

WOMEN IN FILM, LOS ANGELES ANNOUNCES
34th ANNUAL FILM FINISHING FUND RECIPIENTS

Four Films Awarded Special Grants from Stella Artois
Delta Air Lines to Provide Complimentary Airfare to Grantees

Los Angeles, CA, March 9, 2020....Women In Film, Los Angeles (WIF L.A.) today announced the recipients of the **34th annual Film Finishing Fund**. A total of nine grantees were chosen from 266 feature-length narrative films, documentaries, and shorts submitted from 21 countries. Past recipients have gone on to win Academy, Emmy, Sundance, Berlin Film Festival, and Peabody Awards, as well as distribution and other recognitions. The Film Finishing Fund provides cash grants and in-kind production services to complete films that fit the established criteria of being created by, for, or about women. The works-in-progress are viewed by a special jury of women in the industry who select the winning films.

Two of this year's grantees have been selected at major film festivals: LORELEI will screen at the Tribeca Film Festival and I'LL MEET YOU THERE was selected by SXSW. Additionally, this year is the first time that previous grantees have been selected for the Fund, **and WIF is proud to continue nurturing the talent of winning women creatives**. Filmmakers Iram Parveen Bilal and Grace Lee were both awarded in 2012, and their careers continue to flourish.

When announcing the recipients, WIF L.A. Executive Director Kirsten Schaffer said, "When female filmmakers are afforded the resources to create first-rate work that represents a more complete audience, only then do we see progress towards parity. For over 30 years, Women In Film has helped women bring remarkable storytelling to the screen, and we are truly proud of this year's grantees and their exceptional work." **The Women In Film Finishing Fund has awarded over two million dollars in cash and in-kind services to 280 films from all over the globe since its inception in 1985.**

Stella Artois, with whom WIF L.A. began a partnership in 2017, has expanded their support of female filmmakers by investing in the Film Finishing Fund for a third year: providing four new \$25,000 grants for fiction and documentary films by women who are using the power of film to inspire social change. "As a long-standing supporter of Women In Film and female filmmakers, Stella Artois is thrilled to invest in the Film Finishing Fund for the third year in a row," said Lara Krug, Vice President of Stella Artois. "We're proud to support these women pursuing their passions to challenge the status quo and inspire change. We look forward to seeing these films

and their stories, which are a testament to the filmmakers' talent and ability and beautifully push forward important cultural conversations.”

WIF L.A. also announced that **Delta Air Lines** will continue their support as the “Official Airline of Women In Film.” The airline supports WIF L.A.’s mission to achieve gender parity in the screen industries and acts on its commitment by providing flights to support WIF L.A. programs, including the Film Finishing Fund. Delta’s support of women in the workplace is also evident through its Diversity and Inclusion Council, its women’s business resource groups, and its partnership with the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion.

In addition, a new Media Accessibility Initiative Grant has been allocated to the Film Finishing Fund grantee **A COPS AND ROBBERS STORY**. This grant includes in-kind post production services for media accessibility assets: audio description for blind and low-vision audiences, and closed captioning for Deaf and hard of hearing audiences. This grant was initiated and generously provided by Michele Spitz of Woman of Her Word and Point.³⁶⁰

2019 WOMEN IN FILM L.A. FILM FINISHING FUND WINNERS:

Stella Artois Grantees

A COPS & ROBBERS STORY • Documentary Feature, Directed by Ilinca Calugareanu
I’LL MEET YOU THERE • Narrative Feature, Directed and Written by Iram Parveen Bilal
LORELEI • Narrative Feature, Directed and Written by Sabrina Doyle
AND SHE COULD BE NEXT • Documentary Feature, Directed by Grace Lee & Marjan Safinia

Documentary Feature Films

BELLY OF THE BEAST • Directed by Erika Cohn
DAUGHTER OF A LOST BIRD • Directed by Brooke Swaney
APÁTRIDA • Directed by Michèle Stephenson

Narrative Short Film

UNPOT • Directed and Written by Huieun Park

Documentary Short Film

LUPITA • Directed by Monica Wise Robles

2019 WOMEN IN FILM L.A. FILM FINISHING FUND WINNER DETAILS:

Stella Artois Grantees

A COPS & ROBBERS STORY • Documentary Feature, Directed by Ilinca Calugareanu
Logline: One man, two lives, and the 24 hours that changed everything.

