



### Arun Bhattarai

*Agent of Happiness; The Next Guardian*

Arun Bhattarai is a documentary film director known for films like *Agent of Happiness*, *The Next Guardian*, and *Mountain Man*. His most recent film, *Agent of Happiness*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Since then, it has travelled to over 100 film festivals and was nominated for the IDA Awards. His films have been awarded at festivals like IDFA, DOC NYC, San Francisco International Film Festival, Docs Against Gravity, among others, and have been theatrically released in more than 30 countries. His works have received support from the Sundance Film Institute, Catapult Film Fund, and the IDFA Bertha Fund. Arun also mentors young filmmakers through various workshops in South Asia and has served on the jury at festivals like the Sydney Film Festival. He is a National Film Award recipient and one of the few independent filmmakers in Bhutan.



### Martín Benchimol

*The Castle; The Dread*

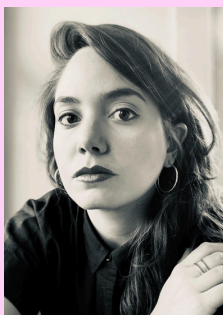
Martín Benchimol is an Argentine director and screenwriter, known for a body of work with a distinctive style that navigates the boundaries between documentary and fiction. His documentary feature films have had strong international exposure and received numerous awards. His film *The Castle* (Berlinale 2023) won the Horizontes Award for Best Film at the San Sebastian International Film Festival and Best Director at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, among others. *The Dread* (IDFA 2017) received the IDFA Award for Best Film. His short film *A Robust Heart* was produced by Sandbox Films, premiered in competition at IDFA 2022, was part of the Elemental collection, and became the first short from this initiative acquired by *The New York Times'* Op-Docs. Benchimol is an honorary graduate of the University of Buenos Aires, where he taught screenwriting from 2013 to 2023 and also mentored graduation projects in the university's postgraduate documentary program.



### Milisuthando Bongela-Davis

*Milisuthando; Umoya: On African Spirituality*

Milisuthando Bongela-Davis is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, cultural worker and artist. Her career began in the fashion industry but the last 16 years have seen her traverse the worlds of music, art, media, and film - continually turning towards indigenous knowledge systems. She was Arts Editor for the *Mail & Guardian's* Friday section and was host and co-producer of the podcast *Umoya: On African Spirituality* with Dr. Athambile Masola. Her first film, a personal essay documentary titled *Milisuthando*, had its in-competition world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and was selected for MoMA's 2023 New Directors / New Films Festival before opening the 2023 Encounters Documentary Film Festival. It was nominated and won awards for its groundbreaking form, subject matter and approach to personal filmmaking. After a theatrical run at Anthology Film Archives in May 2025, *Milisuthando* will be distributed by The Cinema Guild in North America. She lives in New York.



### Cristina Costantini

*Sally; Science Fair*

Cristina Costantini is an Emmy Award-winning director. Her acclaimed documentary *Mucho Mucho Amor*, which chronicles the life of beloved Puerto Rican astrologer Walter Mercado, premiered at Sundance in 2020. Prior to that, she directed *Science Fair*, which explored the competitive world of high school science fairs. The film garnered an Emmy, a Critics' Choice Award, as well as audience awards at Sundance and SXSW in 2018, and was turned into an Emmy Award-winning series for National Geographic. Cristina also executive produced *Menudo: Forever Young*, an HBO Max original series, and *Stanford Prison Experiment: Unlocking The Truth* for NatGeo. Her feature with National Geographic Documentary Films, *Sally*, chronicling Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, premiered at Sundance 2025. Her latest project, *Tomorrow Was Beautiful*, which tells the story of the record-breaking world tour of Colombian singer Karol G, premiered in early May on Netflix.





## Contessa Gayles

*Songs From the Hole; The Debutantes*

Contessa Gayles is an award-winning film director, writer, DP, editor, and Emmy-nominated producer. She tells stories about identity, community, coming of age, healing, Black liberation, and the radical imagination. Her feature documentary-visual album, *Songs From The Hole*, world premiered at SXSW 2024, where it won the Audience Award, Visions category. The film earned an IDA Award nomination for Best Music Documentary and won the 2025 Cinema Eye Honors Heterodox Award. Contessa directed *The Debutantes* (Xumo), which premiered in documentary competition at the 2024 Tribeca Film Festival. Her short film, *Founder Girls* (BET), was executive produced by Queen Latifah and premiered at the 2023 Tribeca Film Festival. Previously, she was on staff at CNN, where she directed and produced award-winning non-fiction, including the feature documentary, *The Feminist On Cellblock Y*.



