

Jason Cohen Productions in association with the Fetzer Institute  
A film by Jason Cohen

**Academy Award® Nominee**  
Best Documentary Short Subject 2014



# FACING FEAR

*A moment of hate.  
A lifetime of forgiveness.*

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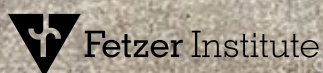
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# Film Description



## Logline

In this Academy Award®-nominated short documentary, worlds collide when a former neo-Nazi skinhead and the gay victim of his hate crime attack meet by chance 25 years after the incident that dramatically shaped both of their lives. Together, they embark on a journey of forgiveness that challenges both to grapple with their beliefs and fears, eventually leading to an improbable collaboration...and friendship.

## Synopsis

When he was 13, Matthew Boger's mother threw him out of his home because he was gay. While living on the streets of Hollywood, he was savagely beaten by a group of neo-Nazi skinheads. Boger managed to survive the attack and escape life on the streets. Twenty-five years later, Boger was working at the Museum of Tolerance and found himself in conversation with a former neo-Nazi, Tim Zaal. The two men soon realized that they had met before... Zaal was one of the attackers who beat Boger and left him for dead.

With their worlds turned upside down, the two embarked on a journey of forgiveness and reconciliation that challenged both to grapple with their own beliefs and fears. Neither could imagine that it would lead to an improbable collaboration...and friendship.

Academy Award®-nominated *Facing Fear* retraces the haunting accounts of the attack and the startling revelation that brought these men together again. While delving deep into their backgrounds, the roots of the ideologies that shape how they handle the reconciliation process are exposed. Self-doubt, anger and fear are just a few of the emotions they struggle through as they come to terms with their unimaginable situation.

Shot on location in Los Angeles, the film is the theatrical directorial debut for Jason Cohen. Edited by the award-winning Tom Christopher with cinematography by Svetlana Cvetko (Academy Award-winning *Inside Job*), the film takes an introspective trip through the world of early 80's Hollywood while delicately addressing past events that shaped the men involved, from early childhood to their present relationship.



# Background Information



## Matthew Boger



Matthew Boger was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Northern California. As a young boy he was disowned and thrown out of his family home after sharing the news that he was gay. Having no formal education beyond the 7th grade he

lived on the streets of West Hollywood as one of many homeless teens. Eventually he worked in fast food restaurants and retail stores, saving money to attend a trade beauty school in 1987 where he learned to be a hair color specialist.

From 1990 to 2005, he had a successful career as one of Beverly Hills' premiere colorists, quickly acquiring a celebrity clientele including Sharon Stone, Liv Tyler, Nicole Kidman, and Michael Douglas. In 1998, horrified and compelled by the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming who was tortured and left for dead, he decided to volunteer at the Museum of Tolerance to help promote values of respect and understanding. In 2005, he made the life-changing decision to leave his high-profile career when he was promoted to Manager of Operations for the Museum of Tolerance. It was at the Museum that he had a fateful encounter with Tim Zaal, a man who had victimized him years before. Their shocking story is recounted in the book *Freaks and Revelations* and was covered by news media including *Oprah*, CNN, and others across the country. Today he and Tim tell their story of reconciliation and forgiveness through their presentation *From Hate to Hope*.

## Tim Zaal



Timothy Zaal is a former neo-Nazi skinhead. Some of Zaal's past racist/political affiliations include: Los Angeles Area Director of Recruitment & Propaganda for the White Aryan Resistance and Director of the Southern California Chapter of the Hammerskin Nation. After beginning the process of distancing himself from these movements, he began working as the consultant to the Simon Wiesenthal Center Task Force Against Hate Crime in 2001.

In 2003, he began speaking publicly about his experiences in a program called *From the Depths of Hate* at the Museum of Tolerance, in schools, and many other settings. He later became a co-facilitator in the Museum of Tolerance's *From Hate to Hope* program alongside Matthew Boger, a former victim of violent hate crime. Timothy Zaal has been featured on *Oprah*, *GANGLAND*, *20/20*, and is featured in the Stonewall Award-winning book *Freaks and Revelations*, written by Davida Willis Hurwin. Zaal has a degree in alcohol and drug counseling and is continuing his studies toward a degree in social work/social psychology.



