

A MARIANNA YAROVSKAYA FILM



women  
of the  
**GULAG**

**Portraits of Five Remarkable Lives**

Based on a book by Paul Gregory

**Tuesday, October 27, 2020 / 7:00 PM**

with

**director Marianna Yarovskaya and author Paul Gregory**



*Women of the Gulag* (2019) tells the compelling stories of six female survivors of Soviet labor camps. While Solzhenitsyn's classic *Gulag Archipelago* focuses on the experiences of the men caught in Stalin's camps, Marianna Yarovskaya's 2019 Oscar-shortlisted documentary captures the voices of women survivors, now in their eighties and nineties, as they go about their daily lives and reflect on their experiences. Their accounts range from the horrific to the uplifting. The film also juxtaposes the troubling resurgence of praise for Stalin with the fight to preserve and disseminate the memory of Soviet repression, terror, and displacement.

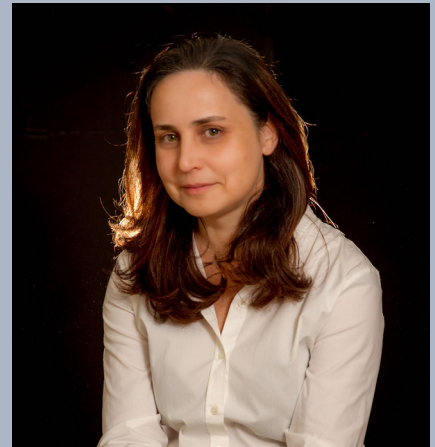
Director/producer Marianna Yarovskaya and author/producer Paul Gregory will join Alexandra Noi (History, UCSB) for a virtual discussion of this fascinating documentary. Two days before the event, registered participants will receive a screening link to view the film.

This event is sponsored by the Carsey-Wolf Center, the Department of History, and the Department of German and Slavic Studies.



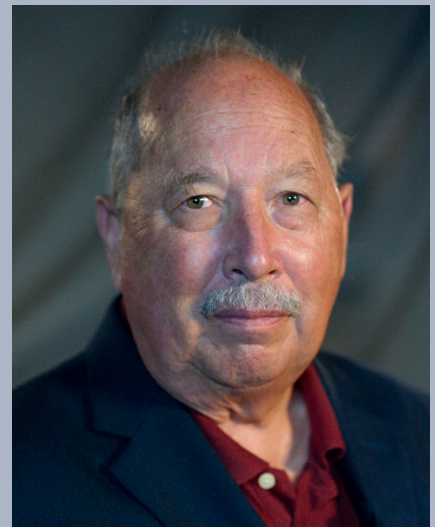
## Guest Biographies: Marianna Yarovskaya (director/producer)

Marianna Yarovskaya is an award-winning Russian-American documentary filmmaker who is the director and producer of the 2018 Academy Award short-listed documentary film, *Women of the Gulag*. Her first film, *Undesirables*, won a Student Academy Award in 2001. Since then, she has worked on dozens of programs for Discovery Channel, National Geographic, History Channel, Greenpeace, Animal Planet as producer, executive producer, and senior editor. She also has credits on over 80 documentary films and TV programs, including research credits on two Academy Award-winning and one Academy-nominated feature film. She is a member of the Producers Guild of America (PGA).



## Paul Gregory (author/producer)

Paul Gregory is a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He is the author of *Women of the Gulag: Five Remarkable Lives* (Hoover) and *Terror by Quota* (Yale). He is the editor of the eight-volume *History of Stalin's Gulag* (Rosspen). He has worked in the Hoover archives for over fifteen years. His archival research has formed the basis for more than eight books. Gregory is also a professor emeritus from the University of Houston.



## Moderator Alexandra Noi (History, UCSB)

Alexandra Noi is a PhD student in the Department of History at UCSB. She is interested in the comparative analysis of penal systems in China and the former Soviet Union, as well as in historical memory, commemoration practices, sites of conscience, and intergenerational trauma. She is a member of the UCSB Interdisciplinary Memory Research Group.



## Producers

### Mitchell Block - Executive Producer

Mitchell Block is president of Direct Cinema Limited in Santa Monica, CA. Block produced the 2011 Academy Award and multiple Emmy nominated documentary film *Poster Girl*. He was a consultant on short and feature nonfiction projects for HBO/Cinemax from 1998-2005. He's been teaching independent film producing at USC's School of Cinematic Arts since 1979. He was an executive-producer on HBO's 2001 Academy Award-winning film *Big Mama. No Lies*, produced and directed by Block, was selected in 2008 for the National Register of Historical Films, films selected from 1973 include: *American Graffiti*, *Badlands*, *Mean Streets* and *The Sting*. It won an Emmy in 1975. He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Television Academy, founding member of BAFTA-LA, and a life member of the UFVA & IDA.

