

INCITE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

Seoul Train

기차

"Drive, walk, run - but however you do it,
be sure to see 'Seoul Train'"

Denver Post



The gripping documentary exposé into the life and death
of North Koreans as they try to escape their homeland and China

www.SeoulTrain.com

Incite Productions Inc.
c/o Jim Butterworth & Lisa Sleeth
(917) 385-1024
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incite
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PRESS KIT



"So compelling that you can't stop watching even though you know it will haunt your dreams."

Nancy DeWolfe Smith, The Wall Street Journal



"If this film doesn't sear your heart, you haven't got one."

Bloomberg News

"A truly remarkable film...raw emotional power."

Eric Heginbotham, Council on Foreign Relations



"Drive, walk, run – but however you do it, be sure to see SEOUL TRAIN."

Denver Post



"A harrowing geopolitical study...SEOUL TRAIN is a must see."

Honolulu Weekly

"A gripping documentary."

Bob Woodruff, ABC News



"SEOUL TRAIN is the definitive exposé of this large, growing and generally unknown crisis and captures perfectly how hundreds of thousands of refugees get lost in the complex web of geopolitics. It is a must-see by everyone concerned with human rights, Asia and world affairs."

Senator Sam Brownback



"SEOUL TRAIN is an unsettling foray into the constant struggle to escape human rights violations too often ignored by Western Countries."

International Documentary Magazine



"A very moving and powerful film."

Ted Sorenson, special counsel and adviser to President John F. Kennedy



"A passionate call for action"

Creative Loafing, Atlanta



"SEOUL TRAIN has the intimate and privileged-insider feel of a really good *Frontline* piece"

New Times, Broward-Palm Beach, Florida



"I thought the film was terrific. I thought it was balanced. The reason I like this film is that it's very realistic; it is not a polemic. It gives us things we can work at."

I think it's a really excellent piece of work."

Ambassador Donald P. Gregg, President and Chairman, The Korea Society

"Emotionally evocative"

Cleveland Free Times



"An unprecedented exposé...a stunning portrait of a humanitarian crisis in the making"

Bright Lights Film Journal



"Skillfully sews heart-wrenching found footage...Most impressive is the fact that the threat of nuclear weapons isn't mentioned once."

Austin Chronicle



"A sobering investigation"

Orange Country Weekly



"SEOUL TRAIN is a vivid portrayal of the plight of North Korean escapees. It was a moving and disturbing film that succeeded in giving [them] a personality and a human face."

Carl Gershman, President, National Endowment for Democracy

"A groundbreaking documentary."

KoreAm Journal



"A powerful documentary that clearly reveals the tragic human conditions in North Korea."

Venice Magazine



"SEOUL TRAIN is a must see."

Walter Chaw, critic, Film Freak Central



"SEOUL TRAIN is an intensely visceral, illuminating, and deeply moving document of inspired activism against a seemingly unconquerable tide of moral apathy, bureaucratic inertia, and inhuman politics."

Strictly Film School



SELECTED HEADLINES

8 June 2006	Twelve North Korean Defectors Arrested in Thailand	JoongAng Ilbo
8 June 2006	North Korean Defectors Arrested in Laos	Korea Times
25 May 2006	U.S. to Grant Asylum to Shenyang Four	JoongAng Ilbo
24 May 2006	Other Asian nations also repatriating N.K. refugees	Amnesty International
21 May 2006	1st North Korean Defectors Arrive in L.A.	Los Angeles Times
9 May 2006	Chun Ki-won: More Defectors Are Coming to the U.S.	JoongAng Ilbo
7 May 2006	U.S. Grants Asylum to Refugees From North Korea	Washington Post
7 May 2006	6 North Korean Defectors Make Their Way to U.S.	Los Angeles Times
4 May 2006	Human Rights Watch Urges Pyongyang to Accept Monitoring of Food Aid	Korea Times
30 April 2006	NK Defector Granted US Asylum	Korea Times
16 April 2006	20 Former N. Koreans Seeking Asylum in US	Korea Times
28 March 2006	4 N. Korean Defectors Arrive From Hungary	Korea Times
19 February 2006	Hundreds of N. Koreans Find Shelter in Europe	Chosun Ilbo
7 January 2006	By Order of North Korea, U.N. Halts Food Assistance There	New York Times
4 January 2006	Norway Grants Refugee Status to 2 NK Defectors	Korea Times
18 December 2005	4 NK Defectors Arrested in Thailand	Korea Times
18 December 2005	Seoul Isolated by Passive Stance on NK Rights Abuse	Korea Times
12 December 2005	USAID Chief Says He Witnessed Mass Burial in NK	Korea Times
11 December 2005	1,200 N. Koreans Defect to South in 1st 11 Months	Korea Times
18 November 2005	UN Resolution on Rights in North	Korea Times
27 October 2005	13 N.Koreans Seek Help at Korean School in China	Chosun Ilbo
10 October 2005	China Deports 7 N. Korean Refugees Sheltering at International School	Chosun Ilbo
23 September 2005	15 S. Koreans in Chinese Lockup for helping N. Koreans	Korea Times
20 August 2005	Bush Names Special Envoy For Rights in North Korea	New York Times
12 June 2005	WFP Halts Operation of 10 Food Processing Plants in North Korea	Yonhap News
8 June 2005	North Korea Calls Food Shortage "Most Crucial Economic Matter"	Yonhap News
8 June 2005	Seven North Korean Defectors Enter Thai Embassy in Vietnam	Korea Times
26 April 2005	WFP to Suspend Food Aid to North Korea	Korea Times
4 April 2005	UN Report: N. Korean Female Defectors Suffer Sexual Exploitation	Yonhap News
28 March 2005	Thailand and Laos to Keep Out North Korean Defectors	Chosun Ilbo
10 March 2005	Crackdowns, Public Executions on China-North Korean Border	Chosun Ilbo
23 Jan 2005	WFP: North Korea Reduces Food Rations	Yonhap News
17 Jan 2005	Foreign Food Aid Goes to North Korean Military	Yonhap News
12 Jan 2005	China Foils News Conference by South Korean Lawmakers	Korea Times
5 Jan 2005	Activists Campaign for Boycott of Beijing Olympics	Yonhap News
4 Jan 2005	Seoul Closing Door on Mass Defections	Korea Times
29 Dec 2004	Mongolia Rejects Refugee Camp for North Korean Defectors	Korea Times
24 Dec 2004	Defectors Know Not All Will Survive 8,000 km Trek	Chosun Ilbo
20 Dec 2004	Seoul Mulls Measures to Limit Political Defections	Chosun Ilbo
16 Dec 2004	Mongolian Leader to Visit North Korea to Discuss Defectors	Korea Times
13 Dec 2004	Japan to Suspend Food Aid for North Korea	Yonhap News
6 Dec 2004	WFP Cuts Food Aid for North Korean Province	Korea Times
2 Dec 2004	A Spy Turns Up Among Defectors	JoongAng Ilbo
24 Nov 2004	Chinese Troops Set Up Camp on North's Border	JoongAng Ilbo
23 Nov 2004	North Korea to Suffer Food Shortage	Korea Times
17 Nov 2004	China Repatriates 20 North Korean Defectors, Activists Say	Yonhap News
14 Nov 2004	34 North Korean Defectors Leave for Other Countries	Korea Times
09 Nov 2004	China to Repatriate 70 North Koreans	Korea Times
03 Nov 2004	U.S. Rejects North Korean Defector at U.S. Consulate in Russia	JoongAng Ilbo
29 Oct 2004	China Targets Activists Who Aid Defectors	JoongAng Ilbo
28 Oct 2004	China to "Punish" Two South Korean Activists	Yonhap News
27 Oct 2004	Beijing Gets Tough with North Korean Defectors	Korea Times
22 Oct 2004	29 North Koreans Enter South Korean School in Beijing	Korea Times
19 Oct 2004	Two North Koreans Defect Via West Sea	Yonhap News
17 Oct 2004	Two North Korean Defectors Arrive From Mongolia	Korea Times
15 Oct 2004	Asylum-Seeking North Korean Defectors Arrested in Mongolia	Chosun Ilbo
14 Oct 2004	Two North Korean Defectors to Seek Asylum in U.S.	Chosun Ilbo
15 Oct 2004	20 North Korean Defectors Enter Consulate in Beijing	Korea Times
08 Oct 2004	Defectors in Canadian Embassy Seek Asylum in South Korea	Yonhap News
07 Oct 2004	10,000 Chinese Troops Dispatched to North Korean Border	Chosun Ilbo
05 Oct 2004	North Korean Defectors Seek Asylum in U.S.	Korea Times
01 Oct 2004	U.S. School Rebuffs 9 North Korean Defectors	Korea Herald
02 Oct 2004	China Wants Custody of Defectors	Korea Herald
29 Sep 2004	45 North Koreans break into the Canadian Embassy	Chosun Ilbo
17 Sep 2004	North Korea Admits Labor Camp	Korea Times
01 Sep 2004	29 North Korean Refugees Storm Japanese School in Beijing	Korea Times

SYNOPSIS

With its riveting footage of a secretive “underground railroad,” SEOUL TRAIN is the gripping documentary into the life and death of North Koreans as they try to escape their homeland and China. It is the definitive exposé into a growing and potentially explosive humanitarian crisis, portraying not only the human toll, but also the complex geopolitics of a crisis that threatens to undermine the stability of East Asian peace. By combining vérité footage, personal stories and interviews with experts and government officials, SEOUL TRAIN depicts the flouting of international laws by major countries, the inaction and bureaucracy of the United Nations, and the heroics of activists that put themselves in harm’s way to save the refugees.

