Sundance Institute Announces 2020 Creative Producing Labs Fellows

Los Angeles — Sundance Institute today announced Fellows and Advisors for the five-day 2020 Creative Producing Labs, redesigned digitally to take place for the first time ever on Sundance Co//ab. The Labs begin July 27, and is a flagship convening for the Institute’s Creative Producing Program, which champions and develops current and rising generations of independent producers across fiction and nonfiction film.

Under the leadership of Creative Producing and Artist Support Director Shira Rockowitz and Documentary Film Program Interim Director Kristin Feeley, the program features year-round industry mentorship, granting, and opportunities to connect with potential financiers in addition to the annual Labs, to develop emerging producers’ holistic creative and strategic skillset for an evolving industry.

Advisors for the Feature Film Program include producers Neil Kopp and Anish Savjani (First Cow, Green Room), Jordana Mollick (The Lovebirds, Hello, My Name is Doris), Heather Rae (Bull, Frozen River), as well as guest Advisors Jason Berman (Nine Days, Uncorked), Effie Brown (Dear White People, Project Greenlight), Anita Gou (Honey Boy, The Farewell), screenwriter Meg LeFauve (Inside Out, Captain Marvel), Laura Lewis (Little Woods, All About Nina), Stephen Love, Jr. (Wednesdays, The Land), and writer/director Kelly Reichardt (First Cow, Certain Women). Documentary Film Program Advisors include Diane Becker (Whirlybird, Inventing Tomorrow), Keith Brown (Firelight Films), Katie Doering (American Saint, True Believer), Alexandra Hannibal (CNN Films), Su Kim (Midnight Traveler, Hale County, This Morning, This Evening). Josh Penn (Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets, Wendy) and Kellen Quinn (Time, Midnight Family).

The 2020 Creative Producing Lab Fellows are:

**Feature Film Program**

**Chalino**

**Producing Fellows: Harris Kauffman and Diego Nájera**

Chalino tells the true story of Chalino Sanchez, originator of the narcocorrido, who immigrated from Sinaloa to Los Angeles in the early 1990s and started a musical revolution with his songs about the lives of Mexican outlaws.

Harris Kauffman is the VP of Development and Production at Storyboard Entertainment. As an independent producer, he has worked in all facets of production, and was a co-producer on the films A Crooked Somebody and Darkness Rising. He graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing.

Diego Nájera is a Mexican producer. His award winning projects have been featured at
the Berlinale, SXSW, Guadalajara International Film Festival, Viña del Mar International Film Festival, HBO, and the Miami Film Festival. He holds an MFA from USC’s Peter Stark Producing Program and his work has been supported by the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute, and Film Independent.

Late Bloomers
Producing Fellows: Alexandra Barreto and Taylor Feltner
Following an accident, Louise, a self-absorbed millennial, lands in physical therapy where she befriends an 80-year-old Polish woman who helps her get a grip on life and come to terms with her mother’s Alzheimers.

Alexandra Barreto is an actress, writer, producer and director. Her directorial debut Lady Hater premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival and was named one of the “Top 5 Not-To-Be Missed Shorts” from Tribeca by Forbes. Alexandra produced the feature film Too Late starring Academy Award nominees John Hawkes and Robert Forster.

Taylor Feltner produced the shorts Lady Hater which premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival, as well as Exit 12 which won the SXSW Grand Jury Prize that same year. His feature Late Bloomers participated in the 2019 Film Independent Fast Track. Additional feature credits include Too Late starring John Hawkes, which enjoyed a 30+ market theatrical release and secured a worldwide deal with Netflix.

Malpelo
Producing Fellow: Camila Zavala
A headstrong female free-diver makes the perilous voyage to Malpelo, a remote island in Colombia, to investigate the troubling disappearance of hammerhead sharks while aboard a fishing boat with an all-male crew who prove to be as dangerous as the predators she’s studying.

Camila Zavala is a Peruvian writer/producer based in Los Angeles with an MFA from Columbia University. Her award winning short films have been official selections of the Tribeca Film Festival, Telluride Film Festival and Palm Springs International Shortfest. She is a 2019 Film Independent Producing Lab Fellow for the feature film Malpelo, supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.
Neon Tilapia
Producing Fellow and Silverman Honoree: Elizabeth Charles
When a dangerous water-weed threatens to take over his lake and livelihood, a fisherman in rural Kenya enlists the help of his granddaughter to fight back using glowing, genetically modified fish. As strange lights appear in the lake, chaos erupts in the village.

Elizabeth Charles is an independent producer dedicated to championing content that exemplifies inclusive and diverse storytelling from multicultural perspectives. With over a decade of experience across radio, commercials, branded content, music videos, short films and television in the Caribbean and United States, Elizabeth’s work has been selected by more than 30 festivals including the Palm Springs International Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, ITV Fest and FESPACO.

Documentary Film Program

Florence From Ohio
Producing Fellow: Carrie Weprin
Florence from Ohio is a genre-twisting comedy that explores the life of Huang JingYing, aka Florence, a Chinese woman who immigrated to Youngstown, Ohio in the 1970s and the pockets of existence she created to transcend her immigrant housewife status to eventually become known as “Mrs. Mahoning County”. Through her collection of St. John knitwear suits, Florence and her daughter, Director Stephanie Wang-Breal, collectively reimagine and embrace their generational ideas around motherhood, feminism, assimilation, and race.