Snapshot Bio:

Calugareanu's instinct guides her into discovering stranger than fiction stories and larger than life characters. Blending absurd and playful tones, her films are a breathtaking mix of fiction and documentary that immerse audiences into worlds beyond imagination.

Her debut feature documentary CHUCK NORRIS VS. COMMUNISM premiered at Sundance 2015 and went on to play in cinemas and festivals around the world. Calugareanu is currently in pre-production on the feature film HOW COULD I BE DEAD AND NOT KNOW IT, and in production on the series "Celluloid Dreams." She is a Berlinale Talents alumna (2017), 2018 Chicken & Egg Accelerator Lab grantee, the 2018 Sundance Institute and National Geographic Further Filmmaker fellow, and the 2019 Sundance Music Labs directing fellow.

I'LL MEET YOU THERE • Narrative Feature, Directed and Written by Iram Parveen Bilal

Logline: A Muslim cop goes undercover at his estranged father's mosque while his daughter hides her passion for a forbidden dance, uncovering a shocking family secret.

Snapshot Bio:

Raised in Nigeria and Pakistan, Bilal is a Physics Olympian turned filmmaker. She just lensed her third feature film, I'LL MEET YOU THERE, a family drama about a Muslim cop and his teenage ballerina daughter. The project was a Film Independent Writer/Director Lab project. She was one of 15 directors invited to Cinefondation's L'Atelier at Cannes 2019 for her feature project WAKHRI (ONE OF A KIND), based on a social media star in Pakistan. Bilal is currently actively looking to direct television and is also developing TV projects set in the U.S. and South Asia.

Her past noted feature length works include JOSH (AGAINST THE GRAIN), Pakistan's first film to be on Netflix and in the permanent collection at the U.S. Library of Congress, and THE PHD MOVIE: STILL IN GRAD SCHOOL. An avid public speaker and activist, she just wrapped a four-year term as co-chair of the Asian American Writers Committee at the WGA and is an active board member for the Caltech Y, a leading community service organization affiliated with her alma mater, the California Institute of Technology. Bilal initiated the Pakistani Oscar committee and is the founder of Pakistan's first professional screenwriting lab (Qalambaaz). She is a Thomas J. Watson, Women In Film, Film Independent, and CAPE fellow, and an active member of the Alliance of Women Directors and Film Fatales, both organizations vested for fair representation of female directors in the entertainment industry. She believes that genuine curiosity is the antidote to fear.

LORELEI • Narrative Feature, Directed and Written by Sabrina Doyle

Logline: A man is released from prison after 15 years. He reunites with his high school girlfriend, now a single mother of three. What follows is a lyrical take on love, regret, and second chances.

Snapshot Bio:

Doyle is a British writer and director based in Los Angeles and London. She's currently in post-production on her feature directing debut *LORELEI*, starring Pablo Schreiber and Jena Malone, and produced by THE FLORIDA PROJECT's Kevin Chinoy. Sir Alan Parker has called her work "outstanding [...] refreshingly intelligent, serious and lyrical. Much needed in tomorrow's cinema."

Doyle's directing work has been supported by Google, Panavision, the Mary Pickford Foundation, BAFTA Los Angeles—and now Women In Film. Her shorts have been seen on the pan-European television network ARTE, the cable channel ShortsTV, and the streaming service Fandor, as well as at dozens of international film festivals. She was also honored by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) as a "Brit to Watch," and chosen to participate in the inaugural Sony Pictures Entertainment Diverse Directors Program. Doyle's sci-fi spec script *ASTER'S RITES* was a Top 50 Nicholl Fellowship Semifinalist. She's currently working on a historic true crime screenplay for producer Robert Cort ("On the Basis of Sex") and Participant Media (*ROMA*, *SPOTLIGHT*). Previously, Doyle worked as a BBC journalist for six years, producing content for the UK's flagship news programs, including "Today" and "Newsnight." Doyle was born in London to an Irish father and Italian mother. A first-generation high school graduate, she got top Bachelor's and MPhil degrees from Cambridge University, where her work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. She subsequently won a Fulbright Scholarship to attend the American Film Institute, where she completed her MFA in Film Directing.

