



***Sky Train* by Canyon Sam wins PEN Open Book Award**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2010

PEN American Center, the largest branch of the world's oldest literary and human rights organization, announced today the winners of the 2010 PEN Literary Awards. Each year, with the help of its partners and supporters, PEN confers over \$100,000 to writers, editors, and translators. The winners and runners-up will be honored on Wednesday, October 13, at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. The ceremony will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be followed by a reception.

The PEN Open Book Awards were created by PEN American Center's Open Book Committee, a group committed to racial and ethnic diversity within the literary and publishing communities. The awards confer five \$1,000 prizes upon authors of color. The 2010 judges were Sarah Shun-lien Bynum, Randall Keenan, and Juan Felipe Herrera.

For more information, please visit <http://www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5277/prmID/1865>

About *Sky Train*

Through a lyrical narrative of her journey to Tibet in 2007, activist Canyon Sam contemplates modern history from the perspective of Tibetan women. Traveling on China's new "Sky Train," she celebrates Tibetan New Year with the Lhasa family whom she'd befriended decades earlier and concludes an oral-history project with women elders.

As she uncovers stories of Tibetan women's courage, resourcefulness, and spiritual strength in the face of loss and hardship since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950, and observes the changes wrought by the controversial new rail line in the futuristic "new Lhasa," Sam comes to embrace her own capacity for letting go, for faith, and for acceptance. Her glimpse of Tibet's past through the lens of the women—a visionary educator, a freedom fighter, a gulag survivor, and a child bride—affords her a unique perspective on the state of Tibetan culture today—in Tibet, in exile, and in the widening Tibetan diaspora.

Gracefully connecting the women's poignant histories to larger cultural, political, and spiritual themes, the author comes full circle, finding wisdom and wholeness even as she acknowledges Tibet's irreversible changes.

Canyon Sam is a San Francisco writer, performance artist, and Tibet activist. Her one-woman show *The Dissident* was critically acclaimed in the *Village Voice* and the *Boston Globe*. This is her first book.

"In her remarkable book, writer and activist Sam examines the stories of varied Tibetan women—displaced aristocrats, impassioned freedom fighters, educators, and others—united in their desperation to reclaim their country. A third-generation Chinese-American, Sam also chronicles her own experiences in Tibet throughout the narrative, skillfully mimicking readers' slow discovery of the country in its many dimensions. Though complicated politically, Sam handles Tibet's dilemma with knowledge and grace, addressing the larger history of Tibet to reveal a beautiful, subtle culture that's as rich as it is foreign. At no time does Sam sugarcoat the effects of Chinese occupation on the people or the land, rendering human rights issues in terms of intensely personal experience. Visceral and deeply felt, this narrative deserves a read from anyone interested in human rights and the untold stories of oppressed women everywhere." -*Publishers Weekly*

278 pp., 30 illus., 6 x 9 in.

\$24.95 paper ISBN 978-0-295-98953-2

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