Thousands of SEOUL TRAIN screenings worldwide on TV, in the theater and at community events have had an immeasurable impact in raising awareness of the crisis and, as a result, have focused policy attention on the issue, motivated countless people to donate time and resources, incited major international NGOs to report on the crisis, spurred the United Nations into action, and ensured that the crisis remains forefront in the conscious of the public and policymakers. Nonetheless, the crisis persists.



Two-year-old Kim Han-mi looks on in agony as her mother is wrestled to the ground by Chinese soldiers

Today, there are an estimated 250,000 North Korean refugees living underground in China. They escaped a food crisis and other persecutions at home that have claimed the lives of approximately 3 million in the past 10 years. As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stands idly by, the Chinese Government – in direct violation of international laws to which it’s a party – systematically arrests and forcibly repatriates hundreds of these refugees each month. Defecting from North Korea is a capital offense, and repatriated refugees face human rights abuses ranging from concentration camps and torture to forced abortion and summary executions.

For a lucky few refugees, however, there is hope. A group of multinational activists has taken it upon themselves to create an Underground Railroad. Via a network of safe houses and escape routes, the activists – at great personal risk – help the refugees on daring escapes to freedom over thousands of miles of Chinese territory. This is an odyssey where betrayal and deceit lurk around every corner, and the price of getting caught likely means death. It’s an epic tale involving years on the lam living in underground shelters, North Korean and Chinese agents, double-crossings, covert border crossings, and the terror of what happens if they get caught.

In order to capture the essence and urgency of the current crisis, the stories of several refugee groups are told through actual footage. We follow these refugees from their arrival in China – before they begin their escape attempts – as they recount the horror they left behind. We also hear their fears of being caught and sent back to North Korea, where they know their doomed fate. We watch as they make their respective escape attempts and, in dramatic conclusion, we see the outcomes: some make it to freedom; others, including an 8½ month pregnant Nam Chun-mi, get caught by the Chinese and are sent to their demise.

As if the current problem was not bad enough, estimates are that upon the fall of Kim Jong-il’s regime, 2-3 million refugees will flood into China across the shallow Tumen and Yalu Rivers that divide the two countries. (Note: China’s is the only navigable border from North Korea, since the DMZ forms an impenetrable border with South Korea.) If China, UNHCR, and the international community aren’t prepared for this, it could shape into one of the worst humanitarian crises ever, and pose an economic and security threat beyond the immediate region. And given that Pyongyang is in U.S. crosshairs, many expect that regime-change is only a question of when, not if.

In SEOUL TRAIN, we meet the activists on the front line, learn of the risks they take for their refugees and for themselves, and see firsthand the toll their work takes on them. We also hear from the Chinese Government, who articulates its country’s claims as to why the North Koreans are not refugees; from the UNHCR as to why it has failed to save even one North Korean refugee; from members of the U.S. Congress that have publicly challenged both the PRC and UNHCR; and from other experts (academics and NGOs) on the crisis at hand and as they foretell the impending disaster.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In July 2003, we attended a presentation on North Korea. It was at this presentation where we learned of the story of Seok Jae-hyun, a photographer for *The New York Times* who in January 2003 had gone to China to document the plight of North Korean refugees. Unfortunately, things went bad: the Chinese arrested all involved, imprisoning Seok and forcibly repatriating the refugees.

When we learned about this incident and the attendant human rights crisis in North Korea, we were shocked that we had never heard about it, much less read about it in the NY Times. With millions of people dead, hundreds dying daily and a dearth of press coverage or international attention, we knew that the issue needed advocacy. That's when we decided to use the power of the media to help make a difference.

As first-time filmmakers (Lisa's a critical care nurse at the local hospital and Jim's a businessman), our first task was to learn how to make a film...and we'd never even touched a camcorder before! We practiced our camera skills by interviewing one another and the local kids in our small mountain town in Colorado. Then, in October 2003, we took leaves from our jobs, packed up and headed for Seoul. We spent a total of two months in the Koreas and China living with and among the activists in the Underground Railroad.

Standing on the bank of the Tumen River, which forms the border between China and North Korea, we could feel the cold, visceral effect of North Korea. It's this narrow slice of water, which freezes over in the winter months, that separates the misery the refugees endure at home and their potential for freedom. Guarding the border, however, are the omnipresent soldiers with their sniper rifles and AK-47s. North Korea – nicknamed The Hermit Kingdom because no one can leave nor get in – was only accessible to the daring, brave North Koreans who had successfully escaped once, and were willing to go back to document the horrors inside. Had they been caught, they would have been summarily executed. It's due to their courage that SEOUL TRAIN has the bleak shots from inside North Korea.

Many people ask us if we ever felt afraid for our safety. Our main concern was actually more for the safety of the activists and refugees with whom we came in contact. Thus, we often posed as tourists, and used covert techniques – such as spy cams and a camcorder broken down to its bare parts – to film in places where it would bring unwanted attention or wouldn't be allowed. Also, since they could go places we couldn't, the activists entrusted us with their own footage from the Underground Railroad. It's this footage that ultimately makes SEOUL TRAIN so heart wrenching.

When we returned home in December 2003, we knew that SEOUL TRAIN was no longer our little "home movie." We also returned home with a moral obligation to make this footage public...it had been entrusted to us, and it was up to us to make something of it. A friend of ours then put us in touch with the final piece of the puzzle: Aaron Lubarsky. Aaron had just won the 2003 Primetime Emmy for Best Documentary Editing, and was a hot commodity in the film industry. Despite this, Aaron turned down much more lucrative offers and jumped at the chance to be a part of this effort. Together, the three of us formed the perfect balance and creative tension that comes through in the film.

It's important to note that every effort was made to protect the identities and activities of the activists and refugees, as their continued success and safety depends upon it. Unfortunately, the fate is sealed for many of the refugees featured in the film. Now, the best that can be done for them is to show the world this crisis to prevent the same from happening to others.

SEOUL TRAIN is dedicated to the selfless activists that put themselves in harm's way, using their own resources, and risking torture and imprisonment in North Korea and remote parts of China. SEOUL TRAIN is also dedicated to the memory of those refugees that have been sent back to North Korea to a horrific fate.

Lisa Sleeth & Jim Butternorth

SCREENING HISTORY & SCHEDULE

SEOUL TRAIN has screened on national TV broadcasts throughout the world, including a U.S. broadcast on the Emmy® Award winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. (Please contact Incite Productions for more information on specific dates, broadcasters and ratings.) In addition, SEOUL TRAIN has screened at hundreds (if not thousands) of events worldwide – a few of which are listed below – in association with film festivals, and various non-governmental organizations, civic groups, student organizations, churches, human rights groups and other organizations. The film has also screened before numerous policymakers, including the U.S. Congress, the European Parliament, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the International Parliamentarians' Coalition for North Korean Refugees & Human Rights.

