

SUNDANCE INSTITUTE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 7, 2007

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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE DOCUMENTARY FILM PROGRAM ANNOUNCES GRANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS COMBINE ARTISTRY AND ISSUES FOR POWERFUL STORYTELLING

Los Angeles, CA—The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program recently announced its second round of grants for 2007 with 20 feature-length documentary films receiving a total of \$600,000. Dedicated to supporting U.S. and international documentary films that focus on current human rights issues, freedom of expression, social justice, civil liberties, and exploring critical issues of our time, the Program's Documentary Fund was established at Sundance Institute in 2002 with a gift from the Open Society Institute and is supported by a leadership grant from the Ford Foundation. Sundance Institute Documentary Fund grants are announced twice a year and since its inception at the Institute, the Fund has disbursed almost \$4.5 million to over 125 projects.

A committee of human rights experts and film professionals made recommendations from over 300 projects submitted by filmmakers from around the world. These projects represent a number of themes, including: how religion informs our values and beliefs; the debates over global warming; the experience of war and its aftermath and daily life in several Middle Eastern countries. In supporting such work, the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund encourages the diverse exchange of ideas crucial to developing an open society, raising public consciousness about human rights abuses and restrictions of civil liberties, and fostering an ongoing dialogue about these issues.

"The films funded in this round represent a range of documentary style and innovation combined with issue-based storytelling that promise to be extraordinary," said Cara Mertes, Director of the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program. "Each of them fulfills our goal to provide support at a crucial, often difficult time in the life of a film and to encourage a combination of innovative and effective storytelling in raising awareness about issues that touch all of us."

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The Sundance Institute Documentary Fund considers projects in three categories— Development, Work In Progress and Supplemental. Development grants provide seed funds to filmmakers whose projects are in the early research stage or in pre-production. Documentaries in production or post-production are eligible for the more substantial Work in Progress grants. The Fund awards Supplemental grants to projects that have previously received Development grants and meet the criteria for Work In Progress grants. The Fund is a central element of the Institute's Documentary Film Program, which also provides year round creative support to nonfiction filmmakers through labs and other activities focused on distinct stages of the filmmaking process. Details on the Fund's award guidelines can be found on the Sundance Institute website, sundance.org/documentary.

The 20 Sundance Institute Documentary Fund grant recipients are:

Development Grants

Francois Verster

DREAM OF SHAHRAZAD (South Africa)

Dream follows self-exiled Iranian conductor Alexander (Ali) Rahbari as he returns to Iran to lead the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's SCHEHERAZADE suite, the classic symphonic rendition of tales from THE ARABIAN NIGHTS. Using the music as starting point, the film explores the ways in which the West perceives Islam and the Middle East.

Astra Taylor

MEGAPOLIS (US)

This collaboration between "urban theorist" Mike Davis and the filmmaker is a meditation on the changing shape of cities in the modern age.

Kamal Aljafari

PORT OF MEMORY (Palestine/Germany)

The film is an historical recounting of the occupation of the Palestinian port town of Jaffa by Israeli forces in 1948 by survivors of the occupation and visible traces in present day Jaffa.

Deann Borshay Liem

PRECIOUS OBJECTS OF DESIRE (US)

A feature-length follow up to Liem's personal meditation, FIRST PERSON PLURAL, the film will document the search for a woman whose identity the director was given at the time of her adoption from South Korea by an American couple.

Laura Poitras

RELEASE (US)

Release explores the psychological and political repercussions of the United States' policy of detention at Guantanamo Bay Prison by following the stories of men released from Guantanamo and returning home.

Carrie Lozano and Sam Green

SPEAKING FROM THE GRAVE (US)

This film is an in-depth exploration of the new frontier of forensic anthropology and the use of science to bring about justice in countries affected by war.

Tod Lending

WAR IS A FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING (US)

A kaleidoscopic journey into the aftermath of war, inspired by and adapted from the national bestseller written by veteran *New York Times* correspondent Chris Hedges.

Work-in-Progress Grants

Phil Grabsky (UK)

ANGOLA MUSIC SCHOOL (Rivers of Gold) (working title)

The film follows a year in the troubled life of Luanda's only music school. Phil Grabsky follows the school director and three students as they navigate post-war Angola while pursuing their dreams.

Ed Pincus and Lucia Small (US)

THE AXE IN THE ATTIC

Two filmmakers embark on a road trip across America to document the lives of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Tony Gerber and Jesse Moss (US)

FULL BATTLE RATTLE

Full Battle Rattle follows life inside the US Army's Iraq simulation in California's Mojave Desert from the perspective of the Iraqi-American civilians who work there as "role players" and the US soldiers who train there.

