

I've considered myself a passionate environmentalist for about as long as I can remember. My mother read me *Silent Spring* when I was nine and the specter of a Cold War nuclear arms race was not an uncommon topic around the dinner table in my family. So my anti-nuclear and environmental roots run very deep. My first film was an anti-nuclear weapons documentary, *Radio Bikini*, that premiered at Sundance in 1988 and went on to receive an Oscar® nomination for Feature Documentary. My film *Earth Days*, which was Closing Night Film at Sundance in 2009, chronicles the rise of the environmental movement of my youth. In the course of making *Earth Days* I began for the first time to see the deep pessimism that has infused today's environmental movement, and to recognize the depth of its failure to address climate change. It was initially through getting to know Stewart Brand that I was introduced to a new and more optimistic view of our environmental challenges that was pro-development and pro-technology. From there I began to seek out and discover a small but growing cadre of people around the world who were beginning to stand up and challenge what had become the rigid orthodoxy of modern environmentalism.

It's no easy thing for me to have come to the conclusion that the **rapid deployment of nuclear power is now the greatest hope we have** for saving us from an environmental catastrophe. Yet this growing realization has led me to question many of the founding tenets of traditional environmentalism, from the belief that we can dramatically reduce our energy demand through energy efficiency to the belief that solar and wind power will one day power the planet. The almost theological adherence to a set of unquestionable beliefs by most liberals and environmentalists has likely contributed as much or more to prolonging our addiction to fossil fuels as the equally appalling state of denial among many conservatives when it comes to climate change. Both sides are locked into rigid, self-righteous ideological positions with potentially disastrous consequences for us all unless we begin to **face the facts**.

For the past **three years** I have devoted almost every waking moment to taking these ideas and shaping them into a documentary about what is perhaps the biggest and most unwieldy subjects imaginable: how do we continue to power human civilization without destroying the environmental conditions that has made modern civilization possible? I knew from the beginning that this film would have to be firmly grounded in personal narrative if it were to have any impact at all on a mass audience. Early on I determined that the film would be framed around a few key individuals who had undergone a dramatic intellectual metamorphosis on the issue of nuclear power, as I, myself had done. The evolution of their apostasy on this issue – their journey from being staunchly anti-nuclear to passionately pro-nuclear -forms the central dramatic **arc** of the film. My hope is to take the audience on a similar journey of discovery through the process of watching the film.

PANDORA'S PROMISE is without question the most personal and important film of my career. I've learned that just about everything I thought I knew about energy turned out to be wrong. And most of what I had been lead to believe about nuclear energy and its historical events turned out to be significantly different from what had really happened.

The making of this film has taken me to four continents on a grand tour of the hidden world of nuclear energy. I've been inside the doomed power plant at Chernobyl (the first cameraman to do so, I believe), deep into the Fukushima exclusion zone, and to a popular beach in Brazil that has a naturally occurring background radiation level that's over 300 times what is considered "normal!" I've visited a little known research facility in Idaho where a new kind of reactor was developed 20 years ago that can't meltdown and is fueled by nuclear waste.

If there was a single ah-ha moment it was when I was granted entry into a room in France (the size of a basketball court) where all the waste from powering 80% of the country for 30 years is stored: four cylindrical tubes 10 meters long and 1 meter wide are all that's left from powering the city of Paris for 30 years with clean nuclear energy! I thought, "My God, what on Earth were we thinking?"