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2019 Sundance Film Festival: Amid Record High Submissions, Announcing New Hires, Talent Forum, Data-Driven Demographic Initiatives & Critic Stipends



Park City, Utah — With less than two weeks until the program is announced, and less than three months until Day One, Sundance Institute today announces new hires on its programming team and new initiatives to deepen support for independent storytellers and broaden access to the Festival. The 2019 Festival will showcase work drawn from over 14,200 submissions, a record high.

Kim Yutani, the Festival's recently-named Director of Programming, said: "This year's record-breaking number of submissions are phenomenally strong: we're invigorated and inspired by the work we've been seeing. Our incredible -- and growing! -- programming team has refined our curation processes, ensuring that the conversations we have as we program continue to center, as always, on a Festival that represents a wide range of filmmakers and on-screen experiences. We're also continually evolving our process to incorporate data and research findings."

Program Team Evolves: The new hires mentioned by Yutani include expanding and refining the Programming and screener teams, with an eye towards fresh perspectives and varied decision-making voices. **Dilcia Barrera** joins as Programmer; **Stephanie Owens** as Associate Programmer; **Sudeep Sharma** as Shorts Programmer and **Ana Souza** (formerly a Programming Coordinator) is promoted to Manager, Programming / Associate Programmer. Including these new additions, women comprise half of the Sundance Film Festival programming team. **Tabitha Jackson**, Director of the Institute's Documentary Film Program, will program a strand of panels under programmer **John Nein**. A full lineup of the programming team appears below.

Demographic Data & Transparency: After collaborating with **Dr. Stacy L. Smith** and her team on landmark studies of women in independent film conducted from 2012 to 2015 in partnership with **Women In Film**, the Institute is now making its submissions and acceptance data transparently available for a groundbreaking new research project in partnership with Dr. Smith and her USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. This research will for the first time analyze demographics of submissions to include gender as well as race/ethnicity, and will encompass both the Sundance Film Festival and the Institute's varied Labs and other artist support programs. Results of the research will be presented at this year's Festival, as part of the Institute's long-term commitment to sharing data as a way to deepen understanding of barriers and opportunities and to better serve and represent diverse storytellers.

Sundance Institute Talent Forum: For the first time, this year's Festival will include a **Forum** for exciting talent from the Institute's signature artist development Labs and programs to present new work to industry attendees, alongside a special artist-only program of keynotes, screenings, gatherings and seminars. From **Tuesday, January 29 through Thursday, January 31**, the Sundance Institute Talent Forum will feature some of the most promising storytellers from across the Institute's various disciplines ready for the next step with their careers or projects; this new, highly curated, invitation-only program aims to create a signature experience for artists and industry alike.

Press Corps Inclusion: In an ongoing effort to best serve the artists showcased at Festival, the Institute's Media Relations team is collaborating closely with other organizations and festivals to expand the ranks of attending critics, as well as renovating its own processes. For the first time ever, applicants for currently-underway press accreditation are being asked to provide demographic information. The team has further committed to allocating a minimum of 20% of top-tier press passes to critics from underrepresented communities -- that is, women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities— in order to enrich the critical discourse around films showcased at the Festival. Recognizing that quantitative matters alone aren't a complete solution, the team will also deepen the qualitative experience for press at Festival, ensuring that new applicants, who may be covering the Festival for the first time, can best navigate accreditation, attendance and reporting. Among these first-time critics: the sixth class of **Roger Ebert Fellows**, emerging film writers, critics and filmmakers selected by Chaz Ebert who convene at Festival for mentorship and unique coverage opportunities.

The Institute's new **Press Inclusion Initiative** includes stipend grants to defray travel and lodging costs for over fifty freelance critics and journalists, with founding support from **The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Emerson Collective, Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Netflix, Open Society Foundations, and Rotten Tomatoes**. Ford Foundation, with additional support from The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Emerson Collective, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Open Society Foundations, will host a panel and welcome reception for stipended critics, supporters and select industry members on Day 1 of the Festival. Collaborative supporters of the initiative include the **African American Film Critics Association, Blackhouse Foundation, The Black List, Center for Asian American Media, Easterseals Southern California, Firelight Media, MACRO, Muslim Public Affairs Council - Hollywood Bureau, National Association of Latino Independent Producers, NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists, TIME'S UP, USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative** and **Women In Film**. Stipends will be awarded upon application by a panel that includes **Chaz Ebert, Franklin Leonard** and **Sukhdev Sandhu**. For details on applying for stipends, contact press@sundance.org.



The **2019 Sundance Film Festival Programming Team**, led by **John Cooper** (director) and **Kim Yutani** (Director of Programming) is:

Senior Programmers: **David Courier**, **Shari Frilot** (Chief Curator, New Frontier), **Caroline Libresco** (Director of Catalyst and Women at Sundance), **John Nein**, **Mike Plante**, **Charlie Sextro**

Programmers: **Dilcia Barrera**, **Hussain Currimbhoy**, **Harry Vaughn**, **Heidi Zwicker**

Associate Programmers: **Adam Montgomery** (Senior Manager, Programming), **Lauren Cioffi**, **Stephanie Owens**, **Ana Souza** (Manager, Programming)

Shorts Programmers: **Emily Doe**, **Jon Korn**, **Lisa Oddie**, **Adam Piron**, **Sudeep Sharma**, **Landon Zakheim**

DaManuel Richardson, Assistant to Director of the Sundance Film Festival & Coordinator, Public Programs
O'Shea" Myles, Assistant to Director of Programming

The Sundance Film Festival®

The Sundance Film Festival has introduced global audiences to some of the most groundbreaking films of the past three decades, including *Sorry to Bother You*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Eighth Grade*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Mudbound*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Whiplash*, *Brooklyn*, *Precious*, *The Cove*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Reservoir Dogs* and *sex, lies, and videotape*. The Festival is a program of the non-profit Sundance Institute®. The Festival is a program of the non-profit Sundance Institute®. 2019 Festival sponsors include: Presenting Sponsors – Acura, SundanceTV, Chase Sapphire, YouTube; Leadership Sponsors – Adobe, Amazon Studios, AT&T, DIRECTV, Dropbox, Netflix, Omnicom, Stella Artois; Sustaining Sponsors – Canada Goose, Canon, Dell, Francis Ford Coppola Winery, GEICO, High West Distillery, IMDbPro, Lyft, RIMOWA, Unity Technologies, University of Utah Health; Media Sponsors – The Atlantic, IndieWire, Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, VARIETY, The Wall Street Journal. Sundance Institute recognizes critical support from the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development, and the State of Utah as Festival Host State. The support of these organizations helps offset the Festival's costs and sustain the Institute's year-round programs for independent artists. Look for the Official Partner seal at their venues at the Festival. sundance.org/festival

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 *Sorry to Bother You*, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, *Eighth Grade*, *Blindspotting*, *The Tale*, *Get Out*, *The Big Sick*, *Strong Island*, *Blackfish*, *Top of the Lake*, *Winter's Bone*, *The Wolfpack*, *Dear White People*, *Trapped*, *Brooklyn*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *20 Feet From Stardom*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](http://SundanceInstitute.org) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).



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