

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE****CONTACT**

Caitlin Jaynes, 42 West
419-367-4678
caitlin.jaynes@42west.com

Aisha Almada, ITVS
415-356-8383
aisha.almada@itvs.org

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“THIRD ACT,” A SON’S PORTRAIT OF PIONEERING FILMMAKER ROBERT A. NAKAMURA, PREMIERES MAY 25 ON INDEPENDENT LENS

Filmmaker Tad Nakamura Honors Father’s Legacy as Godfather of Asian American Media While Reflecting on Inherited Trauma and a Lifetime of Storytelling

(San Francisco, CA) March 31, 2026—Through an intimate collaboration between father and son, Robert and Tadashi Nakamura transform memory into a living archive in “Third Act,” premiering May 25, 2026, on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS. From World War II incarceration to cultural awakening and a Parkinson’s diagnosis, “Third Act” is a tender portrait of legacy, inherited trauma, and the final chapter of a shared creative life.

Often referred to as the Godfather of Asian American media, Robert A. Nakamura built a groundbreaking career with works like the personal documentary “Manzanar” and “Hito Hata: Raise the Banner,” one of the first feature films created by and about Asian Americans. With Tadashi behind the camera for “Third Act,” their final film together, Robert reflects on his years in a U.S. internment camp during World War II and his lifelong work documenting that history.

In telling his father’s story, Tadashi begins to recognize his own. The film reveals how historical trauma reverberates across generations, carried not only through memory but also through silence, anxiety, and inheritance. “Third Act” becomes both a personal farewell and a meditation on what it means to live with and ultimately make meaning from the past.

“In telling the appalling story of Asian Americans incarcerated in WWII American internment camps, Third Act feels ripped from today’s headlines in its depiction of people torn from their homes and communities,” said Lois Vossen, INDEPENDENT LENS a Founding Executive Producer. “Weaving a luxurious tapestry, director Tad Nakamura intertwines stories of systemic racism, the universal struggle between father and son, the act of aging, and the devastation of Parkinson’s disease—told through the wry wit and aching recollections of a giant in American cinema.”



1435 FOLSOM STREET
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
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“Third Act” is structured chronologically around three phases of Tadashi’s father’s life: becoming an artist in Los Angeles after WWII, finding his path, and dealing with Parkinson’s and PTSD. Together, father and son use their shared medium of film to express emotions they had been hesitant to express directly.

Born in the U.S. to Japanese immigrant parents and growing up in Los Angeles, the elder Nakamura thought of himself as an all-American boy until after Pearl Harbor, when Japanese Americans were rounded up and imprisoned. He spent three years in an American internment camp and a lifetime reckoning with how his family was treated. Determined to counter negative media images, he reinvented himself as a filmmaker and teacher, gave voice and vision to the burgeoning Asian American consciousness in the 1960s, and spent the rest of his career reversing—and teaching others to reverse—ethnic stereotypes.

Shortly after retiring, Robert's Parkinson's diagnosis and the Trump era reopened psychological wounds he thought had healed, bringing new urgency to the stories he had spent a lifetime telling.

“Third Act” will premiere on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on May 25, 2026, (check local listings) and will be available to stream on the [PBS app](#).

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Tadashi “Tad” Nakamura, Director

Tadashi Nakamura was the youngest filmmaker at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. His work includes Emmy® Award-nominated "Mele Murals" (PBS and Al Jazeera), "Jake Shimabukuro: Life on Four Strings" (PBS), and the trilogy "Yellow Brotherhood," "Pilgrimage," and "A Song for Ourselves." Nakamura has a master of arts from UC Santa Cruz, and a bachelor of arts from UCLA.

Eurie Chung, Producer

Eurie Chung is a Peabody Award-winning documentary producer. She leads Flash Cuts, a post-production facility, with Walt Louie and has supported filmmakers for over 15 years. Her work includes the five-part PBS docuseries ASIAN AMERICANS, "Mele Murals," and will next launch "Third Act." She is a 2024 Sundance Producers Lab Fellow.

Ursula Liang, Consulting Producer

Ursula Liang is a journalist and has worked for outlets like The New York Times Op-Docs, T: The New York Times Style Magazine, and ESPN The Magazine. Her debut "9-Man" aired on AMERICA RE-FRAMED. Liang also works for The 2050 Group, is a founding member of the Filipino American Museum, and sits on the advisory board of The Dynasty Project.

CREDITS

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| Director and Producer | Tad Nakamura |
| Producer | Eurie Chung |
| Consulting Producer | Ursula Liang |
| Executive Producers | Carrie Lozano Lois Vossen Royd Chung Spencer Nakasako Diane Quon Donald Young |

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an award-winning documentary series that fosters understanding, seeks to build empathy, and encourages a more united society. Produced by ITVS, *Independent Lens* documentaries have premiered on PBS for 25 years and streamed on YouTube, helping Americans foster deeper connections between communities and themselves. From the Oscar-nominated *I Am Not Your Negro* to the Peabody-acclaimed docuseries *Philly D.A.* and the Emmy® award-winning *The Invisible War*, *Independent Lens* provides viewers with in-depth, nuanced storytelling reflecting the experiences of people from a variety of voices and communities. Funding is provided by the Action Circle for *Independent Lens* with major funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Acton Family Giving, Ford Foundation, and Jonathan Logan Family Foundation, with additional support from Artemis Rising Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, Park Foundation, Brandt Jackson Foundation, the deNovo Initiative, and RandomGood Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.



Stream anytime on the PBS app or YouTube. Learn more at pbs.org/independentlens

ABOUT ITVS

Independent Television Service (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, Park Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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