AND SHE COULD BE NEXT • Documentary Feature, Directed by Grace Lee and Marjan Safinia

Logline: As American demographics rapidly shift, a defiant group of women of color are transforming politics from the ground up. As candidates and organizers, they are harnessing the political power of the New American Majority. *AND SHE COULD BE NEXT*, made by a team of women of color filmmakers, asks whether democracy itself can be preserved—and made stronger—by those most marginalized.

Snapshot Bio:

Grace Lee directed and produced the Peabody Award-winning *AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY: THE EVOLUTION OF GRACE LEE BOGGS* about the legendary civil rights activist which *The Hollywood Reporter* called "an entertainingly revealing portrait of the power of a single individual to effect change." The film won multiple festival audience awards

and was broadcast on the PBS documentary series “POV.” Other directing credits include the Emmy-nominated “Makers: Women in Politics” for PBS, the interactive online documentary K-TOWN ‘92 about the 1992 Los Angeles civil unrest, OFF THE MENU: ASIAN AMERICA, and the feature film JANEANE FROM DES MOINES, set during the 2012 presidential campaign, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. She has been a Sundance Institute fellow, a 2017 Chicken & Egg Breakthrough Award winner, an envoy of the American Film Showcase (through USC and the U.S. State Department), and is co-founder of the Asian American Documentary Network. She's currently a producer/director on a five-part PBS series, “Asian Americans.”

Marjan Safinia is an Iranian documentary filmmaker whose films examine identity, community, and social justice. BUT YOU SPEAK SUCH GOOD ENGLISH explores the first-generation immigrant experience from an insider perspective. SEEDS tells the story of ten brave teenagers from the world’s most troubled conflict zones living side-by-side for one life-changing summer. Collectively her films have played at over 100 international film festivals and been broadcast in North America, Europe, and across the Arab world. Most recently she produced and directed work for Google founder Sergey Brin, the Obama administration, and Hillary Clinton’s Next Generation. Until 2018, Safinia was the longest-serving President of the Board of Directors of the International Documentary Association (and the only woman of color to lead this organization since it was founded in 1982). She co-hosts the preeminent online documentary community The D-Word, and is a regular juror, programmer, speaker, and connector of all things documentary.

Documentary Feature Films

BELLY OF THE BEAST • Directed by Erika Cohn

Logline: Belly of the Beast intimately chronicles the journey of women fighting reproductive injustice in their communities.

Snapshot Bio:

Erika Cohn is a Peabody and Emmy Award-winning director/producer who *Variety* recognized as one of 2017’s top documentary filmmakers to watch, and was featured in DOC NYC’s 2019 “40 Under 40.” Most recently, Cohn completed THE JUDGE, a Peabody Award-winning and Emmy-nominated film about the first woman judge appointed to the Middle East’s Shari’a courts, which premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival and was broadcast on PBS’ 2018 “Independent Lens” series. Cohn co-directed and produced IN FOOTBALL WE TRUST, an Emmy Award-winning feature documentary about young Pacific Islander men pursuing their dreams of playing professional football, which premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival and was broadcast on PBS’ 2016 “Independent Lens” series. She has received numerous accolades for her work, including a Directors Guild of America Award for her

film *WHEN THE VOICES FADE*, a narrative profile of the Lebanese-Israeli war of 2006, and has been a featured panelist/speaker at various film festivals and university conferences across the globe. Her work has been supported by IFP, the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Institute, Hot Docs, Sheffield, ITVS, Women In Film, BAVC, and the CPB Producers Academy, among others. Cohn grew up attending the Sundance Film Festival as a native Utahn, where she first began her career. She studied at Chapman University (California) and Hebrew University (Jerusalem), and has degrees in Film Production, Middle East Studies, and Acting Performance. In 2013, Cohn founded Idle Wild Films, Inc., which has released three feature documentaries and produced numerous branded content and commercial spots, including Gatorade's "Win from Within" series, for which she received a 2016 Webby Award nomination. She is currently developing her feature narrative debut and will be releasing the feature documentary *BELLY OF THE BEAST* in 2020.

DAUGHTER OF A LOST BIRD • Directed by Brooke Swaney

Logline: What does blood have to do with identity? Kendra Mylnechuk, an adult Native adoptee born in 1980 at the cusp of the enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act, is on a journey to reconnect with her birth family and discover her Lummi heritage.

