



Sundance Institute Talent Forum will take place January 28–30 at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. In its second year, Talent Forum will present a carefully curated group of the most promising storytellers from across Sundance Institute’s signature artist-development programs, as well as select Festival filmmakers. Our aim is to connect them to industry collaborators and supporters in order to meaningfully advance their projects and careers through one-one-one meetings, roundtables, and special events.

Institute Projects

Sundance Institute fellows present 46 highly anticipated fiction and nonfiction projects spanning feature films, episodic, and short form. This slate includes Sundance Lab and Fellowship supported projects at all stages of development seeking everything from creative collaborators to financing partners to representation.

Fiction

A Killing on Park—Writer: Deborah Esquenazi; Producer: Daniel Chalfen

When a young widow is arrested for the murder of an esteemed rabbi, a disgraced Manhattan prosecutor in self-exile from Hasidic Brooklyn takes on the case. Inspired by real events.

Animal—Director: Brian C Miller Richard; Writer/Producer: Hunter Burke; Producer: Kenneth Reynolds

When a series of gruesome killings awakens suspicions of a mysterious creature of lore, an embittered game warden must find the truth without being consumed by the evil himself.

Bluets—Writer/Director: Hannah Peterson; Producer: Taylor Shung

During the last weeks of high school, an indelible bond grows between two teenagers, Cici and Ben. Bluets is a wistful consideration of the ways people shape each other’s identities, even in disappearance.

The Daily Life of Mistress Red—Writer/Director: Peshawn Bread; Producer: Jhane Myers

A Native dominatrix for hire finds cultural healing in whipping apologies out of her white-supremacist clients. (short film)

Day Dream—Writer/Director/Producer: Rodney Evans; Producer: Ron Simons; Executive Producer: Christine Vachon

A feature-length musical drama that follows the black, gay jazz composer Billy Strayhorn as he travels to New Orleans to investigate the myths and legends surrounding Buddy Bolden, the forefather of modern jazz who spent the last 24 years of his life in a mental institution.

Dear Leader—Writer/Director: Christina Choe; Producer: Amy Lo

Christina Choe, whose debut feature, Nancy, premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, returns with her second feature, a psychological thriller.

Dibé—Writer/Director: Shaandiin Tome

A young shepherd goes through the depths of Navajo ways of life trying to figure out how to prevent her family's herd from being taken.

Downtown Owl—Writer/Co-director: Hamish Linklater; Co-director: Lily Rabe; Producer: Bettina Barrow

1983. In Owl, North Dakota, high school football and alcoholism make life worth living. That is, until Julia arrives to teach high school English and causes quite a stir—namely for Mitch, a mediocre quarterback plotting the downfall of his coach, and Horace, an Owl fixture and soon-to-be widower—before the blizzard that changes them forever.

Egg Baby—Director: Natalia Anderson; Writer: Sawyer Perry; Producer: Allison Friedman

When a goth girl is partnered with the captain of the football team on an assignment to co-parent an egg, she's forced to come out of her shell and confront her cracked relationships.

El Otro Lado (The Other Side)—Writer/Director: Barbara Cigarroa; Producer: Julie O'Leary

Set in the border town of Brownsville, Texas, during the child-migration crisis, Lucy, a low-income Mexican American teen, is forced to confront the true nature of her father when he takes in two undocumented minors for money.

Fair Share—Writer: Lauren Whitehead; Producer: Aderemi Abioye

Sharecroppers on a southern farm attempt to set aside racial divides in order to organize a labor union after the market crash of '29 threatens financial ruin for both workers and landlords alike. Amid the chaos unfolding around her, a free-willed tenant farmer tries to hustle her own way out while negotiating obligations to her family and to the farm. (episodic)

Farmhouse—Writer/Director: Minnie Schedeen

Set in a near-future dystopia, where mutated beasts called the Hounds have ravaged the earth, a young girl and her mother struggle to survive in an isolated farmhouse. When a stranger arrives on the land, both mother and daughter's lives begin to unravel as they start to question the very reality they thought they knew so well.

Fieras—Writer/Director: Linda Yvette Chávez

Lucy, an immigrant parent with empty-nest syndrome and a forgotten dancing dream, spends her days caring for her ailing mother. To give her stubborn madrecita a reason to live, she must return to the one thing she let go of years ago and dance in her local church talent show.

La Cazadora (The Huntress)—Writer/Director: Suzanne Andrews Correa

In Juarez, Mexico, a city where violence against women is perpetrated with impunity, an unlikely heroine emerges with a violent call for change.

Mixtape Marauders—Writer/Director: Peter Edlund; Producer: Megan Leonard

Patrick and Max drift through life in their sleepy farm town, smoking weed and making mixtapes, until an unexpected text from Alma, Patrick's dream girl, launches an ill-advised plan to make her the perfect mix.