5th International Conference on North Korean Human Rights and Refugees (Warsaw)	March 2004	Work-in-progress preview
U.S. Senate	April 2004	Work-in-progress preview
Beaver Creek Film Festival	Sep 2004	Work-in-progress preview
American Film Institute's AFI FEST	Nov 2004	World Premiere – Two sold-out screenings
Vancouver Asian Film Festival	Nov 2004	
South Korean National Assembly (Seoul, South Korea)	Nov 2004	The National Assembly is the South Korean legislative body
U.S. Senate	Nov 2004	Screening to: members of Congress and staff
Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival	Nov 2004	Winner BEST DOCUMENTARY
Santa Fe Film Festival	Dec 2004	
Bahamas International Film Festival	Dec 2004	
Human Rights in Film, International Film Festival (Warsaw)	Dec 2004	
Council on Foreign Relations (co-sponsored by The Korea Society)	Dec 2004	Private screening and panel discussion
Palm Springs International Film Festival	Jan 2005	
Freedom Cinema Festival (Park City, UT)	Jan 2005	
6th International Conference on North Korean Human Rights and Refugees	Feb 2005	
Boulder International Film Festival	Feb 2005	Winner BEST DOCUMENTARY
Big Sky Documentary Film Festival	Feb 2005	Finalist BEST DOCUMENTRY SHORT
Durango Film Festival	March 2005	
SXSW Film Conference & Festival	March 2005	Three sold-out screenings
Amnesty International Film Festival (Amsterdam)	March 2005	Followed by a panel discussion with David Hawk
Cleveland International Film Festival	March 2005	Two sold-out screenings
International Film Festival on Human Rights (Geneva)	March 2005	
Film Festival Internazionale di Milano (Milan, Italy)	March 2005	Winner BEST EDITING
Paris International Human Rights Film Festival	Mar/Apr 2005	
Texas Film Festival	Mar/Apr 2005	Winner, Audience Award, BEST DOCUMENTARY
Vail Film Festival	Mar/Apr 2005	
Wisconsin Film Festival	Mar/Apr 2005	
Colorado Filmmakers Showcase, Starz FilmCenter (Denver)	4 April 2005	
Chicago International Documentary Festival	April 2005	Panel discussion hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations
Human Rights Nights (Bologna, Italy)	April 2005	
Rome Independent Film Festival (Rome, Italy)	April 2005	
Trenton Film Festival	April 2005	
Los Angeles Artist Film Festival	April 2005	Winner BEST HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTARY
Newport Beach Film Festival	April 2005	
U.S. Senate / U.S. House of Representatives	April 2005	
One World International Human Rights Doc. Film Festival (Prague)	Apr/May 2005	
Amnesty International Film USA Festival (West Hollywood, CA)	April 2005	
Seattle International Film Festival	May 2005	Three sold-out screenings
Jackson Hole Film Festival	June 2005	Winner BEST GLOBAL INSIGHT FILM
Atlanta Film Festival	June 2005	
Brooklyn International Film Festival	June 2005	Winner INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARD
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival (New York City)	June 2005	Three sold-out screenings at Lincoln Center
Galway Film Fleadh (Galway, Ireland)	July 2005	
Freedom House North Korea Conference	July 2005	
International Parliamentarians' Coalition for North Korean Refugees & Human Rights (Tokyo)	July 2005	
Crested Butte Reel Fest	August 2005	Winner, Audience Award, BEST DOCUMENTARY Winner, Silver Prize, BEST DOCUMENTARY Winner, Audience Award, BEST FILM
Libertas Film Festival (Dubrovnik, Croatia)	August 2005	
GiRL FeST Hawaii	Sept 2005	
Amnesty International USA Film Festival (Pittsburgh, PA)	Sept 2005	
DOCZN, New Zealand International Documentary Festival (Auckland)	Sept 2005	
Spotlight Film Festival (Husova, Czech Republic)	Sept 2005	
Nordisk Panorama (Bergen, Norway)	Sept 2005	
The ImaginAsian Theater (New York City)	Sept 2005	Theatrical Premiere
Pacific Design Center (Los Angeles, CA)	Sept 2005	Special PBS screening
The Frontline Club (London, England)	Oct 2005	Private screening at London press club
Vermont International Film Festival (Burlington, VT)	Oct 2005	
Barcelona Human Rights International Film Festival	Oct 2005	
Nazareth International Film Festival (Nazareth, Israel/Palestine)	Oct 2005	
São Paulo International Film Festival	Oct-Nov 2005	South American Premiere
Austin Asian Film Festival	Nov 2005	
Amnesty International USA Film Festival (Salt Lake City, UT)	Nov 2005	
Amnesty International Film Festival (Vancouver, Canada)	Nov 2005	
Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival (Colorado Springs, CO)	Nov 2005	
International Human Rights Film Festival (Dresden, Germany)	Nov 2005	
ONE WORLD – Priština (Priština, Kosovo)	Dec 2005	Winner, BEST INTERNATIONAL FILM
RiverRun International Film Festival	March 2006	
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival (San Francisco)	March 2006	
GiRL FeST Bay Area	March 2006	
European Parliament (Brussels, Belgium)	March 2006	
INPUT: International Public Television Screening Conference (Taipei, Taiwan)	May 2006	Private screening at annual conference of public TV broadcasters
Foreign Press Club (Hong Kong)	May 2006	Private screening
Amnesty International USA (Washington, DC)	May 2006	
Dartmouth College	May 2006	
EBS International Documentary Film Festival	July 2006	Asian Premiere
Amnesty International Film Festival (Stockholm)	Oct 2006	

SPECIFICATIONS

Total Running Time..... 54:00 (with intro and credits, can be edited down to approximately 50 minutes)
 Country of Production USA
 Completion Date 2005
 Filmed on Location in China, South Korea, North Korea, USA, Poland and Switzerland
 Original Languages..... Korean, Mandarin Chinese, English and Polish
 Subtitles Available in English, Korean, bi-lingual English-Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Russian, Czech, Polish, Croatian, Serbian and Albanian (other languages in progress)
 Production Format..... Standard definition, 16x9 letterbox (1.78:1), stereo audio, color
 Exhibition Formats DigiBeta, Beta SP, DVD, DVCAM, miniDV and VHS / NTSC or PAL

SEOUL TRAIN CREDITS

Producers Lisa Sleeth and Jim Butterworth
 Directors Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky and Lisa Sleeth
 Editor Aaron Lubarsky
 Assistant Editor Brandon Park
 Additional Editing..... Jim Butterworth, Lisa Sleeth and Paul Lee
 Audio Post-Production..... Zlatko Makić, Zimage Sound Production
 Color Correction..... Will Cox, Final Frame
 Associate Producers Ronnie Eisen
 Richard Lim
 Post-Production Facility postDox
 Camera Lisa Sleeth, Jim Butterworth, Ishimaro Jiro, Ahn Chol, Oh Young-phil, Chun Ki-won, Moon Kook-han and Beth Butterworth
 Translation..... Jisu Kim, Grace Lee, Kim Sang-hun, Sin-U Nam, Sun-mi Peters, Rev. Ju Jang-don, Shul-Ping Lu, Leonid Petrov, Aleksandra “Ola” Stawecka, Adrian Hong, Jinna Park, Leslie Simitch, Julien Mailland, Stéphanie Bonin, Natálie Šeborová, Shioe Okamura, Karin & Evi Millette, Yone Ishige, C. Vidal, Annie Ferrer
 Graphics..... Chad Roark, Lauren Kim and Dan-ah Kim
 Original Music..... David Harris
 Music “Samulnori” (Traditional Korean)
 “Kayageum” (Traditional Korean)
 “Tempest” (Written by Lisa Gerrard, Pieter Bourke & Madjid Khaladj, Performed by Lisa Gerrard & Pieter Bourke)
 “Broken” (Written and performed by Lisa Gerrard & Pieter Bourke)
 “Faith” (Written and performed by Lisa Gerrard & Pieter Bourke)
 “Iguazu” (Written and performed by Gustavo Santaolalla)
 “Sacrifice” (Written and performed by Lisa Gerrard & Pieter Bourke)
 “Myst” (Written and Performed by David Harris)
 “March” (Written and Performed by David Harris)

SEOUL TRAIN FILMMAKERS

Jim Butterworth is a Founder and Principal of Incite Productions, a Producer and Director of SEOUL TRAIN, as well as a technology entrepreneur. He founded and has led several successful companies, including an early Internet company and one of the top-performing venture capital funds of 1999-2002. He is also one of the pioneers in the development of streaming audio and video over the Internet, and holds eight patents in the field. Jim holds a Bachelor of Industrial and Systems Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and an MBA from the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth College. SEOUL TRAIN is his debut film.

Lisa Sleeth is a Producer and Director of SEOUL TRAIN, Founder and Principal of Incite Productions, and a registered nurse specializing in high technology critical care and public health education. In addition to working in the intensive care unit at home, she has dedicated her career to providing humanitarian assistance, having participated in medical relief efforts on five continents, including the treatment of Kosovar refugees in Albania for the United Nations. She is highly skilled and experienced in working with NGO personnel, with refugees, and in unsecured, volatile areas. Lisa holds a BS in Nursing from Washington State University. SEOUL TRAIN is her debut film.

