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## **Sundance Institute Announces Latest Documentary Fund Grantees**

### **22 Projects from 19 Countries Receive Unrestricted Support**

Sundance Institute today named the global cohort of 22 independent nonfiction filmmakers and their projects that comprise the latest Grantees of the Institute's Documentary Fund.

Grant support, unrestricted and totaling \$520,000, will be extended to projects in all stages of development, production, post-production and audience engagement; grants are made possible by Open Society Foundations and MacArthur Foundation, along with a custom grant provided by A&E IndieFilms: the **Sundance Institute | A&E Brave Storytellers Award**, for projects which capture an ethos of courageous nonfiction filmmaking. This granting cycle's supported projects come from nineteen countries across five continents, with just over 50% originating from outside the U.S. Grant funds are in addition to the Institute's [Respond & Reimagine Fund](#), announced earlier this year.

"At Sundance Institute, we know that these unprecedented times demand creative and nimble support," said Documentary Film Program interim Director, **Kristin Feeley**, and Documentary Film Fund Director, **Hajnal Molnar-Szakacs**. "We're fortunate to have a collaborative and strong network of partners that allow us to ensure material support for these filmmakers as they develop bold new work, we can ensure that the field of nonfiction storytelling continues to evolve even against larger headwinds."

The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program is made possible by founding support from The Open Society Foundations. Generous additional support is provided by Ford Foundation; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Luminate; Sandbox Films; Skoll Foundation; The Kendeda Fund; The Charles Engelhard Foundation; Genuine Article Pictures; CNN Films; Cinereach; Violet Spitzer-Lucas and the Spitzer Family Foundation; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Bertha Foundation; Compton Foundation; Nion McEvoy & Leslie Berriman; National Geographic Documentary Films; Joan and Lewis Platt Foundation; Code Blue Foundation; EarthSense Foundation; Harbour; Vulcan Productions; WNET New York Public Media; Adobe; J.A. & H.G. Woodruff, Jr. Charitable Trust; and two anonymous donors.

**The latest grantees, presented by production stage and grantor, are:**

#### **DEVELOPMENT**

***Alis*** (Colombia)

Dir. Nicolas van Hemelryck, Clare Weiskopf

Prod. Nicolas van Hemelryck, Clare Weiskopf



Through a creative act, eight teenage girls who lived on the streets of Bogota give life to a fictional classmate. As reality prevails and fiction fades, the innocent game becomes a descent into hell where their luminous faces guide us to the depths of the dark world they once inhabited. Is it possible to imagine a different life, break the cycle of abandonment and embrace the future?

***A Hawk as Big as a Horse*** (Russia, France)

Dir. Sasha Kulak

Prod. Louis Beaudemont

Lydia is a Russian transgender ornithologist who lives in a small town near Moscow. In order to escape from the harsh Russian reality, she decided to create a world of fantasies around the *Twin Peaks* mythology.

***How to Build a Library*** (Kenya)

Dir. Maia Lekow, Christopher King

Prod. Maia Lekow, Christopher King

Two ambitious Kenyan women are on a mission to revitalize Nairobi's libraries. But before realizing their dream, they must navigate the precarious halls of Nairobi's politics and the problematic colonial history from which these libraries were built.

***Q*** (Lebanon)

Dir. Jude Chehab

Prod. Jude Chehab

For over fifty years a Syrian movement has been secretly growing into the largest Muslim women's organization in the world. Through a generational lens, *Q* takes us deep into the mysterious, unspoken world of the Qubaysiat, the regime-loving Sufis turned cult through the filmmaker, her mother and her grandmother's relationship to the group.

***Reas*** (Argentina)

Dir. Lola Arias

Prod. Gema Juárez Allen

*Reas* will be shot at Ezeiza Prison in Buenos Aires. A group of women and trans people wait out their sentences, reconstructing scenes from their past lives and imagining their future lives in the form of a musical in which they sing, dance and perform.