Nanny—Director: Nikyatu; Producer: Nikkia Moulterie

An immigrant nanny pieces together a life in NYC caring for the child of an Upper East Side family. As visions of her child start to haunt her before his arrival in the U.S., she is confronted by a truth that threatens to shatter the American Dream she's constructed.

Native Speaker—Writer/Director: Andrew Ahn

Henry Park, a Korean American spy, is hired to follow a politician gearing up to run for New York mayor. While trying to reconcile with his wife after their son's death, Henry is blindsided by the murder of a campaign volunteer, a scandal that puts his own life at risk. Based on the novel by Chang-rae Lee.

Noor—Writer/Director: Nijla Mu'min; Producer: Avril Speaks

Caught in the throes of grief following her brother's unsolved murder outside of a Brooklyn bodega, Noor, a black woman, develops an unexpected intimacy with Rami, the Palestinian man who works there, causing their worlds to collide and forcing them to choose between passion and loyalty.

On The Mat—Writer/Director: Daniel Antebi

Fifteen-year-old Ilan falls for another boy in his Tae Kwon Do studio, but their instructor, who's been sexually assaulting Ilan for years, tries to intervene.

Paper Trail—Writer/Director: Rachael Moton; Producer: Gia Rigoli

When a North Philadelphia university begins gentrifying the Black neighborhood that surrounds it, two local siblings realize that their own family is at risk for displacement. In an attempt to raise money to avoid eviction, they unwittingly cause a cheating scandal when they begin completing their classmates' coursework for money.

The Prince of Hyde Park—Writer/Executive Producer: Sachin Dharwadker

When Chicago high school basketball sensation Ezra Jones II mysteriously disappears during the winter of 1994, the resulting investigation and unrelenting media scrutiny sweep his friends and family into a vortex of emotional upheaval that changes their community forever. (episodic)

Qimmit—Writer/Director: Andrew Okpeaha MacLean; Producer: Cara Marcous

Inspired by true events, Qimmit tells the story of Suvlu, an Inupiaq hunter who is forced to make a monstrous decision for the survival of his family.

Scars—Writer/Producer: Simone Chantal Hawthorne

Sick of watching the justice system fail to properly serve members of their community, a group of vigilante teens learns to take matters into their own hands. But even the best-laid plans often go awry. (episodic)

Spirits—Writer/Director: Kyle Bell; Producers: Dylan Brodie, Sterlin Harjo

A young native boy is conflicted between making a choice of leaving his family and home behind for a future playing college basketball. (short film)

The Starling Girl—Writer/Director: Laurel Parmet; Producers: Kara Durrett, Kevin Rowe

A Christian fundamentalist teenager starts an affair with a beloved church leader and pushes her sexual exploration to both exciting and disturbing ends.

Story Ave—Writer/Director/Producer: Aristotle Torres; Co-writer: Bonsu Thompson; Producer: Chelsea Barnard

After running away from home, a teenage graffiti artist holds up an unsuspecting old man in a robbery gone right that changes both of their lives forever.

Tilting—Writer/Director: April Shih

Tilting follows a young woman as she takes refuge in a small poker room in Las Vegas while she tries to ignore the fact that her life is falling apart. But she struggles to maintain her carefully constructed facade when her decisions off the table start to creep in. (episodic)

Undercurrent—Co-writer/Director: Priscila Torres; Co-writer: Vincent Bates

In an attempt to regain her sense of independence, a Salvadoran immigrant places her marriage and future in jeopardy when she begins working illegally for a landscaping company.

Untitled Opa-locka Project—Writer/Director: Keisha Rae Witherspoon; Producer: Jason Fitzroy Jeffers

A black teenager in inner-city Miami navigates post-traumatic stress disorder, government surveillance, and his disbelieving community after he claims his family was abducted by aliens.

You Cannot Erase Me—Writer/Director/Producer: Tyler Rabinowitz

Fleeing persecution, a gay man from Chechnya resettles in New York City and soon finds himself in a whirlwind romance with his new roommate, who introduces him to the world of drag and the parts of himself he had been taught to bury.

Nonfiction

A Photographic Memory—Writer/Director/Producer: Rachel Elizabeth Seed; Producer: Danielle Varga

A photographer attempts to piece together a portrait of her deceased mother, Sheila Turner-Seed, a daring journalist and a woman she never knew. Uncovering the vast audiovisual archive Turner-Seed produced, including lost interviews with iconic photographers, the film explores memory, legacy, and stories left untold.

A Private Wild—Director: Christopher LaMarca; Consulting Producer: Mara Adina

A Private Wild is an intimate exploration of the liminal spaces within the current renaissance of psychedelic therapy. Between trauma and transcendence, an underworld of psychological experiences is revealed.

