

Reporter Zero

A FILM BY CARRIE LOZANO



Reporter Zero is the first documentary film about journalist Randy Shilts' groundbreaking AIDS reporting and the struggles he faced trying to get the nation and his community to reckon with the devastating truth about the disease.

"Filmmaker Carrie Lozano's provocative film isn't content to document a crucial historical moment, but delivers a sharp poke at those complacent about the disease's continuing devastation."

Michael Fox, SF Weekly



***Gold Medal**
2006 Student Academy Award

***Juror's Citation, 2006 Black Maria Film Festival**



***Nominated for Best Documentary**
2006 Berlin International Film Festival

Synopsis

(TRT: 24:38, USA, Video, 2006)

“It’s been a helluva time to be a reporter.... As far as I’m concerned, writing upbeat stories during the AIDS epidemic would be like writing about party favors on the Titanic. I’ve struggled for weeks to explain the real story. Nothing came out in standard, linear journalism. But then, none of this makes linear sense.”

—**Randy Shilts, July 29, 1984**

At a time when the media seems unable or unwilling to assert itself as the public’s watchdog, *Reporter Zero* is an inspiring reminder that journalists can make a difference. *Reporter Zero* is the first documentary film about Randy Shilts’ groundbreaking AIDS reporting and the struggles he faced trying to get the nation and his community to reckon with the devastating truth about AIDS. While most publications shied away from covering what was considered a “gay disease,” Shilts, the nation’s first openly gay reporter at a major media outlet, reported from the frontlines of the AIDS crisis, sounding alarm after alarm in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

While the media, federal institutions, and even scientists downplayed news about the spread of AIDS in the 1980s, Shilts knew that the disease would become a global crisis. *Reporter Zero* tells the story of how Shilts’ candid, fearless reporting alienated many within and beyond the gay community. He was, critics said, “self-interested,” “biased,” “a gay Uncle Tom,” “a token fag.”

Ultimately, people came to realize that Shilts’ warnings were all too tragically accurate. In 1987, his research and writing resulted in one of the most important books of our time—*And the Band Played On*. Yet, at the height of his career, tragedy struck.

Reporter Zero tells the dramatic story of Shilts’ fight to contain a devastating epidemic and his determination to rattle a nation in denial. His story exemplifies the power of journalism, represents a critical moment in the history of gay rights, documents massive institutional failure, and reminds us that in spite of flaws and psychic struggles, one person can make a difference.

Key Personnel

Director/Producer/Editor: Carrie Lozano

Reporter Zero is **Carrie Lozano's** directorial debut. She most recently produced the feature-length documentary *The Weather Underground*, which premiered at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the 2003 Best Documentary Academy Award.

After studying with filmmakers Craig Baldwin and Ernie Gehr, she began making hand-processed, experimental films in the mid-1990s. She has worked in the San Francisco film community as a print writer and editor for the past seven years, and also has a professional background in health-care policy. She earned bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Film Studies from U.C. Berkeley in 1996, and recently earned her master's degree in journalism from U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism where she studied with acclaimed filmmakers Jon Else and Deborah Hoffmann.

She is currently co-producing a new film with Sam Green entitled *The Universal Language* and editing a film about San Francisco's summer of love for American Experience (dirs. Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco).

Director of Photography: Jigar Mehta

Jigar Mehta has worked on feature films, television programs, and documentaries that have taken him to France, Kashmir, and West Africa, for the past seven years. He recently did camera work for *My Flesh & Blood*, recipient of the Audience Award for Best Documentary and Grand Jury Prize for Best Director at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival.

He received his BS in Mechanical Engineering from U.C. Berkeley and a master's in journalism from Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. He is currently working on Jon Else's upcoming film, *The Wonders Are Many*.

Executive Producer: Charlotte Lagarde

Charlotte Lagarde recently produced and directed the documentary *Heart of the Sea: Kapolioka'ehukai* (2002), about Hawaiian legend Rell Sun. It won the PBS Independent Lens Audience Award 2003, the Audience Award at both the San Francisco International Film Festival and the Newport Beach Film Festival, and the Best Documentary Award at the Ashland Independent Film Festival.

Lagarde's productions *Voting in America* (2004), *Every Child Should Have a Chance* (2001), *Tribal Sovereignty: Unplugged* (1998) and *Juvenile Justice: Unplugged* (1997), are distributed in public schools throughout the United States. Lagarde's documentaries *Swell* (1996), about four generations of female surfers in Santa Cruz, California and *Zeuf* (1994), a documentary about a woman surfer's struggle with breast cancer (Directors' Choice award at the Black Maria Film and Video Festival) were broadcast on PBS stations and the Sundance Channel, and are currently in distribution on home video.

Lagarde holds an MA in documentary filmmaking from Stanford University, and a BA in Political Science. She founded Swell Cinema in 1996 and teaches media studies to high school students. She is currently producing *Beautiful Son*, a documentary on healing autism to come out in November 2006.

Interviewees In order of Appearance

Steve Newman: Randy Shilts' ex-partner
Dr. Marcus Conant: AIDS physician and researcher
Michael Denny: Randy Shilts' book editor
Keith Power: Former *San Francisco Chronicle* assistant editor
Susan Sward: *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter
David Perlman: *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter
Dr. Mervyn Silverman: Former San Francisco public health director

Credits

Director/Producer/Editor
Carrie Lozano

Director of Photography
Jigar Mehta

Creative Advisors
Jon Else
Deborah Hoffmann

Executive Producers
Charlotte Lagarde
Carrie Lozano

Sound
Sachi Cunningham
Daniel Freed
Rob Harris
Brent Huffman
Jason Marsh
Jeff Plunkett

Music
Tarentel

Narrator
Daniel Moulthrop

Online Editor
Angela Reginato

Sound Mix
Daniel Olmsted

Technical Advisors
Karen Everett

Kean Sakata

Additional Advisors

Cynthia Gorney

Sam Green

Dr. Andrew Moss

Archivists

Tim Wilson, San Francisco Public Library

Richard Geiger, San Francisco Chronicle

Graphics

Jigar Mehta

Graphics and Website design

Renaud Garnier

Online Facility

The Bay Area Video Coalition

Sound Facility

Berkeley Sound Artists

Research/Postproduction Assistant

A.K. Conrad

Additional Music

"When you touch me"

Performed by Taana Gardner

Courtesy of West End Records

Archival Footage/Materials

ABC

BBC Worldwide

The GLBT Historical Society

KPIX, San Francisco

KQED, San Francisco

KRON, San Francisco

NBC

The New York Post

The New York Times

Oddball Film + Video

The San Francisco Chronicle

The San Francisco Public Library

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Gary Shilts
Jim Van Buskirk

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