***Regarding Memory and Neglect*** (Brazil)

Dir. Ricardo Martensen

Prod. Ricardo Martensen, Felipe Tomazelli, Dado Carlin

What's left of us after we die? Our bones? Our belongings? Memories? How long do these traces of existence remain on Earth? By presenting three different stories in the city of São Paulo, this film questions our memories. The narratives and characters force us to face issues that the country of Brazil, in 2020, insists on forgetting.



***Todo lo sólido*** (Cuba, Mexico, U.S.A.)

Dir. Luis Gutiérrez Arias

Prod. Zaina Bseiso, Alejandro Alonso Estrella, Joie Estrella Horwitz

Structured as an epic poem, *Todo Lo Sólido* tells the story of an island sinking into the Caribbean Sea. Encountering people and forces that have shaped its present reality, a nameless drifter searches for explanations about the island's destiny.

***Untitled Nicky Nodjourni Project*** (U.S.A.)

Dir. Sara Nodjourni, Till Schauder

Prod. Sara Nodjourni, Till Schauder

In the hectic days after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art exhibited a series of paintings entitled "Report on the Revolution" by the emerging artist Nickzad "Nicky" Nodjourni. Expecting it to be a warm embrace of Islamist ideology, religious hardliners who reviewed the show instead felt so enraged by the work that they tore it down, ripped it apart, and burned it. Nicky fled the next day in fear of execution. 40 years later, his daughter Sara Nodjourni and fellow filmmaker Till Schauder investigate what happened to the surviving paintings, how this fateful exhibition shaped Nicky's political activism for the rest of his life, and how its dangerous repercussions persist.

***Yawar Shunku: Bleeding Heart*** (Ecuador)

Dir. Antonio Romero Zurita

Prod. Sam Vinal

Ecuadorian composer Guerardo Guevara composes his final requiem as he reaches 90 years. Meanwhile, his deceased niece, Elena, is brought to life through fragments of home movies and the podcasts she recorded. Filmmaker Antonio Romero Zurita is in the middle, drawing the musical map between the two of them, his uncle and sister.

## PRODUCTION

***Children of the Mist*** (Vietnam)

Dir. Ha Le Diem

Prod. Swann Dubus, Tran Phuong Thao

In the misty mountains of North Vietnam, a teenage Hmong girl walks the thin line between childhood and adulthood. Over a period of two years, girls in this minority group are forced to lose their innocence, discover the traps of seduction, and fight for their independence.

***Girl Talk*** (U.S.A)

Dir. Lucia Small

Prod. Lucia Small, Dia Sokol Savage

Filmed over four years, *Girl Talk* follows five teenage girls on a top ranked debate team on their quest to be the best in the United States. In the cutthroat world of high school debate, these young women navigate the everyday challenges of teenage life while fighting against sexist double standards. As the



debaters gain confidence and find their own voices, their struggles mirror the national fight for equality in our nation's political corridors.

***Whitewash (working title)*** (France)

Dir. Ahmet Necdet Cupur

Prod. Delphine Morel, Anke Petersen, Nadir Operli

In an Arab village situated in the south of Turkey, filmmaker Ahmet Necdet Cupur's brother Mahmut wants to divorce his newly wed wife Nezahat. At the same time, Zenep, Ahmet's sister who is engaged to their cousin, manages to break free and gets a factory job. As Ahmet delves into their lives, an image of early weddings appears in Turkey.

**POST-PRODUCTION**

***City Hall*** (U.S.A.)

Dir. Frederick Wiseman

Prod. Karen Konicek

City government touches almost every aspect of our lives. Most of us are unaware of or take for granted these necessary services such as police, fire, sanitation, veterans affairs, elder support, parks, licensing of various professional activities, record keeping of birth, marriage and death as well as hundreds of other activities that support Boston residents and visitors. *City Hall*, by Frederick Wiseman, shows the efforts by the Boston city government to provide these services to a diverse population.