A Director and the Editor of SEOUL TRAIN, **Aaron Lubarsky** is a critically acclaimed documentary filmmaker whose work has screened at numerous festivals and theaters, and on broadcast TV worldwide. In 2003, Aaron won the Prime Time Emmy for Outstanding Non-Fiction Picture Editing for HBO's JOURNEY'S WITH GEORGE. He also received an IDA award and a student Academy Award for his film WAYNE FREEDMAN'S NOTEBOOK, and his film UNCLE EUGENE won the Documentary Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival. Aaron holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from UC Davis and a master's degree in Documentary Film Production from Stanford University, and has also worked as an editor at LucasFilm. Aaron's selected filmography includes:

- Co-Director/Editor "Lookalike" AMC (2004) (Nationally broadcast; 2004 Full Frame Documentary Festival)
- Co-Director/Editor "Journeys with George" HBO (2003) (6 Primetime Emmy Nominations; Winner, 2003 Emmy for Best Non-Fiction Editing, Worldwide broadcast and distribution on HBO, BBC and Canal +)
- Editor "Speedo" PBS (2002) (PBS broadcast Spring 2004; Multiple film festival award winner)
- Director/Editor/Camera "Uncle Eugene" (2001) (SF International Film Festival Golden Gate Award Winner; Sundance Channel, Slamdance)
- Editor "Making Episode One" Lucasfilm (2000) (International broadcast; DVD release)
- Director/Editor/Camera "Wayne Freedman's Notebook" (1998) (Student Academy Award Winner; Student Emmy Award Winner; IDA Award Winner; PBS Broadcast)
- Director/Editor/Camera "Generation Exodus" (1994) (PBS Broadcast; Museum of Modern Art screening)

Incite Productions is a Colorado-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that produces high-quality documentaries on global human rights issues, with particular emphasis on persecution, intolerance, discrimination, human trafficking and refugees. SEOUL TRAIN is the debut film from Incite Productions.

High-resolution TIFF images of the filmmakers can be downloaded at <http://www.seoultrain.com/presskit/photos.htm>.

FEATURED IN SEOUL TRAIN

Senator Sam Brownback*Chairman, U.S. Helsinki Commission*

“We’re going to look back in 10 years after North Korea opens up. We’re going to see millions of people dead. And we’re going say: ‘Why didn’t you act? Why didn’t you do something?’”

Brownback pushes for human rights reform throughout the world, including North Korea, China and Sudan. He’s also the original sponsor and Senate champion of the recently enacted *North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004* (HR.4011), and the *Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006* (HR.3127). Brownback cuts right to the heart of the crisis when he says “Here’s the real point of the issue: is their [the Chinese Government’s] view, are they refugees or economic migrants? And of that I’ve offered, and I’ve said to them, there’s a simple answer to this. You submit this to the UNHCR, and the UNHCR makes the determination. And you comply by the international agreement that you’ve signed to.”

Marine Buissonnière*Secretary General**Médecins Sans Frontières International
(Doctors Without Borders)*

“It’s unimaginable that the UNHCR staff has not gone to the border area in the past two to three years.”

Now the Secretary General for all of MSF/DWB, until 2003 Marine was the regional representative for MSF in Seoul. Impassioned and outraged, she sounds off in a thick French accent and wants to know where UNHCR is while the North Koreans in China are being “hunted and sent back to a fate that we all know is dramatic.”

Chun Ki-won*Underground Railroad Activist*

The mysterious and secretive pastor who works the routes of the Underground Railroad with more success than any other single activist.

He himself has traveled all the routes and has initiated new routes that have brought more than 400 North Korean refugees to safety (or approximately 10% of the *total* number of North Koreans that have made it to South Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953). A former businessman, Chun was initiated to the North Korean refugee crisis several year ago on a business trip to the Yanbian area of China near the North Korean border when he saw the dead body of a North Korean that had been shot in the back trying to cross the Tumen River.

Dr. Chung Byung-bo*Professor of Cultural Anthropology
Hanyang University
South Korea*

“Once they cross the border that constitutes a very, very serious crime from the North Korean perspective. When the Chinese government sends them back to North Korea, they are severely punished. So, by the nature of North Korean law and the North Korean regime’s practice of punishing border crossers, they become political refugees.”

As an anthropology professor, Dr. Chung is an unbiased, respected expert on the effect of the food crisis upon North Koreans. He describes the famine in North Korea as one of the worst in modern history, even amongst socialist regimes, and that “At the age of seven, North Korean children and South Korean children have about a 12-centimeter height difference.” Dr. Chung is acutely aware of the crisis; he oversees the six-month re-education program for North Korean children that have made it to South Korea. Likewise, he is also painfully aware of its catastrophic potential: “If they [the refugees] flood borders – not only to South Korea, but to China and to Japan – it will really shake the stabilities, or the basis of East Asian peace.”

Kong Quan*Director-General**Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 (“MoFA”)*

“Under these conditions, we do not need to consult the UNHCR regarding this situation. They obviously are not refugees.” Kong Quan represents the official view of the Chinese government: that not one North Korean defector is a refugee, but that they’re all economic migrants that came to China to work.

Kim Sang-bun*Underground Railroad Activist*

Possibly the most covert member of the Underground Railroad, Kim specializes in facilitating the escape of “high value” North Korean defectors that provide evidence against the Kim Jong-il regime for a future International Criminal

Court tribunal. A retired UN official, Mr. Kim makes only a cameo in SEOUL TRAIN due to the secrecy of his activities.

Ruud Lubbers*UN High Commissioner for Refugees*

“For a number of years UNHCR has been making efforts to obtain access to them, but this has been denied.” A hero of Dutch politics and appointee to his

post overseeing the UNHCR, Lubbers appears annoyed and disinterested as he makes passing reference to the plight of North Koreans in China. Lubbers resigned his position on February 20, 2005 amid allegations of sexual harassment.

Moon Kook-han*Underground Railroad Activist*

“Not a day goes by they aren’t on my mind. I think about them all the time. Especially these seven. No...I can’t forget them. I’m the one that sent them.”

Moon Kook-han chokes back the tears as he talks about the refugee group called the “MoFA Seven.” A one-man show, he specializes in making political statements as he leads his refugee groups out of China. In 2001, he rushed a family of seven into the UNHCR office in downtown Beijing. With the Han-mi family, he stormed the Japanese Consulate gates in Shenyang, China. And with the MoFA Seven, he thought he was playing by all the rules. On their fateful day, the MoFA Seven completed their asylum forms and took them to the headquarters of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. Instead, the Chinese brutally arrested the MoFA Seven and sent them back to North Korea, where it is presumed some, if not all, have since died in concentration camps.

Tim Peters*Founder and Director**Helping Hands Korea and**Underground Railroad Activist*

“When you come face-to-face with the realities of what the refugees have to tell us, suddenly that two million dead or three million dead in North Korea starts to penetrate to your heart and your conscious, and you realize you have to do something.”

Gentle and soft spoken, Tim Peters is the glue that holds much of the Underground Railroad together. The Michigan native is the moral compass of the effort, supporting the activities of the Underground Railroad with funding, organization and guidance. Peters has lived in South Korea off and on for more than 28 years, dedicating himself to the service of the North Koreans. He is the Founder and Director of Helping Hands Korea and the Ton-a-Month-Club, which provides more than one ton of food per month to the North Koreans in the remote northern reaches of the country. To date, he has far surpassed that goal, and is in fact 3 years ahead of plan.

Tarik Radwan*Immigration Attorney*

“At what point does this institution and its leaders assume criminal liability? Because if it’s their job to protect the lives of others, and they don’t, at some point...the world community is going to say ‘It’s not just the Chinese who are liable, it’s not just they who should be brought before a tribunal, it’s the very people at the UNHCR.’”

Radwan doesn’t hold back when he speaks of the UNHCR’s apathy toward North Koreans. A passionate immigration attorney specializing in refugee issues, Radwan has dissected the agreement between UNHCR and China *ad nauseum*. He has concluded that there are several legal measures available to UNHCR to force China’s compliance with international refugee law, but that UNHCR has chosen not to use them.

Ron Redmond*Chief, Media Relations and Public**Information Service**UNHCR*

“UNHCR is an intergovernmental organization, and we are tasked by governments to do this work. But if we don’t have the support of those governments, then it’s extremely difficult for us to do it.” As UNHCR spokesman, Ron Redmond was the High Commissioner’s “sacrificial lamb” in SEOUL TRAIN.

He attempts to explain UNHCR’s perceived apathy toward the growing crisis of North Korean refugees. He explains that without the support of UN member states UNHCR is rendered powerless, and calls into question the political will of *member states*, namely the U.S., to address the issue.

Suzanne Scholte*Vice-Chairman**North Korea Freedom Coalition*

“Some people believe that we should not put pressure on the Olympic Committee to change the venue of the Olympics because we can use the Beijing Olympics to raise the human rights abuses that China’s committing.”

Scholte is a true activist, and articulates a poignant rebuttal to one of the most common solutions offered today to the issue of how to apply pressure on the Chinese government. She continues, “But the Beijing Olympics are in 2008. And that means there’s a lot more North Koreans that are going to be killed, a lot more North Koreans are going to be beat to death on the border, a lot more North Koreans are going to be ending up in political prisoner camps because they fled to China.”

Dr. Norbert Vollertsen*Underground Railroad Activist*

“When I accompanied Chun Ki-won for the first time to the North Korean Chinese border, I was wondering how this guy is still alive!”

