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INDEPENDENT LENS UNVEILS FALL SLATE OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS AND SERIES FOCUSED ON STORIES OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, KICKING OFF SEPTEMBER 19, 2023, ON PBS

September 5, 2023

First Half of Fall Slate Will Highlight Latino Filmmakers and Overlooked Stories in “Sansón and Me” and “El Equipo,” While Latter Half Explores Interfaith Understanding With “Three Chaplains” and New Docuseries “A Town Called Victoria”

(San Francisco, CA) September 5, 2023—INDEPENDENT LENS, the Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary anthology series presented by ITVS, today announced its fall lineup of documentary films that will make their broadcast debut beginning September 19, 2023. Together, the films spotlight stories of marginalized communities and cover a range of timely topics including immigration, incarceration, human rights, the Muslim American experience, and religious freedom.

The fall slate will kick off with Rodrigo Reyes’s “Sansón and Me,” which took home the Best Film Award at the 2022 Sheffield DocFest and makes its PBS debut on INDEPENDENT LENS on September 19, 2023. The innovative, emotional documentary peels back the layers of a young immigrant’s journey from orphaned Mexican child to incarceration. As Sansón is currently in prison in California and barred from doing interviews, Reyes uses dramatic reenactments performed by Sansón’s own family members to depict Sansón’s story and highlight the systemic forces and personal choices that envelop young, incarcerated men of color in America. “Sansón and Me” is produced in partnership with VOCES and Latino Public Broadcasting, and is a part of INDEPENDENT LENS’s Stories for Justice initiative, created to spark community conversations and boost the work of people on the front lines of justice reform.



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From Emmy-nominated filmmaker Bernardo Ruiz, “El Equipo” premieres on October 9, 2023, and centers on the Nobel Peace Prize-nominated team that changed the course of forensic science, while upholding international human rights after Argentina’s military dictatorship in the late 1970s. In 1984, legendary U.S. anthropologist Dr. Clyde Snow got a call to go to Argentina and investigate “los desaparecidos,”—or “the disappeared”—the term given to those who went missing under the country’s military dictatorship from 1976-1983. Ruiz traces Snow and his team of Latin American students as they investigate the fate of those missing, provide answers to thousands of families, and hold the government accountable for the crimes committed. Named a “Top 20 Audience Favorite” at the Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival, “El Equipo” is produced in partnership with VOCES and Latino Public Broadcasting.

Next is “Three Chaplains” from filmmaker David Washburn that premieres November 6, 2023. Washburn closely captures three military chaplains—Rafael Lantigua, Khallid Shabazz, and Saleha Jabeen—uncovering the trials and triumphs of their work, and dedication to upholding the First Amendment. Despite decades of military service, some still view them as unfit to serve because of their beliefs. But rather than blend in, they accept the challenges and inherent dangers of being the public face of Islam for the U.S. military. For them, change and mutual understanding starts from within. Saleha Jabeen overcomes an additional layer of obstacles, leading her to become the first female Muslim chaplain in the U.S. military. Penetrating beneath the surface of the U.S. armed forces, “Three Chaplains” also reveals how, through their own anchoring faith, Lantigua, Shabazz, and Jabeen have risen in the ranks, serving as symbols for progressive change within the U.S. military, and within the fabric of America.

Closing out the fall slate is award-winning filmmaker Li Lu’s “A Town Called Victoria,” an all-new three-part docuseries from Reel South and INDEPENDENT LENS premiering on November 13, 2023. On January 28, 2017, leaders of the Victoria, Texas, Muslim community—Abe Ajrami, Omar Rachid, and Dr. Shahid Hashmi—watched as their mosque burned to the ground. Lu follows the stories of Ajrami, Rachid, and Hashmi as they reckon with the incident and seek to restore their sacred space, while reflecting on the journeys they took to find acceptance as Muslim Americans in a small, conservative Christian town. Ultimately, the series explores how a multifaith community can come together to rise united against hate. “A Town Called Victoria” is co-produced by the Center for Asian American Media and is a part of the INDEPENDENT LENS

Stories for Justice initiative and the WNET Group's reporting initiative, "Exploring Hate: Antisemitism, Racism and Extremism."

"This fall, INDEPENDENT LENS partners with trusted co-producers, including VOCES and Reel South, to take an unflinching look at marginalized communities in the U.S. who meet hate and hardship with love and resilience," said executive producer Lois Vossen. "Public media has earned the trust of audiences who are looking for documentaries that provide a multi-layered exploration of systemic issues, spark conversations, and encourage a deeper understanding of what's happening in our communities."

"A Town Called Victoria" and all of the aforementioned films will also be available to stream via the PBS App.

Visit the INDEPENDENT LENS [website](#) for more information.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS App. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens.

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years, the San Francisco nonprofit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS App. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more visit itvs.org.

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