



# THE SHAPE OF WATER

*The Shape of Water* is a feature documentary that tells the stories of powerful, imaginative and visionary women confronting the destructive development of the Third World with new cultures and a passion for change. The film takes us to Senegal, Israel/Palestine, Brazil, and India where these new cultures, alongside old traditions, end female genital cutting (FGC), offer innovative forms of opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and show how women are spearheading the implementation of renewable resources and rainforest preservation by tapping trees to obtain rubber. *The Shape of Water* also takes us to a vast co-operative of rural women in India (SEWA) and, in the foothills of the Himalayas, to a farm, *Navdanya*, set up to preserve biodiversity and women's role as seed keepers. By interweaving images, words, and the actions of Khady, Bilkusben, Oraiza, Dona Antonia, and Gila *The Shape of Water* offers fresh and nuanced insights into the lives of women in the Third World.

Narratives of rescue and salvation often underlie documentaries about women's lives in the Third World. In contrast, *The Shape of Water* offers a complex look that is simultaneously inspiring and yet candid about the contradictions that face women in the Third World as they make change. The rise of globalization, the end of the Cold War, environmental degradation, and failed development in the Third World have increasingly feminized poverty despite women's entry into the labor force in unprecedented numbers. In contrast to many documentaries about the lives of Third World women which present the women as passive victims of their circumstances, this film explores women's efforts to generate vibrant alternatives which dispel apathy by addressing the root causes of poverty. It traces the vital efforts of women who are pioneering social justice and celebrates their success while probing the tensions in their lives.

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI  
E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN





*Scenes from the film.....*

We open in **Brazil's** Amazonian rainforest, where we accompany Oraiza and Taio who tap trees for rubber. We watch the precise cuts being made, cuts which allow the trees' red bark to release milky latex into battered tin cups. We follow the rubber as it enters the factory for processing – encountering the din of the factory as we watch the young men, the blades, the granulators and the ovens produce the rubber for Pirelli tires.

Later we walk into the life of Dona Antonia. a rubber tapper and a mother who insists that rubber, a renewable resource, is central to the preservation of the rainforest. We witness her stoic portrayal of the assassination of her close friend, Chico Mendes, an icon of unionization and crusader against agri-business and environmental degradation. While in her garden, as well as over scenes of women and children standing in the front lines of the *empates*/demonstrations against the massive tree-cutting machines of agribusiness she communicates – through songs and words – her vision for preserving the environment and a better life for all.

In **Senegal** we meet Khady who tells us what it was like to be cut at the age of seven and watch a lively discussion amongst women about the reasons to preserve or abandon this practice. We encounter young women who discuss the profound relevance of FGC in their lives, and attend a live performance by ALIF, a feminist rap group in Dakar. The voices of other women are heard over extracts from dramatic performances against FGC, street theatre produced by groups of villagers and used to spread this dynamic new culture forged out of an ancient tradition. We also meet Mariam, who used to do this cutting and has now stopped the practice.

*We have danced with the knife for many years.....*

## THE SHAPE OF WATER

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI  
E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN





# THE SHAPE OF WATER

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI  
E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~  
INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN

Images of women dancing with knives, throwing them away, using them to plant gardens are underscored with stories of the struggle to end genital cutting and the consequent creation of dynamic new cultures. Yet these revolutionary ideas also create conflict:

*We're not doing it any more. But we want the government to understand that if you vote a law to stop doing something that has earned you a living all these years, you have to help us make a living in another way.*

Mariam, Excisionist

We then travel to **Israel**. A shot of a Women in Black (WIB) vigil, a women's peace vigil which has worked courageously for years to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, fills the screen while an animated Gila tells us about WIB, dismantling checkpoints, and the resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Smadar an Arab (non-white) Jew who migrated to Israel three years ago – tells us about WIB and Israeli racism, evoking images of the ideals used to attract Jewish settlers into Palestine:

*they speak about little houses and scenery like the Alps, like red roofs, nice chubby cows, grazing grass*

Smadar Lavie, Arab-Jewish citizen

Over tense imagery of urban checkpoints we progress along the fortress-like presence of the recently built Security Wall – called the "Apartheid Wall" by many. It is at this wall that we meet the women whose commitment to peace is realized by creating security in everyday life.

This wall anchors the geography of racism in Jerusalem.





## THE SHAPE OF WATER

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI  
E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN



Through a bustling day in the market in Ahmedabad, **India**, we see bright colors, fabrics, food, clothing...women of all ages, religions, and builds, working at their stalls, buyers and sellers, taking care of a day's business. These images transport us from the rainforest of Brazil to the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in **India**, and on to the life of Hiraben, a sixty-year old market trader. Hiraben recounts how she and other women market traders were kicked and beaten for trying to sell their wares but, how, thanks to their determined self-organization into SEWA (Hindi for *service*), they are able to conduct their trade with dignity and in peace. SEWA is a co-operative of over 700,000 women, some of whom arrive at the newly renovated SEWA buildings and bank to work or apply for loans or microcredit. The power of the women who ensured SEWA's survival is apparent as we watch local women at the SEWA offices, making deals and signing on the dotted lines.... their signatures made possible through SEWA's already-in-place literacy program. More than just a means for an entrepreneur to thrive, SEWA humanizes economics, considering each applicant's individual situation and providing a health insurance plan as needed.