## Rachel Grady

*Jesus Camp; Detropia*

Rachel Grady is the co-owner of Brooklyn, NY based Loki Films. She co-directed *Jesus Camp* (Academy Award nominee), *The Boys of Baraka* (Emmy nominee), *12th & Delaware* (Peabody Award winner), *Detropia* (Emmy winner), *Norman Lear: Just Another Version Of You*, *One Of Us*, *Love Fraud*, and *Endangered*.



## Johan Grimonprez

*Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat; dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*

Grimonprez's feature films include *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997, in collaboration with novelist Don DeLillo), *Double Take* (2009, with writer Tom McCarthy), and *Shadow World* (2016, with journalist Andrew Feinstein.) Traveling the main festival circuit from the Berlinale to Sundance, they garnered several Best Director awards, a Spirit Award, and the 2009 Black Pearl Award, and were also acquired by NBC Universal, ARTE, and BBC/FILM 4. *Shadow World* premiered its broadcast on Independent Lens on PBS. His latest feature, *Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat*, was Oscar-nominated for Best Documentary and premiered at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival where it won the Cinematic Innovation Award. He published several books, including *Inflight* (2000), *Looking for Alfred* (2007), and *It's a Poor Sort of Memory that Only Works Backwards* (2011) with contributions by Jodi Dean, Thomas Elsaesser, Tom McCarthy, and Slavoj Žižek.



## Steve James

*Hoop Dreams; Life Itself*

Steve James is a Chicago-based filmmaker whose previous work includes Academy Award-nominated films *Hoop Dreams* and *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*. Other award-winning work includes *Stevie*, *The Interrupters*, *At the Death House Door*, and *Life Itself*. His work has won numerous Emmys, two Independent Spirit Awards, two Peabody Awards, a duPont-Columbia Journalism Award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Award. Two recent docuseries, *America to Me* and *City So Real*, were among the most acclaimed TV shows of the years in which they aired. In 2023, ESPN aired his award-winning docuseries, *The Luckiest Guy in the World*, which IndieWire named one of the best documentaries of the year. His most recent film, *A Compassionate Spy*, premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was released theatrically by Magnolia Pictures in 2023.



**Alison Klayman***White Hot; Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*

Alison Klayman is an award-winning filmmaker known for documenting some of the most prominent people and stories of our time. Big issues, big stakes, and major historical events crisscross her films, even while she brings viewers into these worlds through a singularly intimate lens. She has profiled the eponymous Chinese artist and activist in *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*, which earned a Special Jury Prize at Sundance and put Alison on *The New York Times*'s list of 20 Directors to Watch; singer Alanis Morissette in *Jagged*; and right-wing strategist Steve Bannon in *The Brink*. She has also chronicled the rise and fall (and rise again) of iconic brand Abercrombie & Fitch in *White Hot*; the pervasiveness of prescription stimulants in *Take Your Pills*; and the WNBA's New York Liberty in *Unfinished Business*.

**Lukasz Konopa***Theatre of Violence; After*

Lukasz Konopa's feature debut, *Theatre of Violence*, which he co-directed, premiered at CPH:DOX and is distributed by Dogwoof. The film follows the trial of a former child soldier at the International Criminal Court and explores questions about responsibility, justice, and how violence shapes individuals and societies. It won Best Documentary at DOK.fest Munich and the Grand Prix at Movies that Matter. Previous films include *After*, which observes one day in Auschwitz through the routines of its workers and visitors, and *Vegas*, a look behind the bright lights of Las Vegas during the economic crisis. Lukasz holds degrees in documentary direction (National Film and Television School, UK) and anthropology (Warsaw University, Poland). He is a mentor for postgraduates at Raindance Film School, supporting emerging filmmakers in developing their projects. Since 2022, he has been part of a collective documenting settler violence in the occupied city of Hebron.

