

## “The Fields of Mudan” Film Discussion Guide

**Film length:** 23:12 minutes

Film rating: R for subject matter

Director: Stevo Chang,

**\*\*DISCLAIMER:** The film exposes the viewer to the abomination of child prostitution but avoids the use of sexually explicit material and minimizes the use of violence. Preview the film first in order to best determine its suitability for your intended audience.



### Synopsis:

*The Fields of Mudan* puts a human face on the youngest victims of trafficking. This film is a fictional, though accurate, account of a young Chinese girl, Mudan, who is smuggled into the USA as part of a modern-day child prostitution ring operated by the Asian underworld. The writer and director, Stevo Chang, created the film to raise public awareness of the horrors of human trafficking in the US and globally.

In the film, the child brothel owner, Madam Zhao (Yaping), brutalizes Mudan and the other five young girls in brothel as they “pay off their debts.” Faye (Shannon Lu), an Asian girl close in age to Mudan, befriends Mudan and shares in her dream of someday escaping the torturous sex-trade.

Mudan carries her drawing of her mother playing with her in an open field near a luxurious home in the USA, the land where dreams come true. The picture draws Mudan into her dream world of love and joy with her mother which allows Mudan to escape the violent world she lives in. Faye and Mudan bond and share the same dream for a better life.

### Catholic Social Teaching Connections:

#### The Dignity of the Human Person:

*Trafficking is a violation of the dignity of the human person. Exploiting children in this way for commerce or any profit motive violates their basic human rights and interferes with their normal human development. Sexually exploiting children or any person risks damaging them psychologically, physically and spiritually for life. The dignity of each child, male or female, demands that adults respect human life and condemn any practice that violates a person’s sexual integrity.*

#### Rights and Duties:

*Human persons are social by nature and depend upon a network of relationships to keep them secure and protect their rights. Justice demands resisting all cultural practices that traditionally deny women basic human rights, particularly treatment as sex objects and physical sexual abuse.*

#### Family, Community and Participation:

*The family is the most basic unit of society and has the primary role of securing the safety of a child. Damage done during the vulnerable and formative years of childhood have life-long ramifications and lead to the breakdown of community. It is in the family where children should rightfully “develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Vatican, Rome, 2004, #212)*

#### Web Links:

**Fields of Mudan**  
<http://www.fieldsofmudan.com/>

**To Purchase the DVD**  
<http://www.filmschool.fsu.edu>

**Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking**  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/traffickingweb3.shtml>

**USCCB Migration and Refugee Services on trafficking issues:**  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/traffickingweb.shtml>

**Catholic Relief Services Advocacy work against Trafficking**  
<http://crs.org/public-policy/trafficking.cfm>

## Background Facts on Trafficking:

- Yearly approximately 700,000 persons, primarily women and children, are trafficked across international borders.
- Approximately 17,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States each year.
- Anyone under the age of 18 is a victim.
- The victims of sex trafficking are lured into the trap by fake promises such as good jobs, false marriage proposals, education or being reunited with their families.
- Victims of trafficking are also sold into the sex trade by parents, husbands, boyfriends or are kidnapped by traffickers.
- Traffickers frequently subject their victims to paying off extremely high debts
- Victims are tortured into submission by starvation, confinement, beatings, physical abuse, rape, often gang rape, threats of violence to the victims and the victim's families, forced drug use and the threat of shaming their victims by revealing their activities to their family and friend.
- Victims suffer countless health risks and breakdowns physically and psychologically.
- Types of sex trafficking include commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution and sex tourism.



## Before Viewing the Film:

Due to the sensitive material in the *Fields*, advise the participants that viewing the film may be emotionally upsetting. Assure the participants that the film is an artistic expression on a dreadful topic, an unjust practice in society; that *Fields* is fictional, not real; that the child actors were not exposed to the topic of child prostitution or any harm when acting out their roles during the filming.

\*\*Be sure to preview the film prior to showing it in order to determine its suitability for your intended audience. The film has an **R** rating due to the subject matter.

1. After the group has read the film's background information about the global problem of human trafficking, ask participants to share their own knowledge of human trafficking in general as well as on sexual exploitation of minors. Are participants aware of the internet's role in facilitating the trafficking industry?
2. Before viewing the film, take time to address any questions the group may have about the subject matter.
3. Grant permission for participants to leave the room if they fear their emotions while viewing the film are too overwhelming.



## Imaging Justice: Pivotal scenes depicting the efforts toward justice include:

1. *Fields* depicts from the very first frame that appears on the screen Mudan contemplating the drawing she did of herself playing with her mother in a field. The “fields” in this film symbolize where children develop properly, grow, and experience a deep sense of security and love. Throughout the film Mudan enjoys the gift of a dream of human love and joy. This dream anchors the film to the fundamental need for a just society in contrast to the cruel and unusual punishment of the child sex industry.
2. The American flag appears prominently in the dream sequence and symbolizes the fulfillment of human freedom in a just society, the place where dreams come true.
3. Faye befriends Mudan and tries to protect her when a customer chooses to buy her. Faye takes Mudan’s place in the first instance. The customer returns for Mudan but Faye refuses to let go of her hand to until Madam Zhao whips Faye. Faye screams and protests vehemently to Madam Zhao using the brothel runner’s own words, “She’s still not ready. You said she’s still not ready.”

## Imaging Injustice: Scenes depicting injustice include:

1. Mudan being shipped in the back of a truck at night.
2. Madam Zhao’s brothel establishment.
3. Customers buying young girls for sex.
4. Madam Zhao selling Mudan because the price was too high to resist.
5. An older girl in the brothel tells Faye, “Do you really think you can be like the new girl? Stop kidding yourself...It won’t change what’s outside that window. In a week, she’ll be hopeless like us.”

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Identify the social justice issues that *Fields of Mudan* addresses. How are these connected and related? How are they presented in the film?
2. What would you identify as the underlying causes of human trafficking? What role does media play?
3. Madam Zhao justifies her treatment of young girls in her brothel industry by telling them that they are required to pay off their debt. Who is responsible for the debt? What kind of power dynamics are at work here? Where in your own life do you find conflicts between the use and misuse of power?
4. Mudan lives in terror, a daily nightmare as a victim of human trafficking and forced prostitution. She and Faye gain hope from recalling their dream of uniting in peace and joy with their mothers in the USA. As you reflect on the current levels of poverty and inequality in the world, how do economic pressures contribute to the promotion of trafficking?
5. How have cultural distortions around the concepts of masculinity and sexual activity contributed to this problem of trafficking today? Why is there a demand for young children in brothels? What does this say about power and powerlessness?
6. Where do you see signs of hope in addressing and eliminating the problem of trafficking? What groups in your area are actively involved in assisting its victims and addressing its root causes?
7. Discuss possible ways individuals and groups could respond to the problem of human trafficking and violations of human rights.