***Eight Stories About Hearing Loss*** (Argentina, Uruguay)

Dir. Charo Mato

Prod. Charo Mato, Eugenia Olascuaga, Valentina Baracco

At the age of 23, after losing all of her hearing as a result of a hereditary, progressive and severe auditory condition, Charo decides to unlock and overcome the doubts and fears of her family by having an operation in order to recover her hearing. At this point, she realizes all the things that she had lost along with sounds, and begins questioning herself: how do we hear those who cannot hear?

***The Monster and the Storm*** (U.S.A.)

Dir. Edwin Martinez

Prod. Jamie Gonçalves

A Puerto Rican cosplayer embarks on a quest to heal the loss of his father by creating and eventually becoming his life-long hero, Godzilla.

***Murders That Matter*** (U.S.A.)

Dir. Marco Williams

Prod. Marco Williams

*Murders that Matter* documents Movita Johnson-Harrell, an African American Muslim mother who, in the aftermath of her youngest son's murder, vows to save all the other sons, on both sides of the gun.



***Our Little Palestine*** (Syria, Lebanon, France, Qatar)

Dir. Abdallah Al Khatib

Prod. Mohammad Ali Atassi, Jean-Laurent Csinidis

The film tells the story of a group of Palestinian civilian activists from the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus, who decided to face bombing, displacement and hunger that hit their small community and turn it into a small-besieged ghetto through civil work, agriculture, study, music, theater, love and joy.

**IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT**

***Survivors*** (Sierra Leone)

Dir. Arthur Pratt, Banker White, Anna Fitch, Barmmy Boy Mansaray

Prod. Sara Dosa, Samantha Grant, Arthur Pratt, Banker White, Anna Fitch, Barmmy Boy Mansaray

Through the eyes of Sierra Leonean filmmakers, *Survivors* presents a heart-connected portrait of their country during the Ebola outbreak, exposing the complexity of the epidemic and the socio-political turmoil that lies in its wake.

**SUNDANCE INSTITUTE | A&E BRAVE STORYTELLERS AWARD RECIPIENTS**

***Chocobar*** (Argentina, U.S.A.)

Dir. Lucrecia Martel

Prod. Benjamin Domenech, Joslyn Barnes, Santiago Gallelli, Matias Roveda

Javier Chocobar was shot fighting the removal of his indigenous community from their ancestral land in Argentina. His death was recorded by his killers and posted as a video on YouTube. This film unravels both the story and the history that led to this shooting, both with a gun and a camera.

***Untitled #NunsToo Project*** (Italy, India, U.S.A.)

Dir. Lorena Luciano, Filippo Piscopo

Prod. Lorena Luciano, Filippo Piscopo

After a nun is sexually abused by a bishop in India, an impromptu #NunsToo movement led by fearless Sister Lucy exposes the Catholic Church systemic cover-up. As many take to the streets in support of the nuns, two women in Vatican land, a journalist and a lawyer, put their careers at risk to hold the Church accountable.

***Untitled Free Speech Project*** (U.S.A.)

Dir. Julia Bacha

Prod. Suhad Babaa & Daniel J. Chalfen

When a news publisher in Arkansas, an attorney in Arizona and a speech pathologist in Texas are told they must choose between their jobs and their political beliefs, they launch legal battles that expose an attack on freedom of speech across 28 states in America.

***Untitled Vinay Shukla Documentary Project*** (India)

Dir: Vinay Shukla

Prod: Memesys Culture Lab



Details TBA.

### **Sundance Institute**

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. [Sundance Co//ab](#), a digital community platform, brings artists together to learn from each other and Sundance Advisors and connect in a creative space, developing and sharing works in progress. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences and artists to ignite new ideas, discover original voices, and build a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *The Farewell*, *Late Night*, *The Souvenir*, *The Infiltrators*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Eighth Grade*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Hereditary*, *RBG*, *Call Me By Your Name*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Top of the Lake*, *Winter's Bone*, *Dear White People*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *State of the Union*, *Indecent*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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