**Emma D. Miller***Father Figures; The School of Canine Massage*

Emma D. Miller is a Gotham Award and Cinema Eye-nominated filmmaker who recently produced Elizabeth Lo's *Mistress Dispeller* (Venice/Toronto 2024), winner of over 15 festival prizes. She also produced Iliana Sosa's SXSW award-winning *What We Leave Behind* (ARRAY Releasing/Netflix), a *New York Times* Critic's Pick, and directed *The School Of Canine Massage* (SXSW 2024), a Vimeo Staff Pick. As Development Executive at Concordia Studio, she worked on Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning films that premiered at Sundance, Tribeca, and Telluride, including *Time*, *Boys State*, and *Procession*. Other credits include Showtime's *Couples Therapy*, Oscar-nominated *Knife Skills*, Sundance award-winning *Unrest* (Netflix/Independent Lens), and an upcoming feature for National Geographic. Named one of DOC NYC's "40 Under 40" and one of *Filmmaker Magazine*'s "25 New Faces of Independent Film," Emma was a 2023 Sundance Producing Lab Fellow and 2024 JFI Filmmaker in Residence. She is currently directing her feature debut, *Father Figures*.



**Andy Sarjahani***The Barber of Little Rock; The Smallest Power*

Andy Sarjahani is an Iranian-American documentary filmmaker and cinematographer raised in a working class community outside the Arkansas Ozarks. He is interested in people, our relationship to place, and how that shapes our worldview. His work has focused on human ecology, the natural world, class, the American South and the experience of the Iranian diaspora. His recent cinematography credits include Academy Award-nominated *The Barber of Little Rock* (The New Yorker, 2024); *Southern Storytellers* (PBS, 2023); and *Armed Only with a Camera: The Life and Death of Brent Renaud* (HBO, SXSW Audience Award 2025.) His recent director credits include *The Smallest Power* (Sundance, 2024); *Wild Hogs and Saffron* (Best Short Documentary - River Run Film Festival, 2024); *American Grail: A Quest for the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker* (Big Sky Doc Fest, 2024); and *Black Ag* (Blackstar Film Festival, 2024). He is currently in production on his debut feature documentary, *Iranian/Hillbilly*.

**Tyler Schiffman***Saving Giraffes: The Long Journey Home; A Disappearing Forest*

Tyler Schiffman is an award-winning photographer and documentary filmmaker whose work explores the profound connection between humans and wildlife. Through powerful visual storytelling, he highlights the interdependence between people and the natural world, aiming to inspire awareness and action. His photography has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and exhibited at the United Nations. As a filmmaker, Schiffman has worked with Netflix, National Geographic, Disney+, and Discovery's Shark Week, serving as both director and underwater cinematographer. He is currently working on a documentary about Dr. Johannes Fritz, an Austrian conservationist known for his innovative work in reintroducing the northern bald ibis to Central Europe, a project that was recently featured in *The New Yorker's* 100th-year edition. Through his lens, Schiffman continues to create impactful stories that educate, inspire, and advocate for the preservation of wildlife and the environment.

**Brittany Shyne***Seeds; Painted Lady*

Brittany Shyne is an independent filmmaker based in Dayton, Ohio. Working in the narrative and non-fiction artform, her work seeks to depict the complexity of everyday life by examining themes such as personal histories, alienation, and cultural modernization. By utilizing observational techniques and poetic language, her films lyrically weave together frameworks of race, class, culture, and family lineage. She also worked as a cinematographer on films such as *The Debutantes* (Tribeca, '24), *This Time This Place* (Tribeca, '21), and Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar's Academy Award-winning film *American Factory* 美国工厂 (Sundance '19.) Shyne was the recipient of the 2021 Artist Disruptor Award from the Center of Cultural Power. Her debut feature, *Seeds*, recently premiered at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival, where it received the esteemed U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Award.





**Poh Si Teng***Patrice: The Movie; St. Louis Superman*

Poh Si Teng is an award-winning director and producer (Oscar-nominated *St. Louis Superman*). She is a former creative executive for ABC/Disney, former documentary commissioner for Al Jazeera English, former IDA grants director, and former Emmy-nominated New York Times journalist, with a portfolio spanning four continents. She is the founder of Tiny Boxer Films, which produces feature docs, docu- and unscripted-series for the US and global majority markets. She recently executive produced the Hulu/Disney hit disability romcom documentary *Patrice: The Movie*, and *Muslim Matchmaker*. Her past producing credits include the Oscar-qualified award-winning short documentary *Blood On Our Side* from Mexico, and the BAFTA-qualified short documentary *Dead Woman's Pass* from Peru. She is currently producing a three-part docuseries that she developed, and is directing a political and medical verite documentary set in Gaza and the US.



