



## PREESS KIT

September 2025

**VIEW HIGHER FILMS**

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

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**RUNNING TIME: 78 MINUTES | FORMAT: HD | GENRE: DOCUMENTARY**

## LOGLINE

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There is a crisis in our community, and we need to talk about it.

## ***SILENT WAR* SHORT SYNOPSIS**

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*Silent War: Asian American Reckonings with Mental Health* is a groundbreaking documentary that confronts the deep silence surrounding mental illness in Asian American communities. Through intimate stories of struggle, survival, and healing, the film explores how cultural stigma, intergenerational trauma, racism, and systemic neglect have shaped the mental health experiences of families from diverse Asian backgrounds. Featuring raw personal testimonies, expert insights, and emotional family reckonings, *Silent War* reveals the human cost of staying silent—and the power of breaking that silence. At once personal and political, the film charts a collective journey from shame to resilience, offering hope for a more inclusive and compassionate mental health future.

## ***SILENT WAR* LONG SYNOPSIS**

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*Silent War: Asian American Reckonings with Mental Health* is an unflinching exploration of the cultural, emotional, and systemic barriers that have kept generations of Asian Americans from speaking openly about mental illness. Told through the deeply personal stories of individuals and families—including a young Chinese American woman who survived several suicide attempts, a mother reckoning with her daughter’s bipolar disorder, an established Korean newscaster being accused of being “too Asian,” and a Sikh family haunted by a father’s unresolved pain—the film exposes the quiet suffering in the growing Asian American community. Also spotlighted are individuals from a wide range of backgrounds whose lived experiences help shed light on important topics of communication and language barriers, model minority myth, belonging and loyalty, as well as unique mental health challenges Asian Americans face.

Blending vérité footage, interviews, and expert commentary, *Silent War* delves into the impact of migration, intergenerational trauma, and cultural expectations on mental well-being. The film also highlights community-led efforts to destigmatize mental health and push for culturally responsive care. More than a portrait of pain, *Silent War* is a call to action—and a tribute to those fighting for visibility, healing, and change in the face of silence.



# CHANGFU CHANG

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, a few community leaders approached me about a documentary idea on Asian American mental health. At the time, Asian Americans were fighting two viruses: the COVID-19, of course, and the rising anti-Asian hate crimes.

When I took on this project, my children were not impressed, “Dad, are you sure this is the right project for you?” I kind of knew where they came from, but it took me 5 years to find the answer. The answer comes from the stories from our community and my own reflections as an Asian American. For five years, we have travelled across the country gaining access to the experiences and struggles of our community members that are largely neglected or shunned. We were alarmed by how firmly mental illness is gripping our community everywhere and anytime, and yet, so little help is on the way. We were touched by how eagerly our members decided to share their stories and their pent-up emotions. These are truly powerful stories, with so much drama, human cost, inspiration, and impact. Today, I still wonder why our members, from a community in which mental illness is highly and prohibitively stigmatized, would come forward to recount and re-live those many intimate moments that could make them vulnerable and could re-trigger their mental illness.

I know, for the sake of helping our community combat mental illness, they were willing to take risks. I’m so grateful to them. I have my own challenges. The project became deeply personal. In the documentary film business, we are often mindful of the fine line between providing a voice and becoming a voice. Documentary filmmakers, for better or worse, are supposed to be “a fly on the wall.” Otherwise, you become subjective and biased. But I often found myself tearing up with my participants during their difficult moments; I found myself asking questions as if to my children, the questions that had never gotten asked some 20 years before; I found myself processing the same experience and emotions at the workplace as an Asian American professional.

They are telling my stories and our stories. Ultimately, what we were capturing is a collective experience, identity, and destiny. When a director writes a statement, they have arrived at a point where it is reflective, suggesting the end of a journey. It is true for the film and for my own mental health quest. But there is a sense of incompleteness, a sense of a long journey that asks for patience, resilience, and resolve. And it takes time. I hope our film will serve as a good messenger in our war on mental illness.