The **Museum of Tolerance** (MOT) is a human rights laboratory and educational center dedicated to challenging visitors to understand the Holocaust in historic and contemporary contexts and confront all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world today. The only museum of its kind in the world, it is the educational arm of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an internationally renowned Jewish human rights organization. Established in 1993, the MOT has welcomed over five million visitors, mostly middle and high school students. Through interactive exhibits, special events, and customized programs for youths and adults, the Museum engages visitors' hearts and minds, while challenging them to assume personal responsibility for positive change. Visitors are also offered the extraordinary opportunity to hear live personal testimonies from Holocaust Survivors and other powerful speakers whose stories and perspectives bring the Museum themes to life. Recipient of the Global Peace and Tolerance Award from the Friends of the United Nations, this unique institution offers a motivational mix of historical discovery and personal empowerment. [www.museumoftolerance.com](http://www.museumoftolerance.com)

# The Filmmaker



## Director's Statement



Sometimes a story comes your way that strikes you from the outset and you know there is a film in it with a powerful message to be told. There were so many layers to Matthew and Tim's saga from the initial attack to the characters rediscovering each other and then delving into the whole journey that started from that point.

Matthew and Tim's backstory also needed to be told to get some perspective on these two men, so that we could see why this transformation took place during their journey. Both men were able to honestly convey on film the wide range of emotions they experienced as they navigated uncharted emotional territory, leading to some revelations that will surprise the audience.

In the film Tim says, "I don't know if I could forgive somebody the way he's (Matthew) been able to forgive me." That statement really struck a chord with me. It was something I thought about throughout the production of the film. I was often asking myself the question: *How would I handle this if I was thrown into this extraordinary situation?* That self-reflection is something that I feel the viewer will also be forced to examine after seeing the film. Of course, there is no right answer, but it is something we can all consider and open a discussion about.

When editor Tom Christopher and I began to put the film together we really wanted to let the audience feel as though they were reliving the story without doing an actual reenactment of events. So we decided to let our subjects tell the story in a first-person narrative to give it a sense as if it is happening for the first time. To that end, we hope we have made a film that will engage people but also cause them to think about how all of the themes raised—hate, forgiveness, redemption and family—might relate to their own lives.

## Director's Biography

Jason Cohen has produced and directed all formats of film and television on projects that cover a broad range of topics over the past 20 years. Currently, Cohen is in production on a global film about love and forgiveness that has taken him around the world to highlight stories in Uganda, India, Haiti, Spain and Italy.

Cohen has had an ongoing relationship with Academy Award-winning director Steven Okazaki for over 15 years. In 2012, he produced the Okazaki-directed *Approximately Nels Cline*, about the world-renowned lead guitarist of the rock band Wilco. He co-produced HBO's Emmy-nominated *Black Tar Heroin: Dark End of the Street*, with Okazaki and was a producer on his Emmy Award-winning HBO documentary on the dropping of the atomic bomb, *White Light/Black Rain*, which also screened at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

Cohen has also worked in narrative film, producing the feature film *Opal* based on the life of controversial author, Opal Whiteley, which premiered at the 2010 Mill Valley Film Festival and is now being distributed online by Tribeca Film Institute. Other past work includes directing the Olympic documentary, *The Road to Hong Kong*, a short documentary on champion U.S. equestrian horse Ravel, and a documentary on San Jose Sharks radio announcer Dan Rusanowsky for the NHL Network's *Voices* series.

In addition to his documentary and feature work, Cohen has produced numerous commercial and promotional projects for Nike and Gatorade working with athletes LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, Peyton Manning and others. He has also had a long relationship with Microsoft as a producer of broadcast public relations for a wide variety of worldwide events working regularly with executives Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer.

Cohen's earlier work found him working as a producer/cameraman/sound mixer alongside some of the most respected names in journalism. He has logged time for all the major networks as well as PBS and the BBC and cable outlets including ESPN, NFL Network and A&E. Included in his experience are projects in Africa, Norway, Tahiti, Brazil and Antarctica, just to name a few. In 2001, Cohen received recognition for his work when he was honored with the Nafziger Award for distinguished achievement by alumni from the University of Wisconsin School of Journalism, his alma mater.