Carrie Weprin is an independent producer and the co-founder of Once in a Blue, a female-lead production house in Brooklyn, NY. She has developed and produced content for A&E Television Networks, MTV Networks, PBS, and The New York Times. As an independent producer, Carrie has produced the feature-length documentaries Tough Love and Blowin’ Up. She is a 2020 Impact Partners Producers Fellow.
**Higher 15**

**Producing Fellow: Rajal Pitroda**

A young Ethiopian-American man unravels a deep family secret about his uncle – an unlawfully imprisoned Ethiopian revolutionary who risked his life to escape from jail and flee to the United States, only to have a chance encounter with his vicious prison guard three decades later.

Rajal Pitroda produced *Down a Dark Stairwell*, which premiered at the 2020 True/False Film Festival. She is currently producing *Higher 15*, directed by Ameha Molla; *Last Will & Testament*, directed by Rachel Holbrook; and *Evanesce*, directed by Jameka Autry. Rajal was a Resident with SFFILM, an Impact Producer Fellow with Firelight Media and is a board member of Investigative Studios.

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**La Bonga**

**Producing Fellow: Gabriella Garcia-Pardo**

Twenty years after fleeing the violence of civil war, a displaced community embarks on a journey through the jungles of northern Colombia to resurrect a town that exists only in their memory. Traveling with the townspeople as they reunite for a massive celebration, *La Bonga* explores the many distances that separate them from their home and the ties that bind people to their land.

Gabriella Garcia-Pardo is a Colombian-American documentary producer and cinematographer. She collaborates with independent productions and organizations on features and docu-series and is supported by Sundance, Catapult Films, Impact Partners, BAVC, NOFF, and IWMF. Previously, Gabriella created shorts at National Geographic, filmed musicians at NPR, and led horse-treks in Chile. She believes strongly in community and leads monthly events for filmmakers in DC.

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**Manzanar, Diverted**

**Producing Fellow: Jin Yoo-Kim**

From the majestic peaks of the snow-capped Sierras to the now parched Eastern California valley of Payahuunadü, “the land of flowing water,” Manzanar, Diverted poetically weaves together memories and insights of intergenerational women from three communities. Native Americans, Japanese American World War II incarcerees, and environmentalists form an unexpected alliance to defend their land and water from the insatiable thirst of Los Angeles.

Jin Yoo-Kim is a Korean Bolivian American filmmaker who co-produced *A Woman’s Work: The NFL’s Cheerleader Problem* and *K-Town ’92*. Jin served as an impact producer for *Waking Dream* and *Blowin’ Up*. She was a Film Independent Doc Lab fellow, a Firelight Media Impact Producing Fellow, has an MFA in Film from USC, and a BA from Wellesley College.
Untitled Free Speech Project
Producing Fellow: Suhad M. Babaa

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 29 states in America.

Suhad M. Babaa is a documentary producer and Executive Director of Just Vision. She was an executive producer for *Naila and the Uprising* (2017) and helped drive the impact campaign for *Budrus* (2009) and *My Neighbourhood* (2012). She co-directs the media outlet, Local Call. She is a Council on Foreign Relations Term Member and a World Economic Forum Global Shaper.

The Sundance Institute Creative Producing Program is supported by an endowment from the Sandra and Malcolm Berman Charitable Foundation, with generous additional support from Amazon Studios, Cinereach, National Endowment for the Arts, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and SAGindie.

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; CNN Films; Cinereach; Compton Foundation; Violet Spitzer-Lucas and the Spitzer Family Foundation; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Bertha Foundation; Genuine Article Pictures; Nion McEvoy & Leslie Berriman; 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 Sundance Institute Feature Film Program is supported by explore.org, a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation; Alfred P. Sloan Foundation; Will & Jada Smith Family Foundation; Maja Kristin; Universal Filmed Entertainment Group; Amazon Studios; Hollywood Foreign Press Association; Karen Lauder; RT Features; Sandra and Malcolm Berman Charitable Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; NHK/NHK Enterprises, Inc.; Comedy Central; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Kimberly Steward—K Period Media; SAGindie; Philip Fung—A3 Foundation; Directors Guild of America; Writers Guild of America West; Rosalie Swedlin and Robert Cort; and the Deborah Reinisch and Michael Theodore Fund.

Sundance Institute
As a champion and curator of independent stories for the stage and screen, Sundance Institute provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, film composing, and digital media to create and thrive. Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, 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 Clemency, Never Rarely Sometimes Always, Zola, On The Record, Boys State, The Farewell, Honeyland, One Child Nation, The Souvenir, The Infiltrators, Sorry to Bother You, Won't You Be My Neighbor?, Hereditary, Call Me By Your Name, Get Out, The Big Sick, Mudbound, Fruitvale Station, City So Real, Top of the Lake, Between the World & Me, Wild Goose Dreams and Fun Home. Join Sundance Institute on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

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