Ain't I a Woman—Director: Sabaah Folayan; Producer: Emily Best; Executive Producers: Jonako Donley, Sarah Adina Smith

100 years after suffrage, a group of activists and politicians fight to put gender equality in the US Constitution, reckoning with deep historical tensions in the process.

Bring Her Home—Director/Producer: Leya Hale

Bring Her Home follows three Indigenous women who are fighting to vindicate and honor their missing and murdered relatives. Each has experienced the brutal consequences of colonization, and each is finding her own path to healing, for herself and the wider community of Native women.

Edge of Time—Director: Stephanie Spray; Producer: Sara Archambault

Time stands still as a scientific drilling ship takes sediment cores from the seabed. A work of ethnographic sci-fi, Edge of Time intertwines Jorge Luis Borges's meditations on immortality with scientists' reflections on extinction.

Fathom—Director: Drew Xanthopoulos; Producer: Megan Gilbride; Executive Producer: Andrea Meditch

Fathom follows some of the world's most immersed whale researchers to explore their groundbreaking work and how a life among whales has shaped them personally.

Finding Yingying—Director/Producer: Jiayan "Jenny" Shi; Producers: Brent E. Huffman, Diane Quon

Finding Yingying *tells the story of a Chinese family's journey as they search and seek justice for their daughter, an international student kidnapped in her first weeks in Illinois in June 2017. Through intimate vérité and her poetically written diaries, the film will also tell Yingying's story—a promising life cut much too short.*

Hamtramck, USA—Directors/Producers: Justin Feltman, Razi Jafri; Executive Producer: Doug Blush

Hamtramck, USA *is a documentary exploring democracy in America's first Muslim-majority city. The film follows campaigns that not only determine the city's leadership but also its identity through the experiences and identities of the candidates, which are largely defined by their cultural heritage.*

The Last Kidney Donor—Director: Penny Lane; Producer: Gabriel Sedgwick

Director Penny Lane's decision to become a "Good Samaritan" by giving one of her kidneys to a stranger seems to be a simple act of altruism but quickly becomes much more complicated.

On The Divide —Directors: Maya Cueva, Leah Galant; Producers: Diane Becker, Melanie Miller

On the Divide *follows three Latinx people living in McAllen, Texas, who are connected to the last abortion clinic on the U.S./Mexico border. As threats to the clinic and their personal safety mount, our three characters are forced to make decisions they never could have imagined.*

Riotville, USA—Director: Sierra Pettengill; Producers: Sara Archambault, Jamila Wignot; Executive Producer: Charlotte Cook

Riotville, USA *is an archival documentary about the U.S. military's response to the political and racial injustices of the late 1960s: take a military base, build a mock inner-city set, cast soldiers to play rioters, burn the place down, and film it all.*

Through The Night—Director: Loira Limbal; Producer: Jameka Autry

To make ends meet, Americans are working longer hours across multiple jobs. This reality of nonstop work has resulted in an unexpected phenomenon: the flourishing of 24-hour daycare centers. Through the Night *is a vérité documentary that explores the personal cost of our economy through the stories of two working mothers and a childcare provider.*

The Tuba Thieves—Director: Alison O'Daniel; Producer: Rachel Nederveld

The Tuba Thieves *fictionalizes real events and lived experiences through a hard of hearing sensory system. Intercut with reenactments of historical concerts, a Deaf drummer explores her connection to music with her hearing father and hearing boyfriend while marching-band students reconcile a rash of tuba thefts from Los Angeles high schools.*

Untitled Dystopia Film—Director: Malika Zouhali-Worrall; Producers: Kishori Rajan, Danielle Varga

After a Kafkaesque trial sends novelist Ahmed to jail for six months, he decides to leave the country. In Ahmed's latest novel, disenchanting revolutionary Farah also realizes she must flee. But when Ahmed arrives in Las Vegas, and Farah arrives in a futurist city-state, real and fictional dystopias collide in this hybrid film.

Untitled Indigo Girls Documentary—Director: Alexandria Bombach; Producers: Jessica Devaney, Kathlyn Horan, Anya Rous

From Sundance Film Festival award-winning director Alexandria Bombach comes an intimate look into the lives of one of the most iconic folk-rock bands in America—the Indigo Girls. With never-before-seen archival footage, intimate vérité, and touches of magical realism, the film dives into the songwriting and storytelling of the music that transformed a generation.

We Want to Negotiate: The Secret World of Kidnapping & Ransom—Directors/Producers: Andres Caballero, Sofian Khan; Producer: Jessie Motts

Based on the 2019 book by Joel Simon, the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, this documentary thriller asks: what would you do if your loved one was taken? Told through the stories of families who've faced this reality, it's an inside look at what happens next.

Festival Films

As part of Sundance Institute's support of artists, 36 filmmaking teams from the Festival lineup are participating in Talent Forum to spark new industry relationships and seed new projects and opportunities. Each team is composed of select directors, writers, producers, and other creatives from around the world.