Having worked on numerous Underground Railroad operations, Vollertsen solemnly describes the danger that not just refugees, but activists face. An outspoken, radical but completely dedicated activist for human rights in North Korea, the German medical doctor knows first hand the critical conditions under which the North Koreans live. Prior to becoming an activist, Vollertsen provided medical relief within North Korea, stating “Children were dying in front of my eyes.” Notwithstanding his controversial tactics, his efforts have nonetheless brought the plight of North Koreans to the world’s attention.

GLOSSARY

1951 Refugee Convention — The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (and the 1967 Protocol thereto). The 1951 Refugee Convention sets forth the rights and responsibilities pertaining to refugee issues worldwide, and stemmed from the millions of refugees that still roamed Europe six years after the end of WWII. China acceded to both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol on 24 September 1982.

Asylum — The protection and immunity from extradition and refoulement granted by a host country to a political refugee from another country.

Confucianism — The political and social morality taught by Confucius and his disciples that forms the basis of jurisprudence and education in China and much of East Asia, including historic Korea. Chinese and Korean leaders found the standards-based principles of Confucianism to be an effective means to control large populations. The North Korean regime today uses Confucianism as the basis for why it punishes up to three generations of an alleged criminal's family in order to rid society of bad elements.

Core/Wavering/Hostile Classes — Kim Il-sung reported to the Fifth Korean Workers' Party Congress in 1970 that the North Korean population could be classified into three political groups: a loyal "core class," a suspect "wavering class" and a politically unreliable "hostile class" based on how loyal or disloyal to the regime each person is presumed to be. These three groups are further divided into 51 sub-classifications, such as those in the wavering class who had been landowners before the communists came to power, or those who had resided in the southern half of Korea before 1945. People who fall into the hostile class, which constitutes approximately 25% of the population, are discriminated against in terms of employment, food, housing, medical care and place of residence.

Crime Against Humanity — An act of persecution against a group so heinous as to warrant punishment under international law. The term was first used in the preamble of the Hague Convention of 1907, and subsequently used during the Nuremberg trials as a charge for actions such as the Holocaust that did not violate a specific treaty but were deemed to require punishment. The 2003 treaty establishing the International Criminal Court defines "crime against humanity" as any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: (a) murder; (b) extermination; (c) enslavement; (d) deportation or forcible transfer of population; (e) imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; (f) torture; (g) rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; (h) persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, (i) enforced disappearance of persons; (j) the crime of apartheid; (k) other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

DMZ — The Demilitarized Zone. The DMZ is a 4-km (2½-mile) wide swath that forms the 238 km (148 mile) border between North and South Korea, as defined in the Korean War Armistice Agreement of 27 July 1953.

DPRK — Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the official name of North Korea. A country of northeast Asia at the northern end of the Korean Peninsula (population: 22.4 million est.). Inhabited since ancient times, Korea was a united kingdom since the 7th century AD. Korea was occupied by Japan from 1910 until the end of WWII in 1945. After the war the peninsula was divided into a Soviet occupation zone in the north and an American zone in the south. Soviet resistance to reunification led to the establishment in 1948 of two separate countries, with the Korean War leaving the peninsula divided along much the same line as before. Under Kim Il-sung, North Korea became increasingly isolated, especially after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Pyongyang is the capital and the largest city.

Economic Migrant — According to the UNHCR, an economic migrant normally leaves his or her country voluntarily to seek a better life elsewhere, and should he or she elect to return home they would continue to receive the protection of their government. An economic migrant should not be confused with a "refugee."

Food Crisis — A food crisis stems from the exacerbation of famine conditions or a natural food shortage through man-made or government policies such as food distribution systems and agricultural policies.

Gulag — The term given historically to the network of state-run political prisoner camps in Stalinist Russia known for their arbitrary detention and harsh conditions, which included forced labor, torture and execution. North Korea operates its own gulag network that contains an estimated 200,000 prisoners.

Host Country — The country in which a refugee resides, whether legally or illegally. The host country has certain legal obligations to protect the rights of refugees as mandated by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Juche — Kim Il-sung is credited with developing the idea of juche, a self-reliant and creative application of Marxism and Leninism to the specific conditions unique to Korea. Under this principle of self-reliance, Kim formulated what is known as the monolithic ideological system. This system encompassed the thought of self-reliance in ideological stance, independence in

political work, self-sustenance in economic endeavors, and self-defense in military affairs. The idea is also known as “Kim Il-sung Thought.”

Kim Il-sung — Born on 15 April 1912 as Kim Song-ju; died on 8 July 1994. Known as the “Great Leader,” the “Eternal Leader,” “Suryong” (the “Supreme Leader”) and the “sun of the nation,” Kim Il-sung was the founder of North Korea, and president and general secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea until he arranged for power to pass to his son, Kim Jong-il. In 1998, the younger Kim gave his father the posthumous title of “Eternal President.” In the mid-1970s, Kim began to train his son to take over the operation of the Party, and by the time of the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980, he had all but anointed his son as heir to the mantle of power in North Korea.

Kim Jong-il — Born as Kim Yuri on 16 February 1942 in the Russian army camp Viatskoe (or Viatsk) near Khabarovsk. The son of, and successor to, the founder and longtime leader of North Korea, Kim Il-sung. Known to North Koreans as the “Dear Leader.” While heir apparent, he had a reputation as a spoiled playboy who vainly wore platform shoes to appear taller. After his father’s death in 1994, Kim Jong-il managed to retain power, but did not assume his father’s titles until 1997, when he was named Secretary of the Communist Party. By that time North Korea had become one of the most isolated countries in the world, with an economy in a shambles and frequent famines.

Korean War — The war between the Communist North and non-Communist South Korea that started on 25 June 1950 when troops from the North invaded South Korea, and ended with an armistice (cease-fire) agreement on 27 July 1953. U.S. and other UN forces intervened to defend South Korea from North Korean attacks supported by the Chinese. Casualties in the war were heavy; U.S. losses were placed at more than 54,000 dead and 103,000 wounded, while Chinese and Korean casualties were each at least 10 times as high. After much difficulty, the armistice agreement was finally reached, splitting the peninsula along a demilitarized zone at about the 38th parallel, with the northern half coming under Communist domination and the southern portion becoming Western-oriented.

IGO — Inter-governmental organization. A permanent organization set up by two or more states to carry on activities of common interest, such as the various UN agencies like UNHCR and the WFP.

Internally Displaced Person — Not to be confused with the term “refugee,” an internally displaced person is someone that has been forced to leave his or her home but remains within the borders of his or her home country.

Manchuria — The area in present-day northeast China adjacent to North Korea that at various times throughout history has belonged to Korea, China, Japan, Russia, England and the Mongols. The area today has a very large ethnic Korean population.

Member States — A country that is a signatory to the UN Charter and other UN agreements (such as the 1951 Refugee Convention).

MoFA — The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible, among other things, for diplomatic relations and the granting of political asylum to persons, including refugees, residing in China.

Mutual Cooperation Protocol — The alleged 1986 border agreement between China and North Korea that provides, among other things, for the return of North Koreans to North Korea.

NGO — Non-governmental organization. An international organization made up of persons other than states, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières.

NKHRA — The U.S. North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004. The NKHRA is intended to help promote human rights and freedom in North Korea. The NKHRA was signed into law on 18 October 2004, after being passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. In an earlier draft form, the NKHRA also existed as the North Korean Freedom Act.

Pyongyang — The capital of North Korea, and the historic capital and cultural center throughout much of the history of unified Korea.

Refoule (and refoulement) — The French word, meaning literally “drive back,” used by most international agreements (such as the 1951 Refugee Convention) to describe the forced return of refugees to their home country.

Refugee — The legal term defined by various instruments, but generally defined as a person outside of his or her home country or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Most refugees by definition are “illegal border crossers” since they are not able to avail themselves of the protection or diplomatic services of their home country, such as obtaining proper passports and visas. “Refugee” is a legal term and should not be confused with “internally displaced person” or “economic migrant.”

RoK — Republic of Korea, the official name of South Korea. A country of northeast Asia at the southern end of the Korean Peninsula (population: 48.2 million). Inhabited since ancient times, Korea was a united kingdom since the 7th century AD. Korea was occupied by Japan from 1910 until the end of WWII in 1945. After the war the peninsula was divided into a Soviet occupation zone in the north and an American zone in the south. Soviet resistance to reunification led to the establishment in

1948 of two separate countries, with the Korean War leaving the peninsula divided along much the same line as before. Ruled by a series of authoritarian military leaders, South Korea developed a prosperous economy on the strength of trade ties with Japan and the United States. Seoul is the capital and the largest city.

Six-Way Talks — The prevailing series of discussions over the security threat posed by the possession of weapons of mass destruction by North Korea. The six parties are North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the US.