**Begüm Aydin***Developmental Neuroscientist & Gut Whisperer, The Rockefeller University*

Begüm Aydin is a developmental neurobiologist whose research explores how microbial signals shape the development and regeneration of the nervous system, focusing on the enteric nervous system, often called the “second brain” in the gut. By integrating multidisciplinary approaches from developmental biology, microbiology, neuroscience, and stem cell biology, she investigates how gut bacteria promote neuronal plasticity, challenging traditional views on adult neurogenesis. Trained as a developmental biologist in her PhD, Aydin uses the gut as a model to study how environmental factors influence neurons, aiming to uncover principles of neural resilience and regeneration that could inform therapies for broader nervous system disorders. As a scientist, Aydin thrives on interdisciplinary work, seeking to connect ideas across fields. She is passionate about fostering collaborations between scientists, artists, and diverse scholars, believing that open science communication and exchange across disciplines spark creativity and innovative solutions to complex biological questions.

**Arkarup Banerjee***Neuroscientist & Vocal Communication Detective, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory*

Arkarup Banerjee grew up in the suburbs of Kolkata in India and studied biochemistry for his bachelor's degree at University of Delhi. Switching to systems neuroscience, during his PhD he studied computations and neural circuits involved in olfactory sensory processing. As a Junior Fellow at the Simons Foundation and a postdoctoral fellow at NYU, he became interested in motor cortical control of vocal behaviors in the Alston's singing mice. Currently, he studies neural circuits underlying vocal communication in these exotic rodent species from the Central American rainforests. These animals vocalize alone as well as socially, offering an exciting opportunity to study the neural dynamics and circuitry that enable a motor behavior to be used flexibly for social communication. Research in his lab combines cutting-edge neural circuit analysis with comparative evolutionary analyses across rodent species to gain insight into the evolution of neural circuits for mammalian vocal communication.

**Marcia Bjornerud***Structural Geologist & Deep Time Diviner, Lawrence University*

Marcia Bjornerud is Professor of Geosciences and Environmental Studies at Lawrence University in Wisconsin. Her research focuses on the physics of earthquakes and mountain building, and she combines field-based studies of bedrock geology with quantitative models of rock mechanics. She has done research in high arctic Norway and Canada as well as mainland Norway, Italy, New Zealand, and the Lake Superior region. A contributing writer to *The New Yorker*, *Wired*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, she is also the author of several books for popular audiences: *Reading the Rocks*, *Timefulness*, *Geopedia*, and the recently published *Turning to Stone: Discovering the Subtle Wisdom of Rocks*.

**Julianne Dalcanton***Astrophysicist & Galaxy Anatomist, Flatiron Institute*

Julianne Dalcanton is an astrophysicist. She spent much of her career in Seattle, as a professor at the University of Washington's Department of Astronomy, but recently upended her life to join the Simons Foundation's Flatiron Institute as the Director of the Center for Computational Astrophysics in New York City. She loves teasing apart how the universe works, and is emotionally bonded to the Hubble Space Telescope. In addition to space, she enjoys crafty stuff, swimming at the Rec Center, her absurdly miniature dog, and karaoke (balancing minimal musical ability with a general lack of embarrassment). She has lots of thoughts about navigating the world with chronic illness and complex family responsibilities.





### Felecia Davis

*Architect, Engineer, & Textile Visionary, Pennsylvania State University*

Felecia Davis is an Associate Professor at the Stuckeman Center for Design Computing in the School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University, and is the Director of SOFTLAB@PSU. Davis's work in architecture connects art, science, engineering, and design, and was featured by PBS in the *Women in Science Profiles* series. Davis's designs were part of the 18th Venice Biennale, The Laboratory of the Future, and MoMA's exhibition *Reconstruction: Blackness and Architecture in America*. She is a founding member of the Black Reconstruction Collective, a not-for-profit group of Black architects, scholars, and artists supporting design work about the Black diaspora. Davis's work has been recognized by the DigitalFUTURES Group in 2021, the New York Architectural League's 2022 Emerging Voices in Architecture program, ACADIA's 2022 Innovative Research Award of Excellence, and the 2022 National Design Award from the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Museum for Digital Design.



