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“WRITING WITH FIRE” MARKS ELEVENTH DOCUMENTARY FROM PBS’S INDEPENDENT LENS TO RECEIVE OSCAR NOMINATION

*The Inspiring Documentary About India’s Only All-Female News Outlet Will Make Its
Television Debut March 28 On Independent Lens*

(San Francisco, CA) February 8, 2022— “Writing With Fire” from filmmakers Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh was nominated for an Academy Award® in the best documentary feature category, announced this morning. This accolade marks the eleventh Academy Award® nomination for a documentary that has made its television debut on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS. It is the 24th nomination for ITVS, public media’s leading incubator and presenter of independent film.

PBS has aired INDEPENDENT LENS for over two decades, as a home for documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. The award-winning weekly series, presented by ITVS, features new independent documentaries each week, from the fall through late spring. INDEPENDENT LENS gives communities across the country the chance to watch these important films and fosters conversation on timely topics, from the criminal justice system to the fight for racial and gender equality to immigration issues and the climate crisis.

In the midst of India’s crowded, patriarchal news landscape, “Writing With Fire” follows the reporters with *Khabar Lahariya*—India’s only newspaper run by Dalit (“low caste”) women—as they take it upon themselves to cover their country’s inequities with unflinching determination. Armed only with smartphones, these fearless journalists traverse the state of Uttar Pradesh, exposing government misconduct, rape culture, and rampant corruption that victimizes those without voice or power. Five years in the making, the film marks the feature debut of both Thomas and Ghosh.

“To have our debut feature documentary nominated by the Academy® is such an honor, but it is truly the work of these brave journalists that deserves this spotlight,” said filmmakers Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh. “These incredible women persevere with their courage, resilience, and wit everyday while reporting from some of the most challenging environments, in pursuit of truth, justice, and real change. With this recognition from the Academy® and with our



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INDEPENDENT LENS debut on PBS in March, we hope to not only honor these brave journalists but also bring to the world a story of inimitable hope and resilience."

Lauded as "a rousing, inspirational tribute to the pride of grassroots Indian journalism" by *Variety* and "the most inspiring journalism movie—maybe ever" by the *Washington Post*, the film has received critical acclaim since its world premiere at Sundance Film Festival in 2021, where it was a double award winner, scooping up both the World Cinema Audience Award and Special Jury Award: Impact for Change. The film was a favorite on the festival circuit playing at more than 90 festivals, and picking up additional awards at the San Francisco Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival, Telluride Mountainfilm Festival, Washington D.C. Filmfest, Belfast Film Festival, International Human Rights Film Festival, and more.

"INDEPENDENT LENS congratulates Rintu and Sushmit and the entire team behind 'Writing With Fire' on this much-deserved nomination. It's because of fearless filmmakers like Rintu and Sushmit that we're able to fully understand the dangerous but essential reporting process of these journalists in India," said INDEPENDENT LENS Executive Producer Lois Vossen. "This is a story of hope and bravery against all odds that spotlights tenacious women who are risking it all, and using their voices to call attention to issues overlooked in the media in order to spark real change in their communities. We couldn't think of a more fitting film to showcase to viewers across the U.S. in March."

In addition to its Academy Award® Best Documentary Feature nomination, the film was also nominated for the Producers Guild of America Awards for outstanding producer of documentary motion pictures, and was named to the IDA Shortlist for best feature documentary.

Previous films that made their broadcast debut on INDEPENDENT LENS, and also backed by ITVS, that were nominated for Academy Awards include: "[Hale County This Morning, This Evening](#)" (2019); "[I Am Not Your Negro](#)" (2017); "[Best of Enemies](#)" (2016); "[The Invisible War](#)" (2013); "[How to Survive a Plague](#)" (2013); "[Hell and Back Again](#)" (2012); "[Waste Land](#)" (2011); "[Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room](#)" (2006); "[The Weather Underground](#)" (2004); and the short documentary "[Why Can't We Be a Family Again?](#)" (2002).

"Writing With Fire" will premiere on PBS's INDEPENDENT LENS on Monday, March 28. Visit the "Writing With Fire" [film page](#) for more information. The 94th Academy Awards® will be broadcast live Sunday, March 27, on ABC.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:**Rintu Thomas** (Co-Director/Producer)

Rintu Thomas is an award-winning director-producer from India whose work is supported by the Sundance Institute, Chicken & Egg Pictures, IDFA, SFF Film Fund, Doc Society, and Bertha Foundation, among others. A 2021 IDA Courage Under Fire Award honoree, Thomas is also an IDA Logan Elevate grantee and a Sundance Fellow.

Her debut feature documentary, “Writing With Fire,” won two awards at Sundance ’21 (Audience Award and Special Jury Award: Impact for Change). Described by *The Washington Post* as “the most inspiring journalism movie—maybe ever,” “Writing With Fire” has played at over 100 festivals and won 28 international awards. The film is also a *New York Times* Critic’s Pick.

Over the last 10 years, Thomas’s films have been used as advocacy tools for social impact, included in the curriculum of universities, and exhibited globally in spaces such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference and The Lincoln Center for Performing Arts—becoming catalysts for new conversations. She lives between New Delhi and a quaint mountain-town in North India.

Sushmit Ghosh (Co-Director/Producer)

Sushmit Ghosh is an award-winning director and cinematographer from India whose work has been supported by the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Institute, Doc Society, SFF Film Fund, IDFA, Bertha Foundation, Sorfond, and the Finnish Film Foundation, among others. Ghosh is a 2021 IDA Courage Under Fire Award honoree and a Sundance Fellow.

Five years in the making, Ghosh’s debut feature documentary, “Writing With Fire” is a double Sundance award winner. Hailed by *IndieWire* as “profound,” and “insightful and inspirational” by *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film has been a festival favorite winning 28 awards, including 10 best documentary awards.

In 2009, Ghosh co-founded Black Ticket Films, a production company invested in the power of storytelling. With a strong eye on social justice stories, Black Ticket Films’ award-winning slate of films are being used as advocacy, impact, and education tools by institutions across the world. In his spare time, you’ll find Ghosh motorcycling and hiking through the Himalayas.

**ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS:**

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS, Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. 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, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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