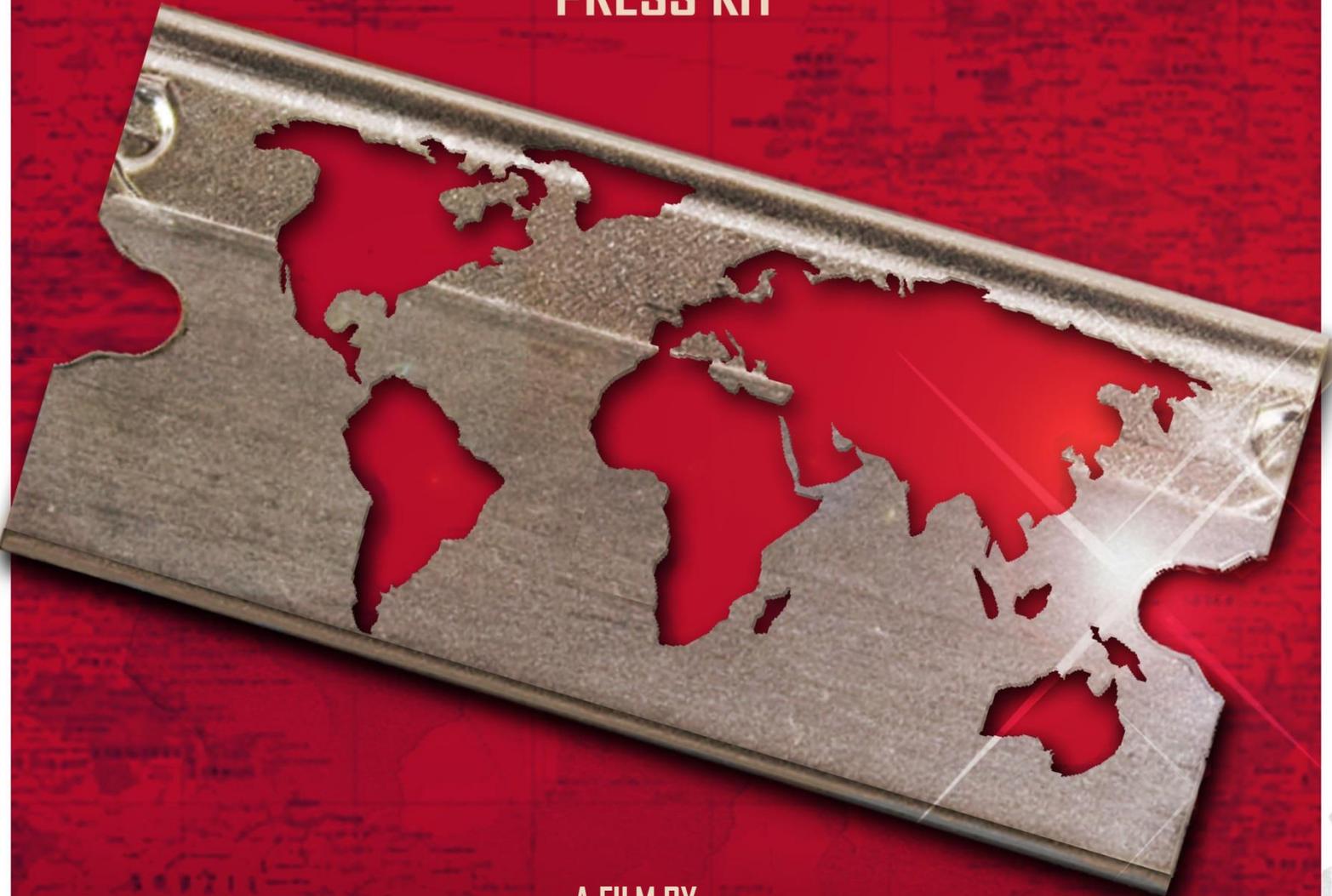


CUT

EXPOSING FGM WORLDWIDE
PRESS KIT



A FILM BY
JOHN CHUA



*Gravitas
Ventures*



LOGLINE

Part adventure travelogue and part anthropological study, *Cut* follows an explorer disproving the out-of-Africa theory about female genital mutilation, and exposes this human rights violation as a native practice on every inhabitable continent.

SYNOPSIS

Taking nearly a decade to complete, *Cut: Exposing FGM Worldwide* is a feature-length documentary that conclusively proves that female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM) can be found as a native practice on all inhabitable continents. From war zones in the Middle East to suburban white America, the film visits fifteen countries and features key interviews with FGM survivors, activists, cutters, doctors and researchers to uncover an often secret practice shrouded in centuries of traditions, mysticisms and irrationalities.