Daniel B. Gold and Judith Helfand (US)

EVERYTHING'S COOL

A group of self-appointed global warming messengers are on a life or death quest to find the iconic image, proper language, and points of leverage that will help the public go from embracing the urgency of the problem to creating the political will necessary to push for a new energy economy. Meanwhile, the industry funded nay-sayers sing what just might be their swan song of scientific doubt and deception.

Weijun Chen (China/South Africa)

PLEASE VOTE FOR ME

This film follows the race for the prestigious role of Class Monitor in a grade school in China, reflecting on the larger issue of whether democracy is possible in China.

Esteban Uyarra and Michael Christofferson (DENMARK)

SADDAM ON TRIAL: BATTLE FOR SADDAM

The filmmakers were granted unprecedented behind-the-scenes access to this historic trial in a gripping account of the trial of former dictator Saddam Hussein.

Kate Davis, David Heilbroner and Franco Sacchi (US)

WAITING FOR ARMAGEDDON

The film is an in-depth look at individuals and communities of Christian Apocalyptic believers in contemporary America.

Nahid Persson (Iran)

MY WIVES AND ME

Persson's latest film is an intimate and often comic portrait of a man living with multiple wives and numerous children in an Iranian village.

Mahmoud Al Massad (Jordan)

RECYCLE

RECYCLE follows an ex-mujahadeen in Jordan struggling to balance his Islamic faith with the disillusionment and hardships of his daily life.

Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern (US)
THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK

Following the experiences of former US Marine Brian Steidle, the film documents his quest to document and expose acts of genocide after serving as an unarmed military observer for the African Union in Darfur, Sudan from 2004 through 2005.

Maria Finitzo (US)
TERRA INCOGNITA: THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF STEM CELL RESEARCH

The issues and controversy surrounding stem-cell research are illuminated by the story of one doctor's pioneering research and the personal stake he has in its success.

Julie Bridgham (US)
THE SARI SOLDIERS

The film intimately follows the story of six Nepali women on opposing sides of Nepal's conflict as they battle to transform their country's future.

Parvez Sharma (US)
IN THE NAME OF ALLAH (working title)

This film is an exploration of the intersection of Islam and homosexuality. Openly gay, Muslim filmmaker Parvez Sharma creates a mosaic of homosexuals living in Islamic countries and countries with diasporic Muslim populations.

Sundance Institute Documentary Fund

Created in 2002 as part of the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund is made possible by a \$4.6 million grant from the New York-based Open Society Institute (OSI) and is now supported by a leadership grant from the Ford Foundation. Originally established in 1996 as the Soros Documentary Fund, the Fund is widely respected for the quality and exposure of the projects it supports. Films supported by the Fund have received widespread distribution to their intended audiences via broadcast and theatrical release, and many have garnered a number of awards and exceptional industry recognition. Among the impressive list of films supported by the Fund are: James Longley's IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS, winner of Best Documentary Directing, Editing and Cinematography Awards at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski's BORN INTO BROTHELS, winner of the 2004 Sundance Film Festival Documentary Audience Award and the 2004 Academy Award® for Best Documentary Feature; Catherine Tambini and Carlos Sandoval's FARMINGVILLE, winner of a Special Jury Prize at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival; Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco's DAUGHTER FROM DANANG, winner of the 2002 Sundance Documentary Grand Jury Prize and an Academy Award® nominee; Kate Davis's SOUTHERN COMFORT, winner the 2001 Sundance Documentary Grand Jury Prize; Edet Belzberg's CHILDREN UNDERGROUND, winner of a 2001 Sundance Special Jury Prize and an Academy Award® nominee; and LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY, winner of the 2000 Sundance Documentary Grand Jury Prize and an Academy Award® nominee.

Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program

The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program provides year-round support to nonfiction filmmakers globally. The program encourages the exploration of innovative nonfiction storytelling, and promotes the exhibition of documentary films to a broader audience. It supports independent artists through the Sundance Documentary Fund, the Filmmaker Lodge at the Sundance Film Festival and the Independent Producers Conference, the Edit and Story Laboratory and Documentary Composers Laboratory, and a variety of collaborative partnerships and initiatives.

Sundance Institute

Dedicated year-round to the development of artists of independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work, Sundance Institute was founded by Robert Redford in 1981. The Institute has grown into an internationally recognized resource for thousands of independent artists through its Film Festival and artistic development programs for filmmakers, screenwriters, composers, playwrights and theatre artists. The original values of independence, creative risk-taking, and discovery continue to define and guide the work of Sundance Institute, both with US artists and, increasingly, with artists from other regions of the world.

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