



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ITVS-FUNDED PROJECTS RECEIVE TWELVE NEWS & DOCUMENTARY EMMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

#### INDEPENDENT LENS FILMS RECEIVE EIGHT NOMINATIONS

(San Francisco, CA, July 26, 2018) Twelve documentaries funded by ITVS received News & Documentary Emmy Award nominations, it was announced today, including eight nominations for films that premiered on *Independent Lens* on PBS. The nominated films include Steve James's *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*, Keith Maitland's *TOWER*, Susan Gray and Bestor Cram's *Birth of a Movement*, and James Solomon's *The Witness* (see complete list below.) The News & Documentary Emmy Awards will be presented on Monday, October 1st, 2018, at a ceremony at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall in the Time Warner Complex at Columbus Circle in New York City.

"We are incredibly honored to receive 12 nominations for ITVS co-productions, a testament to the breadth of work that independent artists bring to series across public television," said Sally Jo Fifer, president and CEO of ITVS. "The bold work of these talented producers reaches national audiences on *Frontline*, *POV*, *American ReFramed*, and *Independent Lens*, giving voice to communities across America."

"Delving deep into a wide range of subjects including racism, the dire consequences of industrial agriculture, rising nationalism around the globe, education inequity, drone warfare, and the first mass shooting in U.S. history, these films hold a mirror up to our world," said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* Executive Producer. "We're extremely proud to have partnered with these talented filmmakers on complex, relevant films that capture America—and the world—at a crossroads. Because of our trusted brand the films also encourage audiences to more thoughtful conversations."

Formed by Congress in 1988 to address the lack of diverse voices in public media, ITVS has served as an incubator for filmmakers and a funding engine for more than 1400 films. Recipient of the 2017 Peabody Institutional Award, ITVS was recognized by the Peabody Awards Board of Jurors for its "broad transformative impact on the media landscape."

#### The nominated films are:

**Abacus: Small Enough to Jail** (Outstanding Business and Economics Documentary)

*Frontline*/Filmmaker: Steve James

ITVS Supervising Producer: David Eisenberg

Nominated for an Academy Award, *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail* tells the saga of the Sungs, a Chinese American family who own and operate Abacus Federal Savings in New York's Chinatown — the only U.S. bank prosecuted in relation to the 2008 financial crisis.

**Almost Sunrise** (Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary)

*POV*/Filmmaker: Michael Collins

ITVS Supervising Producer: David Eisenberg

In an attempt to put haunting combat experiences behind them, two friends embark on an epic 2,700-mile trek on foot across America, seeking redemption and healing as a way to close the moral chasm opened by war. *Almost Sunrise* is an intimate, vérité film that eschews stereotypes and instead captures an unprecedented portrait of veterans — one of hope, potential and untold possibilities.

**The Bad Kids** (Outstanding Business and Economics Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmakers: Lou Pepe and Keith Fulton

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

At a remote Mojave Desert high school, extraordinary educators believe that empathy and life skills, more than academics, give at-risk students command of their own futures. The film shows how education can combat the crippling effects of poverty for these so-called "bad kids."

**Birth of a Movement** (Outstanding Historical Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmakers: Susan Gray and Bestor Cram

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

When *The Birth of a Nation* opened in 1915, the unrepentantly racist film was met with widespread protests by African Americans. The film, which would lead to a national resurgence of the KKK, unleashed a battle still waging today about the First Amendment, censorship, race relations and representation, and the power and influence of Hollywood.

**Deej** (Outstanding Graphic Design and Art Direction)

*America ReFramed*/Animator: Em Cooper

ITVS Supervising Producer: David Eisenberg

Abandoned by his birth parents and presumed incompetent, DJ Savarese ("Deej") found not only a loving family but also a life in words, which he types on a text-to-voice synthesizer. As he makes his way through high school and dreams of college, he confronts the terrors of his past, society's obstacles to inclusion, and the sometimes paralyzing beauty of his own senses.

**Farewell Ferris Wheel** (Outstanding Business and Economics Documentary)

*America ReFramed*/Filmmakers: Miguel Martinez and Jamie Sisley

ITVS Supervising Producer: Michael Kinomoto

Carnivals have a delightful place in the American imagination but rising expenses and changes in U.S. labor patterns mean this national pastime is nearly extinct. *Farewell Ferris Wheel* is an inside look at the struggles of an industry trying to stay alive by employing Mexican migrant workers with a controversial visa.

**Forever Pure** (Outstanding Politics and Government Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmaker: Maya Zinshtein

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

*Forever Pure* follows what happened when two Muslim players joined Israel's most popular and controversial football team. Through the story of one tumultuous season in the life of this famed club, the film offers a dramatic window into modern Israeli society.

**National Bird** (Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmaker: Sonia Kennebeck

ITVS Supervising Producer: Shana Swanson

*National Bird* follows the dramatic journey of whistleblowers determined to break the silence around one of the most controversial issues of our time: the secret U.S. drone war.

**SEED: The Untold Story** (Outstanding Nature Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmakers: Jon Betz and Taggart Siegel

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

Few things on Earth are as miraculous and vital as seeds but, in the last century, 94% of our seed varieties have disappeared. *SEED* follows the journey of passionate seed keepers around the world determined to protect our 12,000-year-old food legacy.

**TOWER** (Outstanding Historical Documentary) (Outstanding Music & Sound)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmaker: Keith Maitland

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

On August 1, 1966, a sniper rode the elevator to the top floor of the University of Texas Tower and opened fire. When the gunshots were finally silenced, the toll included 16 dead, three dozen wounded, and a shaken nation left trying to understand.

**The Witness** (Best Documentary)

*Independent Lens*/Filmmaker: James Solomon

ITVS Supervising Producer: Amy Shatsky-Gambrill

In 1964, 28-year-old Kitty Genovese was repeatedly stabbed on a street in Queens. Soon after, *The New York Times* published a front-page story asserting that 38 neighbors watched her murder — and did nothing to help. *The Witness* follows the efforts of Kitty's brother as he launches his own investigation into his sister's life and death.

**About ITVS**

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films and then airs them for free on PBS via our weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as on other PBS series and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information, visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org)

**About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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## CONTACT

Donna Hardwick, ITVS  
Mary Lugo  
Cara White

415-356-8383  
770-623-8190  
843-881-1480

[donna.hardwick@itvs.org](mailto:donna.hardwick@itvs.org)  
[lugo@negia.net](mailto:lugo@negia.net)  
[cara.white@mac.com](mailto:cara.white@mac.com)