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Sundance Institute Announces 2018 Sundance Ignite Fellows

Fifteen Filmmakers Ages 18 to 24 Selected from Short Film Competition to Receive Year of Creative and Professional Mentorship, All-Expenses-Paid Trip to 2018 Sundance Film Festival



*Top, L-R: Amri Rigby, Andrea Porras-Madero, Ayo Akingbade, Carol Nguyen, Crystal Kayiza.
Middle, L-R: Gerardo Coello Escalante, Matthew Puccini, Matty Crawford, Mohamed Touahria, Paloma Lopez.
Bottom, L-R: Sindha Agha, Sky Bruno, Sydney Butler, Terrance Daye, Varun Chopra.*

Los Angeles, CA — Sundance Institute and Adobe Project 1324 announced the newest round of 2018 Sundance Ignite Fellows today, chosen from a global crop of more than 800 applicants. The fifteen 18-to-24-year-old filmmakers selected to participate in this one-year fellowship hail from five continents, with creative groundings spanning from television writing to documentary photography to narrative short films.

"These fifteen remarkable emerging artists are truly on the forefront of what's next in our culture, and we are thrilled to help them reach the next level with their fresh voices and unique perspectives," said **Meredith Lavitt**, Director of Sundance Ignite. "Sundance Ignite fellows aren't tomorrow's filmmakers -- they are today's filmmakers, and we look forward to connecting them to a wealth of opportunities for growth during their year with us."

For the third year, fellows were selected from their submissions of one- to eight-minute original films and their written applications. This year's prompt asked, "**What stories ignite you?**" Submissions were evaluated by Institute staff, Adobe Project 1324, and industry mentors and finalists were selected based on their original voice, diverse storytelling and rigor in their filmmaking pursuits.

In addition to their trip to the Festival, Sundance Ignite fellows are paired with a Sundance Institute alumni professional for a full year of guidance and development, gaining industry exposure and meaningful mentorship. This year's Sundance Ignite mentors include **Effie Brown** (*Dear White People*), **Jeff Orlowski** (*Chasing Coral*) and **Jason Berman** (*Burning Sands*). In addition to a personalized Festival experience and mentorship track, Sundance Ignite fellows gain unique access to workshops, internships, and work opportunities at Sundance Institute's renowned Labs and artists programs supported by [Project 1324](#).

With Sundance Ignite as their launchpad, past fellows have springboarded into opportunities on the festival circuit, graduate film programs and beyond. Past Sundance Ignite Fellows include **Charlotte Regan**, whose winning submission [Standby](#) (Official Selection Toronto International Film Festival 2016) was nominated for a BAFTA; **Kayla Briët**, whose short film submission [Smoke That Travels](#) was part of [her talk at TED2017](#); social impact documentary filmmaker **Leah Galant** ([The Provider](#), Official Selection SXSW 2016) and **Sachin Dharwadker**, who was recently named one of Sundance Institute's 2017 Episodic Lab fellows with his project *The Prince of Hyde Park*.

The 2018 Sundance Ignite Fellows are:



Amri Rigby is a filmmaker born and raised in Decatur, Georgia. He is currently majoring in Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation at the University of Southern California's Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy. Once he discovered his passion for storytelling after taking an animation class, he decided to pursue filmmaking. Amri aims to create films that engage audiences by inspiring, uplifting and empowering.



Andrea Porrás-Madero was born and raised in Mexico. She moved to California at age 14, where she began making films. She is currently a double major in Film Production and Latin American Studies at the University of Southern California.



Artist, filmmaker **Ayo Akingbade** was born and raised in Hackney, East London. She experiments with a range of media, including combining analogue techniques with digital processes. In 2017, her project *Tower XYZ* received a Special Mention Award at International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, she obtained a film degree from London College of Communication and participated in Ji.hlava's Academy in the Czech Republic.



Carol Nguyen is a 19-year-old filmmaker based in Toronto. Her work explores culture, identity and family, topics that heavily define her understanding of the world. Through her career, Carol aims to tackle gender equality and diversity in film. Today, Carol is continuing her passion for filmmaking at Concordia University in Montreal.



Crystal Kayiza grew-up in Oklahoma and is now a Brooklyn-based documentary filmmaker and Sally Burns Shenkman Woman Filmmaker Fellow at the Jacob Burns Film Center. After graduating from Ithaca College with a degree in Documentary Studies and Production, Crystal spent two years at the ACLU working on criminalization of poverty issues. Her documentary work and writing has been featured in *The Nation*, *Scalawag Magazine* and *OkayAfrica*. She received a Heartland Emmy Award in 2017 for her film *All That Remains*, which profiles Boley, Oklahoma, one of the nation's last all-Black towns.



