



"The Warriors of Qiugang"

《仇岗卫士》

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The Warriors of Qiugang

仇岗卫士

2010 | Documentary | 39 min. | In Chinese with English subtitles

Directed by: Ruby Yang | Written by: Thomas Lennon

Produced by: Thomas Lennon & Ruby Yang

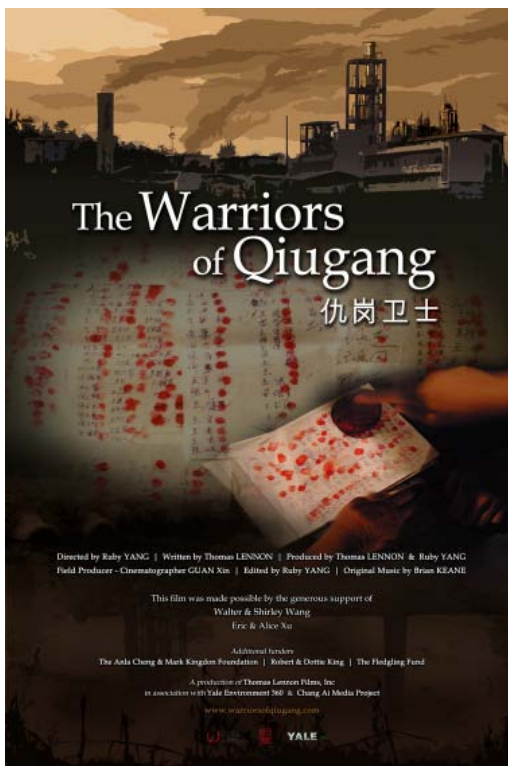
Shot in Anhui Province, China

Length: 39 minutes

Film Format: Mini-DV, HDcam

Original Language: Chinese

Subtitles: English





SHORT DESCRIPTION

Villagers in central China take on a chemical company that is poisoning their air, water and land. For five years they fight to transform their environment and as they do, they find themselves transformed as well.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Zhang Gongli is a farmer who grew up in the village of Qiugang, in Anhui Province; his house and fields lie near the banks of the Huai River. In 2004, private chemical companies took over an old state-owned enterprise that had long produced pesticides and dyes in Qiugang. As production ramped up, black waters disgorged from the plants and flooded the fields of Qiugang. Fish died, crops failed, and villagers grew alarmed by the large numbers of their own succumbing to cancer.

When his own fields could no longer be farmed, Zhang filed a lawsuit against the factory that adjoins his land. He lost. This marked the beginning of a stubborn and often dangerous campaign that spanned five years. Our film follows Zhang and his allies in the village as they draw up a petition to bring to Beijing, recruit support from the local media, reach out for help from a local NGO, and in time, make contact with environmental activists from across China. From clandestine trips to the nation's capital to private negotiating sessions with factory representatives, our footage reveals a rare portrait of grassroots activism in contemporary China. Far from a simple black-and-white portrait, the film tracks the villagers as they seek out the help and power of the national government to curb local businesses and local officials. The film's intimacy leads us past the headlines and clichés about modern China to offer a memorable portrait of villagers wrestling with, and transformed by, China's headlong rush into modernity.



CAST OF CHARACTERS



Zhang Gongli
Villager

Zhang Gongli, a farmer with only a middle-school education, is the central character in our film. He makes for an improbable eco-warrior. Now almost 60, he has spent most of his life working in the fields. He is fiercely nationalistic, with an abiding faith in China's Communist Party. Yet when factories started poisoning his village, he pushed back. He taught himself the rudiments of Chinese law and filed a lawsuit against the polluters. When he lost in the courts, he persevered. Over the course of almost five years, our cameras watch as this modest and at times hesitant farmer turns himself into a savvy leader. As a representative of the factories acknowledges towards the end of the film, Zhang is no longer "an ordinary villager".



Wang Yongcui
Villager

She may be a gossip and something of a busybody, but Wang Yongcui was the only person brave enough to talk in front of the camera when our crew first arrived in Qiugang. The mother of three sons, Wang is also aunt to the village head, and she has a story or two to tell about him (as well as all her other neighbors). Over the course of the campaign, Wang makes herself into Zhang's improbable ally and essential partner.



Wang Zongying
Villager

87-year-old Wang Zongying makes a mark on her wall for every death in the village. She says over 50 villagers have died in the past two and a half years alone. And about a third of those who died were under 50 years old. She says in all her long years, she has never seen such a high mortality rate. "I'm 87 years old," she tells our cameras. "and I never tell lies."



Yang Jun
Village Committee Member

Yang Jun knows that the chemical factories stopped discharging their wastewater whenever there was an inspection by the local environmental protection agency and it infuriated him. Each time he heard that a new inspection was about to take place, he would race to the Baojia Waterway to collect samples of the pollution and to crosscheck the official reporting.