### Mark Jonathan Harris - Executive Producer

Mark Harris is a documentary filmmaker, journalist, and fiction writer. His two Oscar-winning feature documentaries explore the Holocaust. *The Long Way Home* documents what happened to the survivors of the concentration camps in the period immediately following their liberation. *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* chronicles Britain's rescue mission of 10,000 children in the nine months prior to World War II. In recent years Harris has focused on producing. He produced the award-winning *Darfur Now* and executive produced two other high profile documentary features, *Spirit of the Marathon* and *Living in Emergency: Stories of Doctors Without Borders*. Since 1983 he has taught filmmaking at the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, where he is a Distinguished Professor. From 1990- 1996 he was the Chair of Film and TV Production. Harris was Yarovskaya's advisor at USC, she worked on his film *Kindertransport*, and he consulted on her Student Academy Award-winning film, *Undesirables*.



## The Crew

### Leonard Feinstein - Editor

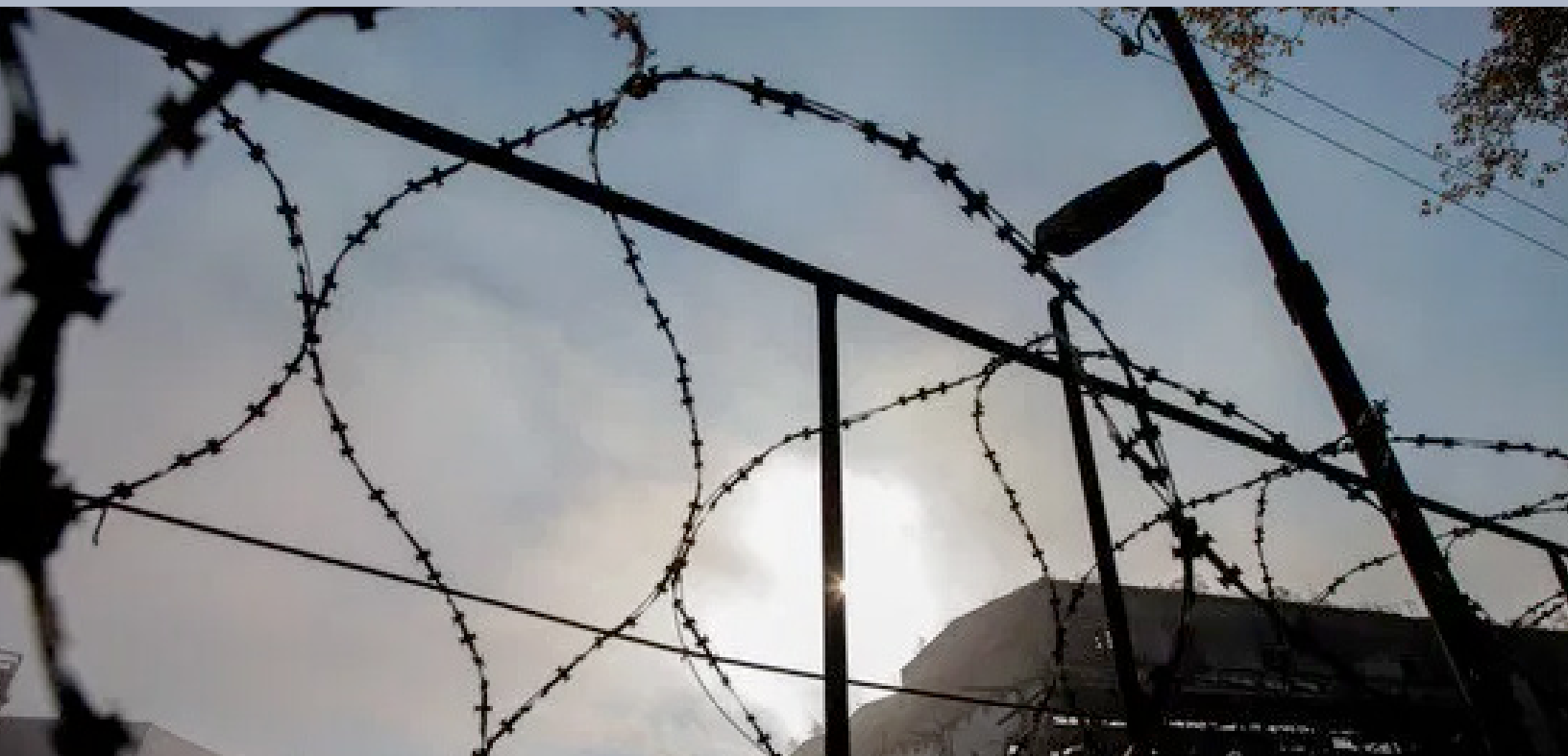
Leonard Feinstein has been editing documentary films and TV for over three decades. Among his credits are the award-winning feature docs *Darfur Now*, *Bitter Seeds*, and *Mona Lisa Missing*. He has cut numerous films for director Robert Kenner, and edited director Jon Dunham's acclaimed marathon documentaries, *Spirit of the Marathon II* and *Boston: An American Running Story*. For television, his work includes the landmark PBS series *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*, as well as programs for *NOVA*, *National Geographic*, *American Experience* and *Craft in America*. *Robert Irwin: The Beauty of Questions*, a film he directed and edited, took the Grand Prize at the 1998 International Biennale of Films on Art in Paris. Feinstein has been nominated for a Prime Time Emmy, and won an American Cinema Editors Award in 2009 for his work on the TV series *Greensburg*.