-Ship: A Visual Poem (Shorts)—Writer/Director: Terrance Daye; Producer: KarynRose Bruyning; Executive Producer: Khalid Livingston

Acasa, My Home (World Documentary)—Director/Co-writer: Radu Ciorniciuc; Co-writer: Lina Vdovii; Producer: Monica Lazurean Gorgan

And Then We Danced (Spotlight)—Writer/Director: Levan Akin; Producer: Mathilde Dedye

Arabian Alien (Shorts)—Writer/Director: Meshal Aljaser; Producer: Almotaz Aljefri

Buck (Shorts)—Writers/Directors: Elegance Bratton, Jovan James; Producer: Chester Algernal Gordon

Charter (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Amanda Kernell; Producers: Eva Åkergren, Lars Lindström

Collective (Spotlight)—Writer/Director/Producer: Alexander Nanau; Producer: Bianca Oana

Cuties (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Maïmouna Doucouré; Producer: Zak Zangro

The Earth Is Blue as an Orange (World Documentary)—Director: Iryna Tsilyk; Writer/Producers: Anna Kapustina, Giedrė Žickytė

Epicentro (World Documentary)—Writer/Director: Hubert Sauper; Producers: Martin Marquet, Shea Sweeney

Exil (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Visar Morina; Producers: Jonas Dornbach, Janine Jackowski

The Father (Premieres)—Director/Co-writer: Florian Zeller; Co-writer: Christopher Hampton; Producers: Simon Friend, Christophe Spadone

High Tide (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Verónica Chen; Producers: Sofía Castells, Esteban Mentasti

I'll End Up in Jail (Shorts)—Writer/Director: Alexandre Dostie; Producer: Hany Ouichou

Identifying Features (Sin Señas Particulares) (World Dramatic)—Director/Co-writer/Producer: Fernanda Valadez; Co-writer/Producer: Astrid Rondero

Impetigore (Midnight)—Writer/Director: Joko Anwar; Producers: Shanty Harmayn, Tia Hasibuan

Influence (World Documentary)—Writers/Directors: Diana Neille, Richard Poplak; Producer: Bob Moore

Into the Deep (World Documentary)—Director: Emma Sullivan; Producers: Mette Heide, Roslyn Walker

John Was Trying to Contact Aliens (Shorts)—Writer/Director: Matthew Killip

Jumbo (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Zoé Wittock; Producer: Anaïs Bertrand

Luxor (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Zeina Durra; Producer: Mohamed Hefzy; Executive Producer: Paul Webster

The Mole Agent (World Documentary)—Writer/Director: Maite Alberdi; Producer: Marcela Santibáñez

No One is Crazy in This Town (Shorts)—Director/Co-writer: Wregas Bhanuteja; Co-writer: Henricus Pria; Producer: Adi Ekatama

Once Upon a Time in Venezuela (World Documentary)—Director/Co-writer: Anabel Rodríguez Ríos; Co-writer/Producer: Sepp R. Brudermann; Producer: Arash T. Riahi

The Painter and the Thief (World Documentary)—Director: Benjamin Ree; Producer: Ingvil Giske

Pillars (Shorts)—Writer/Director/Producer : Haley Anderson; Producer: Zuri Obi

The Reason I Jump (World Documentary)—Director: Jerry Rothwell; Producers: Jeremy Dear, Stevie Lee, Al Morrow

Relic (Midnight)—Director/Co-writer: Natalie Erika James; Co-writer: Christian White; Producer: Anna McLeish

Saudi Runaway (World Documentary)—Writer/Director: Susanne Regina Meures; Producer: Christian Frei

So What If the Goats Die (Shorts)—Writer/Director: Sofia Alaoui; Producer: Margaux Lorier

Softie (World Documentary)—Writer/Director: Sam Soko; Producer: Toni Kamau; Executive Producer: Bramwel Iro

Summer White (Blanco de Verano) (World Dramatic)—Director/Co-writer: Rodrigo Ruiz Patterson; Co-writer: Raúl Sebastián Quintanilla; Producer: Alejandro Cortés Rubiales

Surge (World Dramatic)—Director: Aneil Karia; Writers: Rupert Jones, Rita Kalnejais; Producers: Julia Godzinskaya, Sophie Vickers

This Is Not a Burial, It's a Resurrection (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese; Producers: Cait Pansegrouw, Elias Ribeiro

The Truffle Hunters (World Documentary)—Directors/Producers: Michael Dweck, Gregory Kershaw

Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness (World Dramatic)—Writer/Director: Massoud Bakhshi; Producer: Jacques Bidou, Marianne Dumoulin

To get further details about the participating Festival films, please refer to the Sundance Film Festival press releases for feature films [here](#) and for episodic and shorts [here](#).