### Suzanne Dikker

*Cognitive Neuroscientist & Synchrony Sage, New York University*

Suzanne Dikker is a Research Associate Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience. Her core research focuses on how the rhythms of our brains and bodies support real-world dynamic social interactions. To conduct this work, she leads various initiatives at the interface of neuroscience, education, and art. These include MindHive - a community science platform that brings together youth, educators, scientists, and community organizations to co-design human brain and behavioral science research projects - and Harmonic Dissonance Collective - a collaborative of artists and scientists co-creating public experiences that interrogate the algorithms that describe our interactions with others and the world around us. Suzanne's research and community science projects are supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, the EU Horizon 2020 program, and the Schmidt Futures Foundation, among others. Suzanne received a PhD in Linguistics from NYU and was a postdoctoral trainee at the Weill-Cornell Sackler Institute for Developmental Psychobiology.



### Johan Eklöf

*Bat Scientist & Evangelist of Night, Independent Researcher*

Johan is a Swedish bat scientist and writer, best known for his research on microbat vision and the ecological effects of light pollution. With nearly two decades of experience, he now works as a consultant, specializing in bats, night ecology, and nature-friendly lighting. Born in 1973 near Gothenburg, he grew up in the 80s immersed in synthesizers and fantasy games. That early fascination with imagination evolved into a deep interest in nature's own mysteries: evolution, paleontology, and ultimately, zoology. His academic path led to a Master of Science in Biology and Earth Sciences in 1998 and a PhD in Zoology in 2003. Today, he divides his time between nocturnal fieldwork in summer and writing during the darker seasons. His books range from children's literature to poetry and popular science. *The Darkness Manifesto* (2020) received widespread acclaim in international media.



### Chaz Firestone

*Cognitive Psychologist & Perception Pontificator, Johns Hopkins University*

Chaz Firestone is Associate Professor of Psychological & Brain Sciences at Johns Hopkins University, where he is also appointed in the Department of Philosophy. He directs the Perception & Mind Laboratory, an interdisciplinary group of researchers studying how we see and think about the world around us. His research and writing has appeared in journals such as *Nature*, *Science*, and *PNAS*, and his work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and NPR. Firestone is the recipient of the Stanton Prize from the Society for Philosophy and Psychology, the Gittler Prize from the American Psychological Foundation, and the Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformative Early Career Contributions from the Association for Psychological Science. He earned his PhD from Yale University and was an undergraduate at Brown University. Outside of the lab, Firestone enjoys competing in submission grappling tournaments and spending time with his partner and children.



**Omar Hurricane***Physicist & Fusion Warrior, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory*

Dr. Hurricane completed his PhD in Physics at UCLA in 1994. He remained at UCLA as a postdoc at the Institute of Plasma Fusion and Research until joining Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in 1998 as a Designer. Omar has been Chief Scientist for the inertial confinement fusion (ICF) program since 2014, formulating the strategy and many tactics that led to fusion ignition. From 2000-2010, Omar led an interdisciplinary science effort, euphemistically called “Energy Balance,” that resolved a long-standing nuclear stockpile mystery for which he was awarded the U.S. Department of Energy Ernest Orlando Lawrence Award in 2009. He received the American Nuclear Society Edward Teller Award in 2021 for “Visionary scientific insights and leadership of National Ignition Facility (NIF) experiments resulting in the achievement of a burning plasma,” as well as the American Physical Society fellowship and the John Dawson Award for Excellence in Plasma Physics Research.

**Samra Husremović***Chemist & Atomic Engineer, Columbia University*

Samra, originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina, moved to the U.S. for her undergraduate studies at Bates College, where she majored in Chemistry and conducted research on topics ranging from how light interacts with nanostructures to designing chemical processes for cleaner energy. She earned her PhD in Chemistry at UC Berkeley, focusing on atomically thin magnetic materials with potential applications in miniaturized electronics. Now a postdoctoral researcher at Columbia University, she focuses on controlling the atomic structure and symmetry of crystals to tailor their electronic properties. Her goal is to uncover the mechanisms behind emergent physical behavior and to design materials that could improve the energy efficiency of future technologies. Outside the lab, Samra enjoys swimming, birdwatching, and learning about deep-sea fish.