The film won PBS's TTC About Women and Girls Film Festival and a shorter 25-minute version received a TV broadcast across America on PBS stations in December 2017. The feature-length version has been sold for global distribution to Gravitas Ventures, part of Red Arrow Studios, the subsidiary of European TV broadcasting giant ProSeibenSat.l.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

Part adventure travelogue, part anthropological study, and certainly an explosive human rights exposé, *Cut: Exposing FGM Worldwide* is the result of nearly a decade of investigative research into the secret practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) globally. Filmmaker John Chua travelled to some of the most remote and dangerous locations as well as some of the most mundane places to talk to cutters, survivors, doctors and activists to uncover an often secret practice shrouded in centuries of traditions, mysticisms and irrationalities. He is the first person to show that FGM is a native behaviour on every continent except Antarctica.

Among FGM experts, conventional thinking says that the practice originated in Africa centuries ago, was later adopted by certain Islamic sects, and has spread across the world through migration. The film aims to disprove the out-of-Africa theory and show FGM as actually an indigenous phenomenon across the world, revealing some surprising facts in the process. For example, until the 1960s some white Christian doctors and parents in the United States advocated cutting the clitoris to prevent masturbation.

Highlights include testimonies from American FGM survivors and doctors, an Iraqi's account of ISIS mandating FGM in Mosul, undercover video of medical clinics in Singapore offering to cut British and American baby girls, the first filmed testimonies of FGM in the Peruvian Amazon and among Cambodian Chams, and an interview with a cutter from Dagestan in Russia. This film poses questions humanity needs to answer. Why has FGM for so long been associated with African traditions, when in fact it appears across religions and races? And why are so many people globally obsessed with this cutting?

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FACTS ABOUT FGM

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines FGM as 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.' There are four types of FGM according to the WHO.

For decades, many of us in the West considered FGM mostly an African phenomenon. In 2004, Wadi, an NGO providing charity help to women, children and refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan, began campaigns to expose and stop FGM in northern Iraq. Their exposure of the problem led to worldwide discussions that FGM is not just an African issue. It inspired other activists in the Middle East and elsewhere to expose FGM in their communities.

Most people are in fact unaware that FGM can be found as a native phenomenon on every continent except Antarctica. It is not tied to any one race, religion or belief.

In almost all communities where this practice is found, FGM is done secretly and is a taboo topic.

For this and many other reasons, we do not know the true extent of FGM worldwide and the number of women and girls affected. UNICEF has some estimates but they are woefully inadequate.



Q&A WITH WRITER, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER JOHN CHUA

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED IN DOCUMENTING FGM?

Nearly a decade ago, I went to Iraq to start a volunteer program to train citizen journalists. Through the NGO Wadi, I met Iraqi Kurds trying to expose and end FGM in their country. At that time, FGM was still widely regarded in the West as African, and the Kurdish exposé was revolutionary. Working with them, I produced short documentaries on FGM in Iraq for the BBC and Guardian.

Eventually, these Iraqi Kurds successfully petitioned their government to enact anti-FGM laws. Through their work, FGM is now largely ending there. This experience inspired me to continue investigating FGM elsewhere in the Middle East, and then later in Southeast Asia, Russia, South America and the United States which led to the creation of *Cut: Exposing FGM Worldwide*. I became the first person to document FGM as a native practice on all inhabitable continents.

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF GETTING THE FILM MADE?

When I first started almost a decade ago, I thought the project would be done within a year or two. I intended only to investigate one or two countries. In fact, earlier versions of the film did not feature non-Islamic cultures. I thought I could just train a few local citizen journalists on how to interview and have them record videos for me. Like many other people studying FGM, I didn't think about venturing to the Americas, Russia or Australia.

But the longer I worked on investigating FGM, the more countries I found where this was a native practice. The process went on and on, as I gathered evidence in one country after another. There were just too many countries and I didn't know enough people I could train to get the documentary footage. In the end I realised I had to just go there myself to gather the material.

WHICH COUNTRIES DO YOU FOCUS ON IN THE FILM?

In countries where I already know or trained citizen journalists such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, and India, I had them shoot and send me videos. The other countries prominently featured that I visited myself are Australia, Colombia, England, Iraq, Malaysia, Russia, Peru, Singapore, Thailand and the United States.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MAJOR CHALLENGES DURING PRODUCTION?

There were so many challenges that people told me not to even try to tell a comprehensive story. But I needed to get the footage because otherwise no one would believe me that FGM was found across so many different races and religions. In many places it was difficult for me to operate sound and video equipment as well as be the interviewer/producer. It was hard to get anyone to go with me to these remote locations, some of which were known for highly dangerous activities such as cocaine trafficking in rural Peru, Islamic State terrorism in Dagestan and the war in Iraq.