We travel through the streets of Ahmedabad with Hiraben, and visit with Bilkusben, a Muslim kite-maker whose products we see in the annual January kite-festival in Gujarat. Shots of meetings of thousands of rural women demonstrate the working democracy of SEWA, with Hiraben representing its operation in practice.

The themes of the film – new traditions, peace, the environment, social justice – are revealed through the personal stories of the five women. In so doing *The Shape of Water* pays tribute to women around the world who are creating social justice, laying bare the tensions and contradictions that ground their commitment.

## PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

**Kum-Kum Bhavnani (Producer and Director:** bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu) is a scholar, writer, and cultural critic who has worked periodically with broadcast media in the UK in the 1980s, before coming to the USA in 1991. She created radio programs for her trades union organizations interviewing organizers such as Arthur Scargill (Leader, Mineworkers Union). She was also the initiator and billed as researcher for *Resist and Survive* (30 minutes: directed by Dee Dee Glass and broadcast on Channel Four on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1983). That programme followed three black women's groups in Manchester who worked on economic (employment co-operative), health (challenging white-defined notions of sickle cell anemia) and cultural/sexual (hair and sexuality) aspects of black women's daily lives in the UK.

**Sheena Malhotra (Associate Producer)** is Assistant Professor, Women's Studies at California State University, Northridge. Her career traverses the film and television industries. Prior to earning her doctorate in 1999, she was Executive Producer and Commissioning Editor of Programs for Business India Television (1994-1996), which included foreign program buying for the network. She has also worked in the Indian film industry as an Assistant Director to Shekhar Kapur (director of *Bandit Queen* and *Elizabeth*). In 2002 and 2003 she was Co-ordinator and Prop Master for *Easy* (Over Easy Productions) as well as for *Island of Brilliance* (working title: Brilliant Productions), and is currently Creative Producer on Tavishi Alagh's documentary film *Bollywood Crossings*.

**Johanna Demetrakas (Editorial Consultant)** was a nominee for an EMMY award (Outstanding Craft of Editing, 2004) for *Amandla: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* which has won, amongst others, the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, Audience and Freedom of Expression Award, and the International Film Critics Documentary Award. Ms Demetrakas also edits with the director Renee Tajima. Examples of those works include *My America Or Honk If You Love Buddha*, *The Last Beat Movie*, and the 2003/4 PBS documentary Special *My Journey Home*. In the past she has worked with Haskell Wexler (*Bus Riders Union*), Philip Rodriguez (*God is my Co-Pilot*) and directed/edited *Right Out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party*.

**Rachelle Dang (Camera)** is a videographer and editor (*A Vermont Story* – screened in October 2003 in New York City) who has also worked as an editor (*Ruptures*), production assistant and assistant editor (*The Power of an Illusion*: broadcast PBS 2003) and instructs students in camera techniques. She was the camera operator for *The Shape of Water* footage shot in Senegal and Israel/Palestine in February 2003, in Brazil, October 2003, and India, November 2003.

**Sarah Levy (Camera)** has received the 1999 American Society of Cinematographers Student and the Kodak Emerging Filmmaker (2001) Awards. She shot interviews for *Tell Them Who You Are* (Dir Mark Wexler: 2004 official selection Toronto and Venice Festivals). Her work has been screened on PBS, Showtime, ABC, CBS, NBC. She also co-directed and shot *Tak for Alt: Survival of a Human Spirit* screened as part of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences Contemporary Documentary series for 2000 – "A survey of outstanding recent work in the documentary field".) and was the DP on the independent feature *The Graffiti Artist* (which premiered at 2004 Berlin Film Festival).

**Bo Anderson (Sound)** is a music producer and recording engineer based in Rio de Janeiro. He has done location sound recording, post-production and sound design on numerous documentaries, short films and multimedia projects in the USA and Brazil. He has produced music for release in a variety of mediums (his most recent release is *Tudo Bem* on Tru-Thoughts Records). Currently, he produces a modern global music radio show for Anti-Combate FM in Rio de Janeiro. He worked on the Brazil, India and some Senegal footage for *The Shape of Water*, and has composed the original music score for the documentary.

**Monique Zavistovski (Editor and Story)** has an MFA in Cinema-TV Production (2001) from the University of Southern California. She has edited a number of feature-length and PBS documentaries, These include *Mboutoukou* (2000), about a young boy's quest in Cameroon (official selection 2002 Venice International Film Festival and over 30 other festivals worldwide), *A Sound Education* (1999), a 30 minute documentary about music education for Korean and African-American youth in South Central Los Angeles (winner, Best Short Film at the Cleveland International Film Festival), and *Roam*, a short narrative about two homeless Latino boys trying to survive in Los Angeles (official selection 2002 Sundance Film Festival).