**Theodore Kim***Computer Scientist & Animation Innovator, Yale University*

Theodore Kim is a Professor of Computer Science at Yale University, where he investigates biomechanical solids, fluid dynamics, and topics in geometry. Previously, he was a Senior Research Scientist at Pixar Animation Studios. He has received the NSF CAREER Award, multiple Best Paper Awards, and two Scientific and Technical Academy Awards. His algorithms have appeared in over 20 films, and he has screen credits for *Cars 3*, *Coco*, *Incredibles 2*, and *Toy Story 4*. His public writings on how computing intersects with issues of race, gender, and power have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Scientific American*, *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, *CNN*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**Tina Lasisi***Biological Anthropologist & Human Variance Voyager, University of Michigan*

Tina Lasisi is a biological anthropologist at the University of Michigan. She grew up in the Netherlands in a Bulgarian-Nigerian family and first became interested in human variation as an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge. After a lecture on skin color evolution, she started wondering why no one had applied the same thinking to human hair. What began as a simple search turned into a decade-plus research journey, eventually leading to a PhD from Penn State and a faculty position where she studies the structure and nature of human variation using genetics, evolutionary theory, and image analysis. She has a slight obsession with using AI to solve problems and spends a questionable amount of time building systems to organize her work. Haters will say it's procrastination (and sometimes she is haters). She is a sci-fi nerd who regularly threatens to launch herself into space.





**Nathan Lents***Biologist & Animal Sexpert, John Jay College*

Nathan H. Lents earned a PhD in human biology from St. Louis University and completed postdoctoral training in genetics and genomics at New York University. He is Professor of Biology at John Jay College, CUNY, where he has taught genetics, human evolution, and the biology of sex and gender since 2006. His research lab studies the evolution of human and Neanderthal genomes and he has written popular science articles explaining how evolution has shaped human biology and behavior for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Science*, *Newsweek*, *Discover*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, and many others. He is also the author of three books: *Not So Different: Finding Human Nature in Animals*; *Human Errors: A Panorama of Our Glitches, from Pointless Bones to Broken Genes*, and this year's *The Sexual Evolution: How 500 Million Years of Sex, Gender, and Mating Shape Modern Relationships*.

**Jonathan Losos***Evolutionary Biologist & Lizard and Cat Wrangler, Washington University in St. Louis*

Jonathan Losos is an evolutionary biologist known for his research on how lizards - and more recently, cats - rapidly evolve to adapt to changing environments. Educated at Harvard and Berkeley, he moved to Washington University for his first faculty position, before leaving to become a professor of biology at Harvard and Curator in Herpetology at the university's Museum of Comparative Zoology. He then returned to Washington University in 2018 to become the founding Director of the Living Earth Collaborative, a biodiversity partnership between Washington University, the Saint Louis Zoo, and the Missouri Botanical Garden. Losos has written more than 250 scientific papers and three books, most recently *The Cat's Meow: How Cats Evolved from the Savanna to Your Sofa*. Losos has been elected a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He has received numerous awards for his evolutionary studies.

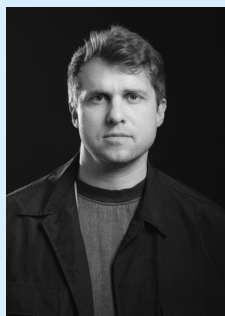
**James Makokis***Nehiyô (Plains Cree) Family Physician & Trans Health Trailblazer, University of Alberta*

Dr. James A. Makokis is a Nehiyô (Plains Cree) Family Physician from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation in northeastern Alberta and the winner of Season 7 of *The Amazing Race Canada* with his husband Anthony Johnson as "Team Ahkameyimok" ("Never give up" in the Plains Cree language). They used their time on the show to bring attention to important issues like never before. Dr. Makokis is a national and internationally recognized leader and author in the area of Indigenous health and transgender health. Dr. Makokis believes that power should be shared, especially with those who have been disempowered. His philosophy of leadership is based on Nehiyô iyintiw wiyasiwewina (Cree Natural Laws) including *kisewatisiwin* (kindness), *kwayask itatisiwin* (honesty), *sohkeyitamowin* (strength/determination), and *pahkwenamatowin* (sharing) as taught to him by his Elders.



