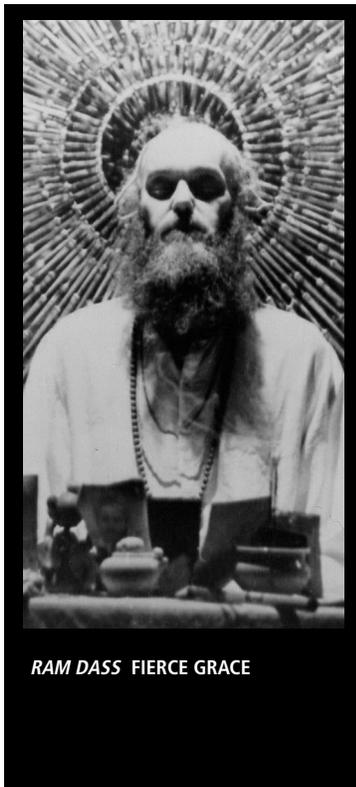


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:
www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos
Program companion website: www.pbs.org/ramdass



**INDEPENDENT LENS'S "RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE"
OFFERS AN INSPIRING PORTRAIT OF THE FAMED
HARVARD PROFESSOR TURNED SPIRITUAL LEADER**

Acclaimed Documentary Takes Viewers from the Counterculture of the '60s and 70s to the Present Through the Fascinating Life of One Indomitable Man

**Film Produced and Directed by Mickey Lemle
Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens,"
ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS
Tuesday, April 20, 2004 at 10 P.M.
(check local listings)**

"Equals any transcendent moment you're likely to find in a fiction film, a novel, or a 'manual for conscious being.'"

—MICHAEL ALMEREYDA, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"Funny and subtle...Ram Dass has learned to receive as much wisdom as he imparts."

—ELVIS MITCHELL, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"Heartbreaking and inspiring! Counterculture mavens will doubtlessly flip...but even mainstream audiences may find themselves nourished by this generous reflection on a life well lived."

—STEPHEN GARRET, *TIME OUT NEW YORK*

"A fascinating window into American political history...one of the most thought-provoking documentaries of recent times."

—DESSON HOWE, *THE WASHINGTON POST*

"A generous and inspiring film that unfolds with grace and humor and gradually becomes a testament to faith."

—EDWARD GUTHMANN, *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE*

"Engaging and unpretentious."

—DENNIS HARVEY, *VARIETY*

"I was not prepared to be as moved as I was by Mickey Lemle's RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE."

—ANDREW SARRIS, *NY OBSERVER*

"RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE is artful...and it illustrates one of (Ram Dass's) conclusions: Healing is not getting back to the way things were, but about learning to live with how they are." —NOEL MURRAY, *THE ONION*

(San Francisco, CA) — Harvard professors Richard Alpert and Timothy Leary made counter-culture history in 1963 when they were fired from that institution for conducting controversial LSD research. Alpert, the son



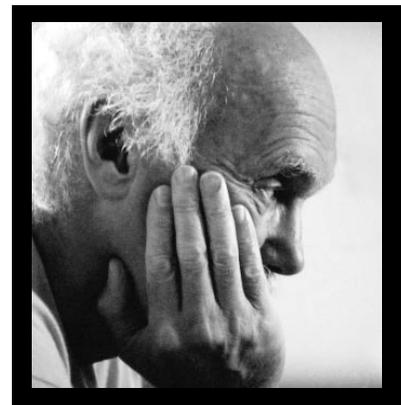
of a wealthy Jewish lawyer from Boston, journeyed to India and soon found his guru, Maharaj ji, who renamed him Ram Dass (“Servant of God”). Ram Dass is best known for his 1971 classic bestseller *Be Here Now*, a book that changed the lives of millions and set a whole generation on a quest for expanded consciousness and meaningful spirituality. Filmmaker Mickey Lemle, who has known his subject for more than 25 years, weaves vivid archival footage from hippiedom’s glory days with intimate glimpses of Ram Dass today, as he continues to remake his life since being—in his words—“stroked” in 1997. While the illness would have broken others, it has provided Ram Dass, now in his seventies, with a new passion—using an unexpected, uninvited challenge as a tool for spiritual transformation, and using what he learns to help others. It has become his greatest teaching.

Named by *Newsweek* as one of the Top Five Non-Fiction Films of 2002, **RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE** is an engrossing, poignant meditation on spirituality, consciousness, healing and the unexpected grace of aging.

It is also a fun, lively chronicle of a rich life well lived against the vivid backdrop of 50 years of social, cultural, pharmaceutical and spiritual history. **RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE** will air nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle, on Tuesday, April 20th at 10 P.M. (check local listings.)