Snapshot Bio:

Brooke Pepion Swaney (Blackfeet/Salish) is a 2014 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation fellow and a 2013 Time Warner fellow through the Sundance Institute. *OK BREATHE AURALEE*, her NYU graduate thesis film, screened at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and has TV distribution with FNX (First Nations Experience, a PBS affiliate). Along with editing, Brooke's experience also includes producing *BELLA VISTA* (Rotterdam 2014) and the Vision Maker Media-funded New Media project, short program *SIXTY FOUR FLOOD* (PBS & PBS Digital). She also worked with Revolution Messaging on the Bernie Sanders 2016 presidential campaign on their digital media team (producing, directing and editing); her Native Outreach ad *I AM HUMAN* received over 3 million hits on Facebook. Presently, she is in post-production on her first feature length documentary, *DAUGHTER OF A LOST BIRD*, funded by Vision Maker Media.

APÁTRIDA (a.k.a. STATELESS; formerly FOR MORAIME) • Directed by Michèle Stephenson

Logline: In 1937, tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent were murdered by the Dominican army, many on the basis of their skin colour alone. The so-called "Haitian Problem" was an attempt to control the border between the two countries and whiten the Dominican population, led by a dictator obsessed with race. In 2013, the Dominican Republic's Supreme Court stripped the citizenship of anyone with Haitian parents, retroactive to

1929. The ruling rendered more than 200,000 people stateless, without nationality, identity, or a homeland.

Director Michèle Stephenson's new documentary APÁTRIDA (STATELESS) traces the complex tributaries of history and present-day politics as state-sanctioned racism seeps into mundane offices, living room meetings, and street protests. Anyone defending marginalized groups faces threats of violence. In this dangerous climate, a young attorney named Rosa Iris mounts a grassroots campaign, challenging electoral corruption and advocating for social justice. As Rosa balances her congressional run with her dedication to her family and community, the full scope of her fight is revealed. Filmed in chiaroscuro colours, and shot through with elements of magical realism, APÁTRIDA (STATELESS) combines gritty hidden-camera footage with the legend of a young woman fleeing brutal violence to flip the narrative axis, revealing the depths of institutionalized oppression.

Snapshot Bio:

As co-founder of the Rada Film Group, Michèle Stephenson pulls from her Panamanian and Haitian roots and experience as a human rights attorney to tell provocative stories that speak to personal and systemic liberation. Her films have been nominated for three Emmys. Her collaborative series with NYT Op-Docs, *A Conversation on Race*, won the 2016 Online Journalism Award for Commentary. She was recently awarded the Creative Capital Fellowship and the Chicken & Egg Pictures Breakthrough Filmmaker Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Current projects include two nonfiction features and an immersive time travel collaboration.

Narrative Short Film

UNPOT • Directed and Written by Huieun Park

Logline: A quiet day for an elderly mother who is led through the door to the final stage of her life.

Snapshot Bio:

Huieun Park is a Korean filmmaker and multimedia artist. She studied Korean Language and Literature at Yonsei University. She moved to Los Angeles in 2010 to earn a Master's degree in Film Directing from the California Institute of the Arts. Park has written, directed, and produced several short films and one feature. She has explored the inner frameworks of people who have experienced forced displacement or isolation from family and from other social interactions. Her films have screened at various film festivals such as Athens International Film and Video Festival, Austin Film Festival, and CAAMFest (Center for Asian American Media Festival).

Documentary Short Film

LUPITA • Directed by Monica Wise Robles

Logline: A Tsotsil Maya massacre survivor becomes a spokesperson for her people amid a Mexican indigenous movement led by women.

Snapshot Bio:

Monica Wise Robles (Director/Cinematographer/Producer) is a Colombian-American documentary filmmaker and video journalist based in Mexico City. Her work focuses on intimate stories of resistance across borders to highlight feminist, LGBTQ, migrant, and indigenous narratives. Monica's work can be seen in *The Guardian*, *The Intercept*, *The Atlantic*, TeleSUR, Al Jazeera, MSNBC, PBS, History Now, BBC Travel, and NBC Latino. She worked on Pamela Yates' 500 YEARS, a feature documentary chronicling indigenous resistance in Guatemala which premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Wise Robles was also a producer and cinematographer on "The New Deciders," a 2016 PBS election special with journalist Maria Hinojosa. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, she has also produced work from Haiti, Cuba, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador. She is currently directing two documentary films exposing state human rights abuses in Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico through the eyes of female survivors seeking justice. Monica is an International Women's Media Foundation Adelante fellow, a UC Berkeley Investigative Reporting Program Associate, a Ford and Sundance Institute grantee, and was selected for Take The Lead's #50WomenCan program for women working to change the gender gap in the media industry.