Sunshine Policy — The Sunshine Policy was introduced in 1998 by then-president of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung, in order to underline the peaceful management of the division of the Korean Peninsula. It stands in great contrast with prior policies toward North Korea that focused on containment. The main aim of the policy is to soften North Korea's attitudes toward the south by encouraging interaction and economic assistance. There are three guiding principles to the Sunshine Policy: (i) no armed provocation by the north will be tolerated; (ii) the south will not attempt to absorb the north in any way; and (iii) the south actively seeks cooperation. The Sunshine Policy is continued today by Kim's successor Roh Moo-hyun. The term "Sunshine Policy" originates in an episode of Aesop's fables.

Tumen and Yalu Rivers — The two rivers that form the 1416 km (880 mile) border between China and North Korea.

UN Charter — The constitution of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 by the 50 original member states. It entered into force on 24 October 1945, after being ratified by the five founding members – China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the U.S. – and a majority of the other signatories. The UN Charter states explicitly that it trumps all other treaty obligations, such as the alleged Mutual Cooperation Protocol between China and North Korea.

Reunification — The reunification into a single country of North and South Korea. Korea had been a unified country since the 7th century AD until the end of WWII in 1945. Some experts estimate the economic cost of reunification to be 11 times the cost of German reunification due to the vast disparity between the capitalist south and Communist north.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights — The most fundamental of human rights and freedoms, as adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948 (www.un.org/Overview/rights.html).

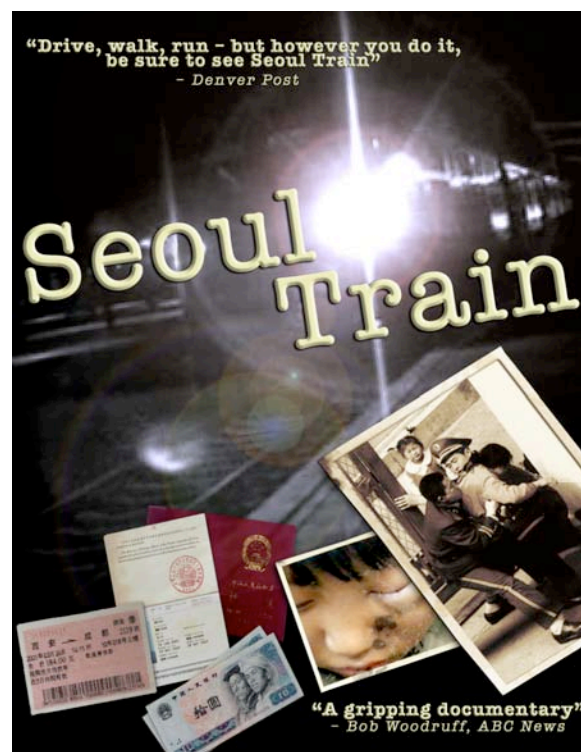
UNCHR — United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

UNHCHR — United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Oversees the UNCHR.

UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency.

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations / Vienna Convention on Consular Relations — The international conventions on diplomatic intercourse, consular relations, privileges and immunities.

WFP — World Food Programme. Set up in 1963, WFP is the United Nations frontline agency in the fight against global hunger. In 2003, WFP fed 104 million people in 81 countries, including most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people.



SEOUL TRAIN PRODUCTION STILLS

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Chun Ki-won, Underground Railroad activist, keeps a watchful eye as he smuggles a group of 12 North Korean refugees out of China to Mongolia.



Moon Kook-han, Underground Railroad activist, discusses the attempted escape and asylum of Han-mi and her family, and how the North Koreans qualify as refugees under international law.



A North Korean refugee, part of a group known as the "MoFA Seven," holds up a banner that reads "We Want Freedom. Help Us." The MoFA Seven attempted to apply for asylum to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).



Nam Chun-mi, one of the 12 North Korean refugees activist Chun Ki-won is smuggling out of China. Chun rushed her into the group because she was 8½ months pregnant and he didn't want her to risk giving birth while living underground in China.



North Korean children scrounge for food as a result of a devastating food crisis that has killed an estimated 3 million North Koreans in the past 10 years.



North Korean children scrounge for food as a result of a devastating food crisis that has killed an estimated 3 million North Koreans in the past 10 years.



Dr. Chung Byung-ho, Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Hanyang University, South Korea, states that the height difference between North & South Korean children by age eight is 5-7 inches due to the pervasive malnourishment in North Korea.



Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), former member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and sponsor of the legislation that became the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (HR-4011), champions the rights of North Korean refugees on Capitol Hill.

Seoul Train

서울기차

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SELECTED ARTICLES

December 9, 2005

TELEVISION

Desperate Journey

By NANCY DEWOLFE SMITH

December 9, 2005; Page W4

Despite its whimsical title, "**Seoul Train**" is deadly serious -- and yet so compelling that you can't stop watching even though you know it will haunt your dreams. Its subject is the "underground railroad" of North Korean refugees who are running for their lives in a desperate attempt to reach freedom. (On PBS's Independent Lens series, Tuesday, 10-11 p.m. ET. Check local listings.)

Getting out of North Korea, which this documentary accurately describes as the "world's largest prison camp," may be the easy part. Once they make it over the border into China, the refugees are hunted like rabbits by zealous Chinese cops and soldiers. Forcibly repatriated to North Korea, the refugees face torture and imprisonment for the treasonous act of leaving the country. It's a crime punishable by death. Some of the North Koreans interviewed for this film probably are dead already.

Apart from a few sickening scenes shot secretly in North Korea, most of the program takes place in China, where we meet groups of refugees awaiting rides on an underground route to safety. One of the most welcoming destinations is Mongolia, which has a reputation for treating North Koreans humanely before helping them reach their ultimate destination in democratic South Korea.


Schindler of Asia

We meet the first group of refugees as they plan a trip by train, taxi and foot across China to the Mongolian border. They include Han Sul-hee, who is 17. She and the rest of the group, mainly young adults who have left parents and siblings behind, are sitting in a safe house with a Christmas tree and Santa decorations. They have been waiting several months -- eating proper food and trying to gain enough weight so they'll look healthy enough to pass for South Korean tourists. So severe is North Korea's government-induced famine that the average 7-year-old child in North Korea is about half a foot shorter than his counterpart in South Korea, and it's estimated that up to three million souls have perished from hunger in recent years.



The camera follows Sul-hee and the others as they head for the train station in Yanji, China, for a journey that will be full of peril at every stage, especially in towns where the locals like to report foreigners to the police. The refugees' escort is Chun Ki-won, a South Korean pastor who has been called the "Schindler of Asia" for

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Lisa Sleeth and Jim Butterworth/TVS

North Koreans trying to flee their country in "Seoul Train."

his rescue efforts. We last see him and his little tour group as they head into the Gobi, just a few miles from the crossing into Mongolia. The hidden camera could go no farther, so a message on our TV screen fills in the rest: Chun and all his charges were arrested at the border by Chinese police.

We know how awful that must have been from the scenes we do see, of another group of North Koreans who tried a different method of escape. With the help of activist-guide Moon Kook-han, this group moved into a motel near the Japanese consulate in Shenyang, China, where they spent days preparing to dash through the gates onto sovereign Japanese soil and demand asylum. According to the plan, two men in the group would go first, pushing Chinese guards aside so the women, including 2-year-old Han-mi and her mother, could rush into the consulate yard.

A camera across the street recorded what happened next: Reaching the gate, the men barged through but the guards grabbed Han-mi and her mother. As a crowd gathered, and the camera rolled, the mother clung to the iron gate, screaming and struggling with all her might to break free and get to safety, just a few precious feet away. But the guards wrestled her to the ground. The last shot we see is little Han-mi's terrified face as the guards overpower her mother.

Like a Human Being

Mr. Moon also worked with the seven North Koreans who tried yet another approach and formally applied for refugee status at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The MoFA-7, as the group became known, were arrested by Chinese authorities and presumably repatriated. None has been heard of again. Mr. Moon weeps when he thinks that he may have, in effect, led them to their deaths.

Watching film of the MoFA-7 in the moments before their arrest -- one woman tells the camera that she's willing to risk death for the chance "to live like a human being with dignity" -- it's tempting to heap all the blame on China and North Korea. But the behavior of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is in a way more shocking. A UNHCR official interviewed here says that while some of the North Koreans may be refugees, there's not much his agency can do to help them. After all, he explains, "a couple" of UNHCR representatives went to the border "four or five years ago" to look into the situation of refugees there and were prevented from doing that by Chinese authorities, "so it's not like we haven't tried."

A few of the North Koreans seen in this program have since been released from captivity in China and made their way to South Korea, some with the help of concerned members of Congress. But most of the stories do not have happy endings. Since Mr. Chun was arrested at the Mongolian border in 2001, many thousands of refugees have tried and failed to reach freedom. All the program can do is end our ignorance. Someday, when the full extent of North Koreans' suffering is revealed, no one who has seen "Seoul Train" will be able to say, "I didn't know."