**Ryan Krivoshey***Founder & President, Grasshopper Film*

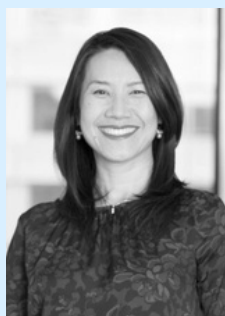
A veteran of the independent film scene, Ryan Krivoshey founded the award-winning distribution company Grasshopper Film in 2015, hailed as “one of the most artistically daring of distributors” (*The New Yorker*). The company has released films by celebrated directors including Ryusuke Hamaguchi, Albert Serra, Pedro Costa, Agnes Varda, Pietro Marcello, Tsai Ming-liang, and Claire Denis, along with groundbreaking documentaries such as the Academy Award-nominated *Last Men in Aleppo*, *Sweetgrass*, *The Hottest August*, *Black Mother*, *Nocturnes*, *Bisbee '17*, and *Leviathan*. In 2024, Ryan turned to production, as Co-Founder and President of Correspondent, a production company committed to creating and supporting artistic, cinematic, and boundary-pushing filmmaking. Ryan has been invited to participate on festival juries, panels, and mentorship programs for the Cannes Film Festival, IDFA, Toronto International Film Festival, True/False, The Gotham, RIDM, and South by Southwest, among others.

**Joey Marra***Producer, Closer Media*

Joey is a producer, writer, and exec based in NYC and currently working at Closer Media, a production financing company. At Closer, his non-fiction slate includes the documentaries *Orwell* by Raoul Peck that premiered at Cannes 2025, the forthcoming *Musk* by Alex Gibney, *Middletown* by Jesse Moss and Amanda McBaine that premiered at Sundance 2025, and forthcoming docs from Amir Bar-Lev, Ken Dornstein, Steve James, Tanaz Eshaghian, and James Longley. For many years Joey was the Head of Development and Executive Producer at Alex Gibney's Jigsaw Productions, where he developed and produced projects like *How to Change Your Mind* with Michael Pollan, *Octopus!* with Phoebe Waller-Bridge, *Dirty Money*, and other features, series, and podcasts. He has earned multiple Emmy nominations and won a duPont-Columbia Award. Before Jigsaw, Joey was a writer and producer at National Geographic where he worked on series like *Brain Games* and *Cosmos*.

**Ivvet Modinou***Senior Vice President, Science, Society & Culture, Simons Foundation*

Ivvet Modinou has been working in public engagement with science for over two decades. In her role as Senior Vice President of Science, Society & Culture, she leads public engagement for the Simons Foundation, including strategic oversight of Science Sandbox, a flagship grantmaking program seeking to inspire and engage people with science. Her portfolio also includes public events, researcher engagement, national initiatives, and editorially-independent media units Quanta Magazine, The Transmitter and Sandbox Films. Previously, Ivvet was head of engagement at the British Science Association, overseeing public programs, including the British Science Festival, and also building the association's national community-engagement portfolio. She has an MS in science communication from Imperial College London, and has worked at the BBC, the Natural History Museum, and The Times of London.

**Tina Nguyen***Senior Vice President, Documentary Programming, HBO*

Tina Nguyen is the SVP of HBO Documentary Programming. Her career began as a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times. She later switched to documentaries producing specials and series for PBS/NOVA, Discovery and National Geographic, then launched and showran hit franchises for Food Network and HGTV, and later joined the Travel Channel as an Executive Producer. Before joining HBO, she was Head of Production at Vox Media's content studio.



**Sarah Qari***Producer, Radiolab*

Sarah Qari is a producer and reporter for the podcast Radiolab at New York Public Radio (WNYC). She has produced stories on a wide range of scientific topics, from microbiology to astrophysics - with an interest in spotlighting unsung heroes of science. She has also been recognized widely for her journalism on politics and culture - like a duPont-Columbia Award-winning series chronicling the life of a Guantanamo detainee and a Gracie award-winning episode tracing the origins of "Stockholm syndrome." Prior to Radiolab, Sarah was a producer on the Supreme Court podcast More Perfect.

**Sudeep Sharma***Programmer, Sundance Film Festival*

Sudeep Sharma is a Programmer for the Sundance Film Festival with a focus on documentary feature films. With nearly two decades of experience in film curation, Sudeep started at the Institute as a screener for international documentaries and reader for the Labs, and has had several roles including Programming Associate, Associate Programmer, and Shorts Programmer. He has worked in programming at many eclectic organizations including major Los Angeles film organizations such as Film Independent, AFI Fest, Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He has also been Director of Programming and Interim Artistic Director for the Palm Springs International ShortFest. He has served on festival juries and film award committees around the world and has led and participated on panels on a variety of industry and cultural topics. He holds a PhD in Cinema and Media Studies from UCLA, and has taught film and television history, industry, and criticism courses at universities throughout Southern California.