Ren Jingwen
Green Anhui Volunteer

Green Anhui is a young and relatively small NGO based in Anhui Province. Its mission is to increase public interest and involvement in environmental protection. It was founded in 2003 by a group of journalists, environmental activists, and students. Investigating conditions along the Huai River, one of the NGO's volunteers discovered unnatural colors flowing from a tributary. He traced the source of the pollution to Qiugang. Volunteer Ren Jingwen subsequently spent a lot of time in Qiugang helping residents understand their legal rights and gathering concrete evidence of what was happening to the village's water.



FILMMAKERS

THOMAS LENNON
WRITER, PRODUCER



Lennon's work in documentary film has won the field's most coveted honors: an Academy Award (two nominations), two duPont-Columbia awards, two George Foster Peabody and Writers' Guild awards, and two national Emmys. He has twice premiered films at Sundance.

He founded, with Ruby Yang, the *Chang Ai Media Project*; their groundbreaking AIDS messages have been seen over 900 million times on Chinese television and the Internet, probably the largest campaigns in the history of the disease. This work earned them profiles in the Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Los Angeles Times and on PBS. Their film *The Blood of Yingzhou District* won an Oscar in 2007. They recently completed the last in a trilogy of short films about modern China, *The Warriors of Qiugang*, which he wrote and produced. He recently directed a series of short films for the Internet commissioned by the Peterson Foundation.



FILMMAKERS

RUBY YANG DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

Filmmaker Ruby Yang has worked on a range of feature and documentary films exploring Chinese themes as director, producer and editor. She won an Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject for *The Blood of Yingzhou District* in 2007. She is also known for her feature documentary *Citizen Hong Kong* and the award winning documentary *My Voice, My Life*.

With filmmaker Thomas F. Lennon, Yang founded the Chang Ai Media Project in 2003 to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in China. Since then, its documentaries and public service announcements have been seen by hundreds of millions of Chinese viewers. Together they made a trilogy of short documentary films about modern China, including *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, which won an Oscar, *Tongzhi in Love* and *The Warriors of Qiugang* which was nominated for Academy Award Best Documentary Short Subject in 2011.

Yang lived and worked in San Francisco for many years, relocated to Beijing in 2004 and now lives in Hong Kong. She was appointed by the University of Hong Kong as Hung Leung Hau Ling Distinguished Fellow in Humanities in 2013. Her feature documentary *My Voice, My Life* was named one of “Hong Kong’s five most-notable films of 2014” by Wall Street Journal. Her 2016 documentary *In Search of Perfect Consonance* received the Excellence in Filmmaking Award at the Sedona International Film Festival. In 2018, she completed *Ritoma*, a mid-length documentary, which follows the nomads of Ritoma as they navigate the collision of tradition and modernity.

Yang is a member of the Directors Guild of America and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. She now heads the Hong Kong Documentary Initiative at the University of Hong Kong, which aims to nurture the next generation of documentary filmmakers in the region. A complete listing of her films is on [imdb](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1045111/).



GUAN XIN FIELD PRODUCER – CINEMATOGRAPHER

Guan Xin was born in 1970 in Liaoning, China. As an independent producer, he has explored the far reaches of Western China, the Taklamakan Desert, the Wujiang River, Ali, Hoh Xil, and other areas in northern Tibet, making films focused on cultural themes, wildlife, and narrative subjects. Guan has served as a photographer, producer, and director and actively participates in cultural exchanges between the East and West. His works include *Finding Shambhala*, *Przewalski's Gazelle* and *Approaching Hoh Xil*.

BRIAN KEANE COMPOSER

Brian Keane is a leading music producer and composer who has won numerous Emmys and Grammys. He wrote the music for Lennon and Yang's Academy Award winning film *The Blood of Yingzhou District*.

CO-PRODUCTION PARTNER

Yale Environment 360 is an online magazine covering environmental issues from a global perspective, with original articles and multimedia content from some of the world's foremost journalists, scientists, environmentalists, and policymakers. Since its launch in 2008, *Yale Environment 360* has attracted an international audience and has received various honors, including a National Magazine Award for Digital Media, the Online Journalism Award for Best Specialty Site, and a National Press Photographers Association award for Best Documentary. *Yale Environment 360* is published at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies.

PRODUCTION STILLS



The Warriors of Qiugang still.01

Farmer turned activist Zhang Gongli documents the pollution from a chemical plant in the village of Qiugang, in Anhui Province.

(Photo/Agai Cao)



The Warriors of Qiugang still.02

More than 1800 Qiugang residents – almost the entire population of the village – signed a petition to local government leaders.

(Photo/Agai Cao)



The Warriors of Qiugang still.03

Young woman wash clothing in a lake full of wastewater from the chemical factories.

(Photo/Agai Cao)



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End Credits

Dedicated to the villagers of Qiugang

Directed by
Ruby Yang

Written by
Thomas Lennon

Produced by
Thomas Lennon
Ruby Yang

Field Producer - Cinematographer
GUAN Xin

Edited by
Ruby Yang

Original Music by
Brian Keane

Additional Music
George GAO

Researcher
Agai CAO

Animation & Graphic by
Frog CUI



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Dialogue Mixer
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Music Editor
Keith Chirgwin



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