Likewise, in places where I didn't speak the local language or didn't know the area, I needed to find a local fixer or translator, which wasn't easy. I was a stranger arriving at a remote location which posed its own

challenge. Imagine this stranger asking local women to talk about their secret taboo practice involving genitals, and to do it before a camera. Needless to say, there were times I couldn't get the interview. But I had to keep trying because I didn't know anyone else who would do the job. Also, perhaps a Chinese looking man appearing in their midst got them to open up, because in places which get few visitors, they were equally curious about me.

WERE THERE ANY REVELATIONS WHICH REALLY SURPRISED YOU ALONG THE WAY?

When I started I never thought I would uncover FGM outside Middle Eastern and African cultures. In my own native Singapore, FGM happened to 85 of the 119 Muslim women I surveyed. It is not spoken about and is unknown to outsiders. The fact that FGM likely had an impact on my own Singaporean friends and family who were born and raised as Muslims surprised me.

But having lived in both United States and Russia, I never thought FGM was conducted by certain Christian sects in those two countries. In Russia, an apocalyptic Orthodox Christian sect with over a hundred thousand members performed FGM on some of their females until the Communists obliterated the cult after the Russian Revolution.

As for the United States, I found a surreptitiously shot video from over two decades ago of a white American women talking about how FGM happened to her. I thought I would never find her, but when I did I convinced her to appear in my documentary and be the first white American FGM survivor to openly talk about her memories of getting cut. After a 25-minute excerpt of my film was acquired by a PBS programme and aired on PBS stations across America in December of 2017, two other Christian white women approached us to say they too are FGM survivors. They were cut as children some thirty odd years ago. While *The Handmaid's Tale* shows FGM as punishment in a fictional dystopian America, this actually happened in the United States.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU WANT PEOPLE TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE FILM?

This film aims to educate the public and open discussions about FGM. Why has FGM been for so long considered an African and Islamic phenomenon when in fact it can be found as a native practice on all inhabitable continents? There are many reasons for this. The practice is a taboo topic on every continent, often done in secret. We in the West are often blind to our own atrocities, whether it is FGM or other horrors. Our inability to confront our faults contributes to the 'othering' of FGM and arguably this can perpetuate the practice. People tend to care less when a horror is deemed alien, savage, or inscrutable. FGM needs further investigation locally and globally.

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

WRITER, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

Dr. John Chua is a filmmaker, academic, journalist and explorer. He spent 10 years as a professor and university lecturer in Britain. During much of this time, John Chua researched and documented the existence of female genital cutting as an indigenous practice across all inhabitable continents, exposing an irrational and often secret tradition. He has travelled globally for this project, including the Russian Caucasus, Middle East conflict zones, Southeast Asia, the Peruvian Amazon and the American Midwest, to gather interviews with FGM survivors, cutters, doctors and experts. The resulting documentary *Cut: Exposing FGM Worldwide* shows conclusively that for many centuries FGM exists across religions and races. John Chua has also produced documentaries for the BBC, PBS and Guardian News Media. During his graduate studies, John Chua worked at the art auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's and was a museum consultant.

CO-PRODUCER

Mark Grasso has a career of some three decades as a media, entertainment, film & broadcast technology executive. A 20-year voting member of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) as well as a member of American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), he has been involved in numerous film and broadcast projects around the world. As Managing Director of Citizen Reporting LLC, a production/development media company with a focus on documentaries and original production, and as Co-Producer of *Cut: Exposing FGM Worldwide*, he brings global awareness about FGM.



Gravitas Ventures™

Gravitas Ventures is one of the largest all rights feature film distributors in the world, with the ability to distribute films into theatres and brick and mortar retailers as well as online and on television networks worldwide. The company releases over 400 new films each year.

CEO Nolan Gallagher founded Gravitas Ventures in 2006 after helping shape VOD strategies for the largest North American cable operator (Comcast), and a major studio (Warner Bros). With a simple mission to deliver ideas to the digital market, Nolan recognized that Gravitas could build a bridge between filmmakers and consumer-friendly technology offerings.

Soon after Gravitas' inception, Nolan and Gravitas' President and co-owner Michael Murphy began attending worldwide film festivals in search of thought-provoking features and documentaries while establishing distribution relationships with worldwide cable, satellite, television and internet-based partners.

Gravitas Ventures is part of Red Arrow Studios, one of the world's leading creators and distributors of entertainment content. Red Arrow Studios comprises 20 production companies in seven territories, including 10 companies based in the United States; world-leading digital studio, Studio71, based in six countries; and global film and TV distributors Red Arrow Studios International.

FILM STILL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



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