Gerardo Coello Escalante is a Mexican filmmaker. He was born and raised in Mexico City where he attended various filmmaking and theater workshops and programs. In 2013, he moved to New York and attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, graduating in December 2016. Gerardo currently works on independent films and documentaries while writing and directing his own work in between projects.



Matthew Puccini is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker. His first film, *Solo*, won the King Award for Screenwriting at NYU's First Run Film Festival. His second short, *The Mess He Made*, premiered at SXSW and was a finalist for this year's Iris Prize. Matthew is a member of the 2017 New York Film Festival Artist Academy, a recipient of the 2017 Richie Jackson Artist Fellowship and an Artist in Residence at The Spruceton Inn.

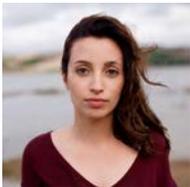


Matty Crawford is a writer/director and recent graduate from the UK. His short films have screened at BAFTA-recognised festivals, collecting a number of awards such as Best Director Award at the Kodak/Nahemi Competition and the New Talent Award at this year's BFI Future Film Festival. He has recently finished production on a new short film funded by the Arts Council England, as his next short film *LOVE HOTEL* premieres at London Short Film Festival in 2018.

Mohamed Touahria is an Algerian filmmaker studying English at Djelfa University in Algeria. He has made three short films and participated in short film festivals across north Africa.



Paloma Lopez is a filmmaker from Caracas, Venezuela. She graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2017, with her senior thesis film *Singer*. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, where she is an assistant to an independent film director. Her passion lies in the visual storytelling aspect of documentary photography, which sparked her love for film.



Sindha Agha is a Pakistani-American independent filmmaker who grew-up in a small town in Illinois and is now based in Los Angeles. Sindha experiments with documentary & narrative genres to create candid, intimate films that illustrate how social forces shape deeply personal experiences. She is dedicated to helping people understand one another better, keen on dialectic, married to sincerity and has it out for shame.



Sky Bruno is a filmmaker based in Kāneʻohe, Hawaiʻi. He is currently studying Digital Cinema at the University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa's Academy for Creative Media. His latest short-doc *SHAPE* was an official selection at the 2017 Honolulu Surf Film Festival and the 2017 'Ohina Short Film Showcase. With his passion for filmmaking, Sky hopes to create opportunities in Hawaiʻi and help develop original voices in the future generations of storytellers.



Sydney Butler is an aspiring screenwriter from Houston, Texas. Her television pilot, *Stella with the World on Her Shoulders*, was one of two pilots produced by NYU's highly selective Advanced Television Course, and was fully funded by the Will & Jada Smith Family Foundation. Her writing has been published in *Interview*, *The Light Leaks* and on Medium. She currently resides in Los Angeles where she is the writer's PA for the Untitled *Grey's Anatomy* spinoff.



Terrance Daye is an award winning poet and filmmaker from Long Island, New York. Terrance's creative work reimagines traditional representations of black male identity and invests strongly in destigmatizing mental illness within the black community. Terrance received his Bachelor's from Morehouse College and is pursuing his MFA in filmmaking from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Terrance's most recent film project, *The Colored Hospital: A Visual Poem* was shortlisted for the 44th Student Academy Awards.

Born and raised in New Delhi, **Varun Chopra** graduated from Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television where he focused on stories of common people with aspects of social justice. He was the recipient of the SFTV Dean's Scholarship. His short films have screened at various International film festivals. He was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* among a team of diverse filmmakers on a discussion on diversity in Hollywood. Varun works in



Los Angeles as a freelance director and is currently editing a television show currently streaming on Netflix. He is one of the ten fellows of Visual Communication's Armed with a Camera fellowship for 2017-2018.

Sundance Ignite is a partnership with [Project 1324](#), an Adobe initiative that supports, connects and amplifies a global community of emerging creatives who are making an impact through their art. More details about Sundance Ignite are available at sundance.org/initiatives/ignite. Follow the Project 1324 community on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Snapchat](#).

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 new 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. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *Boyhood*, *Swiss Army Man*, *Manchester By the Sea*, *Brooklyn*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Life, Animated*, *Sonita*, *20 Feet From Stardom*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Sin Nombre*, *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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