## Q&A with Filmmaker Jason Cohen

### Q. Why did you make this film?

**A.** I was drawn to this story because of the many layers to it. There is the obvious draw to the dramatic elements of the story and how Matthew and Tim came back into each other's lives, but I also wanted to focus on the forgiveness they then had to go through. The story is remarkable from both characters' perspectives and what they each had to deal with as part of this process. I also felt there was a backstory that needed to be told to get some perspective on these two men and then see how they transformed through this journey.

### Q. Where did the idea for this film come from?

**A.** The film was part of a bigger project I am doing with the Fetzer Institute, a foundation that focuses its work on love and forgiveness. They had begun a project with the Museum of Tolerance and the *From Hate to Hope* program that Matthew and Tim do there. When I read the background on them and the program I was instantly drawn to it and knew it was a perfect storyline for a film.

### Q. How did you approach your subjects about making a film about their experiences and friendship?

**A.** Matthew and Tim have done a fair share of press over the last six years since their story came to light but I initially told them that my goal was to make a film that dug a little deeper and explored the forgiveness process they had now been going through for six years.

When their story was first picked up by the media it was just after they had been reintroduced and they were thrown into a bit of whirlwind where they were doing public speaking while they were still learning who each other were and how to accept each other. I really wanted to see how far their relationship had come since then and what else they learned about each other and themselves.



### Q. What do you want audiences to take away from the film?

**A.** I hope the film causes people to think about the issues brought to the surface by this story, from bullying and homophobia to the perspectives of forgiveness from both the victim and the perpetrator. We are not advocating for forgiveness, per se, but rather giving the viewer a sample of how it affected these men in their lives and then let people extrapolate how it translates into their own lives.

Secondly, I hope audiences are entertained. This is a documentary but it also a dramatic story and we tried to develop the narrative in a way that draws in the audience and keeps them guessing.

### Q. Were there any difficulties in making the film?

**A.** The biggest worry for me was gaining the trust of Matthew and Tim. They had had some bad experiences with the initial media storm where their story was told in a more sensationalized manner, so I think they were a little guarded about it all. I wanted them to know that I wanted to take a different approach and really tell the whole story as much as possible and focus on how they have grown in the years since they found each other. In the end, I think Matthew and Tim understood what I was trying to do and they honestly shared the emotions surrounding their story and their lives and hopefully that comes across on the screen.

### Q. Share an anecdote about the filming process.

**A.** When we filmed Matthew's main interview we ran into a little bit of an issue. We had set up in the Museum of Tolerance after the museum was closed because we knew there wouldn't be any traffic or interruptions. About 20 minutes into the interview we started hearing some voices and then seeing some camera flashes, and it turns out part of the museum had been rented out for a graduation party which no one told us about. After fighting it for a little while we gave up and scrapped the interview and had to reset it exactly the same way the following day. It is always hard to get your subject into a mindset of an interview to the point where they are revealing personal emotions and then to have to cut it off and restart another day was a real challenge but Matthew was a real trooper about it all.

## Key Crew Biographies

### **TOM CHRISTOPHER** Co-Producer/Editor

Tom Christopher has worked in the film industry for three decades with projects at Lucasfilm Ltd., Warner Bros. Studios and The Saul Zaentz Company. His feature film editing credits include George Lucas's SPECIAL EDITION of *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *The Return of the Jedi*; Milos Foreman's *Amadeus Director's Cut*; and Carroll Ballard's *Duma*. He has edited many documentary films for PBS, including an American Masters portrait, *Alice Waters and Her Delicious Revolution*, and an America at the Crossroads episode, *Campus Battleground*, a story of conflict resolution on college campuses. His expertise includes film restoration and preparation of projects for the web.

### **SVETLANA CVETKO** Cinematographer

Svetlana Cvetko was born in the former Yugoslavia and came to the U.S. to explore her talent for photography and filmmaking. Her last documentary film, *Inequality for All*, won the Sundance 2013 Special Jury Prize and was picked up for distribution by The Weinstein Company. Previous credits include the Academy Award-winning *Inside Job*, the Sundance documentary *Miss Representation*, and the narrative feature, *(Untitled)*, directed by Jonathan Parker. *The New York Times* wrote that her "clean wide-screen cinematography provides an aesthetic polish," and Pete Hammond of *Deadline Hollywood* called her sharp cinematography "perfect." Cvetko's work was also featured in *American Cinematographer* magazine.