ABOUT THE WOMEN IN FILM L.A. FILM FINISHING FUND

Now in its 34th successful year, the Women In Film Los Angeles Film Finishing Fund awards 8–15 grants annually in cash and in-kind gifts for films by female directors. One of the most challenging obstacles facing women filmmakers is access to capital, even for seasoned creators. WIF L.A.'s research has shown that women continue to deal with particular gendered biases that make it harder to secure financing. Since its inception in 1985, the Film Finishing Fund has had an impressive track record of selecting recipients that have gone on to achieve distribution and win major awards, including:

- **Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn's THE BODY REMEMBERS WHEN THE WORLD BROKE OPEN** premiered at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival,
- **Amy Adrion's HALF THE PICTURE, Christina Choe's NANCY, and Stephanie Soechtig's THE DEVIL WE KNOW** premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival,
- **Tina Brown and Dyana Winkler's UNITED SKATES**, won the 2018 Audience Award for Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival,
- **Grace Lee's AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY: THE EVOLUTION OF GRACE LEE BOGGS**, 2015 Peabody Award winner,

- **Khadija Alsalami's I AM NOJOOM, AGE 10 AND DIVORCED**, Best Fiction Feature Award winner at the 2014 Dubai International Film Festival, and
- **Cynthia Wade's FREEHELD**, 2008 Academy Award® winner for Best Documentary Short Subject.

Along with support from Stella Artois, which provides funds for the film grants, and Delta Air Lines, which offers travel assistance, Women In Film Los Angeles is proud to support influential cinema that is changing the landscape of Hollywood. Through the partnership with Stella Artois, in 2019 WIF L.A. debuted a curated showcase of Film Finishing Fund recipients so that these inspiring projects could be shared with the community. Additional support for the showcase came from AMC Theatres and Chloe Wine Collection.

ABOUT WOMEN IN FILM, LOS ANGELES

Women In Film, Los Angeles (WIF L.A.) advocates for and advances the careers of women working in the screen industries—to achieve parity and transform culture. Founded in 1973, Women In Film supports all women working in film, television, and digital media from emerging to advanced career. Our distinguished programs include: mentoring, speaker and screening series, a production training program, writing labs, film finishing funds, legal aid, and an annual financing intensive. Women In Film advocates for gender parity through research, education, and media campaign. Women In Film honors the achievements of women in Hollywood through the Legacy Series, annual Emmy and Oscar parties, and our signature event, the Women In Film Annual Gala. Membership is open to all media professionals and more information can be found on our website: wif.org. Follow Women In Film on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

ABOUT STELLA ARTOIS

Stella Artois® is part of a Belgian brewing tradition dating back to 1366. It is the No. 1 Belgian beer in the world and is present in over 95 countries. Stella Artois is a bottom filtered, blonde pilsner. It is thirst quenching with a malty middle and crisp finish delivering a full flavor and a hint of bitterness. Stella Artois is best enjoyed served between 3 and 5 degrees Celsius and should be served in the unique Stella Artois Chalice according to the 9-Step Pouring Ritual to guarantee a perfect experience of this gold standard lager. Visit www.stellaartois.com for more information.

ABOUT DELTA AIR LINES

Delta Air Lines (NYSE: DAL) is the U.S. global airline leader in products, services, innovation, reliability and customer experience. Powered by its 80,000 people around the world, Delta

continues to invest billions in its people, improving the air travel experience and generating industry-leading shareholder returns. Delta serves nearly 200 million people every year, taking customers across its industry-leading global network to more than 300 destinations in over 50 countries. Delta has been recognized in Fortune's top 50 Most Admired Companies in addition to being named the most admired airline for the eighth time in nine years and being named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies Worldwide for two consecutive years. More about Delta can be found on the Delta News Hub as well as delta.com, via [@DeltaNewsHub](https://twitter.com/DeltaNewsHub) on Twitter and [Facebook.com/delta](https://www.facebook.com/delta).

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