson

DI colorist  
DI online editor  
DI producers  
DI manager  
DI technical supervisor  
DI executive producer  
post production services

sj rogers smith  
sj rogers smith  
kate c albers  
drew kilgore  
sandy patch  
will cox  
final frame nyc

closed captions

bulls eye caption services

## **ORIGINAL MUSIC PERFORMED BY:**

cello  
guitar, bass  
piano, mbira,  
percussion & accordion

erik jacobson  
matthew sullivan  
quentin chiappetta

nocturne opus 9,  
no. 2 in e flat major  
by frédérrik chopin  
performed by

quentin chiappetta

sound mix

medianoise nyc

## **ARCHIVAL IMAGES**

getty images  
shutterstock  
u.s. national archives  
private collection of hari and ruth thakur

# TERRIBLE CHILDREN

*the autobiography of an unknown indian*  
by nirad c. chaudhuri  
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© 1951 nirad c. chaudhuri  
book cover used with permission

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