The program’s interactive companion website at www.pbs.org/ramdass features detailed information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, as well as links and resources pertaining to the film’s subject matter. The site also features a “talkback” section for viewers to share their ideas with one another, preview clips of the film and much more.

Additional information and/or downloadable photographs from **RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE** are available at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos.



RAM DASS FIERCE GRACE Credits

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR:
CINEMATOGRAPHER:
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER:
EDITORS:
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:
ORIGINAL MUSIC :
CO-PRODUCERS :

Mickey Lemle
Buddy Squires
Linda K. Moroney
Mary Harron
Aaron Vega, Mickey Lemle & Jacob Craycroft
Teese Gohl
Jessica Brackman & Buddy Squires

FEATURED INTERVIEWEES (in order of appearance)

Ram Dass is the subject of the film and he lives in Redwood City, California.

Dr. Larry Brilliant is the co-founder of The SEVA Foundation. He lives in Marin, California.

Wavy Gravy is an author and activist, who lives in Berkeley, California.

Shana Roth is a speech therapist, who lives in Northern California.

Caryl Circus is an aqua therapist, who lives in Northern California.

Steve and Anita Isser's daughter, Rachel, was brutally murdered. They live in Ashland, Oregon.

William Alpert is a lawyer and Ram Dass's brother. He lives in the New York City area.

Dr. Ralph Metzner is a psychologist, an author, and a professor at California Institute of Integral Studies. He lives in Northern California.

Dr. Huston Smith is a world religions scholar, author and professor living in Berkeley, California.

Rosemary Woodruff Leary was married to Timothy Leary. She has passed away since the making of this film.

Bhagavan Das is a Sanskrit chant master and author, who spends most of his time on the road.

Carolyn Ruth Chan is a physical therapist who lives in Northern California

Lynne Oberlander is a physical therapist who lives in Northern California.

Krishna Das is a Sanskrit chant master based in New York.

KK Sah is a translator and devotee of Maharaj ji. He lives in India.

Dr. Ming Qing Zhu is an acupuncturist who practices and resides in San Jose, California.

Mark Matousek is a writer and an editor who lives in New York City.

Robert McDermott is the former president of California Institute of Integral Studies. He lives in Northern California.

Abby Reyes is an activist, who currently lives in Berkeley, California.

ABOUT THE RAM DASS

Richard Alpert (a.k.a. Ram Dass) was born in Boston in 1931. His father, George, a prominent Jewish lawyer, helped found Brandeis University and was President of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Alpert who has been studying the nature of consciousness for over 50 years., began with psychology, specializing in human motivation and personality development, and received an M.A. from Wesleyan and a Ph.D. from Stanford. He then served on the psychology faculties at Stanford and the University of California, and from 1958 to 1963 taught and did research in the Department of Social Relations and the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. During this period he co-authored (with Sears and Rau) the book *Identification and Child Rearing*, published by Stanford University Press.

In 1961, while at Harvard, Alpert's explorations of human consciousness led him—in collaboration with Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Aldous Huxley, Allen Ginsberg and others—to pursue intensive research with psilocybin, LSD-25, and other psychedelic chemicals. Out of this research came two books: *The Psychedelic Experience* (based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead) co-authored by Leary and Metzner, published by University Books; and *LSD* with Sidney Cohen and Lawrence Schiller, published by New American Library. Because of the controversial nature of this research, Alpert was dismissed from Harvard in 1963.

Alpert continued his research under the auspices of a private foundation until 1967. In that year he traveled to India, where he met his Guru (spiritual teacher), Neem Karoli Baba, affectionately known as Maharaj ji. He gave Ram Dass his name, which means "servant of God." Since 1968, he has pursued a variety of spiritual methods and practices from various ancient wisdom traditions, including devotional yoga focused on the Hindu spiritual figure Hanuman; meditation in the Theravadin, Mahayana Tibetan, and Zen Buddhist schools; karma yoga; and Sufi and Jewish studies. He also practices service to others as a spiritual path.

In 1974, Ram Dass created the Hanuman Foundation. Projects developed under its aegis included the Prison Ashram Project, designed to help prison inmates grow spiritually during their incarceration, and the Dying Project, conceived as a spiritual support structure for conscious dying. These projects now pursue their work under independent auspices. The Ram Dass Tape Library Foundation serves as the organizing vehicle for Ram Dass's teachings, and for the distribution of his books and tapes.

Ram Dass's interests include the support of psychedelic research, international development, environmental awareness and political action. He has written a number of spiritual books including *Be Here Now*, published in 1971 (over one million copies sold, 39th printing, Crown Publishers); *The Only Dance There Is* (Anchor/Doubleday); *Grist for the Mill* (with Stephen Levine, Celestial Arts); *Journey of Awakening* (Bantam Books); *Miracle of Love: Stories of Neem Karoli Baba* (Hanuman Foundation); *How Can I Help?* (with Paul Gorman, Knopf); and *Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service* (with Mirabai Bush, Bell Tower Press). Ram Dass's latest book is on consciousness and aging, entitled *Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing and Dying*, which was published by Riverhead Books in May 2001.