* * *

A quick word about "**Silent Witness**" (BBC America, Thursday, 9-11 p.m.), the excellent series about a

team of crime-solving British forensic scientists. This week's episode opens at a race track with a dead horse, and widens to include a helicopter crash, a flurry of euros, a dead drug mule, a kidney-transplant scandal and the skeletons of an Iron Age family. Admittedly, "Silent Witness" is not as high-tech as "CSI," or as kinky. But these deficits can be pluses for viewers who enjoy top-rate, character-driven mysteries.

"**Sit Down Comedy With David Steinberg**" gets off to a shaky start on the TV Land Channel this week with a faintly tedious conversation between interviewer Steinberg and his guest, Mike Myers. (Wednesday, 10-11 p.m.) The main reward for watching is the information that the idea for "Austin Powers" struck Mr. Myers after he heard "The Look of Love" playing on the radio and wondered, "Where have all the swingers gone?" Next week's interview, with Larry David, is a total delight, however; and Mr. Steinberg's roster for future shows -- including Bob Newhart, Martin Short and Jon Lovitz -- sounds promising.

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 **Print this**

Americans expose woes of defectors

December 17, 2004 — Last year, Jim Butterworth was enjoying a laid-back summer night in Vail, Colorado and was far from imagining himself tracking down North Korean refugees in Beijing. As a founder and investor in technology start-up companies, the 41-year-old Mr. Butterworth was happy with his life in Colorado, where, as he says, people are more interested in “ski conditions than atrocities occurring in other parts of the world.”

Mr. Butterworth considered himself up on world affairs, but he was also satisfied with the idyllic life in Vail. North Korean refugees, numbering 250,000 and living underground in China, were not among his chief concerns.

On that summer night, however, Mr. Butterworth was at a free outdoor music concert, where he was introduced to Lisa Sleeth, 34, a nurse at a local hospital. He soon found himself in a heated discussion with her about how to heal the world. They both realized they had a good deal in common and reached a conclusion that they need to do something.

Two weeks later, they attended a presentation on North Korea by James Brooke, a New York Times reporter based in Tokyo, who also covered Korea. Mr. Brooke spoke about a South Korean freelance photojournalist, Seok Jae-hyun, who had been imprisoned for helping North Korean defectors in China. After serving two years in a Chinese prison, Mr. Seok was released last April. His story moved Mr. Butterworth and Ms. Sleeth deeply, and though they had never heard of the refugee issue before, they decided to get involved.

Determination, however, was not enough; the real question was what to do. They decided to “use the power of media,” Mr. Butterworth says by creating a documentary, and so, starting from scratch, he founded Incite Productions, a non-profit film company, though neither he or Ms. Sleeth knew anything about film-making. “We’d never touched a camcorder before,” Mr. Butterworth said in a phone interview.

So they just bought a sophisticated camera and spent the first few weeks learning how to work it, getting assistance from local teenagers in their Colorado town. In the meantime, the two also raised funds, with Ms. Sleeth working night-shifts and Mr. Butterworth taking out a second mortgage on his home.

In October last year, they took leaves of absence from their jobs and flew to Seoul, where they contacted underground activists at work aiding refugees who had escaped North Korea. They then went to live with and among the activists in China.

Thus began a two-month journey in the two Koreas and China that resulted in about 50 hours of film. When they returned to Colorado last December last year, they were amazed at what they had accomplished.

Meeting the refugees, who keep low profiles to avoid attention from the Chinese police, was difficult for these first-time filmmakers from the other side of the world, Mr. Butterworth says. While filming refugees, both he and Ms. Sleeth posed as tourists to avoid attracting attention. They sometimes used hidden cameras and a camcorder they needed to assemble.

The Chinese government has been beset by the influx of North Korean defectors and the press coverage it has generated since the late 1990s. The authorities in China have arrested activists as well as refugees. Mr. Butterworth and Ms. Sleeth feared for their own safety, especially when standing on the bank of Tumen River on China’s border with North Korea. Across the river they could see snipers.

When they felt they had finished their work, they boarded a plane for home, knowing the “the film was no longer our little home movie,” according to Mr. Butterworth.

The project was far from complete, however. Additional interviews with experts needed to be added and the footage needed editing and subtitles. A professional filmmaker, Aaron Lubarsky, was called in to give the documentary the finishing touch.

Thus was born a 54-minute film, titled “Seoul Train.” The title conveys the notion of many North Korean refugees’ ultimate goal of reaching Seoul and also commemorates the selfless, underground “railroad” activists. “We wanted the film to serve to educate the world, not just Asia or the United States,” Mr. Butterworth said, “We want people to learn.”

Over the past several months, he has seen the effort pay off, with the film becoming acclaimed for raising public awareness of the refugees’ plight. After several work-in-progress previews at movie festivals and in the U.S. Senate, the film had its world premier in Hollywood last November.

Senator Sam Brownback, who took the initiative in seeking passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act, which President Bush signed into law last month, called the film “the definitive expose of this large, growing and generally unknown crisis. “

Last month, the film won the best documentary award at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, International Film Festival. A U.S. non-governmental organization that supports North Korean refugees used the documentary to recruit college students, Mr. Butterworth says. The strategy paid dividends.

“I was especially happy to see young Korean-Americans come up to me and say thanks for reminding them of their ethnicity and letting them know that they need to do something,” he said.

Tracing back the footage of several refugee groups with the help of activists, the film also includes quite a few numbers of interviews with leading proponents, such as Senator Brownback.

In the film, international activists complain that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has failed to effectively address the refugee issue. UNHCR members respond saying their efforts have been thwarted because they are denied access to the defectors. The film-makers also interviewed Kong Quan, director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, who said, “We do not need to consult the UNHCR regarding this situation. They [North Koreans] obviously are not refugees.”

The Chinese government, which has promised to repatriate defectors, has argued that North Korean defectors to China are not refugees but economic migrants.

As the film proceeds, however, viewers can plainly see that the North Koreans, who were lucky enough to escape from hunger and other deprivations in their homeland, are refugees in dire need of help with their lives at stake.

With Mr. Butterworth seeking distributors to open the film in South Korea, the film premiered in Seoul last month at the National Assembly. On the day of the screening, the Chinese government moved to repatriate 62 defectors.

The screening accompanied an exhibition entitled “North Korea Holocaust” and discussion sessions, initiated by Moon Kuk-han, a longtime underground activist who also appears in the film. Like the film-makers of “Seoul Train,” Mr. Moon, 50, did not imagine he’d become an ardent activist when he went to Beijing in 1994 to open a stationary business. What awaited him in Beijing, however, was a group of rescue calls from North Korean defectors living in hiding. “North Korean defectors simply thought that if they just meet a South Korean, they can go to South Korea just like that, which made them contact me again and again,” Mr. Moon recalls.

Trying to concentrate on his business, Mr. Moon first turned down appeals from the defectors who unexpectedly appeared, begging for help.

In 1996, he finally decided to help out a defector, a charitable act that turned out to be more overwhelming than he’d ever expected. Getting a broker, an ethnic Korean in China, to forge a South Korean passport, Mr. Moon accompanied the defector, whose identity he still keeps secret, to the airport. In the process, he had to bribe guards and immigration officers before he finally arrived in South Korea with his companion. The defector now lives as an average citizen in Seoul, says Mr. Moon, who made an enormous emotional and financial sacrifice.

"I swore to myself that this was my first and last time. It was just too much for an individual like me," Mr. Moon said. Three years later in 1999, however, Mr. Moon found himself again trying to rescue defectors. This time, it was not just one, but 15, who were all family members. "I just could not turn my back on them. I guess I was possessed by something," Mr. Moon said.

As part of an effort to let the world know about the defectors' suffering, Mr. Moon had the North Koreans draw sketches of what they witnessed back home. One showed a father selling his daughter. Giving up his business, Mr. Moon walked thousands of kilometers from China to Mongolia through the desert, and also visited southeast Asian countries looking for safe routes to South Korea and bribing brokers and border guards. In 2001, he decided to employ a daring, but direct, strategy of helping defectors break into foreign embassies to seek asylum. The strategies worked, with telling photographs of defectors desperately trying to get into embassy compounds. With international public opinion beginning to coalesce in support of the North Korean defectors, Mr. Moon succeeded in sending a large number to Seoul.

Starting last year, the Chinese and North Korean governments were growing edgy over the issue; Beijing started to crack down more harshly on refugees and activists and Mr. Moon found himself all but banned from China.

At the moment, the activist Choi Yeong-hun is serving a five-year sentence in China for helping defectors. Many international activists also put their lives in danger, like Takayuki Noguchi, an assistant director at the Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, a Tokyo-based non-governmental organization, who served time in a Chinese jail from last December to August this year for helping defectors.