## Mark Adler - Composer

Mark Adler is an Emmy-winning composer with over 80 film scores to his credit, including the Oscar-nominated documentary *Food, Inc.* A regular at the Sundance Film Festival, he scored the Audience Award-winning film *Picture Bride* (with Youki Kudoh and Toshiro Mifune). His other film scores include *Focus* (based on Arthur Miller's novel and starring William H. Macy and Laura Dern), *Bottle Shock* (with Alan Rickman and Chris Pine), HBO's *The Rat Pack* (with Don Cheadle, Ray Liotta and Joe Mantegna.) He has also toured as a keyboardist with former Grateful Dead vocalist Donna Jean Godchaux, a high point being an appearance at San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium. Mark is currently writing a theater piece with music.

## Frank Gaeta - Sound

Frank Gaeta is known for his work on *Hell or High Water* (2016), *Captain Fantastic* (2016) and *20th Century Women* (2016).



## How the Film Was Made

The idea was born when filmmaker Marianna Yarovskaya was taking part in founding the Museum of Holocaust in Moscow. As a Russian, she realized that, unlike the Holocaust, the Gulag lacks, as Anne Applebaum declares, a “big moment,” *Women of the Gulag*, shot entirely in Russia, is our attempt to create a “moment.” We focus not on the horrendous statistics of the Gulag. Instead, we allow six actual witnesses to recount their stories in their own words. Yarovskaya began filming with three last witnesses from Hoover’s Paul Gregory’s book of the same title. The cast of characters expanded as Yarovskaya filmed in remote locations near former camps. Our women were eager to tell their stories. In the course of filming, two of our six women died, so our film indeed is immortalizing the last witnesses to the crimes that were committed.

In keeping with the Kremlin’s strategy of not openly blocking Gulag narratives, no authority interfered with our shooting of *Women of the Gulag*. No one stood in the way of cooperating with Memorial and the Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov Foundations. The Kremlin perversely benefits from appearing open to Gulag discussion, especially to foreign audiences. Russian media even paid for a positive article on *Women of the Gulag* in their Russia Beyond the Headlines insert in the *New York Times*. Nevertheless, we understood that Russian authorities are conducting a subtle campaign to make the Gulag disappear. They issue secret orders for the shredding of Gulag documents. Local historians are threatened with jail for unearthing killing fields. Memorial and other victims’ organizations are threatened with being labelled “foreign agents.” This term has great symbolism. Great Terror victims were shot under this label.

This film is personal for Yarovskaya, since her own family history was affected by the gulag.



## Historical Background and Relevance to the Present

Eighty years ago (November 17, 1938) Stalin ended the Great Terror, citing “local excesses” that had come to his attention. It wasn’t until two decades later that the KGB tallied the victims of the sixteen-month reign of terror at 1,334,360. Half were shot, and the rest sentenced to the Gulag. The Gulag itself continued to grow during and after the Second World War. It reached its peak of 2.5 million prisoners shortly before Stalin’s death. Of these, one out of five were women.

The Kremlin cannot deny that the Gulag happened, but the Putin regime wants to focus on Russia’s past glories – the defeat of Napoleon and Hitler, the USSR’s breakneck industrialization and modernization, and Russia’s reverence to the orthodox faith. The Kremlin’s narrative is of Russia as a “besieged fortress” that will rise to the occasion when the decadent West seeks its dismemberment. Stalin’s murder of millions does not fit nicely into this narrative.

The Kremlin is conducting an insidious and relentless PR campaign to preserve and protect Stalin’s image in the public mind. True, Stalin killed, but it was all for modernization and industrialization. The USSR could not have beaten Hitler without the labor camps that mined the resources in the godforsaken East and North, they say.

Imagine a German classroom in which the state curriculum calls for debates on whether Hitler was a positive or negative figure in German history. In Russia, school children are encouraged to organize mock trials, arguing whether Stalin was the “father of Russia” or Russia’s “enemy.” Such pedagogical twists appear not to be necessary anyway. Half of Russia’s youth are not even aware of the repressions under Stalin.

The Kremlin strategy is working. Polls show that the Russian people rate Stalin as the most outstanding figure in Russian history, ahead of Putin himself. The voices of *Women of the Gulag* are scarcely audible, but they must be heard.





## CWC Docs

The Carsey-Wolf Center is committed to screening documentaries from across the world that engage with contemporary and historical issues, especially regarding social justice and environmental concerns. Documentaries allow filmmakers to address pressing issues and frame the critical debates of our time.

## CWC Global

Media are global by nature; they express culture just as much as they transcend borders. The *CWC Global* series is dedicated to showcasing media from around the world. This series features screenings and events that place UCSB in conversation with international media makers and global contexts across our deeply connected world.

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