In 1996, Ram Dass began to develop plans for a talk radio program called *Here and Now with Ram Dass*. Seven pilot programs were aired in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area, and Ram Dass planned to launch the show on a nationwide basis the following year. But, in February 1997, Ram Dass experienced a stroke, which left him with problems of expressive aphasia and partial paralysis. The after effects of the stroke have made it necessary for him to postpone plans for his radio program, but he has been able to resume his other teaching commitments, and he is using the experiences attendant on his stroke to explore more deeply the spiritual dimensions of suffering and the nature of the aging process.

Ram Dass is a co-founder and advisory board member of the Seva Foundation, an international service organization. He works with the Social Venture Network, an organization of businesses seeking to bring social consciousness to business practices. He continues to teach about the nature of consciousness, and about service as a spiritual path. Information about Ram Dass, including his current teaching schedule and his tape-recorded lectures, is available through the Ram Dass Tape Library (800-248-1008 or at www.RamDassTapes.org).

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Mickey Lemle (Producer/Director) has been making feature films, television series and documentary specials since 1968. In 1977 he founded Lemle Pictures, Inc. His film and television works have been shown theatrically, on television and at film festivals around the world. He holds a B.A. from Brandeis University. Lemle served in the U.S. Peace Corps in Nepal and serves on the board of several arts foundations. He also currently holds the position of Co-Chairman of the Board of the Tibet Fund.

In 1992, Lemle produced and directed the multi-award winning documentary *Compassion in Exile: The Story of the 14th Dalai Lama* which was broadcast on PBS and received numerous awards and honors, including two Emmy nominations for Best Director and Best Documentary, and the Grand Prize at the Earth/Peace Film Festival. In 1989, Lemle co-wrote (with Arnie Reisman), produced and directed the multi-award winning *The Other Side of the Moon*, which was broadcast on PBS. The film looks at the experiences of the men who went to the moon; what happened to them on their journeys and what happened to them in the 20 years after. In 1990 Lemle produced and directed, *Our Planet Earth*, for the United Nations, featuring 17 astronauts and cosmonauts from 10 different countries, who each eloquently describe what happened to them while in space and how looking back on our planet inspired them all to take better care of it. His film *Hasten Slowly: The Journey of Sir Laurens Van Der Post* (1996) weaves a tapestry of key moments in the life of an extraordinary writer, filmmaker, commando leader, statesman and anthropologist through his own intimate stories. The film received a Golden Maille Audience Choice Award at the Hawaii International Film Festival, among other honors. Lemle co-executive produced an eight-part series for PBS in 1982 entitled *Media Probes* that garnered the Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival, a CINE Golden Eagle and a prestigious DuPont Award. Lemle personally produced and directed five of the eight shows. Lemle's other honors include the 1976 American Film Festival Blue Ribbon for *A Woman's Place is in the House* (with Nancy Porter), a half hour portrait of Massachusetts State Representative Elaine Noble and a personal Emmy nomination for editing *P.O.W.* and *Jim*, two programs in the *Religious America* series. He was an editor on Michael Romer's *Dying* in 1976. He also directed, shot and edited segments of the Emmy Award-winning series *Zoom* and the Peabody Award-winning series *Eye-To-Eye*.

"When I first met Ram Dass 25 years ago," Lemle said recently, "one of his messages that touched me was that we are both human and divine and that we must hold both simultaneously. He would explain that if one goes too far in the direction of one's humanity, one suffers. If one goes too far in the direction of one's divinity, one runs the risk of forgetting one's zip code. So his stories and teachings were funny, self-effacing, and with an extraordinary grasp of the metaphysical. In form and content his stories are about living on those two planes of consciousness, and the tension between them. His explorations took an uninvited turn, when he suffered a massive stroke in February 1997. Now, he has been forced to live his teachings in a way he had not expected. He uses his current predicament to help others—one can see why he is considered one of the great spiritual teachers of our time, and how he is able to see his stroke as grace, fierce grace."

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in *The New Yorker* to write "Watching Independent Lens ... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independent-lens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.



ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting www.itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

ABOUT PBS

PBS, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is a private, nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 349 public television stations. Serving nearly 90 million people each week, PBS enriches the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services on noncommercial television, the Internet and other media. More information about PBS is available at <http://www.pbs.org>, the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet.



ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images: www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos
Program companion website: www.pbs.org/ramdass