**Ryan Pettey (Additional Editing and Story)** graduated from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a bachelor's degree in Film Studies. He has worked as an editor for the past 6 years, working on everything from commercials to short films. On the side, Ryan has also produced nationally distributed ministry video. Ryan currently resides in Portland and is working on his first feature documentary.

**Matthew Harnack (Additional Editing and Story)** is a recent graduate of UC Santa Barbara with a degree in Film Studies. As a student he focused on new media, digital post-production and image mastery. Presently, he shares his time as the Senior Artist for both the Center for Film, Television and New Media and the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center at the University of California Santa Barbara.

# THE SHAPE OF WATER

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI  
E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN



# THE SHAPE OF WATER

A DOCUMENTARY BY KUM-KUM BHAVNANI

E: bhavnani@soc.ucsb.edu P: 805.898.0880

~ NARRATED BY SUSAN SARANDON ~

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION WRITTEN BY  
EDWIDGE DANTICAT AND JOHN FORAN

## ADVISORS

**John Foran** is an academic and activist. He co-wrote the introduction to *The Shape of Water* and offered professional feedback and childcare during its production. His latest book is *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions* (2005) and his case study teaching (found at [www.soc.ucsb.edu/projects/casemethod/](http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/projects/casemethod/)) has received various awards.

**Salem Mekuria** is an award winning, Ethiopian-born/black-Emmy-nominated (*As I Remember It*) independent film-maker whose *Deluge* (1967) was screened on Channel Four and South African TV. Her most recent work is *Ruptures*, a video triptych installed at the Venice Biennale (June – November 2003.)

**Sara Miller McCune** is Publisher, Founder, Chairman, of Sage Publications. She was also one of the founding Directors of Sage Publications India Private Ltd, and is still a member of its Board of Directors today. Ms. McCune is involved with numerous academic and philanthropic committees and organizations. She has received a number of special awards, including the “Outstanding International Service Award” which she was awarded by the Knowledge Utilization Society in 1993. She has a strong personal commitment to working with women in the Third World, where she has traveled extensively, as well as to arts and cultural projects.

**Raoul Peck** has made a number of strikingly powerful films to do with Third World issues. In the 1980s, he directed a number of television shows and films, including *Haitian Corner*, shot in Brooklyn and Haiti. In the late 1990s, he was Minister of Culture in Haiti, where his eighteen month tenure led to the first National Cultural Plan in Haiti. *Lumumba*, his widely acclaimed, award winning, (Cannes Directors Fortnight, Paul Robeson Award, Los Angeles Pan-African Film Festival) feature-length drama was first screened in 2000. In 2001 he completed his documentary *Profit ... and Nothing But!*, and in 2004 HBO screened *Sometimes in April*, his feature film about Rwanda. In 2001 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from Human Rights Watch.

**Phyllis de Picciotto** is a Film, Media and Marketing Consultant and an International Educator and Lecturer in Film Studies. She has been actively involved in the film industry for 23 years as an independent film exhibitor with Laemmle Theatres, Metropolitan Theatres and other chains on the West Coast. She is the founder and was the director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival for 13 years. a Member of the Santa Barbara City Arts Advisory Committee and of their Visual Arts in Public Places Committee. At present she is a consultant for a number of film related projects,

**Candace Schermerhorn** directed *You Don't Know Dick/Courageous Hearts of Transsexual Men* (1996) has been a consultant to *The Shape of Water* from the start. Her background is as production manager for *Downside Up* (2001) and associate producer for *Coming to Light* (PBS broadcast 2001). She implemented the distribution strategy for *Downside Up* and the web production for *Coming to Light*. She was Program Manager for the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF: 2004) and Documentary Award Jurist for the SBIFF in 2005.

**Aradhana Seth** is a prominent documentary film director. She completed her Masters from the Mass Communications Research Centre at the Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi in 1987. Following that course of study she was an Assistant Director on the feature, *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones*, whose screenplay was written by Arundhati Roy. She has worked with George Lucas on the *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, shot in Benares, India, and also with Deepa Mehta as the production designer for Mehta's films *Fire and Earth*. She also designed Somnath Sen's film, *Leela*. Her latest film *Dam/Age*, is a chronicle of the fight against the Narmada Dam and the related court case against Arundhati Roy.

**Barking Lizard Post Production Services (Trailer Editors: Rick McDonald/Ryan Pettey)** have extensive experience in working on award winning documentaries, several feature films (including *An American Werewolf in Paris*, *Star Trek Generations*, *Holes*) and national commercials. With a studio in Santa Barbara, Barking Lizard is close to Hollywood and has been involved in documentaries that have been finalists at Sundance (1998 and 1999) and that have aired on Showtime and The Learning Channel.