### **ZAND GEE** Associate Producer

Zand Gee has worked for many years as an Associate Producer for filmmaker Steven Okazaki on his documentaries and narrative works. She is also a widely published book designer for Rizzoli New York and other major publishers, whose projects include several notable publications on Frank Lloyd Wright, Oscar Niemeyer, and Julius Shulman. *Facing Fear* is her first project with Cohen.

### **STEVEN OKAZAKI** Editorial Consultant

Steven Okazaki, an Academy Award winner (*Days of Waiting*, 1990) and a four-time Oscar nominee, produces documentary films on an extraordinary range of subjects from Hiroshima to heroin addiction to the Minnesota State Fair for HBO, PBS and NHK.

### **DAVID KESLER** Composer

David Kesler is a composer for TV, theater, and film, a music producer working with a diverse list of groups, and a critically acclaimed songwriter and performer in the bands, Thee More Shallows and Fops.

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### **Fetzer Institute** [www.fetzer.org](http://www.fetzer.org)

*Facing Fear* was produced in conjunction with the Fetzer Institute which supports projects that foster awareness of the power that love and forgiveness can have in our world. Established by broadcast pioneer and longtime Detroit Tigers owner John E. Fetzer (1901-1991), the Institute is a private foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

# Production Credits



## **Produced, Written & Directed by**

Jason Cohen

## **Co-Produced & Edited by**

T.M. Christopher

## **Director of Photography**

Svetlana Cvetko

## **Associate Producer**

Zand Gee

## **Editorial Consultant**

Steven Okazaki

## **Original Music Composed by**

David Kesler

## **Assistant Editor**

Greg Knowles

## **Sound Recordist**

Chris Jones

## **Additional Camera**

Greg Melton

Rafael Lopez

Jason Cohen

## **Additional Sound**

Monroe Cummings

Tim Nichol

## **Production Assistants**

Rafael Lopez

Nick Bodkin

Joe Johnson

## **Bookkeeper**

Joyce Shue

## **Equipment Rentals**

EVS

Visual Ventures

## **Transcription**

Jocelyn Fabello

Heather Larsen

## **Post Production Sound**

Berkeley Sound Artists

Sound Supervisor & Mixer - James LeBrecht

Sound Mixer & Effects Editor - Jamie Branquinho

Dialogue Editor - Patti Tauscher

## **Digital Intermediate by**

Colorflow, Berkeley, CA

DI Colorist - Kent Pritchett

DI Supervisor - Alexander MacLean

DI Producers - Alex D. da Silva & Kim Salyer

DI Technical Director - Adam Gerardin

On-line Editor - Michael Logan

## **Archival Footage & Photos**

Matthew Boger

Tim Zaal

Museum of Tolerance

Farallon Films

FootageBank

Ann Summa

Hank Grebe

Jerry Roach

David Markey

Philip Wolmuth Photo Library

Steve Starr/Corbis

Jim Hughes/ *The Denver Post*

Frank Girardot/ *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*

## **For Museum of Tolerance**

Liebe Geft

Linda Blanshay

Avra Shapiro

Marcial Laviña

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Matthew Boger

Tim Zaal

David Scott Smith

Teen Court Los Angeles

Camilo Cruz

Southwestern Law School

Café Neveux

Tom Lind

Allard Cantor

Steven Polster

Nick Hauselman

Dina Ciraulo

Tricia Christopher

Antonia Torreblanca



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## Production Stills



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ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE  
Best Documentary Short Subject 2014

*A moment of hate. A lifetime of forgiveness.*

# FACING FEAR

*“Truly  
remarkable  
to watch”*

— The Huffington Post

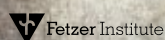
*“Riveting”*

— The San Francisco Chronicle

*“a Must-see”*

— The Advocate

JASON COHEN PRODUCTIONS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE FETZER INSTITUTE A JASON COHEN FILM “FACING FEAR”  
SOUND DESIGN JAMES LEBRECHT ORIGINAL MUSIC DAVID KESLER EDITORIAL CONSULTANT STEVEN OKAZAKI  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ZAND GEE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SVETLANA CVETKO CO-PRODUCER & EDITOR T. M. CHRISTOPHER  
PRODUCED, WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JASON COHEN



[www.facingfearmovie.com](http://www.facingfearmovie.com)

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