# REVIEWS



“The screening of *Silent War* was incredibly impactful. It opened space for community members, educators, and mental health professionals to share powerful stories and have honest conversations about mental health that are often silenced by stigma. It invites us to reflect, to heal, and to find strength in seeking help and supporting one another. It is a must-watch for anyone who cares about intergenerational dialogue and wellbeing in Asian American immigrant families.”

**PROFESSOR MEINA LIU, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

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“The film was beautiful, moving, inspiring and the stories from the families will save lives and help so many people. I look forward to this film being shown in more venues and in community settings.”

**DR. RAZIA KOSI, MENTAL HEALTH EXPERT**

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“This is a remarkable film. Even though the topic of mental health was not new to me, I have learned a lot from the film. I know of many friends (and their children as well) who are suffering from mental illness, but they don’t want to talk about it. It’s indeed a silent war. Thanks for bringing this topic to the forefront. Raising awareness is the first step.”

**FANG WU, AUDIENCE MEMBER**



## STATISTICS FROM THE FILM

**50%**

less likely: Asian Americans seek mental health services at half the rate of other racial groups. Despite making up 7% of the U.S. population, they've received only 0.17% funding on clinical research from the NIH.

**3 IN 10**

Asian American youth have planned or attempted suicide in their lifetime. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Asian American youth between 15 and 24 years old.

**1 IN 5**

Asian American youth have wished they were a different ethnicity. In 2023, 93% Asian American youth experienced some form of race-based discrimination.

**43%**

of Asian American youth report that the biggest stressor on mental health is the pressure to succeed academically, competitively, and professionally. They are most negatively affected by pressure from self and from family.

# MEET THE CREW

## FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES



### CHANGFU CHANG, DIRECTOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER

Changfu Chang is an award-winning filmmaker who has produced a series of documentaries on identities and cultural issues. His releases include *Ricki's Promise*, winner of several awards at prestigious international film festivals and part of the Smithsonian Institution's series on cultural identity in celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in 2016; and *Meet Me on the Bridge*, a BBC documentary that was viewed by over 60 million people within several months when first released on the BBC website in 2018.



### LILY CHEN, PRODUCER

Lily Chen is the producer of *Silent War* and the founding Executive Director of UCA WAVES. A community organizer, nursing educator, and researcher, Lily has led national grassroots efforts around mental health education in AANHPI communities since 2016. She currently oversees multiple projects funded by SAMHSA, the State of North Carolina, and other major organizations, with a focus on culturally adaptive mental health training, parent education, and youth peer support. As a producer, Lily brings deep lived experience and community insight to the film, helping shape its mission.



CONTINUE ➤



## A.C. BROOKE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Allison Connelly, known professionally as A.C. Brooke, is a writer, photographer, graphic designer and documentarian based in Chester County, PA. She is an avid storyteller, with a passion for exploring the nuances in life and relationships. Much of her work revolves around raising awareness for trauma and its impact. In conjunction with working on *Silent War*, she's also directing her own documentary, *Paper Birds*, which highlights the fallout of recovered memories and the delayed onset of PTSD. As a dedicated professional, Allison is eager to use her skills and experience to make a positive impact on the world around her.



## JORDAN GRAFF, EDITOR

Jordan Graff is the editor of *Silent War*, where he brings nearly a decade of experience and a thoughtful, story-driven approach to his craft. A former student of director Changfu Chang, Jordan views editing as the final opportunity to shape a narrative—and treats it as a creative, not just technical, role. He sees editing as a subtractive process: one that distills hours of material into a story with emotional resonance and clarity. Whether sketching diagrams, taking notes, or simply listening, Jordan's process is all about understanding the heart of the story and advocating for the viewer's experience. In addition to his editorial work, Jordan brings complementary skills in sound design, photography, motion graphics, and color.



## BARRY ATTICKS, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Dr. Barry Atticks is the Director of Music and a professor of music technology. His professional background includes work in New York and Los Angeles as a music engineer, sound designer, and effects editor for major TV shows like *Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman* and *Chicago Hope*, as well as collaborations with Hans Zimmer's Media Ventures. An active performer and the current president of the Association for Technology in Music Instruction, Barry continues to lead global music industry trips for students while also moonlighting as an NCAA football official.

## DR. CHANGFU CHANG, DIRECTOR

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