In response to growing criticism against brokers who seek to profit from aiding defectors, Mr. Moon expresses sympathy. "They're at least saving people's lives, unlike the government that is sitting idly doing nothing," he says. "You need money to get those defectors helped anyway. And let me tell you, it's not an easy job when it's so unrewarding and tiring. The defectors are total strangers, after all, and they tend to ask too much from activists. They have no knowledge of what the outside world is truly like after spending all their lives in North Korea under Kim Jong-il."

Although he welcomes U.S. willingness now to accept North Korean refugees, Mr. Moon is concerned about suggestions that the leadership in North Korea may be under strain. "When the North Korean regime collapses, there'll be millions of people flooding into China and other countries. We should be ready for that, or the world, not to mention northeast Asia, will be in a total mess," Mr. Moon said.

by Chun Su-jin

December, 2004

"55 Minutes of Reality"

Ground-breaking documentary "Seoul Train" chronicles the plight of North Koreans

> *By Grace E. Jang*

> *Photograph by Eric Sueyoshi*



Jim Butterworth (left) and Lisa Sleeth (right) want the world to know about the human rights violations that North Koreans suffer under both the Kim Jong Il regime and the Chinese government. They hope that "Seoul Train" will increase international awareness of the issue. The award-winning documentary, which premiered at the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles in November, includes footage of activists like South Korean pastor Chun Ki Won (center), who was imprisoned for helping refugees escape from China.

A "wacky dictator and weapons of mass destruction" were all that Jim Butterworth and Lisa Sleeth, like many Americans, knew about North Korea when George W. Bush declared that country to be an "axis of evil." "We only knew the obvious stuff," Butterworth says.

"We had no idea about the 3 million dead, the refugees, the terrible human rights abuses. And no one we knew was aware of it, either."

For the last 18 months, Butterworth and Sleeth, along with Emmy award-winning documentary editor Aaron Lubarsky, have been working on a film that tells the little known story of North Korean refugees and the activists dedicated to helping them.

Their 55-minute film, "Seoul Train," premiered at the American Film Institute (AFI) Festival in Los Angeles to sold-out screenings Nov. 5 and 7, and was named "Best Documentary" at the Ft. Lauderdale International Film Festival.

"It's powerful," says Natalie McMenemy of the AFI, who introduced the film. "It takes you out of your egocentric world."

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

At last count, 2 million North Koreans have died of starvation under Kim's rule. About 1 million more have died in 20 political prison camps located throughout North Korea, at least one of which is reportedly three times the size of Washington, D.C.

International groups such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Los Angeles-based Jewish human rights organization, are investigating recent reports of the use of gas chambers at the camps, where prisoners are allegedly being used as guinea pigs for chemical and biological weapons testing.

Thousands of North Koreans have attempted to escape, and hundreds have succeeded, thanks largely in part to a secret network akin to the Underground Railroad used by American slaves and abolitionists prior to and during the Civil War. For those who manage to flee across the Tumen or Yalu rivers, however, the battle to survive begins anew in China.

The Chinese government considers those who leave North Korea to be "economic migrants," not refugees worthy of asylum from political persecution. Granting North Koreans asylum would, some say, threaten China's stability. If hundreds, then thousands and eventually millions, of North Koreans crossed the border, the mass exodus would eventually bring about the collapse of the Kim regime, which could have potentially disastrous effects for neighboring countries who already face economic struggles.

Chinese citizens are, therefore, encouraged to turn North Korean defectors over to the police. Defectors are usually repatriated to North Korea where, invariably, they are imprisoned or executed for treason. Those who are not turned over to authorities are auctioned off. The women are sold into sexual slavery and are often raped and beaten by their captors.

Their singular goal is to reach South Korea. "Seoul Train" chronicles the defectors' plight through interviews and riveting footage taken by underground activists, including Chun Ki Won, a South Korean pastor imprisoned for seven months in China for helping refugees escape.

Known among relief workers as "the Asian Oskar Schindler," Chun is responsible for smuggling more than 400 North Korean refugees out of China. However, not all his efforts are successful. In footage included in "Seoul Train," a group of North Koreans he tried to help flee to Mongolia was captured, along with Chun. The Chinese government has since banned Chun from entering the country.

"I couldn't stop crying as I watched," he said after attending the screenings in Los Angeles. "If only they had made it out."

"It's tough to watch because it's real," Sleeth says. "It's 55 minutes of reality."

Both government and non-government organizations, like the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the North Korea Freedom Coalition and Medecins Sans Frontieres International (Doctors Without Borders), have been pressuring China to treat those North Koreans who seek asylum within its borders, and those who aid them, more humanely — but to no avail.

Suzanne Scholte, vice chairman of the North Korea Freedom Coalition, says she hopes the documentary will increase awareness and eventually help to change the plight of North Koreans.

It just might.

On Nov. 15, the U.S. State Department requested a copy of "Seoul Train."

THE FILM'S BEGINNINGS

It began simply, with two people committed to effecting positive change: Butterworth, a former Wall Street investment banker galvanized by the events of September 11, and Sleeth, an intensive-care nurse with 12 years of experience as a medical relief volunteer for various international crises. They each wanted to impact the world in a greater way, so it was kismet when a mutual friend introduced them one summer night in 2003 during a concert in Vail, a ski resort town in Colorado.

Sleeth, whose extensive humanitarian work includes time working in Kosovo with the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees assisting Albanian refugees, was preparing for yet another trip — this time to Tajikistan. She was gearing up to initiate what had become a familiar routine: "Quit my job, sell everything, take off overseas for a long time, do that work, then come back to work the night shift," says Sleeth.

That's when she met Butterworth, who had moved to Colorado in October 2001 from New York, where he had lived five blocks from the World Trade Center.

"September 11 was a seminal event to me," says Butterworth, who has patented audio streaming on the Internet. "I really looked at my business activities and thought, 'Why? What's the point? To make more money?' There has to be some positive effect from your contribution to the world."

Butterworth convinced Sleeth that she could impact more people through documentary filmmaking. And so the mutual interest took root. They stumbled upon the topic rather serendipitously: James Brooke, northeast Asia correspondent for the New York Times, spoke at a symposium in July 2003. He told the couple about his freelance photographer, Jae Hyun Seok, a South Korean who had been imprisoned for documenting North Koreans trying to escape from China. "[Brooke] told us that the real issue is the human rights abuses in North Korea, about people crossing the Tumen River and the Yalu. I was fascinated," says Butterworth.

Thus the "Seoul Train" project began.

They spent about three months in China and both Koreas researching and interviewing. The documentary began as "Jim and Lisa's glorified home movie," Butterworth says, but upon further research, the two — who had no prior filmmaking experience — soon realized what was at stake.

"We saw that the film had grown up and that we had this awesome responsibility — a moral obligation — to get it out," he says.

REACH INTO THE HEART, GET TO THE BRAIN

Butterworth and Sleeth were approached by the New York Times Television production company to produce the film at no cost to them. And it was tempting. The two had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to make the film. Butterworth took out a second mortgage and Sleeth signed up for as many overnight shifts as she could handle — this, after each had cashed in their savings and retirement funds.

But they declined the offer. The Times production company wanted to "sensationalize" the story, Sleeth says. "We felt a tremendous obligation to do right by the activists who gave us their footage and told us their story."

"Lisa and I are activists. We're not filmmakers. We're not a television production company. We're activists using the media to produce change, to get results," Butterworth says. "We wanted something that really touched not only the heart but the head. We know that we've achieved our mission when people cry during the movie and the next day we get e-mails saying, 'I thought about it all night long.' That's perfect. We reached into the heart and got to their brain."

"NOT AN ETHNIC ISSUE, BUT A HUMANITY ISSUE"

Sleeth and Butterworth say that they were alarmed to discover how apathetic most Koreans were to the issue — hostile, even. Butterworth says he was shunned in L.A.'s Koreatown as he tried to promote the screenings. When the people he approached — mostly first-generation Korean Americans — saw that the topic was North Korean refugees, they walked away.

"Obviously, we're looked upon with a sense of initial distrust or question as to why we're doing this," Butterworth says. "They see this as an ethnic issue. Lisa and I don't see this as an ethnic issue. We see this as a humanity issue. Koreans see this as a Korean issue. 'Why are you making this film? And why are we not making this film?'"

A Korea Times reporter told Butterworth that he was embarrassed that Koreans didn't make "Seoul Train," and that it took two Americans to do it. "We've heard that a lot, but at the end of the day, Lisa and I don't look at it that way. We look at it as a human story. It has nothing to do whatsoever with white, black, yellow, brown or red. These are people that are suffering."

They will continue to suffer and die, activists say, as long as the international community continues to look the other way. Time is running out, one activist says. "Time is so precious. We need to act now."

For more information on the topic, or to help, visit the Web site, www.seoultrain.com.

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